

Baptism of the Holy Spirit
And 9 Holy Spirit Gifts ...

CEASED?
2ND EDITION

A Comprehensive Study Guide
Designed to Help Readers
Decide What is True

Don Dixon

May you be Blessed by this Free PDF Copy of the 2nd Edition of CEASED?

Greetings,

This PDF copy is provided free as my wife Lori and I want the information in **CEASED?** to be available as widely as possible. We don't want finances, publishing, delivery, or technological issues to be a deterrent in any way. God has blessed us in so many ways and just as He gives us freely, God calls us to give freely as well.

- ❑ *Matthew 10:8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those with leprosy, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give.*

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CEASED? turned out to be a long reference book which led Richard Birch to recommend I take excerpts from **CEASED?** and make smaller books. The result is 3 **POINTS TO PONDER** books.

- ❖ **POINTS TO PONDER FOR CHARISMATICS & PENTECOSTALS**
- ❖ **POINTS TO PONDER FOR CESSATIONISTS**
- ❖ **POINTS TO PONDER FOR ROMAN CATHOLICS**

A summary of the contents in the 3 Points to Ponder books is found on page x in the Introduction section.

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Dedication

I admire people who are committed to seeking the truth especially when the costs of doing so may be high, and who are willing to admit when they are wrong.

I dedicate **CEASED?** to all those who seek the truth in God's Word, and to those who stand up and share His truths in love and kindness, and for God's glory.

Contents

An Impactful Experience	iv
Mountain Top	iv
Acknowledgments and Thanks	v
Introduction	vi

PART I: SOME CONTEXT FOR CEASED?

Chapter One	Mindset and Final Authority	1
Two	9 Holy Spirit Gifts	14

PART II: SOME BASICS ON CHRISTIANITY

Three	Spirit, Soul and Body	28
Four	Born Again/Salvation	44
Five	Holy Spirit 'Withs' [Para and Meta]	100
Six	Holy Spirit 'In' [En]	103
Seven	Holy Spirit 'Upon' [Epi]	121
Eight	'En' & 'Epi' After the Cross	137
Nine	Filled/Refilled with the Holy Spirit	159
Ten	4 Baptisms Relevant Today, 9 in Total?	170
Eleven	Tying Chapters 3 to 10 Together	194
Twelve	Link of 9 Holy Spirit Gifts to Baptism in Holy Spirit	210

PART III: ADDITIONAL CESSATIONIST ARGUMENTS

Thirteen	Ceased by the Numbers	215
Fourteen	Did the 9 Holy Spirit Gifts Decline, then End?	220
Fifteen	Did the Purposes of Signs and Wonders End?	236
Sixteen	Did the 9 Gifts End with Specific Groups?	246
Seventeen	If the 9 Gifts Ceased, What Else Ceased?	262
Eighteen	Is all Divine Revelation in the Bible?	265
Nineteen	Charismatic and Pentecostal Misbehaviors	276
Twenty	Summary of Cessationist Arguments	278

PART IV: GOING FORWARD

Twenty-One	The Gift(s) of Tongues	288
Twenty-Two	Are Believers to Live in Divine Health?	308
Twenty-Three	Today's Christian Walk	322

PART V:
INSIGHTS AND QUESTIONS ABOUT ROMAN CATHOLICISM

Previous Chapters:

Chapter Three	Mary - Sinner in need of a Savior?	37
Four	Works - Required to Gain or Keep Salvation?	54
	Water Baptism - Required for Salvation?	55
	Communion - Symbolic or Literal?	73
	Communion - Priests and Forgiveness of Sins	81
	Communion - Hundreds of Billions of Sacrifices	88
	Other Catholic Teachings on Salvation	94
Eight	Confirmation/Baptism of the Holy Spirit [epi]	151
Ten	Acts 2:38 - Water Baptism or Baptism in Holy Spirit?	187
Twenty-One	Tongues in the Catholic church	307

New Chapters:

Twenty-Four	5 of 7 Catholic Sacraments, Traditions	349
Twenty-Five	Peter and Mary	361
Twenty-Six	Images, Different Ten Commandments, Saints	407
Twenty-Seven	Has a New Veil Been Created?	426
Twenty-Eight	Protestants and Catholics Worship Together?	438

PART VI:
IN CLOSING

Twenty-Nine	To Leaders	453
Thirty	In Closing	454

TESTIMONIES

1.	An Impactful Experience (Word of Knowledge, Soul Healing)	iv
2.	My Messed-Up Mindset	9
3.	My Psoriasis (Word of Knowledge / Healing Over Time)	31
4.	Evangelizing Using Ray Comfort's Questioning	36
5.	My Struggle in Believing I was Saved	61
6.	Church Goer to Born Again / Set free from Addiction	62
7.	More on My Freedom from Addiction	129
8.	Healing of Lady with a Limp	147
9.	My Baptism in the Holy Spirit and Fire	186
10.	Hurt Knee: Word of Knowledge / Immediate Healing	240
11.	Mentoring of Armor of God - or Not	302
12.	Starting to Speak in Tongues out of the Blue	304
13.	2 Examples of Saints Not Healed	314
14.	Some Healings I've Witnessed	316
15.	Part of My Journey in Seeing God Heal Others	319
16.	Lori's Journey through Breast Cancer	320
17.	Abundance Gospel - Helping the Poor	343
18.	Pastor's Gift Blessed 10-Fold	345
19.	God's Power and The Nail Gun	348

An Impactful Experience

SOON after I was born again, I visited a friend in a hospice near Bellingham, Washington. Days before Tim went home to be with Jesus, his wife Jann and I went outside the hospice for some air. We started talking with a lady who asked if she could pray for Jann. Jann agreed. After a few seconds of quiet - which I found unusual - this lady asked Jann if she had unforgiveness against anyone. Jann said no. And that was totally consistent with the Jann we knew - loving, gentle and kind. The woman was silent for a few more seconds, then asked Jann if she'd let Jesus show Jann any unforgiveness in her heart. Jann agreed and closed her eyes. Soon, the tears started to come down Jann's face. She slowly pulled down at the neckline of her t-shirt to reveal 2 parallel scars, about an inch long each, on the top part of her chest bone. They were a result of knife wounds from her first husband, and she couldn't forgive him.

After a short delay, the lady asked Jann if it would be ok for Jesus to show her what unforgiveness looked like. Jann agreed, closed her eyes, and soon after received some kind of picture. The lady asked Jann if she'd like Jesus to show her what forgiveness looked like. Jann agreed, closed her eyes again, received another picture, and broke down sobbing. For at least 10 minutes, this woman gently ministered to Jann as God brought healing into Jann's soul. I stood there, mesmerized on one hand and feeling absolutely useless on the other.

Afterward, I knew I had witnessed the supernatural love and power, albeit gentle power, that Almighty God brought to one believer through another. I realized there was something major missing in my personal walk with Jesus, and my ability to minister to others. That fueled the start of my journey to seek what God would make available for me.

Part of my journey included writing **CEASED?** which is not a book limited to a theological debate such as we see on Calvinism vs Arminianism. While **CEASED?** provides a very thorough biblical review as to why the 9 Holy Spirit gifts (prophecy, tongues etc.) and Baptism of the Holy Spirit remain valid today, my primary hope is that **CEASED?** will lead to many more amazing blessings from this Baptism and these 9 gifts in the lives of believers and non-believers alike.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 2:5 so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.*

Mountain Top

I love the way the movie 'Mountain Top' introduces the issue of how thoughts can hinder us. Sam Miller is in prison where he is met by a pastor/lawyer named Mike Andrews. Sam tells Mike that Papa God told him Mike and Sam are there to help each other. Mike retorts. "Help each other? You're the one in jail." Sam says "There's all kinds of jails. The worst is the prison of wrong thoughts. I was locked up there for many years until I found the key and opened the door."

My hope is **CEASED?** will open a few of the prison doors that may be holding some readers captive.

Acknowledgments and Thanks

MANY people have helped my wife Lori and I in our Christian walk. Lori's mother, Joy, loved Jesus and God's Word with such passion. Lori remembers coming home many a late evening to see her mom fast asleep on her bed, her Bible laying open on her chest.

My Mom has lived a life filled with love, devotion, integrity and hard work. Mom went to church all her life, but didn't have a personal relationship with Jesus until her mid 80's. Now that she knows Jesus, it's even more wonderful to be in her presence. Thank you, Mom, for being such an incredible mother, supporter and friend.

Glenda Kemp is a great friend who encouraged me to attend a course at her church on dysfunctional behavior. That was one of many acts of kindness and wisdom from Glenda which led to me finally finding Christ. When in my darkest of days in Calgary, Glenda was one of the few people there for me. Thank you. I won't forget your kindness.

I met Cliff Holloway after I moved from Calgary to Abbotsford, and within days of being born again. I was in a terrible state. Cliff helped me immensely, became a valued friend and later that year, married Lori and I. Cliff prayed with me when Jesus Baptized me in the Holy Spirit, an event that dramatically changed my life. Thanks for everything Cliff. You still owe me a day of fishing though.

John and Moira Hill mentored Lori and I since our early days of marriage. Thank you both!

Teachings of believers who are now with Jesus - Billy Graham, Keith Green, Dave Hunt, T. L. Osborn, Derek Prince, David Wilkerson, Henry Wright, and Chuck Smith - blessed Lori and I immensely. We look forward to meeting them one day. Many other teachers have blessed us as well. We have learned from some who believe that gifts such as prophecy and tongues ceased with the early church. We have also learned from some who believe they continue to this day. Thanks to these different teachings, our understanding on many issues has increased, and sometimes changes, quite substantially. Thanks to all of you who are teachers of God's Word and who keep pressing in to learn and share more truths in God's amazing gift to us.

Of all my teachers of God's Word and how to walk out a Christian life, Lori has been number 1 - by far. It's not because Lori has more theological knowledge than others. Not at all. There is no question that her knowledge of God's Word is certainly part of her blessing to me, but her primary influence has been related to her unrelenting hunger to i) learn more of the truths in God's Word which led both of us to seek teachings of many quality teachers, and ii) to walk ever closer with Father God, Jesus and Holy Spirit. Thanks Babe, for everything, including all your edits and suggestions for **CEASED?**.

Introduction

Apologies in Advance

I seek to help the Body of Christ, not to condemn or belittle. If anything in **CEASED?** offends you, I apologize in advance. After all, apologizing is something we Canadians apparently do quite well.

How CEASED? Came to Be

In early 2011, a few months after I was born again, I was Baptized in the Holy Spirit. As I entered our home late that night, Lori looked at me and asked “*What happened to you?*”. She saw God’s presence all over me. The next day, it was evident that I was a changed person. I had a new, burning passion to share Jesus wherever I went. My biggest problem was I didn’t know how to share Him. My Baptism in the Holy Spirit changed me dramatically, and marked the beginning of my researching, making notes, and routinely sharing on Baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Over the years, I’ve had several encounters with believers, both Charismatic/Pentecostal and not, who misunderstood key parts of what this incredible Baptism is, and is not. This knowledge gap and the fact that many Christians were missing out on the associated blessings weighed heavily on me. More recently, I started researching the Cessationist vs Continuationist debate and was jolted. I was certainly bothered by the fact there was disagreement, but I was bothered even more by the ungodly behavior that I too often saw and heard. It appears the Pharisee mindset is still alive and well. I wonder what Miriam would say to those strongly criticizing and condemning other servants of God today.

- ❑ *Numbers 12:1 Then **Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses** because of the Cushite woman whom he had married (for he had married a Cushite woman); ... 4 Suddenly the Lord said to Moses and Aaron and to Miriam, “You three come out to the tent of meeting.” So the three of them came out. 5 **Then the Lord came down in a pillar of cloud and stood at the doorway of the tent, and He called Aaron and Miriam.** ... 8 With him I speak mouth to mouth, Even openly, and not in dark sayings, And he beholds the form of the Lord. **Why then were you not afraid To speak against My servant, against Moses?**” 9 So the anger of the Lord burned against them and He departed. 10 But when the cloud had withdrawn from over the tent, behold, **Miriam was leprous, as white as snow** ...*

The more I researched the Cessationist vs Continuationist argument, the more frustrated I became. In April 2019, I decided to write a book. **CEASED?** came to be. **CEASED?** started with 2 primary goals in mind.

1. Provide information on the ‘with’ [para], ‘in’ [en] and ‘upon’ [epi] Holy Spirit experiences, and how they relate to the Holy Spirit gifts in 1 Corinthians 12.
2. Provide extensive and conclusive evidence showing why the i) 9 Holy Spirit gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 and ii) the Baptism of the Holy Spirit have not ceased, but still apply today.

As I researched and wrote, **CEASED?** expanded to include 4 other goals.

3. Provide information related to spiritual gifts, especially tongues.
4. Provide information for new believers on some of the basics of Christianity including how 4 baptisms and the 3 Holy Spirit experiences - 'with' [para], 'in' [en] and 'upon' [epi] - relate to each other, and their connection to the issue of salvation, and to our spirit, soul and body.
5. Provide personal thoughts on a few parts of our Christian walk including binding and loosing, spiritual warfare, authority and the prosperity / poverty / abundance gospels.
6. Provide insight into key issues where Protestants and Catholics have different beliefs, and whether or not it's prudent to evangelize and worship together.

To help achieve these goals, I wanted to create a study/reference guide that would serve as a comprehensive reference resource, facilitate personal and group study, and enhance communications. In doing so, I hope **CEASED?** will not only lead to more believers experiencing the blessings of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and some of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts, but also help reduce the long-standing division between Cessationists and Continuationists.

Protestants and Roman Catholics

There seems to be a growing intermixing of Protestants and Catholics sharing the stage, working together, and evangelizing together, especially in Charismatic circles. Various sources show there are more than 100 million Charismatic Catholics - Catholics who have been Baptized in the Holy Spirit and operate to some extent in the 9 Holy Spirit gifts (tongues, prophecy, healing etc). There are varying voices on this inter-mixing ranging from strong support to extreme disdain. In addition, Protestant Cessationists routinely chastise Protestant Charismatics for not speaking 'truth' to Catholic Charismatics about 'false' teachings in the Catholic church. To address this concern, ~1/3 of **CEASED?** is spent addressing some of the key areas of disagreement to see if the claims of 'false' teaching have merit, and if so, how important are the gaps. I believe there are born again believers in Protestant and Catholic churches. I also believe - unfortunately - that there are non-believers in both Protestant and Catholic churches including many leaders. As a result, **CEASED?** looks at the issues from the following perspective:

First, how significant are the differences in key beliefs between Protestants and Roman Catholics, both Charismatic and non-Charismatic? And second, should these differences prevent individuals of these denominations from worshipping and evangelizing alongside each other, even in situations where both appear to have been Baptized in the Holy Spirit and operate in one or more of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts?

Focus on the Bible. Not Behaviors

The Cessationist vs Continuationist debate has many tentacles. I will briefly speak to some behavioral issues in Chapter 19, but human behavior is often not a

reliable barometer of what the Bible teaches. As a result, my primary focus is on what the Bible says about the 9 Holy Spirit gifts and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, not on the misbehaviors that have occurred before or are taking place today.

Please know my lack of comments on inappropriate behaviors and teachings is not evidence that I endorse them. I find many comments of some Charismatic leaders/teachers to be at the top of the cringe-worthy scale. Discussions that suggest in any way we are a small god, for instance, are horrific in my view. At a minimum, they can cause confusion, and at worst, can lead to false teachings such as that held by Mormons who believe they can become true Gods. The same holds true for teachings that state God gives us all our heart's desires if we have enough faith, or financially support this ministry or that person. These issues are of grave concern, but I don't believe it is my place to speak out on these issues. I fall short in many, many areas myself, and I believe my role at this time is to pray for these individuals and those who hear their teachings and messages. As a result, I comment little on these topics.

Why CEASED? Covers Many Basic Issues

The 9 Holy Spirit gifts referred to in 1 Corinthians 12 are associated with the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. To properly understand the Baptism in the Holy Spirit in the context of the Christian life requires an understanding of the 4 baptisms applicable to believers today. These baptisms in turn are linked to salvation which in turn is linked to our 3 parts - spirit, soul and body. Accordingly, I felt led to go back to some basics starting in Chapter 3 to give new believers enough background information to enable them to make informed decisions. For seasoned students of God's Word, much of Chapters 2 through 4 will be familiar and if this is you, extra strong coffee may be in order. No donuts though.

Biblical References

Unless otherwise indicated, all scriptures are taken from the NASB translation. I usually included the text of scriptures instead of just referencing the scriptures. I hope it saves time and facilitates reading. I almost always copied and pasted scriptures from www.biblegateway.com or www.biblestudytools.com. I often deleted part of scriptures that were not needed and indicate this with 3 dots . . .

Many Questions

A key goal of **CEASED?** is to stimulate thought and reflection, and to facilitate dialogue. Early in my business career, a senior executive told me a key to solving problems is not to begin by searching for the answer(s), but to search for the right question or questions. This gentleman was drafted by the Detroit Red Wings, and had huge, powerful hands. I never forgot that advice, either out of fear of those hands, or out of accidental wisdom on my part. In my own adult life, I have also found we humans often react more negatively and defensively to statements than we do to fair and reasonable questions. As a result, **CEASED?** includes many questions designed to stimulate thought, to challenge readers to understand why they believe what they do, and to help readers communicate by using question numbers as reference points.

Questions are indicated by the chapter number '1' followed by a colon ':' and then the question number '5' within that chapter. For example, consider the question:

1:5 Are we more committed to a) our current beliefs or b) to seeking the truths as revealed in God's Word?

When looking at the 1:5, the number 1 identifies the question as being in the 1st chapter. The number 5 represents the 5th question in Chapter 1.

Greek and Hebrew

I refer to several Greek Words in **CEASED?**. When I was first born again and started to read/study/meditate on God's Word, Lori kept suggesting I look at the underlying Greek and Hebrew. When she first did so, I looked at her as would a recently neutered dog who realizes it is back at the veterinary hospital where the deed was done a few days prior. My dark inner recesses went crazy thinking "*What are you trying to do to me woman?*". (Woman is a term of endearment between us; at this moment as I write this, I can't recall any of Lori's terms of endearment for me.) Once I started looking into the Greek and Hebrew a bit, I was surprised I had never heard a pastor use the pulpit to teach on the basics of doing so.

In **CEASED?**, looking at the underlying Greek and Hebrew words proved vital to my understanding of what the Bible says about some of the key issues at hand. Having said that, please know I'm not a Greek or Hebrew scholar. I have a layman's understanding of a few words - period. For any of you not accustomed to examining the Greek or Hebrew, there's no need to fret. I do so to a limited extent, and I try to lay out the relevant portions of definitions taken usually from Strong's Concordance and/or Thayer's Greek Definitions.

As an example, consider the Greek word 'en'. It is uniquely identified in Strong's as 'G1722'. The letter 'G' identifies 'en' as being a Greek word (letter 'H' denotes Hebrew words) while the 1722 uniquely identifies which Greek Word that it is. Thayer defines 'en' as '*1. in, by, with etc.*'. A Greek or Hebrew word can be standalone with no relationship to other words. Alternatively, it can be derived from or otherwise linked to one or more other Greek or Hebrew words. There can be also one or more definitions or applications for each Greek or Hebrew word which is one reason why translations can read quite differently in modern-day languages including English.

There are many tools for searching out the Greek and Hebrew. For **CEASED?** and in my day-to-day life, I primarily use the King James version on the MySword app on my Android, and the Interlinear Bible on website www.BibleStudyTools.com. I greatly appreciate the free access provided by these top-notch services.

Inserts, Bolding and Underlining

Scriptures are identified by using the square bullet symbol and *italicizing the words*. I often **bolded** and underlined words to draw attention to the most relevant part(s) of the verse relating to the issue being addressed. I sometimes inserted a number, Greek or Hebrew word within verses to help clarify matters.

- *1 Corinthians 3:16 Do you not know that you are **a temple of God** and that the **Spirit of God** dwells **in [en G1722] you?***

Charismatic/Pentecostal

When I use the word ‘*Charismatic*’ in **CEASED?**, I am referring to all believers who have been Baptized in the Holy Spirit, and in so doing have Holy Spirit coming ‘**upon**’ them. The word ‘*upon*’ is derived from the Greek word ‘*epi*’ [G1909]. **CEASED?** will systematically reveal why this ‘*upon*’ [epi] experience is a separate and distinct experience from the ‘*in*’ [en] [G1722] experience which occurs when we’re born again and Holy Spirit comes ‘*in*’ us.

As we shall see, it is Jesus who gives this Baptism of the Holy Spirit to believers which provides access to supernatural power to be more effective witnesses for Christ. This power of God manifests through believers in various ways including the 9 Holy Spirit gifts in 1 Corinthians 12. The English word ‘*gifts*’ is derived from the Greek word ‘*charisma*’ [G5486] which Thayer defines in part as ‘... 5. *Grace or gifts denoting extraordinary powers, distinguishing certain Christians and enabling them to serve the church of Christ, the reception of which is due to the power of divine grace operating on their souls by Holy Spirit*’. The word ‘*Charismatic*’ evolved from charisma and associated words. Roman Catholic Charismatics often use the word ‘*charisms*’ to refer to the 9 Holy Spirit gifts.

3 Points to Ponder Books

CEASED? is a long reference book which, upon Richard Birch’s recommendation, led to 3 smaller **POINTS TO PONDER** books after **CEASED?** was published.

- ❖ **POINTS TO PONDER FOR CHARISMATICS & PENTECOSTALS**
- ❖ **POINTS TO PONDER FOR CESSATIONISTS**
- ❖ **POINTS TO PONDER FOR ROMAN CATHOLICS**

A summary of the contents in each of these 3 books is in the following table.

Contents from CEASED?	POINTS TO PONDER FOR		
	CHARISMATICS & PENTECOSTALS	CESSATIONISTS	ROMAN CATHOLICS
Some Basics: 10 Chapters in CEASED?	10 Chapters Detailed	10 Chapters Summary	3+ Chapters Detailed
Cessationist evidence: 8 Chapters in CEASED?	8 Chapters Summary	8 Chapters Detailed	8 Chapters Summary
Catholic teachings: 5+ chapters in CEASED?	Nil	Nil	5+ Chapters Detailed
Tongues: 1 Chapter in CEASED?	1 Chapter Detailed	1 Chapter Detailed	Nil
Healing & Christian Walk: 2 Chapters in CEASED?	Nil	Nil	Nil

May **CEASED?** bless you as you read it, and may God especially bless you in your personal walk with Christ.

- 1 Corinthians 14:1 Pursue love, yet *desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.*

Mindset and Final Authority

INTRODUCTION

IF we're committed to our current beliefs, if our eyes, ears, and minds are closed, then we have stopped growing in Christ. If seeking the truth of God's Word is a desire of our heart, our reactions when we encounter new insights in the Bible that contradict any of our current beliefs will show how strong this desire actually is. Chapter 1 tests whether we are more loyal to our beliefs, or to the truths in the Bible.

Chapter 1 concludes with some insights as to why the Bible is not just a collection of writings but a supernatural book. **CEASED?** includes some of Ivan Panin's analysis on the numbers corresponding to each of the letters in the Greek and Hebrew words in scripture. He started his work in the 1890's, long before computers came into being. His findings were amazing.

MINDSETS AND ATTITUDES

Seasoned, intelligent theologians sometimes have radically different views on key parts of God's Word. God is not the author of confusion. As a result, when leading believers disagree so fervently, it's very peculiar to me. Some extreme Charismatics seem to give excessive weighting and priority to experience and/or the opinions of those they follow. But the same seems to hold true for many Cessationists who appear much more loyal to the teachings of say a John Calvin or an Ellen White than to a fresh, open-minded study of the Bible. Roman Catholics have been known to put church traditions and unique teachings above scripture. When our first loyalty is to our experience, our teachers, our church or our own rigid beliefs, then any conflicting teaching or information from the Bible cannot even be considered in our hearts and minds. We end up overlooking truths of God's Word so we can stay true to our beliefs as opposed to facing the reality we may be wrong, and missing out on the blessings that can flow from pursuing and living in God's truths.

Only you know where your heart is at - or maybe you don't know. Your reactions to some of the questions I'm about to ask may help you see your true heart. I simply ask you to be open to what the Bible says, be prepared to accept you may be wrong, and if so be willing to change your beliefs. All are key parts to renewing our minds.

- ❑ *Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind ...*

CEASED? 2ND EDITION

- 1:1 As a starter, consider the following list of potential sources of influence. What are the top 3 sources influencing you today? If you're unsure how to answer, consider some faith issues you recently thought about, and identify which influences most impacted your current thinking on those issues:
- i. teachings of your parents;
 - ii. teachings of pastor(s), priest(s), teacher(s);
 - iii. teachings and traditions of your denomination/church;
 - iv. stories/information about others you personally verified;
 - v. stories/information about others you have not personally verified;
 - vi. personal in-depth study of the Bible giving you personal revelation or which confirmed teachings of others; or
 - vii. other _____.
- 1:2 Of the sources influencing your view of Biblical matters, which one(s) would satan most want you NOT to have as your main influence?
- 1:3 Would it be surprising if the source(s) you identified in question 1:2 is/are the source(s) that should be serving as your main influence(s)?

Many believers say the Bible is their main influence, their ultimate authority. But is that truly the case? When a theological issue comes up, do we go to the Bible to get our answer, or do we go to what we already believe without questioning it, or to another person we know, or to someone on the internet? I did the latter for much of my early Christian walk. It seemed safe and was easy to do. Then I realized I was not getting the full story and truth on some issues, nor was I approaching the Word of God with a knife and fork ... I was content on being spoon-fed.

Many cults say their teachings are based on the Bible. And to varying degrees, they are. Deceit typically wraps itself in a great deal of truth. Individuals in cults are often very sincere people. Their problem is they are deceived, and while the cult leaders teach some or even much of what is true, the false portions are ultimately fatal when it comes to one's eternal destiny. Cult teachings include modifications to Biblical salvation, and the creation of rules and practices designed to keep the person first and foremost loyal to their organization. Teachings and practices are often based on fear and emotional blackmail. Heavy emphasis is also placed on the fact they are the only organization that has the truth. Membership and faithfulness to the church is a key requirement to be a *'true follower'* of their Christ.

We Christians are often quick to criticize, even mock, cults for their beliefs. Pointing out false teachings certainly has its place, but how we do so is important. We need to recognize these people, while deceived, sincerely believe what they believe. Shouldn't our hearts be first and foremost ones of compassion and love for them, and to pray for them to receive a revelation of the truth of Jesus and His Word?

Even within Christian churches, how many of our traditions and teachings aren't supportable by scripture? How many hang on a mighty fragile, theological thread?

What's your mindset?

If you believe the Bible is your final authority on matters of faith, let's see if that belief holds up.

1: Mindset and Authority

- 1:4 When you're facing **credible evidence** on an important issue that conflicts with your existing beliefs, and for which you have no scriptures or theological argument that refutes the evidence:
- i. Are you defensive and look to find almost any argument, even a feeble one, that can be used to negate this evidence?
 - ii. Do you shut down discussions or stop reading anything that conflicts with your views, or simply ignore the evidence? (and yes, there is much that we should immediately stop reading when it's clear it has no Biblical merit)
 - iii. Are you prone to stick with the teachings of a church, pastor, priest, or high-profile leader, as questioning their teachings is not right, not allowed, or something one should not dare think of doing?
 - iv. Are you prone to discrediting the person that brings conflicting evidence, even if the information presented has merit?
 - v. Do you use isolated incidents to make blanket judgments about those you disagree with? In other words, when you disagree with someone and especially if you publicly criticize them, do you do so after a thorough and objective review of their activities, beliefs, and teaching – or just a brief and biased review that only looked for incriminating information?
 - vi. If the evidence showed your belief on a significant faith issue could be in error, do you respond by wanting to find the truth out now, or do you let the information pass you by until a future date - such as when you die and come face to face with Jesus?

I suggest our responses to the above will reflect our answer to question 1:5.

- 1:5 Are we more committed to a) our current beliefs or b) to seeking the truths as revealed in God's Word?

QUESTIONS FOR CESSATIONISTS

The Cessationist camp believes the 9 Holy Spirit gifts found in 1 Corinthians 12 (and which are discussed in Chapter 2) ended with the original apostles or other groups of early believers in the first century AD. Consider the following.

- ❑ *Acts 1:15 At this time Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (**a gathering of about one hundred and twenty**) ...*
 - ❑ *Acts 2:1 When the day of Pentecost had come, they **were all together** in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. 4 And **they were all filled with the Holy Spirit** and **began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.***
- 1:6 The 'all' who were gathered in Acts 2:1 is typically viewed as being similar to the ~120 gathered in Acts 1:15. And given '... *all were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues* ...' in Acts 2:4, doesn't that suggest many more

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than the original 12 apostles were given these gifts of tongues and potentially other Holy Spirit gifts, right from the get-go? As in all of them who were there at Pentecost? If not, why not?

- 1:7 One key form of a prophecy involves God giving words to one person for themselves, or to speak to one or more other persons. A tongue and corresponding interpretation of tongues typically involves God giving words to one person and the interpretation of the tongue to a second person. In this way, God uses 2 people using 2 Holy Spirit gifts to deliver a message, not just one person. When there is a tongue and a corresponding interpretation of the tongue, would this constitute a form of divine revelation similar to a prophecy, word of knowledge, or word of wisdom? If not, why not?
- 1:8 Acts 2:11 reveals bystanders understand the tongues being spoken by the ~120. However, it was not a supernatural interpretation as the tongues were in their language. I cannot find the specifics of one supernatural interpretation of a tongue in God's Word. Does this mean God created the gift of interpretation of tongues, but then did not give the gift to any believer? Or does it indicate some of God's divine revelations are not in the Bible?
- ❑ *1 Corinthians 14:1 Pursue love, yet **desire earnestly spiritual gifts**, but **especially** that you may **prophesy** ... 5 Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and **greater is one who prophesies** than one who speaks in tongues, **unless he interprets**, so that the church may receive edifying.*

CEASED? provides more information on tongues in Chapter 21.

Prophecy is one of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts that Cessationists believed ended with the early church. Consensus seems to be that Paul wrote 1 Corinthians somewhere between 52 and 57AD, approximately 20-25 years after the cross. Further, as per Chapter 13, Paul wrote 1 Corinthians at a time when there were many hundreds of thousands of believers. Consider these verses written by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 11:4 Every **man** who has something on his head while **praying or prophesying** disgraces his head. 5 But every **woman** who has her head uncovered while **praying or prophesying** disgraces her head, for she is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved.*
- 1:9 Why did Paul instruct believers to be concerned about head coverings of Corinthian believers if prophesying wasn't available to the 'ordinary' believer at Corinth, or for that matter, any of the hundreds of thousands of believers living at that time? And as Paul wasn't advising the Corinthians to stop prophesying, but rather was helping them pray and prophesy properly, doesn't that suggest they were already prophesying, just not correctly?
- 1:10 If women were to wear head coverings when they prophesied, doesn't this mean that women were expected to prophesy? In addition, doesn't it open the door to the notion that many dozens, hundreds or even thousands of female believers living at that time could have been given the gift of prophecy, or at least were prophesying once in awhile? If not, why not?

1: Mindset and Authority

In addition, consider Romans 12.

- ❑ *Romans 12:6 However, since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to use them properly: **if prophecy**, in proportion to one's faith; 7 if **service**, in the act of serving; or the one who **teaches**, in the act of teaching; 8 or the one who **exhorts**, in the work of exhortation; the one who **gives**, with generosity; the one who is in **leadership**, with diligence; the one who shows **mercy**, with cheerfulness.*

1:11 Why would Paul write to the Romans in ~57 AD about their having gifts of prophecy if this and the other Holy Spirit gifts weren't available to them? And isn't it interesting - at least to some degree - that the first gift Paul mentioned was prophecy, the very same gift Paul encouraged believers to pursue in 1 Corinthians 14?

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 14:1 Pursue love, yet earnestly desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.*

Finally, let's consider Acts 21:9.

- ❑ *Acts 21:9 Now this man had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses.*

1:12 Translations vary with some saying the 4 women were prophetesses while others suggest they only prophesied a small amount and weren't real prophets. Either way, given these 4 women prophesied - regardless of whether or not they were prophetesses - mean each one of them gave at least one prophecy? And potentially many more? If not, why not?

1:13 In God's Word, I can't find details of a single prophecy given by God through these 4 women. On the basis that the specifics of the prophecies given through these 4 women aren't in the Bible, doesn't this again show the Bible does not contain all of God's divine revelation? If not, why not?

More information on Divine Revelation is provided in Chapter 18 of **CEASED?**.

QUESTIONS FOR CHARISMATICS & PENTECOSTALS

Many Charismatics and Pentecostals don't believe God puts any afflictions such as illnesses and diseases on people today. Consider the following Old Testament scriptures. And if inclined, read chapters 6-8 of Ezekiel, Amos, or Jeremiah some day.

- ❑ *Genesis 12:17 But the Lord **struck Pharaoh and his house with great plagues** because of Sarai, Abram's wife.*
- ❑ *Exodus 9:10 So they took soot from a kiln, ... and **it became boils breaking out with sores on man and beast.***
- ❑ *Exodus 15:26 And He said, "**if you** will give earnest heed to the voice of the Lord your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, **I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians;** for I, the Lord, am your healer."*
- ❑ *Numbers 12:9 So the anger of the Lord burned against them and He departed. 10 ... **Miriam was leprous, as white as snow** ...*
- ❑ *Isaiah 48:10 "Behold, I **have refined you**, but not as silver; I have tested you **in the furnace of affliction.***

CEASED? 2ND EDITION

God also hardened Pharaoh's heart.

- ❑ *Exodus 10:1 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh, for **I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants**, that I may perform these signs of Mine among them,*

1:14 When God hardened Pharaoh's heart, did God contribute to Pharaoh's sinning which in turn led to God putting afflictions on the Egyptians?

God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. God also has mercy on who He chooses to have mercy. God is God after all.

- ❑ *Hebrews 13:8 **Jesus Christ is the same** yesterday and today and forever.*
- ❑ *Amos 4:7 "Furthermore, I withheld the rain from ... Then I would send rain on one city and on another city I would not send rain ...*
- ❑ *Romans 9:18 ... **He has mercy on whom He desires**, and **He hardens whom He desires**.*

Given God does not change, and He put sicknesses, diseases and afflictions on people and hardened hearts in the Old Testament, is there any evidence in the New Testament that shows God continues to put sicknesses, diseases or other afflictions on people? Consider the following who were afflicted after the cross. Herod, Saul/Paul and Elymas were not believers. Ananias and Sapphira were believers.

- ❑ *Acts 12:21 On an appointed day Herod... began delivering an address to them. 22 The people kept crying out, "The voice of a god and not of a man!" 23 And immediately **an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give God the glory**, and **he was eaten by worms and died**.*
- ❑ *Acts 9:8 Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus. 9 **And he was three days without sight**, ...*
- ❑ *Acts 13:8 But **Elymas** the magician (for so his name is translated) was opposing them ... 11 Now, behold, the **hand of the Lord is upon you**, and **you will be blind and not see the sun for a time**." And immediately a mist and a darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking those who would lead him by the hand.*
- ❑ *Acts 5:1 ... **Ananias**, with his wife **Sapphira**, sold a piece of property, 2 and kept back some of the price for himself ... 5 And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and **breathed his last** ... 10 And immediately she fell at his feet and **breathed her last** ...*

1:15 God does not change. Accordingly, if God put afflictions on people both before and after the cross, doesn't that mean He may be afflicting some individuals today, both believers and unbelievers? If not, why not?

1:16 If you still don't believe God puts afflictions on people today, isn't there some wrath coming - something called judgment day?

- ❑ *1 Thessalonians 1:10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is **Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come**.*

1: Mindset and Authority

In the current COVID-19 crisis, Christians often cite Psalm 91 as a reason to believe that believers won't be harmed by the virus. Actual evidence of wonderful men and women of God getting sick would say this teaching has some holes. But in addition, consider the first verses of Psalm 91.

- *Psalm 91:1 He **who dwells** in the shelter of the Most High **Will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.** 2 I will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom I trust!"*

- 1:17 Doesn't this suggest there is a condition to enjoying such protection? That we need to be dwelling in God's shelter in order for God to be our refuge and fortress? Page 344 of **CEASED?** lists a few other times when God puts conditions on his blessings. As a result, is there more to the story?
- 1:18 On the other hand, many Christians believe God often uses sicknesses and diseases to teach a person something. If by chance that is the case, shouldn't we ask God what the lesson is instead of just being passive?

Furthermore, don't we live in a world where sickness and disease can arise from a variety of sources including lifestyle, diet, the environment, sins, or issues in our soul (fear, anxiety, anger etc.)? Don't our unhealthy choices lead to sickness and disease? And in such cases, shouldn't we change what we feed our body and soul in terms of what we eat, drink, watch, listen to, or think about? And what about genetic deterioration or from controversial sources such as demonic influences and generational curses?

And thus, when a person is not healed after prayer, is it wise/prudent to automatically *'blame it'* on God or claim God is teaching us some unspecified lesson without first seeking God and asking Him why healing isn't occurring?

CEASED? provides more information on healing in Chapter 22.

QUESTIONS FOR ROMAN CATHOLICS

The Cessationist vs Continuationist debate frequently mentions the 100+ million Charismatic Catholics. Some Protestant Cessationists criticize Protestant Continuationists for not showing Charismatic Catholics the 'errors' of Catholic teachings. While I initially had major reservations about commenting on the Protestant/Catholic divide in **CEASED?**, I eventually felt led to comment on at least a couple of key issues. As time passed, I found myself addressing more than a couple.

To begin, I don't think many Protestants are protesting against the Roman Catholic church today. That doesn't mean Protestants agree with Roman Catholics on the issues that led to the Reformation. It simply means the Roman Catholic church is viewed as one of many different organizations with their own unique Bible, traditions and teachings. Protestants agree with some Catholic teachings, but continue to disagree on several key points.

The perspective I took in **CEASED?** is to provide information allowing readers to decide for themselves whether or not Protestants and Roman Catholics should witness and evangelize alongside each other. To put the issue another way, would a

Protestant be comfortable encouraging a person seeking God to go to a Roman Catholic church, and would a Roman Catholic be comfortable encouraging someone to go to a Protestant church? If there are no major differences on key issues, no problem. But if there are key differences - that's another ballgame. Hopefully **CEASED?** will bring some insights for both Catholics and Protestants on some important topics that will help clarify what God has to say.

Now back to the core of Chapter 1 - our hearts and loyalty. Let me test Roman Catholic hearts if I may. Mary is given the title *'Mother of God'* by Catholics. One common rationale I've seen for this title is something like the following: *"Because Mary is the mother of Jesus, and since Jesus is God, Mary is therefore to be viewed as the Mother of God"*. Mary is also recognized by Catholics as a creation of God. Dr. Scott Hahn who I refer to in Chapter 25, calls Mary a magnificent creation.

When pondering the issue of whether or not Mary should be viewed as *Mother of God*, Holy Spirit reminded me of Matthew 22.

- ❑ *Matthew 22:41 Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question: 42 "What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?" They said to Him, "The son of David." 43 He said to them, "Then how does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying, 44 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Until I put Your enemies beneath Your feet'"? 45 **If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his son?"** 46 No one was able to answer Him a word, nor did anyone dare from that day on to ask Him another question.*

1:19 My related question is this. Mary is a creation of God. If God created Mary, how could Mary be the Mother of God? In other words, how can Mary be the Mother of the One who created her? And if she is truly the Mother of God and a child of God, is Mary her own *'grandmother'*?

Then consider Luke 1:30.

- ❑ *Luke 1:30 The angel said to her, "**Do not be afraid, Mary,** for you have found favor with God.*

1:20 If Mary was truly the Mother of God:

- i. why would Mary fear an angel of God; and
- ii. why didn't the angel acknowledge Mary's special status and use one of the many titles given to Mary by the Roman Catholic church today?

When I ask the above questions on Mary, please know I recognize Mary holds a special place in the hearts of many Romans Catholics. My intent is not to blindly attack. However, beliefs in our walks with Christ must be grounded in truth, and matters of faith must not be afraid of hard questions and detailed scrutiny. If our hearts aren't receptive to hard questions, isn't that an indication that our beliefs may not be true, or we're not confident they are true? Could it also indicate we may not be willing to admit when we're wrong, and if we don't look at information, we can somehow rationalize it's ok to stick with our beliefs? In courts of law, a defense of not knowing is often not a good alibi.

1: Mindset and Authority

OUR HEART AND MINDSET

If any readers are offended or emotionally upset by any of the above questions and do not find them to be fair and reasonable, I encourage you to determine what part of the questions is not fair or reasonable. Is it because the questions aren't fair, or is it because they present information that conflicts with your current belief system? If you're offended by other reasons, I again encourage you to determine the root reason why you're offended, and if the reason(s) are healthy ones.

In addition, what was your reaction to my questions and comments if they contradicted your beliefs? Did you react by wanting to explore the issue further, or to deny and look for ways to counteract the evidence presented? Our hearts are interesting, aren't they?

My Mindset Was Messed Up

In late 2017, my quiet but very smart and wise son Kyle, showed me I was more committed to my beliefs than to seeking the truth. I was shocked and humbled as I realized how prone I was to believe what I was told by 'those in the know' without taking reasonable steps to verify what I was told. I also realized my ability to learn and gain new insights was being blocked by a combination of unmerited trust in others, pride, arrogance, stubbornness, foolishness, and difficulty admitting I was wrong. I realized that for years, for decades, I had been prone to try to figure out how I could neutralize opposing arguments or facts to preserve my beliefs. My commitment to seeking the truth was half-hearted at best, and a major problem.

After those discussions, I started to take notice of how other people interacted with me and others. In the vast majority of cases, I realized I was not alone. Loyalty to one's beliefs almost always superseded a commitment to pursuing the truth.

Loyalty to Beliefs can be Fatal

I've spoken to many adults from a variety of countries and faiths including atheists, Catholics, Protestants, Hindus, Jehovah's Witnesses, Jews, Muslims, Mormons, and Sikhs. In virtually every case, their beliefs on matters of faith are not based on independent, personal search. They typically believe what their parents believe, not what they personally searched out. And the vast majority of the time, the thought of going against their beliefs is unthinkable as all too often it would lead to shunning and persecution.

There are many millions of believers in the Cessationist and Continuationist camps. There are many millions of believers in the Roman Catholic and Protestant camps. In both cases, one camp is wrong on certain issues or beliefs which means hundreds of millions of individuals must have it wrong. Teachers and leaders must ensure that Biblical truth is being taught, and if Biblical truth is effectively being blocked, that is an extremely unfortunate state to say the least. Some individuals cannot imagine questioning their beliefs as doing so, like many of my students, would lead to persecution from families, their church, and even their employer, especially if they are employed by the church. If this is you, I feel for you and pray that God guides you if you wish to truly pursue His truths.

Within the Body of Christ, loyalty to the teachings of a person or their denomination all too often takes top priority over seeking the truth. I suggest four

reasons are largely responsible for the differences in these various camps:

1. lack of independent study of God's Word;
2. not enough time alone with God nor being led by Holy Spirit;
3. the Bible is not the ultimate authority; and/or
4. loyalty to one's beliefs mixed with fear, pride, arrogance, spiritual laziness, and/or stubbornness. We believe what we have been told without asking Holy Spirit to reveal the truth to us, and without doing our own in-depth research and study of God's Word. And when we realize we might be wrong, we often choose not to go there. After all, who likes to admit we're wrong?

1:21 Loyalty can be a wonderful thing, but loyalty to a false belief can be costly, not just to ourselves but those we influence. Again, where is your loyalty?

THE BIBLE: WHERE IT TRULY SITS IN OUR HEARTS

Is all of the Bible really from God, and thus True

As mentioned, God does not want us to be blindly led by any person or organization. He wants us to question what we hear and read.

- ❑ *Acts 17:10 The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. 11 Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.*

A standard teaching in false religions such as Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses is that the Bible has been changed over time, and they have the only accurate translation. Some/many Christians are even unsure about the accuracy of the Bible. In terms of changes in the underlying Hebrew and Greek which is the key issue, the Dead Sea Scrolls and Codex Sinaiticus are historical documents that should lay those issues to rest. In addition, there is extensive evidence showing why today's Bible is true. Lee Strobel's book *'The Case for Christ'* greatly impacted me. And the movie on his journey which is available free on YouTube is a great watch. Other quality sources include writings and teachings by believers such as Gary Habermas.

In addition to some Christians questioning if the Bible is all true, other Christians selectively use some scriptures and disregard others so their view can be justified. This allows for all kinds of deviations. And if I have done that in **CEASED?**, I apologize. My intent is to provide evidence to reveal the truth, not promote a view.

Ivan Panin

Another facet related to those who question the infallibility of God's Word is that "...it was written by men just like so many other books". As a result, it is viewed as just 'another book'. However, a critical point being overlooked is that while men wrote the words, Holy Spirit inspired or guided them as to what words to write. One of the ways that helped me appreciate this fact was the work of Ivan Panin.

1: Mindset and Authority

In the 1890's while at Harvard, Mr. Panin began to study the mathematical structure associated with the Greek words in the New Testament and the Hebrew words in the Old Testament. Greek and Hebrew do not have separate symbols for numbers as we do in English. For Greek and Hebrew, letters are used to indicate a particular number. To illustrate, we could replace our numbers with letters where A = 1, B = 2, C = 3, D = 5, E = 10 etc. Roman Numerals are a modern-day example of using letters for numbers (I for 1, II for 2, III for 3, IV for 4, V for 5, X for 10, etc.). Mr. Panin replaced each letter in the Greek and Hebrew words in the Bible with its corresponding numerical value. To find the 'score' of a word, Mr. Panin simply added the numbers associated with the letters in the word. Mr. Panin looked for 'codes' which are formulas, patterns, scores, and/or relationships surrounding the numbers. To illustrate, consider Genesis 1:1.

□ *Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

In the NASB translation, Genesis 1:1 has 10 English words that are derived from 7 Hebrew words. Mr. Panin found the 7 Hebrew words in Genesis 1:1 had a total of 28 letters. In studying these 7 words and 28 letters, Mr. Panin discovered 30 separate 'codes' involving just the number 7. Eight of these codes are as follows:

- ❖ Total number of Hebrew words = 7;
- ❖ Total score of first and last letters of all 7 words = 1,393 ($7 * 199$);
- ❖ Total number of letters = 28 ($7 * 4$);
- ❖ Total letters in 3 key words: 'God', 'heaven' and 'earth' = 14 ($7 * 2$);
- ❖ Total letters in the four remaining words = 14 ($7 * 2$);
- ❖ Total letters in first 3 Hebrew words translated to English as 'In the beginning God created' = 14 ($7 * 2$); and
- ❖ Total letters in last 4 Hebrew words for 'the heavens and earth' = 14 ($7 * 2$).

Ok, that was a test to see if you read carefully. I only gave 7 codes. Mr. Panin's analysis is captured in ~40,000 pages. This 2nd edition of **CEASED?** is ~470 pages long. Mr. Panin's work, if stacked, would reach the height of ~90 copies of **CEASED?**, or ~7-8 feet high. And Mr. Panin did so long before today's computers and search engines. It's almost as if Holy Spirit was guiding him. Consider these excerpts from Mr. Panin's book, "*The Inspiration of the Scriptures Scientifically Demonstrated*".

"1. The first 17 verses of the New Testament contain the genealogy of the Christ. It consists of two main parts: Verses 1-11 cover the period from Abraham, the father of the chosen people, to the Captivity, when they ceased as an independent people. Verses 12-17 cover the period from the Captivity to the promised Deliverer, the Christ.

Let us examine the first part of this genealogy. Its vocabulary has 49 words, or 7×7 . This number is itself seven (Feature 1) sevens (Feature 2), and the sum of its factors is 2 sevens (Feature 3). Of these 49 words 28, or 4 sevens, begin with a vowel; and 21, or 3 sevens, begin with a consonant (Feature 4).

Again: these 49 words of the vocabulary have 266 letters, or $7 \times 2 \times 19$; this number is itself 38 sevens (Feature 5), and the sum of its factors is 28, or 4 sevens (Feature 6), while the sum of its figures is 14, or 2 sevens (Feature 7). Of these 266

CEASED? 2ND EDITION

letters, moreover, 140, or 20 sevens, are vowels, and 126, or 18 sevens, are consonants (Feature 8).

That is to say: Just as the number of words in the vocabulary is a multiple of seven, so is the number of its letters a multiple of seven; just as the sum of the factors of the number of the words is a multiple of seven, so is the sum of the factors of the number of their letters a multiple of seven. And just as the number of words is divided between vowel words and consonant words by seven, so is their number of letters divided between vowels and consonants by sevens.

Again: Of these 49 words 35, or 5 sevens, occur more than once in the passage; and 14, or 2 sevens, occur but once (Feature 9); seven occur in more than one form, and 42, or 6 sevens, occur in only one form (Feature 10). And among the parts of speech the 49 words are thus divided: 42, or 6 sevens, are nouns, seven are not nouns (Feature 11). Of the nouns 35, or 5 sevens, are Proper names, seven are common nouns (Feature 12). Of the Proper names 28 are male ancestors of the Christ, and seven are not (Feature 13)."

The mathematical complexity of the Bible is one more way by which God reveals His power and creative genius to us. The Bible is not just a collection of stories, a set of guidelines, or a how-to-live manual. It is the Word of God, and one we should revere much, much higher than all other books, traditions, teachings, articles, and videos . . . all of which are the opinions and interpretations of men or women.

- ❑ *2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;*

Many others have done work on this amazing aspect of God's work. I haven't researched this area much but if you're so inclined, I have no doubt you will find more of God's amazing mathematical genius in many areas beyond His Word.

One more thing. The validity of God, God's creation of this universe, and the Bible has much support from the world of science. The following are great resources.

Jay Seegert

Ken Ham

Creation Ministries International

Institute for Creation Research

Thestartingpointproject.com

Answersingenesis.org

Creation.com

icr.org

What's Above the Bible and Jesus in Our Lives

1:22 If we put church teachings or traditions above the Bible, are we putting these teachings and traditions above Jesus Himself, who is the Word of God?

- ❑ *John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

1:23 If we put any church teaching or traditions above the Bible, or have a belief system that contradicts the Word of God, aren't we playing a bit of poker with our life, and the lives of others whom we influence, by opening the door to what may be false teachings?

TAKEAWAYS FROM CEASED?

If you have any takeaways from **CEASED?**, I hope 5 of them will be:

1. a deep knowing that God loves you (and those you dislike/disagree with);
2. a desire to spend quiet time alone with God in your secret place where you listen much more than you speak, and bask in His presence and glory;
3. a decision to seek God's Kingdom first, to be led by Holy Spirit and enjoy communicating with God throughout each day;
4. a decision to make The Bible your ultimate authority on matters of faith; and
5. a desire to spend more time reading and meditating in God's Word.

God is Holy. He is to be revered and lifted on high in our hearts and minds. But we also need to always remember that God created us to have fellowship with Him.

- ❑ *1 John 1:3 what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and **indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.***

As I wrote **CEASED?**, God reminded me of these items on multiple occasions in my walk. If you haven't read the Bible very much, consider starting with the books of John, Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians to get a sense of His love for you, to see how amazing God is, and to experience the Bible's richness. You will be blessed.

- ❑ *Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

CLOSING POINTS TO PONDER

- 1:24 On contentious issues, is your process one of finding scriptures to support your view, or to seek the truth when all of scripture is considered?
- 1:25 What is your final authority: The Bible, the teachings of a person, church or denomination, traditions, or your personal Book of My Opinions, a new book of the Bible our wonderful waitress playfully introduced to Lori and I?

The very day Lori and I felt **CEASED?** was '*finished*' (is a book ever finished?), Holy Spirit gave a download to Lori about love. There is a widespread desire in the Body of Christ for another major move of Holy Spirit or, as some say, many new outpourings of Holy Spirit. There is also a widespread desire for unity within the Body of Christ. However, the foundation for the unity that Holy Spirit wants is true love. History has shown that a common denominator of the outpourings of the Holy Spirit was love. Proper theology is vital, but without love, our theology is mere religion. Without love, our theology has no more value than the knowledge of the leaders who caused Jesus to be mocked, ridiculed and crucified. As you read **CEASED?**, if I haven't shown true love and kindness, please forgive me. And may all of us seek greater depths, widths, lengths and heights of God's love for Him and for people. May God's love for all of humanity - and God's ability to love each person where they are at - be evident in all we say, do and think.

9 Holy Spirit Gifts

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 2 begins by reviewing the 9 Holy Spirit gifts that are the focus of the Cessationist vs Continuationist disagreement. **CEASED?** shows how the 9 Holy Spirit gifts were a key part of the Christian life at Corinth, and elsewhere. But as much as these 9 gifts are key, we should never forget there are many other gifts and blessings from God, the most important of which is the gift of salvation and relationship with God.

9 Holy Spirit Gifts

The 9 Holy Spirit gifts at the centre of **CEASED?** are as follows:

- ❑ 1 Corinthians 12:8 For to one is given the **word of wisdom** through the Spirit, and to another the **word of knowledge** according to the same Spirit;
- ❑ 9 to another **faith** by the same Spirit, and to another **gifts of healing** by the one Spirit,
- ❑ 10 and to another the effecting of **miracles**, and to another **prophecy**, and to another the **distinguishing of spirits**, to another various kinds of **tongues**, and to another the **interpretation of tongues**.

These 9 supernatural gifts are some of the tangible ways by which Holy Spirit works through believers. They are often organized into groups, such as the following:

<u>Mind/Revealing Gifts</u>	<u>Power/Doing Gifts</u>	<u>Speaking/Proclamation Gifts</u>
<i>Distinguishing of Spirits</i>	<i>Healings</i>	<i>Prophecy</i>
<i>Word of Knowledge</i>	<i>Faith</i>	<i>Tongues</i>
<i>Word of Wisdom</i>	<i>Miracles</i>	<i>Interpretation of Tongues</i>

An overly simplistic review of these gifts follows.

3 Mind/Revealing Gifts

The 3 revealing gifts reveal - or make known - information about a spirit, person, group, or situation that a person could not know unless God revealed it to him or her.

2: 9 Holy Spirit Gifts

- 1: Distinguishing of Spirits:** supernatural ability to discern if what is spoken or occurring is from i) Holy Spirit ii) a human spirit or iii) a demonic spirit or spirits.
- ❑ *Mark 9:25 When Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You **deaf and mute spirit**, I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again."*
- 2: Word of Knowledge:** revelation from Holy Spirit of past or present information regarding one or more persons or situations.
- ❑ *Acts 5:1 But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, 2 and kept back some of the price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, "**Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land? ...**"*
- 3: Word of Wisdom:** supernatural advice or insight from Holy Spirit, and - per the Old Testament - skills plus related knowledge and understanding.
- ❑ *Acts 15:22 **Then it seemed good** to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas - Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men ...*
 - ❑ *Exodus 31:2 "... Bezalel ... 3 And I have **filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all kinds of craftsmanship**, 4 to **create artistic designs** ... 5 and in the **cutting of stones** ... and in the **carving of wood**, so that he may work in all kinds of craftsmanship.*

3 Speaking/Proclamation Gifts

The 3 speaking/proclamation gifts help reveal God's intentions and plans.

- 4: Prophecy:** messages given by Holy Spirit to one or more people - revelations - regarding teachings in the Bible and/or events here on earth in the immediate or more distant future. Prophecies come in various forms including words, visions, pictures, and dreams. Prophecies often encourage, uplift and comfort. Some believers think prophecies can give direction; other believers don't. The words prophecy and prophecies are nouns, while prophesy and prophesied are verbs.
- ❑ *1 Corinthians 14:3 But **one who prophesies** speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation.*

While many prophecies are great to hear, some bring less than uplifting news.

- ❑ *Acts 5:9 Then Peter said to her, "Why is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, **and they will carry you out as well.**" 10 And immediately she fell at his feet and breathed her last ...*
- ❑ *Acts 21:10 ... a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 11 And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, "This is what the Holy Spirit says: **'In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'**"*

CEASED? 2ND EDITION

Whereas words of knowledge deal with information related to the past or present, prophecy is geared to the immediate or distant future.

5: Tongues: words given by Holy Spirit to a person for them to speak or sing in a language they do not understand.

- ❑ *Acts 2:4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with **other tongues**, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.*

Tongues spoken at Pentecost were earthly languages unknown by the person speaking, but known by others in attendance. Tongues were a sign to unbelievers.

- ❑ *Acts 2:5 Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. 6 And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was **hearing them speak in his own language**. 7 They were amazed and astonished, saying, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 **And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born?***

Chapter 21 of **CEASED?** provides much more information on tongues.

6: Interpretation of Tongues: supernatural revelation from Holy Spirit that explains what the tongue that was spoken, but not understood, actually means.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 14:13 Therefore let one who speaks in a tongue pray that **he may interpret**.*

3 Power/Doing Gifts

The 3 power gifts demonstrate God's power and love for humanity.

7: Healings: supernatural healings of physical bodies and souls by Holy Spirit.

- ❑ *Acts 3:2 And a man who had been lame from his mother's womb was being carried along ... 6 But Peter said, "I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: **In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene - walk!**" 7 And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened*

8: Faith: extraordinary faith and trust in God as provided by Holy Spirit.

- ❑ *Mark 2:3 And they came, bringing to Him a paralytic, carried by four men. 4 Being unable to get to Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him; and when they had dug an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic was lying. 5 **And Jesus seeing their faith** said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."*
- ❑ *Mark 10:49 And Jesus stopped and said, "Call him here." So they called the blind man ... 51 And answering him, Jesus said, "What do you want Me to do for you?" And the blind man said to Him, "Rabboni, I want to regain my sight!" 52 And Jesus said to him, "**Go; your faith has made you well.**" Immediately he regained his sight and began following Him on the road.*

2: 9 Holy Spirit Gifts

9: **Miracles:** events or outcomes that aren't explainable by natural causes. They could only occur by the Hand of God.

- ❑ *Joshua 4:23 For the Lord your **God dried up the waters of the Jordan** before you until you had crossed, **just as the Lord your God had done to the Red Sea**, which He dried up before us until we had crossed;*

The Bible is filled with miracles. Creation. Feeding thousands with 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish. People raised from the dead. A donkey speaking. Angels freeing people from prison. God's power is diverse, amazing, and beyond human comprehension, at least my comprehension.

The Cessationist vs Continuationist Disagreement

The basic disagreement on the above 9 Holy Spirit gifts has the Cessationist camp believing the 9 gifts ended with the early church, and in many cases, with the deaths of the original 12 apostles. The Continuationist camp believes these gifts are still in operation today and available to the Body of Christ at large. To clarify a bit further, the Cessationist camp doesn't believe that all miracles have ceased, and that some miracles such as healing continue, but are rare. The Cessationist camp is clear in its position, however, that gifts such as tongues, interpretation of tongues and prophecy are totally non-existent today. If anyone is involved in such activities, the Cessationist camp believes these individuals are not being influenced by God, but either one's flesh or the demonic realm. The remaining gifts - discernment of spirits, miracles, words of knowledge, faith, and wisdom - are mentioned relatively infrequently in Cessationist/Continuationist debates and commentaries.

Many Topics in 1 Corinthians

To start, let's put the first letter to the Corinthians in perspective. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians in response to information received from believers at Corinth.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 1:11 For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by **Chloe's people**, that there are quarrels among you.*
- ❑ *1 Corinthians 16:17 I rejoice over the coming of **Stephanas** and **Fortunatus** and **Achaicus**, because they have supplied what was lacking on your part.*

The 9 Holy Spirit gifts are summarized in Chapter 12 of 1 Corinthians. Many topics are addressed before Chapter 12, some of which are as follows:

- ❖ Chapter 1: Divisions within the church
- ❖ Chapter 2: Wisdom and power from the Spirit of God
- ❖ Chapter 3: Jesus is the foundation, our body is the temple of Holy Spirit
- ❖ Chapter 4: Being stewards, servants, fools for Christ
- ❖ Chapter 5: Sexual immorality
- ❖ Chapter 6: Disagreements between believers, all glory to God
- ❖ Chapter 7: Marriage, unmarried, widows
- ❖ Chapter 8: Idols, conscience
- ❖ Chapter 9: Self-denial
- ❖ Chapter 10: Old Testament examples, Glory to God
- ❖ Chapter 11: Head coverings, Lord's Supper, communion

Many other topics are also covered after Chapter 12.

- ❖ Chapter 13: Love
- ❖ Chapter 14: Prophecy, tongues, interpretation of tongues
- ❖ Chapter 15: Risen Christ
- ❖ Chapter 16: Collection of monies for other saints

1 Corinthians 12 - Putting 9 Gifts in Perspective

Corinth - a City of Gods & Idols

When Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, Corinth was a city in Greece known for its many gods, goddesses, and idols. When Paul visited Athens, he was grieved by what he saw.

- ❑ *Acts 17:16 Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was observing the city full of idols.*

Paul begins 1 Corinthians 12 by referring to spiritual gifts and that the Corinthian believers need to understand what is going on.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 12:1 Now concerning **spiritual gifts**, brethren, **I do not want you to be unaware.***

To help put issues into context, Paul then reminds the Corinthian believers of the pagan idols and influences they had previously been under.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 12:2 You know that **when you were pagans**, you **were led astray to the mute idols**, however you were led.*

Paul also taught they can identify believers by asking "Can you say Jesus is Lord?".

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 12:3 Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the **Spirit of God** says, "**Jesus is accursed**"; and **no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.***

We Worship the One and Only True God

With the backdrop of having worshipped many false gods and goddesses before they came to Christ, Paul begins 'making the Corinthian believers aware' by explaining there is not only one true God, but One God who can manifest or make His presence known in a wide variety of ways.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 12:4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the **same Spirit**.*
- ❑ *5 And there are varieties of ministries, and the **same Lord**.*
- ❑ *6 There are varieties of effects, but the **same God** ...*
- ❑ *7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.*
- ❑ *8 word of wisdom ... word of knowledge ... **same Spirit**;*
- ❑ *9 to another faith by the **same Spirit**, and to another gifts of healing by the **one Spirit**.*
- ❑ *10 and ... miracles ... prophecy ... distinguishing of spirits ... tongues ... interpretation of tongues. 11 But **one and the same Spirit** works all these things, **distributing to each one individually just as He wills.***

2: 9 Holy Spirit Gifts

- 2:1 From verses 4 through 11, is it reasonable to suggest the primary emphasis is:
- i. on the fact there is one true God, not many gods, and not
 - ii. the 9 Holy Spirit gifts in verses 8 through 10? If not, why not?

Verses 12 - 27 emphasize the Body of Christ is a single body using terms such as 'body is one', 'one body', 'the body', 'whole body' or 'Christ's body'. 'One Spirit' is also mentioned twice more.

- 1 Corinthians 12:12 For even **as the body is one** and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are **one body**, so also is Christ.
 - 13 For by **one Spirit** we were all baptized into **one body**, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of **one Spirit**.
 - 14 For **the body** is not one member, but many.
 - 15 If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of **the body**," it is not for this reason any the less a part of **the body**.
 - 16 And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of **the body**.
 - 17 If the **whole body** were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?
 - 18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in **the body**, just as He desired.
 - 19 If they were all one member, where would **the body** be?
 - 20 But now there are many members, but **one body**.
 - 21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."
 - 22 On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of **the body** which seem to be weaker are necessary;
 - 23 and those members of **the body** which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable,
 - 24 whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed **the body**, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked,
 - 25 so that there may be no division in **the body**, but that the members may have the same care for one another.
 - 26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.
 - 27 Now you are **Christ's body**, and individually members of it.
- 2:2 Is it fair to say the emphasis in verses 12 through 27 is to:
- i. clarify there is one Body of Christ, that all believers are part of this body, and that believers are to work together and to care for each other; and
 - ii. that all believers are part of God's family - the Body of Christ - which is broader than a particular legal organization?

Gifts from Father God, Jesus and Holy Spirit

Let's return to verses 4 through 6.

- 1 Corinthians 12:4 Now there are varieties of **gifts**, but the same Spirit.
- 5 And there are varieties of **ministries**, and the same Lord.
- 6 There are varieties of **effects**, but the same God who works all things in all persons.

The word 'gifts' in verse 4 is commonly viewed as referring to the 9 Holy Spirit gifts in verses 1 Corinthians 12, verses 8 through 10. Because the reference is made to Holy Spirit, and because Holy Spirit reveals Himself and the Godhead through such gifts, these 9 gifts are also frequently labeled as 'Holy Spirit gifts', 'gifts of the Holy Spirit', or 'manifestations of the Spirit'. The 'ministries' in verse 5 are commonly viewed as relating to Ephesians 4:11-13 and often labeled 'Ascension Gifts from Jesus', or simply 'Jesus's gifts'. The 'effects' in verse 6 are commonly viewed as relating to the gifts in Romans 12:6-8. They are often labeled as 'Motivational Gifts' or 'Father God's gifts'.

- Ephesians 4:11 And He gave some as **apostles**, and some as **prophets**, and some as **evangelists**, and some as **pastors** and **teachers**,
- Romans 12:6 Since we have **gifts** that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if **prophecy**, according to the proportion of his faith; 7 if **service**, in his serving; or he who **teaches**, in his teaching; 8 or he who **exhorts**, in his exhortation; he who **gives**, with liberality; he who **leads**, with diligence; he who shows **mercy**, with cheerfulness.

The 3 groups of gifts are summarized on the next page. Each gift is coded. Father God's gifts are preceded by an 'F:', Jesus's gifts by a 'J:' and Holy Spirit's gifts by an 'HS:'. Any gifts of one list that are the same or somewhat related to a gift in another list are followed by the corresponding code. For example, the 1st gift from Father God 'F:1 Prophecy' is followed by (J:2) which stands for the 2nd gift from Jesus and then by (HS:6) which stands for the 6th Holy Spirit gift.

Prophecy is a gift from Father God and Holy Spirit. The office or position of a prophet is a gift from Jesus. There is much written elsewhere on prophecy, prophetic gifts and prophets by individuals far more knowledgeable than myself, and thus I don't comment very much on these issues. At this time, let me simply ask:

- 2:3 Per 1 Corinthians 14:31, doesn't it appear all believers can hear from God and could potentially receive a prophecy from God to be shared with others? If not, why not?
- 1 Corinthians 14:31 For **you can all prophecy** one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted;

2: 9 Holy Spirit Gifts

Father God's Gifts

(Romans 12:6-8)

F:1 Prophecy (J:2 HS:6)

F:2 Service

F:3 Teaches (J:5)

F:4 Exhorts

F:5 Gives

F:6 Leads

F:7 Mercy

Jesus's Gifts

(Ephesians 4:11)

J:1 Apostle

J:2 Prophet (F:1 HS:6)

J:3 Evangelist

J:4 Pastor

J:5 Teacher (F:3)

Holy Spirit's Gifts

(1 Corinthians 12:8-10)

HS:1 Word of Wisdom

HS:2 Word of Knowledge

HS:3 Faith

HS:4 Healing

HS:5 Miracles

HS:6 Prophecy (F:1 J:2)

HS:7 Distinguishing Spirits

HS:8 Tongues

HS:9 Interpretation of Tongues

Three more scriptures refer to some of these same gifts, and identify 3 other gifts (O:).

1 Corinthians 12:28

Apostle (J:1)

Prophet (F:1 J:2 HS:6)

Teacher (F:3 J:5)

Miracles (HS:5)

Healings (HS:4)

O:1 Helps

O:2 Administrations

Tongues (HS:8)

1 Peter 4:9-10

O:3 Hospitality

Service (F:2)

Romans 12:13

Hospitality (O:3)

- ❑ 1 Corinthians 12:28 And God has appointed in the church, first **apostles**, second **prophets**, third **teachers**, the **miracles**, then **gifts of healings, helps, administrations**, various **kinds of tongues**.
- ❑ 1 Peter 4:9 Be **hospitable** to one another without complaint. 10 As each one has received a special gift, employ it in **serving one another** as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.
- ❑ Romans 12:13 contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing **hospitality**.

God's Word also mentions other gifts such as celibacy and poverty, discussions on which can melt an igloo. **CEASED?** does not address these items.

Reasons for Gifts

Ephesians 4 identifies two of the reasons for these functions/gifts, namely 1) to equip the saints and 2) to build up the Body of Christ.

- ❑ Ephesians 4:11 And He gave some as **apostles**, and some as **prophets**, and some as **evangelists**, and some as **pastors** and **teachers**, 12 **for the equipping of the saints** for the work of service, to the **building up of the body of Christ**:

At first glance, it might appear Father God's gift of teaching (F:3) duplicates Jesus's gift of teaching (J:5). However, there is perhaps a bit more to the story. Each

and every believer is called to teach, if only to our children, to the person next door or someone else we know well. However, not all of us are called to be Bible teachers to the Body of Christ at large. In the same way, some people may have prophetic words for individuals or groups, but are not called by God to be a prophet which has a much broader scope. King Saul, for instance, prophesied but was not called a prophet though some wondered if he was.

- *1 Samuel 19:24 He [i.e. King Saul] also stripped off his clothes, and he too **prophesied before Samuel** and lay down naked all that day and all that night. Therefore they say, "**Is Saul also among the prophets?**"*

Gift vs Gifts of the Holy Spirit

The Bible talks of the **Gift** of the Holy Spirit (the singular) and the **Gifts** of the Holy Spirit (the plural). To clarify, when a person is Baptized with the Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit comes upon [epi] the person to give the person access to the supernatural power of God to be witnesses for God. This is the Gift of the Holy Spirit which is covered in more detail in Chapters 7 through 12. The **Gifts** of the Holy Spirit - the plural gifts - are generally thought to be the 9 Holy Spirit gifts referenced above.

Gifts for Individual or Collective Benefit

In 1 Corinthians 12, verse 7 refers to the 9 Holy Spirit gifts as being manifestations i.e., different ways by which Holy Spirit's presence is made apparent.

- *1 Corinthians 12:7 But to **each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.** 8 For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another **gifts of healing** by the one Spirit, 10 and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.*

The Greek word underlying the English word 'manifestation' is 'phanerosis' [G5321]. Strong's defines it as 'manifestation'. One of Merriam Webster's definitions of manifestations is in part 'public demonstration of power and purpose.' In other words, Holy Spirit manifests Himself; He makes His presence known. 1 Corinthians 12:7 also states the manifestations are for the common good.

In the scriptures above that list the 9 Holy Spirit gifts, I find it interesting that the word 'gifts' is only used in reference to 'healing'. Moreover, the word is 'gifts' which is in the plural, not the singular.

- 2:4 In terms of the 9 gifts, who actually gets the gift? If a person gets instantly healed through us, do we have the gift of healing, or did the healed person receive the gift of healing, and we were simply the delivery vehicle? In other words, are believers:
 - i. given some supernatural power within themselves apart from God that enables us to heal others;
 - ii. to be used by God to 'deliver' the blessings to others by having His supernatural power flow through us for the benefit of others;

2: 9 Holy Spirit Gifts

- iii. to sometimes receive gifts of healing and other gifts for one's own benefit; or
- iv. both ii. and iii.?

Some believers teach that Holy Spirit gives specific giftings only to certain people. Others believe Holy Spirit can give any gift to any person as the situation warrants; we are simply to seek Holy Spirit and follow His leading. In other words, we don't have a special gifting; we are just to deliver the gifts. And while we may seem to primarily deliver some gifts and never deliver other gifts, or we seem better able to deliver some gifts than other believers, that doesn't mean we have a special gifting. Still other believers teach that all the gifts are available to every believer. What we receive depends on what is needed at the time. Three comments:

1. First, all glory needs to be to God.
2. Second, how can we go wrong by asking Holy Spirit's guidance on what to do in a given situation?
3. Third, if we do receive a special gifting such as prophecy or are used by God for miraculous healings, we need to be careful not to let it go to our head. We're all part of the Body of Christ. And while we may have a unique involvement in areas such as prophecy or healing, we need to keep reminding ourselves we are just one extremely minor part of the Body of Christ who can only do such things because of God. And to clarify, God does the actual healing.

CEASED? is not preoccupied as to whether or not the 9 Holy Spirit gifts are gifts for the person delivering, gifts for the person receiving, or both. Moreover, **CEASED?** refers to these 9 gifts in various ways including Holy Spirit gifts/manifestations, 9 Holy Spirit gifts, Holy Spirit's gifts or 9 gifts.

For Corinthians only, or all Believers

If we return to the end of 1 Corinthians 12, we find a reference to a combination of gifts from Holy Spirit (healing, tongues), Jesus (apostle, prophet, teacher), and Father God (teacher).

- ❑ 1 Corinthians 12:28 And God has appointed in the church, first **apostles** (J:1), second **prophets** (J:2), third **teachers** (J:5), then **miracles** (HS:5), then **gifts of healings** (HS:4), **helps, administrations**, various **kinds of tongues** (HS:8).

The Greek word underlying '*helps*' is '*antilepsis*' [G484] which Strong's defines as '*help*'. Helps could include Father God's gifts such as service (F:2), exhorting (F:4) and giving (F:5).

The Greek word underlying '*administrations*' is '*kubernesis*' [G2941] which Strong's defines in part as '*directorship or government*'. In other words, God and His Word will provide direction in terms of managing the Body of Christ including groups gathered in a particular church body.

- 2:5 God has given a wide variety of means to help the Body of Christ function. As we read 1 Corinthians, a key issue related to the Cessationist vs

CEASED? 2ND EDITION

Continuationist debate is deciding whether we believe this letter is written:

- i. only to believers in Corinth;
- ii. only to early believers established by the original apostles; or
- iii. to all believers including believers today.

What's your view?

- 2:6 As we read 1 Corinthians, is there anything to suggest that the 9 Holy Spirit gifts/manifestations will cease with the early church?
- 2:7 Cessationists typically agree that there is no specific verse in the Bible that says these 9 Holy Spirit gifts/manifestations from the Holy Spirit have ceased. If we say all the issues in 1 Corinthians including Jesus's and Father God's gifts are relevant today, but the 9 Holy Spirit gifts are not, are we being selective on what is and what is not relevant?
- 2:8 For example, one of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts is prophecy. Prophecy is also one of Father God's gifts in Romans 12:6. If the gift of prophecy is not available today but everything else in Romans 12:6 (serving, teaching, exhorting, giving, leading, mercy) is available, do we have a major inconsistency? Are we selecting only what fits our belief system, and then rejecting whatever does not fit our belief system?

In verses 29 and 30, Paul refers to gifts again, but provides a different combination with 3 of Jesus's gifts (apostle, prophet, teacher), 4 Holy Spirit gifts (miracles, healings, tongues and interpretation of tongues), and teaching again as the sole gift from Father God. Paul also makes it clear that not everybody will be everything or do everything.

- 1 Corinthians 12:29 All are not **apostles** (J:1), are they? All are not **prophets** (J:2), are they? All are not **teachers** (F:3, J:5), are they? All are not **workers of miracles** (HS:5), are they? 30 All do not have **gifts of healings** (HS:4), do they? All do not speak with **tongues** (HS:8), do they? All **do not interpret** (HS:9), do they?
- 2:9 Does 1 Corinthians 12:29 suggest that, in God's kingdom, God has disciples take on one or more roles, equips us with various tools but doesn't enable any single disciple to get everything? And in so doing, doesn't that require or at least tend to motivate God's children to work together?

Verse 31 ends 1 Corinthians 12 by encouraging believers to seek the greater gifts and an even better way will be shown. The better way - is love.

- 1 Corinthians 12:31 *But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way.*
- 1 Corinthians 14:1 *Pursue love, yet earnestly desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.*
- 2:10 1 Corinthians 12:29-30 (above) says some believers will prophesy or speak in tongues and some won't. Some will be apostles or prophets; some won't. Given these activities and roles were actively going on in Corinth when Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians, doesn't this mean that prophecies

2: 9 Holy Spirit Gifts

and tongues were occurring through all groups of believers, and not just a select few believers at Corinth + the original apostles + others who were part of the ~120 Baptized in the Holy Spirit at Pentecost? If not, why not?

- 2:11 Paul gave correction on how to use some of the 9 gifts, not on whether or not they should be used. If these believers in Corinth who were prophesying or speaking in tongues were doing something false or of the devil, wouldn't Paul have addressed that kind of issue directly along with the other issues mentioned in 1 Corinthians, and stopped any ungodly shenanigans?
- 2:12 Given Paul did not say these prophecies and tongues weren't of God, doesn't that mean the prophecies and tongues - while lacking - were still of God?
- 2:13 Were the spiritual needs of the believers in Corinth, and the spiritual gifts given to the believers at Corinth applicable to every other group of believers living at that time? If not, why not? Out of curiosity, how does your answer to this question correspond to your answer to question 2:5?

Who Experiences Holy Spirit's Presence & Gifts

Let's return to verses 7 and 11.

- ❑ 1 Corinthians 12:7 But to ***each one*** is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.
- ❑ 1 Corinthians 12:11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to ***each one individually*** just as He wills.

The Greek word underlying the English phrase 'each one' is 'hekastos' [G1538]. Strong's defines it in part as '*any, both, each (one), every (man, one, woman)*'.

- 2:14 If each believer is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good, does 'each one' in verses 7 and 11 mean every believer at Corinth was to experience the manifest, tangible, evident presence of Holy Spirit through one or more of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts? If not, why not? And if it includes every believer at Corinth, why wouldn't it apply to all believers living at that time elsewhere? And to all believers today?

The Bible speaks of requirements to hold positions such as an elder and deacon. I can't find any unique requirements to be met before a born-again believer can receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, and in turn potentially be the beneficiary of one or more of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts such as prophecy, healing or tongues.

- 2:15 The verses between 7 and 11 mention the 9 Holy Spirit gifts/manifestations. On the basis 'each one' refers to every believer, doesn't verse 11 state that Holy Spirit will distribute each of these gifts, as He chooses, to:
- i. every believer, even new believers; and
 - ii. not just a select few believers such as the original apostles?

Spiritual Gifts or Spiritual Matters

In my early review of 1 Corinthians 12 using my New King James Bible, I was surprised the first time I learned the word 'gifts' in verse 1 was in italics. This means the word 'gifts' was not in the original Greek, but added by the translators to provide

CEASED? 2ND EDITION

clarity. The same holds for 1 Corinthians 13:2 and 14:1 - the word '*gifts*' is in italics and was added by the translators. If we remove the word '*gifts*' from 1 Corinthians 12:1, it reads as follows:

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 12:1 Now concerning spiritual, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware. (NASB amended)*

The English word '*spiritual*' is derived from the Greek word '*pneumatikos*' [G4152] which Strong's defines as '*spiritual*'. So what is meant by spiritual? From the list of topics addressed in 1 Corinthians 12, I compiled a simplified topic list.

Verses Topics

- 2: Previously pagans, mute idols
 - 3: Only those who know Jesus can call Him Lord
 - 4-6: Various gifts of Father God (7), Jesus (5) and Holy Spirit (9)
 - 7: Each born-again believer to experience the manifested presence of God
 - 8-11: 9 Holy Spirit gifts/manifestations
 - 12-27: One Body of Christ
 - 28-31: Diversities of gifts and functions spread throughout the Body of Christ
- 2:16 Given all the topics mentioned in 1 Corinthians and within Chapter 12 itself, do you think 1 Corinthians 12 refers to a narrow scope of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts or a broader scope involving several kinds of spiritual matters? And if you believe a broader scope and you are a Cessationist, what does that mean in terms of what has ceased besides the 9 Holy Spirit gifts?

In my review, the word '*gifts*' was added to the majority of translations. Some translations, however, use words of a more general nature including '*spiritual matters*', '*spiritual things*', '*spiritual ways*', '*spiritual realities*' or '*issues*'. I personally prefer '*spiritual matters*'.

Why Educate

Let's return to the issue of believers being unaware in 1 Corinthians 12:1.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 12:1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, **I do not want you to be unaware.***

If you don't believe the Holy Spirit gifts were available to every Corinthian believer but only a few - the original apostles for instance - consider the following:

- 2:17 Why would Paul say "*I do not want you to be unaware*", then take steps to ensure they were aware of these 9 Holy Spirit gifts if they would only exist when an original apostle was present which was infrequent at Corinth, and for only a few more years at most?
- 2:18 Visualize yourself being a new believer in your early twenties. You hear the letter from Paul being read and discussed around 53-57AD. You hear about the 9 Holy Spirit gifts and that Holy Spirit distributes these gifts. You later hear about the 4 virgin prophetesses. You hear about Agabus and others who were not original apostles but who prophesied. You hear of the healing

2: 9 Holy Spirit Gifts

miracles and tongues. Then somewhere along your journey, you're told the 9 Holy Spirit gifts ended with the original apostles. Wouldn't you be rather confused, wonder why Paul wrote and taught what he did, and perhaps question other things that Paul wrote?

Summary of 1 Corinthians 12

2:19 Would the following be a reasonable summary of 1 Corinthians 12?

"My brothers and sisters in Corinth. You live in a city where so many people worship one or many of the multitudes of gods and goddesses. Idolatry is widespread. But there is a big difference between that spiritual world and the kingdom of God to which you now belong. The reality is that there is only one true God who exists in 3 persons - Father God, His Son Jesus, and Holy Spirit. All truly born-again believers are sons and daughters of God, and part of one body, the Body of Christ. Moreover, the Body of Christ is not just those of you here in Corinth, but in the entire world.

God helps His family function by giving a wide variety of supernatural gifts, ministries and services including the 9 gifts of the Holy Spirit. Each of us is unique in our interaction with God. We experience God's presence in our own way, including the manner and extent to which Holy Spirit manifests himself through us in His 9 gifts. Each of us is unique in the giftings, roles, and responsibilities God gives to us, but we are all part of one body, and we are to come together and work together for the common good of all."

CLOSING POINTS TO PONDER

- 2:20 Paul's first letter to the Corinthians deals with a wide variety of spiritual matters including clarifying there is one God, one Spirit, and one Body of Christ to which God distributes gifts from Holy Spirit, from Father God, and from Jesus. Based only on what we read in 1 Corinthians, would you say the 9 Holy Spirit gifts have 1) ceased or 2) are still active and one of the many ways by which God equips His sons and daughters to live a full and abundant Christian life, both individually and collectively?
- 2:21 If you're Roman Catholic, don't all the references to the Body of Christ indicate God's church is not a particular organization, but the widespread group of individuals who collectively follow Jesus? And that any church organization and its leaders are to support, serve, equip and build up the members of the Body of Christ - including the use of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts?
- 2:22 Finally, many Christians wonder how a person who operates in the Holy Spirit gifts can continue to operate in such gifts when their behavior is 'wonky'. Does Romans 11:29 perhaps give an indication?
- Romans 11:29 for the **gifts** and the calling of God are **irrevocable**.*

For those who still staunchly believe that the 9 Holy Spirit's gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 are no longer relevant today, that's your right to do so. If so, consider reviewing the commentary in Chapters 13 through 20 that deal with other Cessationist issues.

Spirit, Soul and Body

INTRODUCTION

AS mentioned previously, the 9 Holy Spirit gifts/manifestations in 1 Corinthians 12 are associated with the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. To properly understand the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, it is helpful if we understand 3 other baptisms applicable to believers today. And to understand these 4 baptisms, it is beneficial to understand their association with salvation. In addition, to gain a fuller understanding of salvation, it is useful to review the impact salvation has on our 3 parts, namely our spirit, soul and body. Chapter 3 begins this review by briefly looking at our 3 parts - spirit, soul and body. Chapter 3 also touches on the issue of sin, and whether Mary was a sinner and needed a savior.

Do Human Beings Have A Spirit

When I raise the issue of humans having a spirit with 7th Day Adventist friends, discussions shut down as they believe human beings don't have their own spirit. If this is your view and you feel like using **CEASED?** to make a fire or paperweight, consider the following scriptures of people who speak about their own spirit.

- Isaiah 26:9 ... Indeed, **my spirit** within me seeks You diligently...*
- Daniel 7:15 As for me, Daniel, **my spirit** was distressed within me ...*
- Job 6:4 ... Their poison **my spirit** drinks ...*
- Psalms 142:3 When **my spirit** was overwhelmed within me ...*
- Ezekiel 3:14 ... I went embittered in the rage of **my spirit** ...*
- Luke 1:47 And **my spirit** has rejoiced in God my Saviour.*
- Acts 7:59 They went on stoning Stephen ... "Lord Jesus, **receive my spirit!**"*
- Romans 1:9 For God, whom I serve in **my spirit** in the preaching ...*
- 1 Corinthians 14:14 ... pray in a tongue, **my spirit** prays ... mind is unfruitful.*
- 2 Corinthians 2:13 I had no rest for **my spirit** ...*

God i) gives us our spirit and ii) takes back our spirit when we die.

- Ecclesiastes 12:7 then the **dust will return to the earth** as it was, and **the spirit** will return to God who gave it.*

Now consider these scriptures.

- John 4:23 But a time is coming, and even now has arrived, when **the true***

3: Spirit, Soul & Body

worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshippers. 24 **God is spirit**, and **those who worship Him must worship in spirit** and truth.”

- ❑ Hebrews 4:12 For the **word of God** is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, even penetrating as far as the **division of soul and spirit** ...
- 3:1 Many prominent Biblical characters speak of their own spirits. Worshippers are to worship God in spirit, The Word of God is so sharp it can separate one's soul and spirit. If you still don't believe we humans have a spirit, are you perhaps being more faithful to your beliefs than to what the Bible says?

5 Basic Questions

I routinely ask young believers questions. Here are 5 examples.

1: How many baptisms are in the Bible, and how many apply today?

The most common answer I get is 1-2 in total, and 1 that applies today. I suggest there are at least 8-9 unique baptisms of which 3-5 are directly applicable to believers living on earth today - Baptism into the Body of Christ (at the moment one is born again), Water Baptism, Baptism of the Holy Spirit, Baptism of Fire, and 1 more as revealed in Chapter 10 which discusses these and other baptisms.

2: What are the differences between the 'para', the 'en' and the 'epi' experiences of the Holy Spirit?

The most common answer is “*I don't know*”. When I clarify that “*para, en, and epi refer to three experiences - with, in, and upon - believers can have with Holy Spirit*”, it seldom clears up the confusion. Hopefully **CEASED?** will do better.

3: Human beings have a body. What other part or parts does a human being have? After I clarify we have 3 parts - spirit, soul and body - I then ask: “What are the 3 parts of the human soul?”

The most common answer is “*I don't know*”.

4: What does born again mean in terms of our spirit, soul and body?

Again, the most common answer I get back is akin to “*I don't know*”.

5: When were the original apostles/disciples born again?

Once more, the common answer is “*I don't know*”. Few have thought about it.

Those results are part of why I go back to the beginning when God made Adam.

Creation of Humans

God created Adam by forming dirt and breathing life into what He had formed.

- ❑ Genesis 2:7 Then the Lord God **formed man of dust** from the ground, and **breathed into his nostrils the breath of life**; and man became a living being.

Our triune God made humans with 3 distinct 'parts': spirit, soul and body.

- ❑ 1 Thessalonians 5:23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your **spirit** and **soul** and **body** be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Trying to comprehend *'everything'* about the human spirit, soul and body, or anything else created by God in this universe, is simply not possible. Just look at the incredible complexity of His birds. I love watching videos on birds, especially starlings and hummingbirds - they are such amazing creations of God.

Part 1 of 3: The Human Body

Like birds, the human body is an amazingly complex creation tightly interconnected with our souls and spirits. Today's science is discovering more and more things such as the *'second'* brain in our guts. An article in Scientific American entitled *"Think Twice: How the Gut's "Second Brain" Influences Mood and Well-Being"* written by Adam Hahazy, and dated February 12, 2010, states in part: *"The little brain in our innards, in connection with the big one in our skulls, partly determines our mental state and plays key roles in certain diseases throughout the body."* Whether it is our DNA, brain, organs, vagus nerve, blood, skeletal system, or any of the other body parts and systems - God's creative genius is on full display.

Part 2 of 3: The Human Spirit

- 3:2 Is it surprising we live in a spiritual world, and that humans are spirits given God is a spirit, God created angels and demons who are spirits, those who worship God do so in spirit, and humans are created in God's image?
- ❑ *John 4:24 **God is spirit**, and **those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.***
 - ❑ *John 4:24 **God is spirit**, and **those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.***
 - ❑ *Genesis 28:12 ... a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the **angels of God** were ascending and descending on it.*
 - ❑ *James 2:19 You believe that God is one ... the **demons** also believe*

Our spirit has multiple roles in our lives including facilitating our communications with God and working in conjunction with our soul as 1) our conscience to discern right from wrong and 2) our intuition which influences our thoughts, words, actions, and decisions.

- ❑ *Romans 8:16 The **Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit** that we are children of God,*
- ❑ *1 Corinthians 2:11 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except **the spirit of the man** which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.*

How complex is our spirit? I don't know, but I suspect our personal spirits and the spiritual realm in which we live are far more complex than the physical world we live in. Reading the Bible, seeing the power of God and how He manifested through people and angels ranges from fascinating and humorous, to downright humbling and unnerving. It is also at times rather unpleasant. We also have an active spiritual enemy. If you doubt, talk with a believer who used to be heavily involved in the occult/witchcraft. It's shocking to learn what goes on today.

3: Spirit, Soul & Body

Part 3 of 3: The Human Soul

The third part of our being is our soul. In the beginning, God breathed the breath of life, and man became a living being, a being with a spirit, soul and body.

- ❑ *Genesis 2:7 Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.*
- ❑ *1 Thessalonians 5:23 Now may ... your spirit and soul and body ...*

Theologians seem to universally agree the human soul has 3 core parts - mind, will, and emotions. Some believe our souls have a 4th part - the conscience - referred to earlier. Whatever your view, I suggest we're only beginning to understand the complexity of our soul and its working relationship with our body and spirit.

God is revealing these complex interrelationships through various people such as Dr. Henry Wright who wrote "*A More Excellent Way*". His book gives insight into many of the relationships between the soul and body, and why many of our diseases - some of which are deemed incurable - arise due to deep and often long-held issues and deep hurts in our souls.

- ❑ *3 John 1:2 Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers.*

Let me share just one quote from page 67 of Dr. Wright's book.

"In this ministry, we deal with many autoimmune diseases: lupus, Crohn's, diabetes (type 1), rheumatoid arthritis and MS, to name a few. All autoimmune diseases have a spiritual root of self-hatred, self-bitterness and guilt."

Another great resource on this issue of soulish and body connections is Dennis and Dr. Jen Clark's book '*Releasing The Divine Healer Within*'. Their book also makes reference to many secular resources that show the close connection between soul and body. Some of the statistics are eye-popping.

From the secular standpoint, a 2015 article entitled "*E-Motion: Trapped Emotional Energy is Linked to Disease*" by Dr. Mercola states "... even the Conservative Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has stated that 85 percent of all diseases appear to have an emotional element."

My Psoriasis

In 2013, I had psoriasis on much of my hands, arms, face, back and legs. The area under my eyes was so discolored that when my son met me after not seeing me for a few months, he just stared at me. He didn't know what to say. My hands were so swollen, I could hardly bend my fingers. My calves and the top of hands were raw, and I often bled on our bedsheets. After over a year of struggles and consultations with ~10 different doctors, after several creams and different treatments, after much prayer and few benefits, I found myself emotionally drained in a big way.

I've had prostate cancer, 2 heart attacks, a quadruple bypass, an emergency appendectomy, a hip replacement and a serious leg infection. Yet, my psoriasis was the worst affliction of all, by far. The constant itching drove me crazy.

Friends recommended I see a Christian naturopath near Bellingham, Washington. I did. "Sally" opened our session with prayer. Within a few seconds,

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Lori and I both started to weep. We were overcome with God's presence. Sally was quiet for a short while, then indicated Holy Spirit revealed to her the root cause of my psoriasis was bitterness. She prayed again and in a short time, Holy Spirit revealed to her that my bitterness was towards myself. I was filled with guilt, regrets, shame, self-hatred and more. As I began to deal with my emotional stuff, my psoriasis receded and 2 months later, it was gone.

If God had healed my psoriasis when previously prayed for, the issues in my soul would have remained hidden and would likely have manifested in other more serious illnesses. God knew I needed my soul healed before I would get lasting physical healing. The psoriasis was not the problem, but a symptom.

- 3:3 Was my delayed physical healing an indication as to why some people may not immediately get healed when they receive prayer?
- 3:4 The key to my getting healed was the word of knowledge - one of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts - given by Holy Spirit to Sally. God didn't heal my psoriasis directly through a healing miracle - another Holy Spirit gift - but through healing of my soul. Was my delayed healing also an example of the benefits of asking Holy Spirit how and what to pray for, instead of just praying for what we see or think is the problem?

Souls - Our Emotions

The emotional part of our soul has various emotions, both positive and negative. This is seen in relationships between Jonathan and David, and between Joseph and his brothers.

- ❑ *1 Samuel 18:1 ... that the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and **Jonathan loved him** as himself.*
- ❑ *Genesis 37:5 Then Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they **hated** him even more.*

Souls - Our Will

A key function of the will component of our soul is to make choices.

- ❑ *Job 7:15 So that **my soul would choose** suffocation ...*

Souls - Our Mind

Our mind does many things including thinking, knowing and remembering.

- ❑ *Psalm 13:2 How **long shall I take counsel in my soul**, having sorrow in my heart all the day? How long will my enemy be exalted over me?*
 - ❑ *Psalm 139:14 I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, And **my soul knows it** very well.*
 - ❑ *Lamentations 3:20 Surely **my soul remembers** And is bowed down within me.*
- 3:5 Given both our minds and wills play such central roles in our lives, is it any surprise God's Word tells us to renew our minds?
- ❑ *Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind**, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

3: Spirit, Soul & Body

Soul Is in Charge Until . . .

Before we are born again, our souls are in charge of our life. Our soul is boss, and our 'dead' spirit takes a backseat. However, we should recognize our spirits were not inactive and sitting on the shelf. There are many people on this earth today who are involved in the occult, witchcraft, voodoo, psychic activities and tarot card readings. All of these activities involve their spirits, souls and bodies interacting with or otherwise being influenced by demonic spirits. Prior to being born again, we may not have been involved in such activities, but our spirits were nonetheless also active and influenced by worldly things including the demonic.

After we're born again, we start a journey of sanctification where we become more and more like Christ in our thoughts, words, decisions and behaviors. Our spirit which is one with Holy Spirit takes more control and our soul goes to the backseat. And, hopefully, isn't too much as a self-serving, backseat driver.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 6:17 But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him.*

Soul - Hell or Heaven

Our souls don't vanish when we die. I believe they go where our spirits go.

- ❑ *Matthew 10:28 Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather **fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.***

- 3:6 Given our body is temporary and goes back to dust while our soul and spirit go to heaven or hell for eternity, is it more appropriate to see humans as:
- a) a spirit with a body and soul or b) a body with a soul and a spirit?

Complexity of Souls

How complex are our souls? Whereas we have many technologies that help us gain a better understanding of the complexity of our body, we have relatively few tools with which we can scientifically analyze our soul. Like our spirits, I don't know how complex our soul is, but I suspect it is at least as complex as our bodies. After all, God's Word suggests God has a soul as well. And God is pretty darn complex.

- ❑ *Leviticus 26:11 Moreover, I will make My dwelling among you, and **My soul** will not reject you.*
- ❑ *Jeremiah 32:41 I will rejoice over them to do them good and will faithfully plant them in this land with all My heart and all **My soul.***
- ❑ *Hebrews 10:38 ... And if he shrinks back, **My soul** has no pleasure in him.*

Soul Hurts and Woundings

If I can digress for a few paragraphs, Lori and I find soul hurts and issues are often viewed within the Body of Christ as secondary to physical issues. Dr. Wright's book provides great insight as to why this should not be the case. Other evidence is starting to show, for instance, how traumatic events can impact our actual DNA, and how such events can damage our brains. Trauma hits close to home for Lori and I.

We've had our fair share, especially Lori who experienced extensive trauma starting at age 2. It's a major reason why Lori is currently involved in this area with a goal to help equip the Christian community to better understand and minister to

those dealing with trauma (www.loridixon.ca). Sources of trauma and deep hurts in souls are widespread. Abuse with its many hats - emotional, physical, sexual, financial and spiritual to name but a few - is one source of trauma. Other sources include grief from suicides and sudden deaths, divorces, health problems, major financial losses, and ill-informed treatment received from religious leaders, organizations and even Christian friends and acquaintances.

When dealing with soul hurts and woundings, we need to treat them with as much respect, sensitivity and compassion as we do for physical health issues. Yes, some people wallow in their emotional pain for too long - that was me for a season and I can relate. But for many, their hurts can be so deep that it's not as simple as 'getting over it'. If we're not careful, people coming to us for prayer can leave more traumatized than when they arrived. Let me give you two examples.

A woman shared her experiences of going to a church wanting prayer. A leader took her hands and placed them together palm to palm, with both of his hands gently positioned around her hands. Even though this holding of her hands was done in an act of kindness, she reacted very negatively because it reminded her of the way her hands were positioned when she was bound while being trafficked. At the beginning of prayer when she was seeking help, she was triggered. As Lori describes it, her amygdala was lit up. Her mind and emotions were in turmoil, she never really heard a word of the prayer. She left more traumatized than when she arrived, and never went back.

A second situation occurs regularly in many churches when a church leader says something akin to "Let's stand, grab the hand of the person beside you and pray". To some people, this can be frightening as the last thing they want is a stranger grabbing their hand or touching them. Imagine a woman near a man who resembles or reminds her of someone who abused her. Contact is the last thing she would want. If someone's soul is not yet healed, seemingly loving gestures can be traumatic and cause considerable pain and angst. We seldom have any idea what another person has gone through; we need to be sensitive. If it is their first church experience since the trauma, we don't want it to be their last.

- 3:7 If your church doesn't make such mistakes in ministry, that's great. But how big is the opportunity to reach out to people in our communities who don't attend any church because they don't feel safe in doing so?

If you're dealing with deep hurts and trauma, I am so sorry. If you feel ignored, misunderstood, if the events in your life and the pain inflicted on you has not been validated, if your concerns have not been recognized, if justice has not adequately been served, if those who hurt you are not sorry or could care less, I am truly sorry. And if church leaders have trivialized your pain or said things akin to "Just get over it." Or "you need to forgive, forget it and keep it quiet for the sake of the family/church etc.", I am so sorry and apologize on their behalf. I have seen first hand the devastating, long-term impacts of deep soul wounds and trauma. For so many of us, it's not that easy to just get over it. I asked Lori to comment. This is her message.

"The good news is that there is hope. There is healing . . . wholeness. Holy Spirit is known as our Comforter and Counselor. God hates injustice and the

3: Spirit, Soul & Body

damage it does to us - to our body, soul and spirit. In a perfect world, there would be abundant grace and wisdom in all interactions between people, but sadly this is not the case. Even leaders and other believers with the best of intentions "get it wrong". They don't know our journeys. Our story. And for some, they don't need to know, nor have they earned the right to access our deepest, most intimate secrets. Sometimes we just need to take a deep breath, close our eyes, and recognize that those who say and do the wrong things don't know what they think they know. As difficult as it may be, we need to recognize they have their weaknesses, and we need to bless them and move on to others for help. Or, if you're feeling bold, tell them why their words and/or actions were inappropriate, and then direct them to local ministries that can educate and equip them to do better.

As for you, seek counsel from local people or organizations that are truly familiar with trauma, and will address your hurts on all three levels - body, soul and spirit. Don't give up! There is freedom and wholeness."

A couple more comments. I've heard teachings that when we're born again, we're a new creation and all soul issues have been dealt with. We should "never look back but only look forward" which is "how we get over it".

❑ *2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*

- 3:8 If healing of souls was a done deal at the moment we're born again, why isn't the healing of every new believer's soul evident at the moment they're born again? And why is sanctification a process that occurs over one's entire life?
- 3:9 In the same way, if we are a totally new creation when we're born again, why isn't every person's body totally healed at that moment?

In my limited experience, those who say things like 'you need to move on and just get over it' have usually not had major traumatic personal experiences they needed to get over. As a result, they just 'don't get it'. Or if they had very traumatic events in their life but were healed, it's often a result of a supernatural healing that occurred after their born-again experience. However, their delayed healing sometimes seems to be forgotten when they teach others to 'just get over it'.

If you need a major healing in your soul (or body), I pray God touches you radically and perhaps even unexpectedly during your time alone with Him, during times of praise and worship, reading His Word or even as you read **CEASED?**.

WE NEED A SAVIOR

In the Garden of Eden, God gave Adam a clear command that he was not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If Adam did, he would die.

❑ *Genesis 2:15 Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. 16 The Lord God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; 17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil **you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.**"*

- ❑ *Genesis 3:6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, **she took from its fruit and ate**; and she gave also to her husband with her, and **he ate**. 7 **Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked**; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.*

After Adam and Eve ate of the tree, things changed. Their eyes were opened. They knew they did wrong when they sinned. God said they would die, but they didn't die physically right away as Adam lived to 930 years of age. After they sinned, their soul was still alive as Adam admitted he was afraid (his emotions) and hid himself (his 'will' made the decision).

- ❑ *Genesis 3:10 He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself."*

While alive in their bodies and souls, Adam and Eve 'died' in their spirits. Their spiritual death arose due to sin which caused a spiritual separation between God (who is spirit) and the spirits of both Adam and Eve, an issue facing every person.

- ❑ *Isaiah 59:2 But your wrongdoings have caused a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.*

Adam and Eve's spiritual deaths marked the end of the unhindered, intimate relationship between God and God's first two human creations. This intimate relationship was replaced by a distant relationship where Adam and Eve were separated from God as God sent them out of the Garden of Eden, out of His presence.

- ❑ *Genesis 3:23 therefore the Lord **God sent him out** from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken.*

Before the fall, we should also remember Adam had a mandate, a call on his life.

- ❑ *Genesis 1:28 God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."*

Because of sin, Adam and Eve were kicked out of the Garden, and they lost their close, intimate relationship with God. Fast forward to today. Human beings are sinners, something that's evident at an early age. Just watch 2-year-olds and behind their cute smiles are ... many opportunities for practicing patience.

A common problem is that people don't see themselves as sinners, but as a 'good' person. Many believe if there is a heaven, they will go there because they are good. Ray Comfort (livingwaters.com) has a unique way of evangelizing by helping people realize that maybe they aren't so good. Ray's approach is akin to the following:

- 3:10 *"Have you ever lied - ever?"* Few people say no to this question. Most say yes. When they do, Ray has a follow-up question of *"What does that make you?"* Ray guides them to realize, compared to the holiness of God, they sinned and are a 'liar' in God's eyes.

3: Spirit, Soul & Body

- 3:11 *"Have you ever stolen - anything - ever?"* Ray helps people realize they are a *'thief'* in God's eyes and have fallen short of God's holiness.
- 3:12 *"Have you ever hated anybody - ever?"* Ray relates how Jesus took the commandment of *"Do not Murder"* to a new level where if we hate someone, even for a short time, we're considered a *'murderer'*.
- 3:13 *"Have you ever lusted after somebody who was not your spouse at the time?"* Ray discusses how Jesus also took the commandment on adultery to a new level, and helps people realize even looking lustfully after someone other than their spouse makes them an *'adulterer'* in God's eyes.

After these 4 short questions, people often realize they are not so good after all. This happened to my Mom.

My Mom Responded to Ray's Questions

My Mom turned 94 as I was writing CEASED?. She is an incredible mother, grandmother, great-grandmother and overall wonderful woman. Her home-made bread and baking, if commercialized, would have been a hit. Soon after I was born again, when Mom was about 85, we started to talk regularly about faith issues. Mom went to church her entire life and believed she would go to heaven because she was a good person. And by earthly standards, she was a very good person. Over time, I shared about how all humans are sinners, need a savior and introduced Jesus, His shed blood and death on the cross, etc. Mom was interested but she kind of heard this before, and it didn't impact her.

Then one night, I gently challenged Mom using Ray's approach. When Mom realized that according to God's standard of holiness, she was potentially a liar, thief, murderer and adulterer, she went very quiet. It was then that she began to appreciate the sinful nature of all humans including herself, her need for a Savior, and the power and beauty of what Jesus did for her on the cross. Soon after, Mom gave her life to Christ and over time, I could see significant changes.

Perhaps the most memorable change involved Mom and another person in her life. A few years after Mom accepted Christ, Mom and I briefly talked about this person. Mom's attitude towards this person who had caused her much hurt was so good. Mom said something to the effect of "_____ is a lost soul. I pray _____ finds peace." When Mom spoke, there wasn't an ounce of hardness - just compassion. I wept as I saw how Jesus's goodness had healed my Mom's heart, and was now using Mom to demonstrate His love and power. Thank You Jesus. Love you Mom.

MARY - A SINNER IN NEED OF A SAVIOR?

God's Word says all humans have sinned which is why we all need a savior.

- Romans 3:23 For **all have sinned**, and fall short of the glory of God;*
- 3:14 The Bible is clear that Jesus did not sin. The Bible, however, does not say anything about Mary not sinning. Doesn't the phrase *'all have sinned'* mean every person other than Jesus sinned, including Mary? If not, why not?
- Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, **yet without sin**.*

Roman Catholic teachings state that Mary was not a sinner which is a key reason why Mary has been given such lofty positions in the Catholic church today. If Mary was not a sinner, it makes me wonder why Mary referred to Jesus as her savior.

- ❑ *Luke 1:45 And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord.” 46 **And Mary said:** “My soul exalts the Lord, 47 And my spirit has rejoiced in God **my Savior**.*

The standard Protestant view as to why Mary would need a savior was because she had sinned. The Catholic view is that she did not sin. The reason commonly cited by Catholics as to why Mary was able to not sin is found in scriptures such as Jude 24, where Jesus is able to keep us (and thus Mary) from stumbling, from sinning.

- ❑ *Jude 24 Now to **Him who is able to keep you from stumbling**, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, (NASB)*
- ❑ *Jude 24 Now to **Him who is able to keep you from stumbling or falling into sin**, and to present you unblemished [blameless and faultless] in the presence of His glory with triumphant joy and unspeakable delight, (AMP)*

3:15 Mary was approximately 45 when Jesus started his earthly ministry, and close to 50 years old when Jesus went to the cross. After more than 4 decades of Mary living in this world, Jesus finally fulfilled the prophecies and His role as savior was established. Before the beginning of Jesus’s earthly ministry and His going to the cross, what scriptural basis is there to believe Jesus served as Mary’s savior and prevented her from sinning during these 4+ decades? Consider the years before His conception, His 9 months in Mary’s womb, His baby years, adolescent, teenage and finally His adult years. In all those periods of time, did Jesus serve as Mary’s savior and prevent her from sinning? If you say ‘Yes’, how is that possible?

3:16 If you still believe Mary never sinned:

- i. After you were born again, and you had Jesus in you and Holy Spirit in [en] you, did you sin afterward?
- ii. If you sinned, was it because you had a free will, a sinful nature, your mind was not totally renewed, and your soul not perfectly sanctified?
- iii. When Mary was visited by the angel, questioned the angel and then decided to do as God asked, didn’t she demonstrate she had a free will? And thus, on what scriptural grounds can we gain comfort that Mary - like you, me, and every other human being apart from Jesus - did not sin before or after being born again?

As we review the ‘para’, ‘en’ and ‘epi’ Holy Spirit experiences, we will see that even with those experiences, we’re still very prone to sin. In Romans, Paul describes his ongoing challenge with sin after he was both born again (the en experience per Chapter 6) and was Baptized in the Holy Spirit (the epi experience per Chapter 7).

- ❑ *Romans 7:18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, **in my flesh**: for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. 19 **For the good that I want, I do not do**, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. 20 But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing*

3: Spirit, Soul & Body

it, but **sin which dwells in me** ... 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? 25 ... on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

- 3:17 If you believe Mary was never born again because she never sinned before or after the cross - which means she was never separated from God - on what scriptural evidence is that view based? And couldn't that only happen if Mary was not a human being, but a divine being? If you say she wasn't divine, but specially protected, the only time we read of God's influence on her before the cross was when Holy Spirit came upon Mary to impregnate her. Given that, how is it possible that Mary did not sin before she was pregnant with Jesus? And what scriptural evidence is there to show that this Holy Spirit experience again prevented her from sinning after she was pregnant?
- ❑ *Luke 1:35 The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.*
- 3:18 Per Chapters 6-8, Mary could have been born again and had the 'in/en' experience on resurrection Sunday evening, and then was Baptized in the Holy Spirit, the 'upon/epi' experience, at Pentecost. As will be shown, these two Holy Spirit experiences can greatly assist a person in not sinning due to God changing the desires of one's heart. However, neither experience is 100% guaranteed to prevent future sin. Again I ask, what scriptural evidence is there to believe Mary was any different, and did not sin after the cross?

Sexless Marriage / No Other Biological Children

Mary ultimately married Joseph, a marriage the Roman Catholic church teaches was sexless. The celibacy aspect is essential to Mary never sinning after Jesus was born. Protestants view things differently and point to 1) the fact Mary was human and 2) in addition to Jesus, had at least four other sons and more than one daughter:

- ❑ *Matthew 13:55 Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and **His brothers [adelphos G80] James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?** 56 And **His sisters**, are they not all with us? Where then did this man get all these things?"*

Common Catholic teaching is that the 'brothers' and 'sisters' mentioned in Matthew 13:55 weren't biological half-brothers and half-sisters of Jesus, but cousins or other relatives. Consider three Greek words - '*adelphos*', '*suggenes*' and '*anepsios*'.

- ❖ *Adelphos* [G80]; Strong's definition includes a biological brother, any fellow or man, or to brethren in Christ. *Adelphos* is used 346 times in the Bible.
 - ❖ *Suggenes* [G4773]; Thayer's definition includes a person related by blood, of the same nation, a fellow countryman. *Suggenes* is used 12 times.
 - ❖ *Anepsios* [G431]; Strong's definition includes a cousin. *Anepsios* is used once.
- 3:19 *Adelphos* is used to describe biological brothers. If James, Joseph, Simon and Judas weren't biological half-brothers of Jesus, why wouldn't the Bible - a book without error (at least in the original Greek and Hebrew) - have used

- suggenes or anepsios instead of adelphos in Matthew 13:55?
- ❑ *Matthew 12:46 While He was still speaking to the crowds, behold, **His mother and brothers [adelphos]** were standing outside, seeking to speak to Him.*
 - ❑ *Luke 8:19 And His mother and **brothers [adelphos]** came to Him, and they were unable to get to Him because of the crowd.*
 - ❑ *Acts 1:14 These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and **with His brothers [adelphos]**.*
- 3:20 Don't these scriptures suggest these men were biological brothers of Jesus? If these individuals were cousins or more distant relatives, why did the original Hebrew use the word 'adelphos' instead of a more general word more suitable for other relatives such as cousin (*suggenes*)?
- 3:21 And wouldn't it be inconsistent to be accurate about the references to Jesus's mother but inaccurate on references to His brothers and sisters?
- 3:22 And consider when Jesus was in Nazareth and the locals were trying to identify Jesus. Don't their questions show they were successful in narrowing down Jesus's specific family unit to His mother, brothers, and sisters?
- ❑ *Mark 6:2 ... Where did this man learn these things, and what is this wisdom that has been given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands? 3 Is **this not the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother [G80 adelphos]** of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are **His sisters [G79 adelphe]** not here with us?" And they took offense at Him.*

The Word 'Until'

In terms of a Mary and Joseph sexless marriage, Lori pointed out something quite interesting when comparing NASB to the Catholic Public Domain Version.

- ❑ *Matthew 1:24 And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife, 25 **but kept her a virgin until [heos] she gave birth to a Son;** and he called His name Jesus. (NASB)*
- ❑ *Matthew 1:24 Then Joseph, arising from sleep, did just as the Angel of the Lord had instructed him, and he accepted her as his wife. **And he knew her not, yet she bore her son, the firstborn.** And he called his name JESUS. (CPDV: Catholic Public Domain Version)*

The NASB version clearly states Mary and Joseph had physical intimacy, but not '**until**' after Jesus was born. The Catholic Public Domain Version states Mary and Joseph never had physical intimacy before or after Mary gave birth to Jesus. In the NASB translation, the English word 'until' is derived from the Greek word 'heos' [G2193] which Strong's defines as '1. til, until'.

- 3:23 When the English word 'until' was taken out of the Catholic Public Domain Version, this effectively removed the Greek word 'heos' from God's Word.
- i. Isn't changing God's Word a rather big deal, with potentially major consequences? If the word 'until' was put back into the Catholic Bible, it would say "... he knew her not until ..." instead of the current translation "... knew her not ...". Doesn't adding the word 'until' put a

3: Spirit, Soul & Body

totally different perspective on a sexless Mary and Joseph marriage, a sinless Mary, and the entire Mother of God issue?

- ii. If one says NASB is wrong and CPDV is correct, why are there articles on www.catholic.com explaining how to interpret the word 'until' in the context of Joseph's and Mary's marriage?
- iii. Was Mary a sinner in need of a savior? What's your vote?

Second Eve

Jesus is referred to as the last Adam who brought life and overcame the sins of the first Adam.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 15:45 So also it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living soul." The **last Adam** became a life-giving spirit.*

A common Catholic view is to claim Mary is the second Eve. But is she?

- ❖ Unlike Jesus who is clearly linked to Adam in the New Testament, Mary is never explicitly linked to Eve.
- ❖ Adam and Eve were married - to each other. Jesus was never married. Mary was married, but to a different man.
- ❖ Jesus's mandate was as the Savior and Messiah; Mary's mandate did not include this. Mary's primary mandate was giving birth to Jesus and looking after Him in His early years.
- ❖ The Bible also refers to two secondary mandates with specific reference to Mary. One mandate is from the one and only scripture Mary is referred to after the cross - to be involved in prayer.
- ❑ *Acts 1:14 These all with one mind **were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.***
- ❖ The secondary mandate for Mary does tie back to Eve - **multiply**.
- ❑ *Genesis 1:27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be **fruitful and multiply**, and **fill** the earth, and subdue it ...*
- ❑ *Genesis 4:1 Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, "I have gotten a manchild with the help of the Lord." 2 Again, she gave birth to his brother Abel ...*

3:24 Jesus came to redeem the world by addressing the sins of mankind. He did not come to father physical children. Mary, by contrast, did not come to redeem the world or address the sins of mankind. So, what was Mary's link to Eve if indeed she is the second Eve? Wouldn't it follow that Mary's mandate would be to have multiple children as well? And wouldn't that mean Mary would have had sex? And wouldn't that go directly against the argument Mary lived a sin-free life partly because she didn't engage in sex?

3:25 If we take Eve and Mary, and compare them to Adam and Jesus, from the standpoint of sin, we know Adam and Eve clearly sinned. The Bible is clear Jesus did not sin. In contrast, no such mention of Mary is made. Jesus had

the dominant responsibility to redeem the world from sin. In contrast, Mary's role was limited to raising Jesus, and had virtually no role during Jesus's earthly ministry. And whereas Jesus was radically different from Adam in many other ways, there's nothing to suggest Mary - other than being the mother to Jesus - was really any different from Eve in the rest of her life. Thus, how is it reasonable to consider Mary as the second Eve similar to how God's Word sees Jesus as the last Adam?

Mary looked after by John

Another reason given for these 4 men not being Mary's children was because Jesus had Mary live with John after the cross. If these 4 men were Mary's biological children, Mary would have gone to live with 1 of the 4. But is it that simple?

As the oldest son, Jesus was obliged to care for His mother, and with His passing, He was responsible to choose who would carry on that responsibility. Why Jesus didn't do this before the cross, I don't know. Purely a guess, but Jesus had some major things on his mind. In any event, Jesus was on the cross on the verge of death, exhausted and in excruciating pain. He sees His mother and John, the apostle who laid his head on Jesus's chest the previous night, and chose John to look after Mary.

- ❑ *John 19:26 When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, "Woman, **behold, your son [huios G5207]!**" 27 Then He said to the disciple, "Behold, **your mother!**" From that hour the disciple took her into his own household.*
- ❑ *John 21:20 Peter, turning around, saw the **disciple whom Jesus loved** following them; the one **who also had leaned back on His bosom at the supper** and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?"*

The question is why John. For one, consider there's no indication Jesus's brothers believed, at that particular point in time, that Jesus was the Messiah. There's also no indication they were even at His crucifixion or with the group gathered on resurrection Sunday evening.

- ❑ *John 7:5 For not even His brothers were believing in Him.*
- ❑ *Matthew 13:57 ... But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household."*

Earlier, when His biological family came to see him, Jesus showed no interest in seeing them. His real 'mother' and 'brothers' were those who believed in Him.

- ❑ *Luke 8:19 And His mother and brothers came to Him, and they were unable to get to Him because of the crowd. 20 And it was reported to Him, "Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, wishing to see You." 21 But He answered and said to them, "**My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it.**"*

- 3:26 Is it all that surprising Jesus choose John to look after Mary given:
- i. John loved Jesus, and Jesus knew it;
 - ii. Jesus's 4 biological brothers did not yet believe in Him; and
 - iii. no mention is made of Jesus's 4 brothers being at His crucifixion?

3: Spirit, Soul & Body

Whether Jesus had biological brothers and sisters or relatives is potentially a secondary issue in terms of why it was John who looked after Mary. I say that because why wouldn't Jesus choose John if these other individuals didn't believe Jesus was the Messiah, their Savior? After all, Jesus didn't always follow the social norms and customs of the day.

3:27 Is it also notable that when Jesus said to John "*Behold, your mother*", Jesus only spoke to John and not to all His followers? In other words, when Jesus spoke these words, wasn't He only referring to John and not to any other believers who were present? That John and John alone was to view Mary as his '*mom*' until she died and went to heaven?

Having said the above, I wonder if Jesus's apparent lack of relationship with His four biological brothers was in part because they saw and treated Jesus as illegitimate because He was conceived outside wedlock. I also wonder how much teasing, mocking and judgment Jesus received in His first 30 years on earth not only from His brothers, but from Jews in general. In his latter years when He walked in His earthly ministry, I wonder if He faced additional alienation and jealousy from his brothers. And if so, Christ's suffering started long before the cross, another reason why He can relate to many of life's challenges that may come our way.

CLOSING POINTS TO PONDER

3:28 Human beings are 3 parts - spirit, soul (mind, will and emotion), and body. All 3 parts are tightly interwoven, amazingly complex, and designed to be in a relationship with God. Modern medicine knows quite a bit about the human body. Isn't it prudent to also believe that while we know a bit about our souls and spirits, that their complexity is potentially even greater than our bodies? And that when we get into issues of dealing with hurts in our souls, don't we need to be careful in how we minister? And that perhaps, first and foremost, we should ask Holy Spirit to guide us? To seek God's Kingdom first in all things? To pray with thanksgiving in everything?

- ❑ *Matthew 6:33* But **seek first His kingdom and His righteousness**, and all these things will be added to you.
- ❑ *Philippians 4:6* Be anxious for nothing, but **in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving** let your requests be made known to God.

3:29 What are the odds that a person's conscience is actually Holy Spirit speaking to them?

Like Adam and Eve, our sins, separate us from God. As a result, we can't have a personal relationship and worship God with our spirit because our spirit is '*dead*'.

- ❑ *John 4:24* God is Spirit: and **those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth**.

So how do we start a personal relationship with God? Chapter 4 provides insight.

Born Again/Salvation

INTRODUCTION

MANY have heard the term born again, but aren't comfortable with what it means. Chapter 4 touches on several issues related to being born again including:

1. God created humans to have a personal relationship with each of us (page 45);
2. basics of being born again (page 45);
3. requirements of salvation (page 48) including the issue of works (page 54);
4. is water baptism required to be saved (page 55);
5. getting saved (page 61) and the sinner's prayer (page 62);
6. what's required, if anything, to keep our salvation (page 65);
7. can unforgiveness cause us to lose our salvation (page 70);
8. is communion symbolic or literal (page 73); and
9. other Catholic teachings on salvation (page 94).

God is Holy: Are We to be Holy Too

God wants us to be holy.

- ❑ *1 Peter 1:16 because it is written, "**You shall be holy** for I am holy."*

We know we're not holy based on our efforts. The solution for mankind was God sending Jesus to the cross for all our sins, enabling us to get in right standing with God. Unfortunately, while God wants all to be saved, those who don't profess Christ as Lord and don't want a relationship with Him won't make it to heaven, but will end up in hell.

- ❑ *1 John 1:7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and **the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.***
- ❑ *1 Timothy 2:4 **who desires all men to be saved** and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*
- ❑ *Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the **free gift of God is eternal life** in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
- ❑ *Mark 9:7 And if your eye is causing you to sin, throw it away; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be thrown into **hell**.*

CREATED FOR PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP

A verse that always gets my attention is Matthew 7:23.

- ❑ *Matthew 7:23 And then I will declare to them, '**I never knew you;** depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'*

Ouch. Jesus didn't tell people to depart just because they practiced lawlessness. He told people to depart because He '*never knew*' them. The word '*knew*' is derived from the Greek word '*ginoska*' [G1097] which Strong's defines in part as '*... come to know ... to become acquainted with, to know*'. God communicated with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. God had a personal relationship with each of them, relationships that involved 2-way communications.

This concept of knowing or not knowing God was seen in many places in the Old Testament. One example was Samuel who had previously been dedicated to God by his mother Hannah, but at this point in time still did not know God.

- ❑ *1 Samuel 3:7 Now **Samuel did not yet know the Lord**, nor had the word of the Lord yet been revealed to him.*

Sin changed Adam and Eve's relationship with God as it led to God kicking them out of the Garden of Eden. Sin led to their separation from God, an outcome that plagues people to this day. Fortunately, through the cross, Jesus paid the penalty for **ALL** sins which removed the separation between human beings and God. We can now approach God directly - if we want to do so.

- 4:1 Isn't it reasonable to believe Jesus's death and shed blood enables us to have the kind of personal relationship with God resembling what God had with Adam and Eve? If not, why not?
- 4:2 When we seek salvation and eternal life in heaven, doesn't that involve coming into an intimate, personal relationship with God starting here on earth and continuing on into heaven? And if we don't want and seek this kind of personal, 2-way relationship here on earth, don't we risk being told to depart when we come face to face with God upon our death - even if we do amazing signs and wonders in Jesus's name?
- ❑ *Matthew 7:21 "**Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of My Father** who is in heaven will enter. 22 Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' 23 **And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; leave Me,** you who practice lawlessness.'*

BASICS OF BORN AGAIN

- ❑ *John 3:3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless one is born again** he cannot see the kingdom of God."*
- ❑ *John 3:7 Do not be amazed that I said to you, '**You must be born again.**'*
- ❑ *1 Peter 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us **to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection** of Jesus Christ from the dead,*

- ❑ *1 Peter 1:23 for you **have been born again** not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.*

In the Greek

The word 'born' is derived from the Greek word 'gennao' [G1080]. Gennao is used 97 times and usually relates to a physical birth beginning with all those begats in Matthew. Spiritual birth is referenced about 10 times including Galatians 4:29.

- ❑ *Galatians 4:28 And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise. 29 But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him **who was born according to the Spirit**, so it is now also.*

The English word 'again' is derived from the Greek word 'anothen' [G509] which Thayer defines in part as '1. From above, from a higher place a. of things which come from heaven or God ... 3. anew, over again'. Being born again is something God does for us - from His heavenly place.

Without Jesus in our lives, we are spiritually dead; we have no relationship with God. When saved, Jesus comes in us, our spirits are born anew and come alive as we're made righteous - as we're made right with God.

- ❑ *2 Corinthians 13:5 Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that **Jesus Christ is in you** - unless indeed you fail the test?*
- ❑ *Ephesians 2:1 And you were **dead in your trespasses and sins**,*
- ❑ *Romans 8:10 If Christ is in you, though the **body is dead because of sin**, yet **the spirit is alive because of righteousness**.*

Nicodemus and Being Born Again

The state of separation between God and humans due to sin was the central topic of discussion between Jesus and Nicodemus in John 3.

- ❑ *John 3:1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; 2 this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." 3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.**"*
- ❑ *4 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?" 5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.** 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*
- ❑ *7 Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You **must be born again**.' 8 The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit." 9 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can these things be?"*

Born of Spirit

Most Bible teachers believe the reference to being 'born of spirit' relates to our spiritual birth wherein our spirit is made new - our spirit is born again. Our spirit,

4: Born Again/Salvation

which was dead and separated from God due to sin, comes alive when we're saved, when we're washed clean, when we enter into a new relationship with God.

- ❑ *1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the **blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.***
- ❑ *2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ, **he is a new creature;** the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*

A key reason we are a new creation is that our spirit joins with Holy Spirit as one - a rather significant benefit and impactful event for any human.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 6:17 But the **one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him.***

This need for our spirits to be saved is supported by Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians where a man was engaged in sexual sin. Action was required.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 5:1 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you ... 5 I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, **so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.***

Born of Water

Considerable disagreement exists, however, on what is meant by 'born of water'. The two most common alternatives are physical birth and water baptism.

- ❑ *John 3:5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God ... 9 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can these things be?" 10 Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things?***

- 4:3 When Jesus wondered why Nicodemus doesn't know these things, Jesus could have been mocking Nicodemus. However, given Nicodemus was sincerely seeking the truth, is it likely that Jesus would mock him? Isn't it likely Jesus's reference to born of water was about something that would have been obvious to Nicodemus? Such as when one is physically born?

i: Physical birth

If 'born of water' refers to our physical birth, Nicodemus would have understood. Additional support for this alternative is found in verses 5 and 6.

- ❑ *John 3:5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless **one is born of water and the Spirit** he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6 That which is **born of the flesh is flesh**, and that which **is born of the Spirit is spirit.***

The English word 'water' in verse 5 is derived from the Greek phrase 'hudor hudatos' [G5204] which is defined as actual physical water. The English word 'flesh' is derived from the Greek word 'sarx' [G4561] which is defined in part as physical. Both water and flesh are physical elements on this earth that would be consistent with a physical birth.

- 4:4 As '*born of the Spirit is spirit*' in verse 6 relates to a birth in verse 5, wouldn't it follow that '*born of the flesh is flesh*' in verse 6 also relates closer to a birth - i.e. physical birth (flesh) - than to water baptism?

ii: Water Baptism

Nicodemus was most likely familiar with John the Baptist's Baptism of Repentance, although that doesn't mean he fully understood it. Nicodemus would have been familiar with the original waters on earth, the flood, the passing of the people of Israel through the Red Sea and the Jordan River.

- 4:5 Before Nicodemus spoke with Jesus, there had been a foreshadowing of today's water baptism. However, could Nicodemus have been expected to know what water baptism would mean after the cross given the limited information on water baptism in the Bible before Jesus spoke to Nicodemus?

I personally believe born of water refers to physical birth. If you believe it refers to water baptism, then shouldn't the evidence be clear that water baptism is required for salvation? Roman Catholicism and some Protestant denominations teach exactly that - water baptism is required for salvation. But is it? **CEASED?** discusses this issue later in Chapter 4. Chapter 10 also reviews Acts 2:38 - Peter's famous: "*Repent and be baptized*" - and why it may not even refer to water baptism.

REQUIREMENTS OF SALVATION

(1) Repentance and Conversion

So how does one get to be saved? John the Baptist, a forerunner of Jesus, gives one key indication. We need to repent.

- ❑ *Matthew 3:2* "**Repent**, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."
- ❑ *Matthew 3:11* "As for me, I baptize you with water for **repentance**, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

During Jesus's ministry, His message was similar - repent.

- ❑ *Matthew 4:17* From that time Jesus began to preach, and say, "**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**"

After the cross, Peter explained what happened at Pentecost when bystanders witnessed tongues of fire and the ~120 speaking in tongues. When the Jewish people realized they had contributed to Jesus being crucified, they were deeply impacted and asked what they needed to do. The first thing Peter said was they needed to repent.

- ❑ *Acts 2:37* Now when they heard this, they were pierced in their heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, **what shall we do?**"
- ❑ *Acts 2:38* Peter said to them, "**Repent** ..."

4: Born Again/Salvation

Peter repeated the requirement that every person needed to repent.

- ❑ Acts 3:19 Therefore **repent** and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;
- ❑ Acts 26:20 but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they **should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance.**

So what is repentance?

Greek and Hebrew

In the New Testament:

- ❖ The English word 'repent' is derived from the Greek word 'metanoeo' [G3340] which Thayer defines in part as 'to **change one's mind for better**, heartily to amend with abhorrence one's past sins'.
- ❖ The English word 'repentance' is derived from the Greek word 'metanoia' [G3341] which Thayer defines in part as 'a **change of mind**, as it appears to one who repents'.

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for repent is 'nacham' [H5162] which primarily means '**to be sorry or to comfort oneself**'.

4:6 When looking at both the Hebrew and Greek definitions, we see that repentance involves both a) being sorry and b) changing one's mind, one's way of thinking. And since our way of thinking influences what we say and do, would it be surprising to find true repentance changes the very way we live and that it becomes evident to those we are closest to? And as a result, after we're born again, shouldn't we see other changes including a greater presence of the fruits of the Spirit?

- ❑ Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control;** against such things there is no law.

God Repented

In Genesis, God was sorry for creating human beings. He was sorry He created us. Isn't that a rather humbling thought?

- ❑ Genesis 6:6 And it **repented [nacham] the Lord** that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. (KJV)
- ❑ Genesis 6:6 The Lord **was sorry [nacham]** that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. (NASB)

God was also sorry for other things such as appointing Saul to be King.

- ❑ 1 Samuel 15:35 Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death; for Samuel grieved over Saul. And the Lord **regretted [nacham]** that He had made Saul king over Israel.

God also changed his mind in the Old Testament.

- ❑ *Exodus 32:14 So the **Lord changed His mind [nacham]** about the harm which He said He would do to His people. (NASB)*
- ❑ *Amos 7:6 The Lord **changed His mind [nacham]** about this. "This too shall not be," said the Lord God.*
- ❑ *Jonah 3:9 "Who knows, God may turn and **relent [nacham]** and withdraw His burning anger so that we will not perish." 10 When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it.*

4:7 Given God repented but doesn't sin, doesn't that show repentance is not always directly linked to sin?

Sorry and Changing Wrong Thinking

Before coming to Christ, many of us are filled with negative things in our hearts - regrets, guilt, shame, etc. On the other hand, others may feel pretty good about themselves. The reality, however, is we're all sinners. We may be sorry for our sins, but too often the reason we're sorry is that we got caught, or we're worried or fearful about the potential consequences of our sins in our earthly lives. Our selfish hearts.

4:8 When we do something wrong and it negatively impacts someone we love, we're grieved. We're sorry. When we sin, we do wrong against God. Given that, shouldn't we be grieved and genuinely sorry for our sins? And shouldn't it be extremely disconcerting if we aren't genuinely sorry for our sins?

Godly sorrow leads to true repentance which is a changing of our hearts and minds so we do not want to sin that way again.

- ❑ *2 Corinthians 7:10 For the **sorrow** that is according to the will of God **produces a repentance** without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.*

With true repentance, our desire to sin changes. We often become somewhat like the reformed smoker. Reformer smokers often can't stand someone smoking, and the thought of smoking is not even on their radar. It often disgusts them. When we truly turn our hearts and ways of thinking towards God, God becomes central in our lives. We don't seek behavior modification so that we don't sin; we pursue God who changes our hearts so we have no desire to sin. For many of us, this can be a battle as our soul and body (our flesh) can have residues of desiring sin in some areas. Or when trials hit, we can resort to old habits of hiding away in our old comforts - food, alcohol, drugs, porn - instead of turning to God and reading His Word, praying, listening to teachings, entering into praise and worship, or calling another believer. We must remember that if we struggle with any sin, we can always ask God to change our hearts. I believe God will honor that kind of prayer. Sometimes He responds immediately or sometimes over time. Whatever way He chooses, God does respond, and in so doing, we will be changed and become more and more like Christ.

Sin separates us from God and if we don't want our relationship with God to be compromised, we will turn our attention to things that honor God.

4: Born Again/Salvation

- ❑ *Philippians 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.*

- 4:9 I know people who sin, repent and confess their sins. In their minds, they are now good to go. Then, they sin again. And again. I can relate; this was me for a season. But repenting in token words is like painting an old rickety fence and not replacing the rotten boards and posts. It may look good for a while, but the sins/problems will re-surface. Overcoming sins can be a difficult battle. However, if God is a priority and we truly want to stop sinning:
 - i. don't we need to take concrete, even difficult steps;
 - ii. don't we need to seek Him and ask Him to change our hearts so that we have no desire to sin; and
 - iii. won't there be clear evidence of our repentance as per Acts 26:20?
- ❑ *Acts 26:20 ... they are to repent and turn to God, performing deeds consistent with repentance.*

Be Converted

As mentioned, Peter repeated the requirement to repent in Acts 3. But Peter also states we need to be converted or to return.

- ❑ *Acts 3:19 **Repent ye** therefore, and be **converted** [epistrepho G1994], that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. (KJV)*
- ❑ *Acts 3:19 Therefore **repent** and **return**, so that your sins may be wiped away, ... (NASB)*

The Greek word underpinning the English words 'converted' in the KJV and 'return' in the NASB is 'epistrepho' [G1994]. Strong's defines epistrepho in part as to 'come, convert, turn or return'.

Some may view converting as separate from repentance. To me, both reflect the same issue - changing our way of thinking from what we have to what God wants. But to do that, don't we need a good reason - an incentive as it were - to make such changes? That reason - that incentive - is the person of Jesus which leads us to the second aspect of salvation: faith, believing, trusting.

(2) By Faith, Believing, Trusting

Through God's grace, He provides a way that enables us to be saved through the person of Jesus. To be born again, we need to have faith that Jesus is the Way which means we need faith that what God's Word says about Jesus is true.

- ❑ *Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through **faith** ...*
- ❑ *Hebrews 11:1 Now **faith** is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*
- ❑ *Hebrews 11:6 And **without faith it is impossible to please Him**: for **he who comes to God must believe that He is**, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.*

Faith is a central part of relationships with God, starting in Old Testament days and carrying on right through to today. Consider Abraham.

- ❑ *Romans 4: 2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture say? **“Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”***
- ❑ *Hebrews 11:17 By **faith Abraham**, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son;*

Abraham’s works were important to God, but they weren’t the key. It was Abraham’s belief, his trusting, his having faith in God that was the key. He was willing to sacrifice Isaac, because he believed God would raise Isaac from the dead since many promises were to be fulfilled through Isaac.

- ❑ *Hebrews 11:18 it was he to whom it was said, “In Isaac your descendants shall be called.” 19 He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.*

I can’t imagine what went through the minds of Abraham and Isaac on that day. While different, Romans 10:9 tells us God also gives all of us at least one ‘faith test’ - do we believe **in our heart** that God raised Jesus from the dead.

- ❑ *Romans 10:9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and **believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead**, you will be saved;*

Having faith *and* believing in our hearts is essential. Having said that, is there a material difference between the two? The word ‘faith’ in Hebrews 11:17 is based on the Greek word ‘pistis’ [G4102] while the word ‘believed’ in Romans 4:3 is based on the Greek word ‘pisteuo’ [G4100]. Both words mean to believe and to have trust. Pisteuo is derived from pistis, and thus from the standpoint of salvation and my limited brainpower, I view faith and believing as effectively meaning the same thing ... do we trust in God ... do we believe in God ... do we have faith in God?

Is Believing Enough by Itself

I’ve heard the comment that believing in Jesus is all that is needed to be saved. One simply needs to believe God for who He is, what He did, what He says etc.

- 4:10 If this is your belief, consider satan and his army of demons who all believe Jesus can do anything, who know what He did, and know who He is. But will their belief get them into heaven? Methinks not.
- 4:11 Some Christians say they believe Christ was and is God, was crucified and resurrected, but He is not the only Way. Rather, there are many roads to heaven. Does that work for you? It doesn’t for me and these broad, universal salvation doctrines are extremely disconcerting.

Putting Belief in Context

English words have limitations. Greek and Hebrew words often have multiple ways of being used. In the case of believing, does it perhaps have a deeper meaning, one wherein we just know in our knower that Jesus is God, our savior? Our belief in Him is not only believing several things to be true, but we also have a belief, a trust,

4: Born Again/Salvation

a confidence in the person of Jesus Christ, and in the character of God. It's more than an intellectual exercise of knowing a bunch of facts which is why Romans 10:9 says we must believe *'in our heart'*.

- ❑ *Romans 10:9 ... **and believe in your heart** that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;*

Some simplistic analogies of *'believing'* would be a child believing in her parents to do the right thing, players believing in their coach to teach them properly, or a crew believing in their foreman to help them deal with any unexpected problems that may arise on the job site. They just know, they have faith, they believe in, they trust in their parents, their coach, their foreman. And is this one reason why God's Word says we're to come to God as a child - filled with childlike belief and trust?

- ❑ *Mark 10:15 Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all.*

A Package Deal

In my view, repenting, believing, and having faith go together. In order to repent and change our way of thinking, we require clarity as to what or who to change our thinking towards. And in order to have faith and believe in that person or thing, we need a good reason to do so.

Without Christ, we're sinners destined for eternal separation from God with God in heaven and us in hell. God, through His Son Jesus, provides the amazing gift of salvation that enables sinners to take a different path and gain eternal life in heaven. In order to have a relationship with Jesus and partake in His gift of salvation, however, we need to change our way of thinking (repentance) towards Jesus, and believe Jesus for who He is and what He offers. In order to do so, we need to believe - have faith - that God's Word about Jesus is true. Repentance, believing, and faith are not independent steps - they're pieces that come together to create a pathway from our living on the road to a dead-end pit, to living on a new road alongside Christ, the end of which is an amazing and eternal life in heaven.

(3) Confess with Our Mouths

God created the universe by speaking it into existence. The spoken word was associated with power many other times in the Bible. There certainly appears to be blessings from the spoken word. Not surprisingly then, Romans 10:9 tells us we need to not only believe with our heart per above, but to confess/speak with our mouth that Jesus is Lord and was resurrected from the dead.

- ❑ *Romans 10:9 that **if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord**, and **believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead**, you will be saved; 10 for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. 11 For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed."*

4:12 Notice the second word in Romans 10:9 is the word *'if'*. By itself, does that indicate that if we don't confess Jesus as Lord or we don't believe He was resurrected from the dead, that we won't be saved? More on this in a bit.

TWO CONTENTIOUS REQUIREMENTS?

(1) Works

A controversial aspect of salvation is whether or not we can somehow initially earn and then continue to maintain or keep our salvation through good works.

- ❑ *James 2:24 You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.*
- ❑ *James 2:26 For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.*

Some people believe the works above are required to earn or maintain one's salvation. Others believe the works referenced above serve not as a requirement of salvation, but as proof of salvation. In other words, when we're born again, will our works give tangible evidence that we've been impacted by God?

Other scriptures show we're saved by our faith and by accepting the free gift of salvation made available by God's Grace.

- ❑ *Ephesians 2:8 For **by grace you have been saved through faith**; and that not of yourselves: it is **the gift of God**: 9 **Not as a result of works**, so that no one may boast.*
 - ❑ *Romans 11:6 But if it **is by grace**, it is **no longer on the basis of works**, otherwise **grace is no longer grace**.*
 - ❑ *Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death; but the **free gift of God is eternal life** in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
- 4:13 Based on these scriptures, could the works in James 2 above relate in part to repenting, believing and/or confessing with our mouths? And if we sincerely repent, believe and confess, aren't we then positioned to receive the gift of salvation per Ephesians 2:8 and Romans 6:23? If not, why not?

If we think we can earn our salvation through our works, Romans 11:6 above tells us God's grace would no longer be grace.

- 4:14 And on the notion that salvation is a free gift, how can we earn it if indeed it is free?
- 4:15 When we believe our works will help get us to heaven, aren't we effectively saying/believing we can do what God couldn't?
- 4:16 Are we also potentially saying what Jesus did on the cross is not enough?
- 4:17 And for some of us, do we feel deep down in our soul that we cannot believe what the Bible says - that we're justified and redeemed by Christ alone? That we believe the gift of salvation may be for others, but not for us?

Moreover, consider Romans 8:32.

- ❑ *Romans 8:32 **He who did not spare His own Son**, but delivered Him over for us all, how **will He not also with Him freely give us all things**?*
- 4:18 Doesn't Romans 8:32 show that God went to extraordinary lengths to give us all things freely? And don't **all** things include everything - including the gift of salvation?

4: Born Again/Salvation

In Biblical times, the Jewish people were very familiar with the 613 laws of the Old Covenant. Works were central to their faith. Jesus made it clear that the key was no longer their works, but their faith in Christ and what He did on the cross.

4:19 For some of us, is it simply too good to think that the framework of works in the Old Testament has been replaced with a relationship with God involving faith, belief, and trust in Christ and what He did on the cross? And is such a belief especially difficult for those of us whose identity has been one of doing something to prove we earned it? Or that we're not good enough to get anything so good - for free?

The Roman Catholic church is often viewed as teaching that works are required to be initially saved. My research showed inconsistent teachings in this area as some Catholics believe and some do not believe we can earn our salvation through works. From my limited perspective, it seems many Catholics agree with Ephesians 2:8-9 that initial salvation is not earned.

- ❑ *Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

Where the issue of works comes into play to a much larger extent in Catholic teachings is that works are often deemed to be required to maintain one's salvation. I disagree, and share more on this later in Chapter 4.

If you've never studied the issue of salvation in the bible before, consider reading the books of John and Romans, and ask Holy Spirit to speak to you. Amongst other things, you may gain a new appreciation of God's love for mankind, and thus His love for you. God gives us great things we don't deserve (i.e., by His grace, we can have eternal life) and does not give us negative things we do deserve (i.e., by His mercy, we do not automatically get eternal death).

(2) Water Baptism

As mentioned, many followers of Christ believe we need to be water baptized to be saved. Many other followers think otherwise. Acts 2:38 is a key scripture that has convinced many people to believe that water baptism is required for salvation.

- ❑ *Acts 2:38 Peter said to them, "**Repent, and each of you be baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

A full discussion on Acts 2:38 is given in the last part of Chapter 10. I deferred this discussion as I felt it would be more fruitful after the essentials of the Baptism into the Body of Christ (done by Holy Spirit when born again) and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit (done by Jesus) are clarified in Chapters 6 through 10 of **CEASED?**. With that background, I will lay out several reasons why Peter's reference to baptism in Acts 2:38 is not to water baptism, but to the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. I can hear the word 'Heretic' coming out in droves.

For now, let's look at the evidence as to why many believers, including myself, don't believe water baptism is required for salvation.

Original Apostles and ~120 at Pentecost

First, consider the original apostles and the rest of the ~120 who were gathered together on the morning of Pentecost. There is no mention that any of these individuals were baptized in water after the cross. There is no mention of their being water baptized:

- ❖ on resurrection Sunday evening;
- ❖ during the following 40 days leading up to Christ's ascension;
- ❖ in the 7 days between Jesus's ascension and Pentecost; nor
- ❖ at Pentecost or any time after Pentecost.

To be fair, Jesus also did not mention repentance, believing etc., to these first disciples, but is that because they were already born again on resurrection Sunday evening right after they encountered Jesus? If you don't believe that is the timing of their being born again, Chapter 6 covers this issue in detail.

Paul and Water Baptism

Paul baptized individuals in water. However, Paul never mentioned water baptism was required for salvation in his teachings. In fact, Paul said very clearly that water baptism was not something Jesus sent him to do. His focus was to be on the gospel which includes what Jesus did for us on the cross.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 1:17 **For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void.***

While Peter was the first apostle to take the gospel to the Gentiles at Cornelius's home, Paul was later entrusted to take the gospel to the Gentiles.

- ❑ *Galatians 2:7 But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised 8 (for He who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles),*
- 4:20 Paul led the way in taking the Good News to the Gentiles. If water baptism was necessary for salvation, is it reasonable to expect Jesus would have sent Paul to baptize in water?
- 4:21 Is it reasonable to expect that Paul, who scribed the most books in the New Testament, would have made it abundantly clear at least once when he presented the gospel that water baptism was required if indeed it is required?
- 4:22 Given Paul never once said water baptism was required to be saved, then shouldn't other New Testament writers have made it crystal clear (which they don't) that water baptism is required to be saved? After all, salvation is a rather important issue.

Paul and 12 Disciples at Ephesus

A good example of the importance of water baptism is found when Paul met with the 12 disciples at Ephesus.

- ❑ *Acts 19:1 It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through*

4: Born Again/Salvation

*the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found **some disciples**. 2 He said to them, "**Did you receive the Holy Spirit** when **you believed?**" And they said to him, "No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." 3 And he said, "**Into what then were you baptized?**" **And they said, "Into John's baptism."** 4 Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus." 5 **When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.** 6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, **the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying.***

- 4:23 Paul never talked to the 12 disciples about God's holiness, sin, the need for a savior, the cross, repentance, believing in Christ, confession of their faith - nothing of the sort. Furthermore, given Paul refers to the 12 individuals as 'disciples' who 'believed', doesn't that mean the 12 individuals were already born again when Paul first met them, that they were already saved? If not, why not? And why would God's word call them believers if they weren't truly born again?

God's Word is so rich. These first 6 verses in Acts 19 provide one example where 4 different baptisms are involved. Chapters 6, 7, 8, and 10 describe these and other baptisms in more detail. Let me briefly summarize.

1. 'Baptism into the Body of Christ' which is done by Holy Spirit automatically occurs when we're born again. This baptism is inferred when the 12 individuals were called believers (verse 1);
2. John the Baptist's 'Baptism of Repentance' (verses 3 and 4);
3. 'Water Baptism' (verse 5); and
4. 'Baptism in the Holy Spirit' which is done by Jesus and results in Holy Spirit coming 'on' or 'upon' a person (verse 6).

Per Chapter 6, when we're born again, Holy Spirit 1) automatically comes in [en] us and 2) automatically baptizes us into the Body of Christ. Since the 12 were already believers as per verse 1, Paul knew Holy Spirit was already in them and they had received this first baptism. As a result, when Paul asked them if they had received the Holy Spirit, he was not referring to their born-again experience and their Baptism into the Body of Christ. If he was, Paul's response to their '*... not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit*' would be to explain how they had already received these blessings. But Paul didn't do that. Instead, he wanted to clarify what baptism(s) they had received, baptism(s) that were not automatically given to them.

After they told Paul they had received John the Baptist's baptism of repentance, Paul took action to get these 12 disciples - 12 men &/or women who were already born again - i) water baptized and then ii) Baptized in the Holy Spirit. This Baptism in the Holy Spirit resulted in Holy Spirit coming on them, and their starting to operate in 2 of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts - prophecy and tongues.

- 4:24 Doesn't this experience at Ephesus indicate a person should both be water baptized and Baptized in the Holy Spirit after one is saved, but that neither is required to be saved? If not, how do we view these events at Ephesus?

Peter and Water Baptism

In Acts 10, Peter is found sharing the gospel with Cornelius, friends, and family.

- ❑ Acts 10:44 While **Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those** who were listening to the message. 45 All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the **gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out** on the Gentiles also. 46 For they were hearing **them speaking with tongues and exalting God**. Then Peter answered, 47 “Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized **who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did**, can he?” 48 And **he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ**. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days.

Speaking in tongues is 1 of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts which, per Chapter 12 of **CEASED?**, are accessible after being Baptized in the Holy Spirit. Per Chapters 7 and 8 of **CEASED?**, the pouring out of the Holy Spirit referred to in verse 45 refers to Baptism in the Holy Spirit, events prophesied by both John the Baptist and Jesus.

- ❑ Mark 1:8 I baptized you with water; **but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit**.
- ❑ Acts 1:5 for John baptized with water, but you **will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now**.” ... 8 but you **will receive power** when the **Holy Spirit has come upon [epi] you**; ...

Peter and other early disciples received their Baptism of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost where they all spoke in tongues.

- ❑ Acts 2:2 And suddenly there came from heaven a **noise like a violent rushing wind**, and it **filled the whole house** ... 3 And there appeared to them **tongues as of fire distributing themselves**, and they **rested on each one of them**. 4 And they were **all filled with the Holy Spirit** and began to **speak with other tongues**, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

Per Acts 10:44-46 above, when Peter observed Cornelius, his family, and friends speaking in tongues, Peter recognized they must have been Baptized in the Holy Spirit. In other words, the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles just as Peter and other disciples had received at Pentecost.

In addition to Peter and other early disciples being Baptized in the Holy Spirit and Holy Spirit coming ‘upon’ them at Pentecost, Chapter 6 of **CEASED?** details another Holy Spirit experience where Holy Spirit came ‘in’ them on resurrection Sunday evening. Chapter 6 of **CEASED?** also provides several reasons as to why this ‘in’ experience where Jesus breathed on them and told them to receive the Holy Spirit is when Peter and the other early disciples were born again.

- ❑ John 20:19 So when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace be with you.” ... 21 So Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” 22 And when He had said this, **He breathed on them** and said to them, **“Receive the Holy Spirit**.

4: Born Again/Salvation

Returning to Cornelius, family and friends, Peter realized that in order to be Baptized in the Holy Spirit, these Gentiles must have also 'received' the Holy Spirit wherein Holy Spirit came 'in' them. In other words, they must have been born again which led Peter to water baptize this first group of Gentiles.

4:25 Given the importance of this example, let me try to break these events down into a bit more detail. So let me ask. In your view, are the events of Acts 10:44-48 consistent with the following summary?

- i. When Peter saw these Gentiles speaking in tongues, he took that as evidence that Cornelius, family, and friends must have been Baptized in the Holy Spirit where Holy Spirit had come upon them (verses 44-46).
- ii. In order for these Gentiles to be Baptized in the Holy Spirit, Peter realized these Gentiles must also have been born again.
- iii. Given they must have been born again, Peter realized they had already received the Holy Spirit - the Holy Spirit 'in' experience - in the same way Peter and the other disciples had received Holy Spirit on resurrection Sunday evening when they were born again.
- iv. When Peter realized that Cornelius, family, and friends must have been born again - and thus had Holy Spirit in [en] them - Peter recognized the gift of salvation that had been given to the Jewish people had also now been given to the Gentiles.
- v. And finally: given these Gentiles had received the gift of salvation, Peter knew he needed to treat the Gentiles in the same way as he did Jewish believers. As a result, Peter took steps to have them baptized in water.
- vi. If you don't believe the above summary reflects Peter's train of thought, what was Peter's thinking?

4:26 Given water baptism occurred not only after witnessing the speaking in tongues/Baptism of the Holy Spirit but occurred as a result of Peter witnessing their speaking in tongues, doesn't that again provide strong evidence that water baptism is not required for salvation? If not, why not?

Mark 16:16

Mark 16:16 is also frequently used to claim water baptism is needed to be saved.

- ❑ *Mark 16:16 He who has **believed** and **has been baptized** shall be saved; but he who has **disbelieved shall be condemned.***

4:27 If we look at the last half of the verse, it says that those who disbelieved shall be condemned. If water baptism was required for salvation, would it be reasonable to expect Mark 16:16 to also have included water baptism in the last section? In other words, if water baptism was required for salvation, wouldn't it be reasonable to expect Mark 16:16 to read something like "... he who has disbelieved or who has not been water baptized shall be condemned?". However, given Mark 16:16 does not state a person is condemned if they aren't water baptized, doesn't this further support the argument that water baptism is not required to be saved? If not, why not?

Thief on the Cross

Many apologists cite the example of the thief on the cross as another example of a person who was saved but not water baptized. This is a unique setting, and I'm not sure it's appropriate to use as an overall guide. So, I don't.

1 Peter 3:21

1 Peter 3:21 reveals there is a baptism that now saves us.

- ❑ *1 Peter 3:20 who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah ... eight persons, were brought safely through the water. **21 Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you** - not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience - through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,*
- 4:28 When one is water baptized as an act of obedience, isn't the mere fact they were obedient an indication a person may be saved? But just because one has been obedient by getting water baptized, does that guarantee a person is actually saved?
- 4:29 Even if water baptism was part of the salvation formula, how could water baptism be the baptism in 1 Peter 3:21 given water baptism would not be the only 'component' by which one would be initially saved?
- 4:30 Per Chapter 6, when we're saved, Holy Spirit baptizes us into the Body of Christ. Holy Spirit comes to live in [en] us to guide us, convict us, and lead us into a life and person that pleases God. Sins in our life should decline over time, and if not, something is amiss. As a result, aren't we being saved not only from the long-term standpoint of gaining eternal salvation, but also by being 'saved' or prevented from sinning in our earthly lives after we're born again? And thus, is the baptism in 1 Peter 3:21 referring to the Baptism into the Body of Christ where Holy Spirit comes in [en] us to guide us, to convict us and to help enable us not to sin, as opposed to water baptism?

Is Water Baptism a Form of Works

- 4:31 Repentance, believing, and confessing are central to being born again. There is no physical act or work involved other than making a choice and confessing a sincere desire to pursue a relationship with Jesus. On the basis one believes that water baptism is a physical action, would water baptism be a form of works that goes against Ephesians 2:8-9?
 - ❑ *Ephesians 2:8 For **by grace you have been saved through faith**; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 **not as a result of works**, so that no one may boast.*

Examples

- 4:32 If water baptism was required for salvation, how do we deal with the fact there aren't multiple scriptures making this requirement crystal clear?

As mentioned, a scripture underpinning Catholic and some Protestant teachings that water baptism is required for salvation is Acts 2:38. Chapter 10 in **CEASED?** discusses 5 reasons why Acts 2:38 may not actually be referring to water baptism.

4: Born Again/Salvation

My Struggle in Believing I was Saved

For many years after being born again, my head knew I was saved. But in my heart, I struggled that the truths of the Bible - that salvation was a gift, that I did not need to work for my salvation, that despite what I had done or not done, or said or not said - that salvation was still applicable to me. I didn't feel I was worthy of such a gift. My head knew what scriptures said, but it was a challenge getting my heart to go along. There were so many days when I could accept the fact that Jesus did what He did for the benefit of everybody else ... but ... I doubted His sacrifice, His Gift, His amazing blessings applied to me.

My struggle was primarily because of how I had shortchanged my children as a father. If, in your heart, you struggle to accept God's goodness and His gift of salvation, if you don't feel you're worthy, rest assured you're not alone. I get it. But here's the deal. None of us are worthy - not you and certainly not me. But we humans, God's creations, are precious in the eyes of God. Jesus loves you and wants to have an everlasting relationship with you, starting now just as you are. You don't need to get right; just come as you are and God will change you. It is a gift of love beyond human understanding. This may sound trite and filled with Christianese, but it is the truth. If there are deep pains, regrets, guilt, or shame in your soul, I am so sorry. But please know, you do belong. Jesus did die for you. He does want a relationship with you. He wants to heal those deep soul wounds. And there are brothers and sisters in Christ willing to come alongside you.

My wife Lori is an amazing woman. She encouraged me and frequently spoke truths over me. Lori can be gentle, but she has her voice and can be direct when needed. One day when I was struggling with accepting God's goodness, Lori asked me, gently but clearly, the following:

"Don, would you like Jesus to have taken one more lash - just for you?"

I broke down and wept. And as I first typed and later edited this discussion on multiple occasions, I wept almost every time. Picturing Jesus dying a horrific death on the cross knowing He died in part for my sins so that I could receive His gift of salvation, a gift of an eternal relationship with Him - was and is still overwhelming at times. If you struggle in accepting God's goodness, I found if I take my eyes off me, put them on Him, and think about what He has done, I appreciate these Biblical truths more and more.

PROCESS OF 'GETTING SAVED'

To recap, God's grace coupled with Jesus's death and resurrection enables the free gift of salvation to be made available. Repentance involving changing one's mind and choosing to turn to God, having faith/belief in Jesus, His shed blood, death and resurrection, and verbally confessing our commitment to Jesus are the central tenants to salvation.

Having said that, consider this. Before we're born again, few of us have much of an appreciation of sin, holiness, the cross, the shed blood and crucifixion, the resurrection, or what repentance truly means. We may have heard someone tell us about the gospel, but if new believers were to take a short test on the theology of sin, salvation, being born again or the gospel, I suggest most would fail.

Religious Church Goer to Born Again Follower of Christ

I starting going to church in Calgary in my late 40's. I did the 'right' things that might cause another person to think I was a Christian. Looking back, I doubt I was born again. About 11 years ago, at age 56, I was broke financially, broken emotionally, and spiritually dead. I was lost, didn't care about anything, and too empty to care much about myself or anyone else. I was also prideful, arrogant, stubborn, and selfish. I was battling a 40-year addiction to pornography that started in my teens. I was a mess. One morning, I cried out to Jesus in desperation, and that is when I believe I was truly born again. No Biblical words. No sinner's prayer. Just a desperate cry for help. And I know I was born again because things immediately began to change inside of me. For one, I started to dislike the porn, then later hated the porn after I was Baptized in the Holy Spirit and Fire. I was a different person, a new creation in some ways. God is so good. When I truly wanted to get free of the porn, God set me totally and permanently free. He doesn't want us to have behavior modification; He wants to give us freedom and victory. He gave it to me.

So yes, while I had heard teachings for years about repentance, confession, believing, and having faith and all of that, I had minimal understanding of what it really meant. My spiritual eyes and ears were closed for the most part even though I was a regular attendee at more than one church, tithed to some degree, and helped out through ushering, stacking chairs, and parking cars.

Salvation in some ways can seem to be a fairly involved process. But there is also the simplicity of it being a heart issue - the broken and contrite heart of a person who seeks after God, understanding little but wanting whatever God has to offer.

- ❑ *Psalm 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.*

Sin separated us from God, but through His goodness, God provided a way that gives us new life in Christ. I believe the only reason I am alive today is because of God's gift of salvation, His ongoing pursuit of me, and His willingness to answer my cry for help.

Sinner's Prayer

Many believers focus on getting a non-believer to a place where they give their heart to the Lord by reciting a form of 'sinner's prayer'. A short-form version of such a prayer is as follows.

"Lord Jesus, I know I'm a sinner, and I ask for Your forgiveness. I believe You died for my sins and that You rose from the dead. I turn from my sins and invite You to come into my heart and life. I want to trust and follow You as my Lord and Savior. Amen."

After a person says this prayer, they are then congratulated and welcomed into the family of Christ. We often add them to our personal salvation count. I attended a church for a season where the message could be on a non-salvation topic such as

4: Born Again/Salvation

5 steps to a better work week. Towards the end of the service, an altar call would be given inviting those who wanted to accept Jesus into their heart to raise their hand. While these individuals continued to sit in their chairs, they repeated the sinner's prayer along with the entire congregation. Once this was done, they would be welcomed into the family of Christ. No discussion on sin, repentance, the cross, shed blood, resurrection, Lordship, etc. Nothing.

I typically have no idea what is truly going on in any person's heart or mind, but it concerns me that we can automatically state that a person is born again by simply saying such a prayer. Did this prayer accomplish what it intended to do, or was it more of a feel-good insurance policy against which no claim could be filed? I wonder how many people are walking around today believing they are Christians because they said a sinner's prayer, but who aren't truly saved. I have the same concern for those who profess to be Christians because *'they are good people'*, *'were raised in a Christian home'*, *'have gone to church all their life'* or *'were water baptized as a baby'*.

Believers are called to make disciples. To me, part of discipling someone starts before the *'sinner's prayer'* or equivalent. I believe some elementary teachings of sin, of their need to realize they are a sinner, of their need for a savior (using the Roman's Road or Ray Comfort's approach are good for this), and their need to change their minds, to make Jesus central in their lives and to be their Lord. The basics of Jesus's shed blood, death, burial and resurrection, the gift of salvation, and the grace and mercy of God are all important to address, albeit very briefly. With this in mind, a discussion of what a sinner's prayer represents would then seem to be in order.

4:33 If the focus is getting someone to say a sinner's prayer, could doing so be potentially irresponsible if the person hasn't truly decided to change their way of thinking and want Jesus in their lives? Could they just be saying it as an insurance policy or to be polite? Could we leave the five and fly interaction (five minutes together before we fly away/leave) believing they are saved when they aren't?

4:34 God's word tells us we are to make disciples. As a result, when someone does accept the Lord, doesn't the person who led them to Jesus have a responsibility to help the new believer get started? Giving them a Bible? Helping them locate a quality church near where they live? Recommending some online Bible teachers that are solid on the basics? Praying for them?

When we do lead someone in a form of sinner's prayer, I think it's wise to help them understand that they probably understand very little about God, about what Jesus did for them, about what is involved in having Jesus as Lord and Savior - and that those limitations are perfectly ok and normal. People need to understand that God knows where they're at, and He simply wants them to come to Him just as they are, but with a sincere heart to seek and be with Him. And to grow to be more and more like Jesus.

CEASED? 2ND EDITION

If you're inclined to use an expanded sinner's prayer, here are a few thoughts.

Limited Knowledge / Heart Condition: *"Lord Jesus, I come to you today with limited understanding, but what I lack in understanding, hopefully my heart makes up for it in desire. I thank You for offering me the free gift of eternal life, the gift of having an eternal, personal relationship with You.*

Acknowledge am a sinner and need a Savior: *Jesus, I realize I'm a sinner although I don't understand the extent to which I have sinned. I believe that my sins prevent me from having a personal relationship with You.*

Believe in Jesus: *While I don't claim to know a whole lot, I do believe Jesus that You are God. You humbled yourself and came to earth where You paid the penalty for my sins through Your mangled body, Your shed blood, Your death on the cross. I also believe that You were resurrected on the 3rd day, and that You are the one and only true Savior - The Christ, The Messiah, The Anointed One - not only for me but for all of mankind. I believe in You Jesus and thank You for the gift of salvation where Your shed blood washes me clean, and enables me to enter into a relationship with You, Holy Spirit and Father God.*

Repent: *I am truly sorry for my sins Jesus and I want to change my life so that it is built around You. I don't know what that all looks like, but I trust that You will help me live a life that is new, and involves me turning from my old ways to a new life where You are central, to a life that honors You, to a life where You are Lord and I am surrendered to You.*

Confess/Ask: *Jesus, I come to You and ask for Your forgiveness of my sins and that You change my heart and mind, that You help me turn away from my sins and things that aren't right, things and ways that aren't of You, and towards those things and ways that are of You. As my Lord and Savior, I ask You to come into my life and change me so that my life honors and pleases You. Please bring people into my life to come alongside me to help me walk more closely with You. Thank You Jesus. Amen."*

Having all said the above, every person's journey and situation is different. Some individuals are born again through the intellectual study of God's Word and realizing the truth as Holy Spirit speaks to them through the Bible. Others may be like me and find God out of desperate cries for help, or seeing His presence in His Creations in this world. Others may hear the gospel and just know they have to pursue Jesus, even though they understand virtually nothing. Others may have a powerful encounter with God. The words in a prayer, in whatever form they take if any, are key but I suggest the condition of one's heart is even more key. And thus,

4: Born Again/Salvation

we need to be careful not to try to always follow some standard formula. For some, their words may be few, as in my case, and simply a desperate cry of “Jesus, help me!”

As part of initial discipleship, I also suggest we make it clear that, if we are truly born again, there will be evidence in the days and weeks ahead. Our attitudes towards sins in our life will change, our desire to read God’s Word will change, our desire to be around believers will change, our demeanor will change. Whatever our situation, God will start changing us, and there should be evidence of change. And these changes will also involve changes in the fruit of the Spirit.

- ❑ *Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*

This transformation in our heart and life is part of sanctification where there is a noticeable shift away from sin and towards holiness. A person will usually know in their knower they are saved, because some transformation will have occurred. And how can it not? After all, as discussed in Chapter 6, Holy Spirit - God Almighty - comes in [en] us when we’re born again.

- 4:35 When we’re discipling believers or helping those seeking Jesus, again I ask, can we ever go wrong by asking Holy Spirit what He wants us to do or say?

‘KEEPING’ OUR SALVATION

After we’re born again, considerable disagreement exists as to whether or not good works are required to keep our salvation. Scripture certainly makes this topic an interesting one. For instance, we’re told to work out our salvation and that persevering in good works brings benefits related to immortality, to eternal life.

- ❑ *Philippians 2:12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your salvation** with fear and trembling;*
- ❑ *Romans 2:6 who will render to each person according to his deeds: 7 to those **who by perseverance in doing good seek** for glory and honor and **immortality, eternal life**;*

When we’re born again, there is no question we’re called to do good works.

- ❑ *Titus 2:14 who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, **zealous for good deeds**.*

The issue is whether works keep our salvation, or only bring rewards in heaven.

- ❑ *Matthew 5:12 Rejoice and be glad, for **your reward in heaven is great**; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*
- ❑ *1 Corinthians 3:11 For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work. 14 **If any man’s work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward**.*

Working out our salvation is a major and often controversial topic, and a full discussion is beyond the scope of **CEASED?**. I have a few comments though, beginning with these two scriptures:

- ❑ *Ephesians 1:13 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation - **having also believed**, you were **sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise**.*
 - ❑ *Romans 8:38 For I am convinced that **neither** death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, **will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.***
- 4:36 Do these scriptures indicate that once we're **truly** born again and saved, we're sealed and saved permanently? Or only temporarily?

Consider Galatians 3:24-29.

- ❑ *Galatians 3:24 Therefore the **Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ** so that **we may be justified by faith.** 25 **But now that faith has come,** we are **no longer under a tutor.** 26 For you **are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.** 27 For **all** of you who **were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.** 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for **you are all one in Christ Jesus.** 29 And **if you belong to Christ,** then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.*
- 4:37 When saved, Holy Spirit comes in [en] us. His Spirit and our spirit are one. Jesus is in us. We're a new creation. We're adopted into the family of God. We're sons and daughters of Christ. We're clothed with Christ. We're joint-heirs. We're one in Christ. We're seated in heavenly places with Christ. We're Christ's sent ones, His ambassadors. We're part of the royal priesthood. If we're God's children and belong to Him, other than a direct and clear rejection of Christ, can our status with God change? It would seem that is rather unlikely ... and then we come to scriptures such as Revelations 3:5.
- ❑ *Revelation 3:5 **He who overcomes** will thus be clothed in white garments; and **I will not erase his name from the book of life,** and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.*
- Does Revelations 3:5 suggest our name can be erased from the book of life if we don't overcome? And that all of the above and other blessings could be lost as well? Each of us has to decide the truth for ourselves.
- 4:38 Having said that, if we're truly born again and a follower of Christ, shouldn't the issue be fairly simple? Shouldn't we have such a desire to follow Jesus that we don't need a theological interpretation to give us peace that once we're saved, we're always saved? Shouldn't our peace come from our desire to grow in our personal relationship with Jesus? And from a risk management standpoint, why would anyone take a chance on losing their eternal salvation? Life on earth is a matter of years while eternity is a long time, as in forever. And as Paul says, pursuing Jesus is so worth it.

4: Born Again/Salvation

- ❑ *Philippians 3:7 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the **surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ.***

Spirit, Soul and Body - What Rules

When we're born again, our sins are forgiven, we're made clean, we're redeemed; our spirit is made right with God. Our souls and bodies, however, are not perfected. Our souls (mind, will, emotions) need work. Before being born again, our souls rule. When born again, our spirits come to life and our connection with God through Holy Spirit is established. A challenge for us then becomes - what is going to rule our lives - our souls or our spirits? Our souls are used to being in charge. Holy Spirit coming in [en] a person can have a dramatic effect and major changes are sometimes immediate (per Chapter 6). Our spirits can begin to rule from the very get-go. For others, changes may occur at a slower pace and we may go one day where we follow our flesh (desires of body and soul) to the next day where we follow what our spirit wants (Godly living) which is being led by Holy Spirit.

- ❑ *Romans 8:14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.*

We know that what we watch and read greatly influences our thought life, decision making, and actions. Our minds need to be renewed so that what we think and what we do are in alignment with God's desires.

- ❑ *Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, **but be transformed by the renewing of your mind**, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

Our will needs to make choices in alignment with God's desires. And our emotions need to be influenced by God's desires. God's Word is alive and active, and if we study and apply what it says, the Bible will be key in changing our lives from where our soul rules to where our spirit rules.

- ❑ *Hebrews 4:12 For the **word of God is living and active** and sharper than any two-edged sword, and **piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit**, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*
- ❑ *Isaiah 55:11 So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.*

On those days when our spirit rules, we're traveling on 'Route 3: Dying to Self.'

- ❑ *Galatians 5:24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*
- ❑ *Colossians 3:3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.*
- ❑ *Matthew 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.*

After being born again, with Holy Spirit in [en] us, another key factor influencing whether our soul or spirit rules is the time we spend alone with God - talking, listening, giving praise, crying, worshipping, laughing - all things that are associated with having a personal relationship with Christ.

Risk, Faith Without Works is Dead

I'd also like to briefly touch on the issue of faith with and without works. To begin, we know we cannot please God without faith.

- ❑ *Hebrews 11:6 And **without faith it is impossible to please Him**, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.*

James 2 tells us without works, our faith is dead.

- ❑ *James 2:17 Even so **faith, if it has no works, is dead**, being by itself. 18 But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." 19 You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. 20 But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?*

Many view James 2:17 as meaning - if we don't have good works in our lives, we have no evidence to show we are saved. Without good works, moreover, we may not even be saved. As a result, we better do some good works. Let me try to share another perspective many other believers have shared with me over the years. To start, we need to remember we can't please God without faith.

- ❑ *Hebrews 11:6 And **without faith it is impossible to please Him** ...*

To have faith involves dealing with one or more things unknown, one or more things unseen. The unknown and unseen involves uncertainty and risk wherein the expected or desired outcome may not actually result.

- ❑ *Hebrews 11:1 Now **faith** is the assurance of things hoped for, the **conviction of things not seen**.*

Consider two scenarios involving Bobby and Robin. Both love God, and both love to feed the homeless. Bobby is part of a big church that provides all the resources required. Bobby and four others receive the church funds, buy the food, prepare it, and serve ~200 people every week. Does Bobby require faith to feed the homeless? Was he dealing with uncertainties, with things not seen? I suggest the answer is no.

Robin, on the other hand, is part of a small body of believers with limited resources. Robin prays and every time God tells her to purchase groceries and prepare a meal for the homeless, she does so. This one week, she believes God tells her to go and buy 1 loaf of bread, small-sized condiments, and enough meat and cheese for 10 sandwiches. After doing so, God tells her to go to an empty parking lot near a homeless camp where Robin will feed over 200 people. Ten sandwiches and 200 people doesn't add up. To feed all 200 would require God doing something supernatural including providing additional help. If God doesn't do something supernatural - if God doesn't come through - failure is inevitable.

4: Born Again/Salvation

Before going further, let me say both Bobby and Robin are doing commendable works of God. And all of us should have good works going on in our lives, and that we do so out of love for God and people. We don't keep score of what we do, nor do we keep score of what others do or don't do. I don't value one person over the other, or one ministry over the other. But let me ask:

- 4:39 Does Robin show her faith by buying enough groceries for a few, but then going forward fully expecting to feed many more than a few?
- 4:40 Would this be evidence of Robin *'showing her faith by her works'*? In other words, does faith involve risk - the risk that requires us to rely on God - to trust God - for the desired outcome?
- 4:41 Should the lives of today's believers have elements of risk where, if God doesn't come through, we cannot succeed? If not, how do we show our faith?
 - ❑ *Hebrews 11:1 Now faith ... **conviction of things not seen.***
 - ❑ *Hebrews 11:6 And **without faith it is impossible to please Him ...***
 - ❑ *James 2:17 Even so faith, **if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.***

I've not seen this kind of food multiplication first hand. However, people we met in Mexico say it occurs all the time in their orphanage. A former student told me of a dinner meeting involving about 30 individuals. He was cooking and put in one package of spaghetti before he was distracted and forgot to put in the rest of the spaghetti. Everybody was fed. When they went to clean up, the clean-up crew looked at all the unopened spaghetti bags and realized only 1 bag was used. That opened the door to share the gospel. A different kind of situation, but one that shows God still does unexpected stuff today.

Another situation involved when my wife Lori was on deployment as a chaplain in Australia just as the COVID-19 virus was breaking out. She witnessed first-hand Godly multiplication of food. They had ordered in a bunch of box meals - one box per person. Other chaplains knew they were short of food as the number of boxes was less than the number in attendance. They served every person, and there were boxes left over. God is good.

Should Prayer Involve Risk

Consider Peter who was key in a paralyzed man being healed.

- ❑ *Acts 3:6 But Peter said, "I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene - walk!" 7 And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened.*
- 4:42 When Peter spoke "... In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene - walk!" was he doing so in faith? Was Peter taking a risk by boldly and publicly telling this man to get up and walk? Was he taking a risk of being ridiculed if God didn't come through and heal this man?
- 4:43 Is this another example of the kinds of risks that believers are to engage in today as part of what God wants us to do?
 - ❑ *Mark 16:17 These **signs will accompany those who have believed:** in My name they will **cast out demons,** they will **speak with new tongues;** 18 ... they will **lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.***

CEASED? 2ND EDITION

- 4:44 If we don't take risks doing God's works, are we limiting our walk? Have we reduced the inherent value, and excitement, of this amazing relationship?
- ❑ *James 2:20 But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?*
- 4:45 On the other hand, when Peter spoke "... In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene - walk!", consider the following.
- i. What if Peter was simply obeying what Holy Spirit was telling him to do, just as Jesus only did what He saw the Father doing?
 - ii. And thus, while on the surface it may appear Peter was taking a risk, how much of a risk was he actually taking if he was simply doing what Holy Spirit told him to do?
 - iii. Again, how can we go wrong by asking Holy Spirit what to say or do?
 - ❑ *John 5:19 Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner."*
 - iv. One other question. Do Peter's words show the power of the spoken words of believers of Jesus, words that align with God's Word and are part of our mandate?

In What/Whom is Our Faith

Another part of faith is who or what we have faith in. Peter spoke to this issue.

- ❑ *Acts 3:16 And on the **basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus** which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all.*
- 4:46 Does Acts 3:16 indicate the key is i) **who** Peter had faith in, namely Jesus and His name, as opposed to ii) the amount of faith Peter had?
- 4:47 Many in false religions have a deep faith and belief in their leader or leaders. Does their great faith do these individuals any good from an eternal perspective? If yes, how?

CAN UNFORGIVENESS CAUSE US TO LOSE OUR SALVATION

Further to the issue of whether or not works are required to keep our salvation, another aspect contributing to the disagreement is what happens if we don't forgive.

- ❑ *Matthew 6:15 But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.*

Consider person XYZ who does something atrocious to Believer B such as assaulting B, stealing a major amount of B's money, or murdering someone B loved deeply. Three days after the atrocious event, Believer B is killed in an accident without having forgiven XYZ. A literal interpretation of Matthew 6:15 suggests B would have lost his/her salvation. But let me ask:

4: Born Again/Salvation

- 4:48 Would God have taken into consideration the nature of the offense and recognized that immediate forgiveness may have been very difficult for B?
- 4:49 Would B have maintained his/her salvation if he/she had said the words '*forgive you XYZ*' without actually meaning them in his/her heart?
- 4:50 There are levels of forgiveness ranging from forcing the words out of one's mouth, to wanting the offender to be radically blessed by God. At what level does B's forgiveness need to reach in order to retain his/her salvation?

In recent times, some high-profile Christians have said they '*lost their faith*' and are no longer Christians. I don't reject the idea that it is possible to be born again and saved, but later on totally walk away from God and their Christian faith. But I wonder if many times, losing one's faith and thus one's associated salvation is a wrong diagnosis. Rather, is this turning away a temporary response to pressures from others who aggressively disagree with truths in God's Word, hurt(s) from church leaders or other believer(s), or blaming God and being angry at God for not preventing something tragic and extremely painful from happening? And if any of these apply to you, I am so sorry. I pray your heart will be healed.

- 4:51 In other cases, though, did some individuals who lost their faith have an '*intellectual*' or '*religious*' faith where Christianity sounded like the right thing to abide by, where Jesus represented the kind of person they could follow, where a Christian church felt like a good place to attend or even work for, but a faith where there was no actual transforming relationship with Jesus where Holy Spirit actually came in [en] them? In other words, were they saved in the first place and had a personal relationship with Jesus to lose? Was the seed not planted in good soil to begin with?

- ❑ *Luke 8:12 Those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved. 13 Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away. 14 The seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity.*

In terms of someone not truly being a Christian, consider this car analogy. I forget where I first heard it, but I think it is relevant here. A person doesn't become a car just because he or she spends an hour or two in the garage on weekends, reads car magazines and takes a mechanics course, voluntarily fixes cars of other people, attends car rallies, and hangs out with car people. In the same way, a person doesn't become a Christian by going to church on Sundays, reading the Bible, going to Bible school, helping people with problems and/or hanging out with other Christians. Per Chapter 6, we become a Christian when we have an encounter with God - when Jesus and Holy Spirit comes in [en] us. A transformation which manifests in one form or another takes place. But ... let's get back to unforgiveness.

Ongoing Confession of Sins

Many people believe we need to regularly confess our sins to keep our salvation. James 5:16 is often cited as a key verse in this regard.

- ❑ *James 5:16 Therefore, **confess your sins to one another** ...*

But consider the next few words in James 5:16 and Psalm 32:3.

- ❑ *James 5:16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another **so that you may be healed**. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.*
- ❑ *Psalm 32:3 When **I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away** ...*

4:52 Per these verses, do we to confess our faults (sins) to one another and to pray for one another for i) our eternal salvation, or ii) so that we can be healed in our souls and/or bodies?

If you disagree with that view, let's try to put James 5:16 into perspective. Consider the scriptures immediately preceding James 5:16.

- ❑ *James 5:13 **Is anyone among you suffering?** Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. 14 **Is anyone among you sick?** Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; 15 and **the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick**, and the Lord will raise him up ...*

Sins impact our soul and body. Confessing sins is important for that reason. But is there more to the story? Consider Proverbs 28:13.

- ❑ *Proverbs 28:13 He who **conceals his transgressions will not prosper**, But he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion.*

4:53 In addition, consider our relationship with God. When we're born again, Holy Spirit comes in [en] us. When we sin, and God is right there within us, doesn't that inhibit the closeness of our walk with God? Many believers struggle with habitual sins such as porn. If a person watches porn, God is there. Right there. Would there be a different response from God for a person who has a truly repentant heart and desperately wants to stop porn as compared to a person who watches porn, isn't sorry apart from a little guilt, perhaps confesses to another person but all the time knowing and expecting and perhaps even looking forward to the next porn session? Won't God respond quite differently?

4:54 And if a person is engaged in habitual sin and doesn't have a strong desire to stop sinning, is there reason to be concerned:

- i. the person may be under demonic influence; and/or
- ii. the person is motivated by soul issues that are so painful that the addiction is the one thing they can rely on to help them escape the pain right then; and/or
- iii. the person may not be born again?

4: Born Again/Salvation

Other scriptures show the importance of confessing sins.

- ❑ 1 John 1:8 If ***we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves*** and the ***truth is not in us***. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
- ❑ Psalm 32:5 I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord"; and You forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah.

I find it interesting that while forgiveness of sins is mentioned, the issue of eternal salvation is not. The reality is Jesus paid the penalty for all our sins. When born again, we are His bride. But ... we mess up and sin. Sinning is a given for all of us. But God gives us a way to make things right.

4:55 Thus, when truly born again and Holy Spirit is in [en] us, don't we confess our sins first and foremost because of the inherent desire to keep a close, personal relationship with God, to not have this relationship compromised by sin, to want to make things right when we do wrong? And other benefits we may receive such as healing are secondary to our personal relationship with Father God, Jesus, and Holy Spirit? If not, why not?

By the way, if you struggle with habitual sin, take serious actions. Pray. Set alarms to remind you to read a scripture or speak it out loud. Print scriptures and put them in your pocket. Pray. Get apps such as "Shut Up Devil". Seek God. Change friends. Move. Get a dumb phone. Get alone with God. Cancel the internet. Always have gospel music or a Bible teaching playing in the background. Place Bibles everywhere. Wear a reminder band around your wrists. Know Jesus loves you. And per Chapters 8-10, ask Jesus to Baptize you in the Holy Spirit and Fire.

COMMUNION – SYMBOLIC OR LITERAL & FOR FORGIVENESS OF SINS, OR REMEMBERING JESUS ONLY

One of the goals of **CEASED?** was to address some issues making it difficult for Protestants and Roman Catholics to evangelize and worship together. Communion is one of those key issues. It's a very big issue for me, and thus I cover this issue in some depth. If you're Roman Catholic, please know I'm not questioning if you're a born-again follower of Jesus. I'm just trying to examine communion in some detail.

Roman Catholic teachings hold that a key reason for taking communion is to gain forgiveness for 'venial' sins, lesser sins that won't cause a person to lose their salvation. Communion is not enough, however, to cover the serious 'mortal' sins which can cause one's salvation to be lost. To gain forgiveness of mortal sins, they must be confessed to a Catholic priest. Most Protestants struggle at the get-go because we believe Jesus's 1-time sacrifice on the cross was enough for all sins. We also don't see the Bible identifying a specific list of sins to be covered by one approach, while a different approach is needed for another group of specific sins. And if two such lists are created, they are of man's creation, not God's.

Most Protestants see communion as a way to remember what Jesus did for us on the whipping post and cross; His 1-time, sacrifice which paid the penalty for all sins.

- ❑ *Luke 22:19 And when He had taken some bread and 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.**"*
- ❑ *1 Peter 3:18 For Christ also **died for sins once for all**, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;*
- ❑ *John 19:30 Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "**It is finished!**" And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.*

As a result of Jesus's one-time finishing sacrifice, most Protestants view the eating of the bread and the drinking of the juice/wine as being symbolic - a tangible act to remember what Jesus did. Many Protestants also believe that while communion is not about forgiveness of new sins, other blessings can come from communion. We also believe Jesus is present when we take communion.

- ❑ *Matthew 18:20 For **where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.**"*

Roman Catholic teachings agree that communion is taken to remember Jesus. The key difference is that the Catholic church - and some Protestant churches, notably in Anglican and Lutheran denominations - teach that eating the bread/wafer and drinking the wine/juice aren't symbolic acts, but literal acts. In other words, eating the wafer and drinking the wine involves actually eating Jesus's body and drinking His blood. One question to start.

- 4:56 If Almighty God was 'in' the wafer and wine, wouldn't it seem logical that DNA and other scientific tests of a regular wafer and a Jesus-filled wafer would show radical differences? Catholic apologists admit there's no difference if/when such tests are done. Regardless of what arguments are used to justify that result, doesn't it seem unusual there is no change when the Creator of the entire universe is in the wafer and wine?

To examine the scriptural evidence, consider Jesus's teachings in John 6 that occurred **before** the Last Supper. Jesus is referred to as the bread who gives life.

- ❑ *John 6:33 For the **bread of God** is that which comes down out of heaven, and **gives life** to the world."*
- ❑ *John 6:35 Jesus said to them, "I am the **bread of life**; he who comes to Me **will not hunger**, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.*
- ❑ *John 6:48 I am the **bread of life**.*

- 4:57 Do these scriptures suggest the 'bread' is actual bread, or is symbolic of the spiritual food and spiritual life that Jesus provides all believers?

Jesus also says anyone eating the bread receives life on earth and into eternity.

- ❑ *John 6:51 I am the **living bread** that came down out of heaven; if **anyone eats of this bread**, he will live forever; and **the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh.**"*

4: Born Again/Salvation

- ❑ John 6:52 Then the Jews began to argue with one another, saying, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" 53 So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves.** 54 **He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life,** and I will raise him up on the last day.
- ❑ John 6:55 For My **flesh is true food,** and My blood is true drink. 56 **He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.** 57 As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, **so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me.** 58 This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; **he who eats this bread will live forever."**

No question Jesus gives life, but this teaching was unusual and led to many deciding not to walk with Jesus. And if I was there, I might have been one of them.

- ❑ John 6:60 Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this said, "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?" ... 66 As **a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore.**

Because Jesus "Said So"

Information from the Baltimore Catechism in the Q&A section of the website:

www.ewtn.com/catholicism/teachings/eucharist-gives-us-jesus-christ-150

states the reason we should take the body and blood literally is because we should take the spoken words of Jesus - God Almighty - literally.

"... a) Christ could not have used clearer, more explicit words than "This is My body." He did not say, "This is a sign of My body," or "This represents My body," but, "This is My body." **Catholics take Christ at His word because He is the omnipotent God. On His word they know that the Holy Eucharist is the body and blood of Christ.**"

- 4:58 In other words, we're to take Jesus's word's literally because Jesus is God and what God says, He means. On that basis, if we're to treat Jesus's references to the bread and wine as literal references to Christ's body and blood because Jesus spoke words to that effect, aren't we then required to treat all - as in all - of Jesus's words in a literal way? If not, why not?

Consider the following scriptures:

- ❑ John 10:7 So Jesus said to them again, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the **door** of the **sheep**.
 - ❑ John 15:1 I am the true **vine**, and My Father is the **vinedresser**. Every **branch in Me** that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He **prunes** it so that it may bear more fruit.
- 4:59 If we're to take everything Jesus said in a literal way, how do we take Jesus being a door and a vine in a literal way? Moreover, how do we look at ourselves since we would be part sheep and part branch? I don't mean to be sarcastic when I ask this, but if we're to take this perspective seriously, could someone be blamed for asking if we should eat food that sheep enjoy? And

when it comes to God pruning us physically, what exactly does God cut off? And what is the actual fruit we produce? And where does it appear on us?

The Disciples and the Last Supper

Jesus next taught on eating His body and drinking His blood in Mark 14 at the Last Supper which occurred just before the cross. This Last Supper was a Passover meal.

- *Mark 14:22 While they were eating, He took some bread, and after a blessing **He broke it, and gave it to them, and said, "Take it; this is My body."***
- 4:60 Given the Catholic argument that we're to take Jesus's words of eating His body and drinking His blood literally and not symbolically, let me ask.
 - i. Shouldn't this literal application also apply to the Last Supper when Jesus was present and actually spoke the words to eat His body and drink His blood? If not, why not?
 - ii. Furthermore, given Jesus said the bread was His body, wouldn't Catholic reasoning require us to believe at the very moment Jesus was giving out the bread that it wasn't just bread, but bread that included the actual physical body of Christ? If not, why not since Jesus said it was His body?
 - iii. Given that Jesus had not yet been crucified, buried, resurrected or ascended to the right hand of Father God, how could the bread possibly be His mangled body if He had not yet been crucified? And how could the wine possibly be His shed blood, if His blood had not been shed?
 - iv. Was the breaking of bread at the Last Supper thus a symbolic act?
 - v. If so, per Catholic teaching, wouldn't that contradict Jesus when He said "*Take it; this is My body*" and cause us to be inconsistent by taking Jesus's words symbolically in that case, but literally thereafter?

And please let me remind you, as I ask these questions, I believe it's vital we take Jesus's words seriously and to treat communion with utmost reverence and deep gratitude, and to appreciate the elements not for what they are (bread and wine/juice) but for Who and what they represent.

- 4:61 This first communion does not appear to involve an unbloody sacrifice of Christ. Jesus never indicated there would be anything different about the eating of the bread and drinking the wine in the future. As a result, don't we have a rather large gap between communion at the Last Supper and communion as per the Roman Catholic church teachings today?

Context for the Last Supper - a Passover Meal

At a Passover meal, several food items and cups of wine were used as symbols to help tell the story of the redemption of Israel, of their being set free from slavery in Egypt. Three pieces of bread covered by a cloth were on the table as were 4 cups. The 3rd cup on the table was for redemption and the 4th was for the Prophet Elijah who would signal the arrival of the Messiah. The 4th cup was not consumed.

- 4:62 At the Last Supper, what do you think Jesus said with respect to the 3rd and 4th cups?

4: Born Again/Salvation

Reaction of Disciples

- ❑ *Mark 14:23 And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, **and they all drank from it.** 24 And He said to them, "**This is My blood** of the covenant, which is poured out for many.*
- 4:63 The disciples ate the bread, and then drank from the cup. If Jesus was truly saying His body was in the bread, is it reasonable to expect one or more of the disciples would have asked Jesus how could the bread be His physical body given Jesus was sitting or standing there with all His body parts intact? Was the fact they didn't ask this type of question because they were already accustomed to the symbolism of Passover foods and drinks? And already knew the bread and wine were symbolic?

After the Last Supper was completed, Jesus washed the feet of His apostles. Peter, who had no issue eating the bread and drinking the wine, reacted strongly.

- ❑ *John 13:3 Jesus ... 5 Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. 6 So He came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, "Lord, do You wash my feet?" 7 Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter." 8 Peter said to Him, "Never shall You wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." 9 Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, then wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head."*

After the cross, Peter also expressed strong reservations about eating animals and birds when God gave Peter a vision about eating animals and birds that Peter deemed unclean under the Law.

- ❑ *Acts 10:12 and there were in it all kinds of four-footed animals and crawling creatures of the earth and birds of the air. 13 A voice came to him, "Get up, Peter, kill and eat!" 14 But Peter said, "**By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything unholy and unclean.**"*
- 4:64 Does Peter's strong and emotional reactions to both having his feet washed, and to eating 'unclean' animals and birds, seem extremely inconsistent with his lack of reaction to partaking of bread and wine if indeed Peter believed he was consuming Jesus's body and blood?

Consider Mark 4 which tells us that Jesus used parables extensively in His teaching, and that Jesus would explain the parable to His disciples in private.

- ❑ *Mark 4:33 **With many such parables** He was speaking the word to them, so far as they were able to hear it; 34 and **He did not speak to them without a parable;** but **He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples.***

Prior to the Last Supper, Jesus had previously talked to the crowds and His disciples about eating His body and drinking His blood.

- ❑ *John 6:55 For My **flesh is true food**, and My blood is true drink. 56 **He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.** 57 As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, **so he who eats Me, he***

also will live because of Me. 58 *This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; **he who eats this bread will live forever.***"

4:65 Based on Mark 4:34, is it reasonable to believe Jesus would have explained - in private - what He meant by eating His body and drinking His blood when Jesus first raised the issue? And thus, by the time the Last Supper rolled around, is it reasonable to think the apostles would have known the truth on the matter? Wouldn't the lack of a reaction from Peter and the other apostles to eating the bread and drinking the wine at the Last Supper be consistent with their other behaviors if they believed they were eating the bread and drinking the wine in a symbolic act to remember Jesus?

- *Luke 22:19 And when He had taken some bread and 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.**"*

It's also worth noting the apostles' reaction as reported in Luke.

- *Luke 22:19 And when He had taken some bread and 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.**" 20 And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, "**This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.** 21 But behold, **the hand of the one betraying Me is with Mine on the table.** 22 For indeed, the Son of Man is going as it has been determined; but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!" 23 And they began to discuss among themselves which one of them it might be who was going to do this thing. 24 **And there arose also a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be greatest.***

The apostles had no apparent reaction to the notion of 'eating' Jesus's body and 'drinking' His blood. When Jesus advises the apostles that one of them will betray Him, they are most concerned. Then, after discussing who will betray Jesus, the disciples then dispute which apostle was the greatest.

4:66 If indeed the apostles believed they were eating the body of Jesus and drinking the blood of Jesus - the person standing right there in front of them and giving out the elements - isn't it awfully surprising that the disciples' reaction was not one of questioning, shock or concern of being involved in an act that some have labeled as getting close to cannibalism, but instead:

- i. debated who might be the one who would betray Jesus; and then
- ii. discussed which one of them was the greatest?

4:67 The discussion on who was the greatest was not the first time this issue had arisen. In their previous discussion, they were reluctant to admit this reality to Jesus. How could discussions about who would betray Jesus and who was the greatest - an issue they knew was not a discussion they should be having - take priority in their hearts and minds over consuming the actual body and blood of Jesus if that's what they were actually doing?

4: Born Again/Salvation

- ❑ *Matthew 18:1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus and said, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"*
- ❑ *Mark 9:33 They came to Capernaum; and when He was in the house, He began to question them, "What were you discussing on the way?" 34 But they kept silent, for on the way they had discussed with one another which of them was the greatest.*

Other Aspects of Catholic Communion

In Roman Catholic communion, the belief is the priest commands Christ to come to earth where Jesus is sacrificed in an unbloody manner. His body and blood are transfigured into the wafer and wine, with only the appearance of the wafer and wine remaining. The process is called transubstantiation. From the Catholic Catechism, we read:

1333 At the heart of the Eucharistic celebration are the bread and wine that, by the words of Christ and the invocation of the Holy Spirit, become Christ's Body and Blood. ... 1357 We carry out this command of the Lord by celebrating the memorial of his sacrifice. In so doing, we offer to the Father what he has himself given us: the gifts of his creation, bread and wine which, by the power of the Holy Spirit and by the words of Christ, have become the body and blood of Christ. Christ is thus really and mysteriously made present ... 1366 The Eucharist is thus a sacrifice because it re-presents (makes present) the sacrifice of the cross ... But because his priesthood was not to end with his death, ... by which the bloody sacrifice which he was to accomplish once for all on the cross would be re-presented ... 1367 The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice: "The victim is one and the same: the same now offers through the ministry of priests, who then offered himself on the cross; only the manner of offering is different." "In this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is contained and is offered in an unbloody manner."

In the last sentence, it begins with 'in this divine sacrifice' and ends with 'offered in an unbloody manner'. This unbloody sacrifice is a critical part of Roman Catholic teachings. Let me ask:

4:68 The New Testament was written over a period of ~65 years following Christ's death and resurrection. If this additional sacrifice of Christ as per Roman Catholic teaching is critical, a must-do activity on a daily/weekly basis, isn't it a bit surprising that no mention - zero mention - is made in the Bible of these ongoing sacrifices, or that there would be multiple sacrifices after Jesus's initial death, resurrection and ascension?

Communion: Forgiveness of Sins

The Roman Catholic church teaches communion is taken in part for the forgiveness of venial sins. Most Protestants would disagree and believe Jesus paid the penalty for all sins on the cross.

4:69 On the basis that communion does result in forgiveness of the less serious venial sins, doesn't it seem extremely unusual that a sacrifice of Christ, Almighty God Himself, is not adequate to also deal with any outstanding more serious, mortal sins - even in small Catholic churches where less than 100 people attend? And that confession of mortal sins to a sinful priest can accomplish what the death of Almighty God couldn't accomplish, and still can't accomplish to this day - even for one person?

Jesus Forgave Sins During His Ministry

Jesus had the authority to forgive sins in His earthly ministry, an authority He used.

- ❑ *Mark 2:10 But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" - He said to the paralytic,*
- ❑ *Luke 7:48 Then He said to her, "Your sins have been forgiven."*

God sent Jesus to earth with a mandate, and to fulfill the mandate, Jesus was given authority. Jesus also sends us just as the Father sent Jesus.

- ❑ *John 20:21 So Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you; **as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.**"*

Various scriptures tell believers what we are to do - love all including our enemies, look after widows and orphans, heal the sick, cast out demons, raise the dead, make disciples, baptize etc.

- ❑ *Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and **make disciples** of all the nations, **baptizing them** in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 **teaching them** to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*
- ❑ *Matthew 10:8 **Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons.** Freely you received, freely give.*
- ❑ *Luke 10:27 And he answered, "You shall **love the Lord your God** with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and **your neighbor** as yourself."*

4:70 These and other scriptures collectively define the parameters around the scope of what we believers are to do today. To do these things, isn't it reasonable to conclude that God gives believers adequate authority to do the core things of Christianity that He wants us to do, but nothing more?

A point of disagreement between Roman Catholics and Protestants is whether or not believers have the authority to forgive 3rd party sins as Jesus did. In Jesus's case, recall the paralytic and how the scribes were reasoning how Jesus could forgive sins as only God could forgive sins.

- ❑ *Mark 2:6 But some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, 7 "Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; **who can forgive sins but God alone?**" 8 Immediately Jesus, aware in His spirit that*

4: Born Again/Salvation

they were reasoning that way within themselves, said to them, "Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts? 9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven'; or to say, 'Get up, and pick up your pallet and walk'? 10 But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" -He said to the paralytic, 11 "I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home." 12 And he got up and immediately picked up the pallet and went out in the sight of everyone, so that they were all amazed and were glorifying God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this."

Jesus didn't disagree with the statement that only God can forgive sins. In fact, He made it clear He had the authority to forgive sins. Which raises the issue of whether or not Jesus was both man and God in His earthly life, or man but with authority given by God. I'll leave that aside for the moment, perhaps a long moment. Coming back to the issue at hand, what is rather interesting is that after His resurrection, Jesus tells His followers they are also supposed to forgive sins.

- ❑ *John 20:21 ... "Peace be with you; **as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.**" 22 And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 **If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained.**"*

As said before, Roman Catholic teaching holds that venial or less significant sins can be forgiven during communion/mass. The mortal or more serious sins, however, need to be dealt with by confessing such sins to a priest. The need to confess to a priest is largely based on John 20:21-23 above. When Jesus appeared to the apostles on resurrection Sunday evening and stated He was sending them into the world just as Father God had sent Jesus, He followed that up by breathing on them, told them to receive the Holy Spirit, and then instructed them to forgive. The apostles were Jesus's ministers and by breathing the Holy Spirit on them, the apostles were empowered to forgive sins. This responsibility/authority given to the original apostles was passed on to succeeding generations, specifically to Catholic priests through the 7th sacrament of Holy Orders. Thus today, in ordinary circumstances, Catholics confess their mortal sins to a priest, a proceeding known as the sacrament of reconciliation or confession.

4:71 If the responsibility of forgiving sins is limited to Catholic priests, and this responsibility is passed down starting from the apostles to such priests, and from one generation of priests to the next, wouldn't it be more consistent if this delegation only occurred for priests who are also apostles? On that basis, how would those priests who are not called by God to be apostles have the authorization to forgive sins within the Roman Catholic church?

Priests, Forgiveness and Role of Apostle

Some believers are called to the 5-fold ministry, and will have differing roles.

- ❑ *Ephesians 4:11 And He gave some as **apostles**, and some as **prophets**, and some as **evangelists**, and some as **pastors** and **teachers**, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;*

CEASED? 2ND EDITION

4:72 Within the Roman Catholic church:

- i. are priests the only Catholics who can hold these five functions today?
- ii. If so, does every Catholic priest hold every one of these 5 positions?
- iii. If not, does that mean some priests don't have the function of an apostle?
- iv. If these positions are not limited to priests, does that mean the non-priest apostle in the Catholic church also has the ability to forgive sins?

4:73 If the responsibility of forgiving sins is limited to priests, and this responsibility is passed down starting from the apostles to priests, and from one generation of priests to the next, and if every priest is not an apostle, how can those priests who are not apostles today have the authorization/ability to forgive sins within the Roman Catholic church?

In addition, consider this. Earlier in John 19, we see Jesus appearing on resurrection Sunday evening to the disciples who were gathered. The word 'disciples' - a more inclusive and encompassing word - and not 'apostles' was used.

- *John 20:19 So when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the **disciples** were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you."*

The English word 'disciple' is based on the Greek word 'mathetes' [G3101] which means a 'learner, pupil, disciple'. And if we look at Luke 24, we see that the disciples gathered on resurrection Sunday evening when Jesus breathed on them and told them to forgive sins included not only the eleven apostles but also the 2 disciples Jesus met on the road to Emmaus.

- *Luke 24:13 And behold, **two of them** were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem ... 15 While they were talking and discussing, Jesus Himself approached and began traveling with them ... 30 When He had reclined at the table with them, He took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, He began giving it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight ... 33 And **they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem**, and found gathered **together the eleven** and those who were with them, 34 saying, "The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon." 35 They began to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread. 36 While they were telling these things, **He Himself stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be to you."***

4:74 Given these two disciples Jesus met on the road to Emmaus were with the eleven apostles when Jesus dropped in on resurrection Sunday evening and were part of the group that Jesus breathed on and told they needed to forgive sins, doesn't that mean forgiving sins was not limited to the original apostles? And thus, how is forgiving of sins limited to Catholic priests today?

4: Born Again/Salvation

4:75 Two original apostles weren't present - Judas who would betray Jesus and Thomas who would encounter Jesus 8 days later. Does the eleven on resurrection Sunday evening thus include Matthias, who was not yet an apostle, but was nonetheless breathed on and told to forgive sins?

Now consider verse 33 which reads '*And ... found ... **those who were with them.***'

- *Luke 24:33 And **they got up** that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered **together the eleven** and **those who were with them.***

Starting after question 6:13 in Chapter 6, I review evidence that shows the 11 apostles plus '*those who were with them*' on resurrection Sunday was essentially the same group of ~120 who were together in Acts 1:12-20 after Jesus ascended, and was again essentially the same group that was together at Pentecost. There were at least 5 women involved including Mary, Jesus's mother, in this group of ~120.

4:76 With the ~120 in mind, consider the following:

- i. Per Chapter 6, when Jesus breathed on the disciples in John 20:22, I believe that was the moment when the first disciples were born again, when Holy Spirit came in [en] them, and the first living Christians came into being. Some may argue the thief on the cross or those who rose from the graves between Jesus's crucifixion and resurrection were the first Christians. You can choose. But the key point to this issue is this: Is there any reason to believe Jesus did not breathe on all of those gathered on resurrection Sunday evening including '**those who were with them**'?
- ii. Given Jesus breathed on all the disciples who were present on resurrection Sunday evening, don't Jesus's instructions on forgiving sins apply to all who were in attendance and upon whom Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit, and not just the 11 apostles? And doesn't that:
 - a. mean all believers are called to forgive sins:
 - b. throw a major wrench into Catholic teachings that lay Catholics need to confess mortal sins to priests; and
 - c. support the notion that when the veil was torn from top to bottom, all people have direct access to God and can confess sins directly to God?

In the last chapter of Luke which covers the events and issues immediately following Jesus's resurrection, no mention is made of Jesus telling His disciples they are to forgive sins on behalf of God or others. What Luke mentions is the following:

- ❖ Jesus proved He was the risen Jesus;
- ❖ All things written about Jesus must be fulfilled;
- ❖ Jesus opened the disciples' minds to scriptures and talked about His need to suffer, He would rise again, and repentance of sins would be proclaimed;
- ❖ Jesus is sending the promise of the Father; and
- ❖ The disciples were to stay in Jerusalem until they were clothed with power from on high. This power, we now know, is a result of being Baptized in the Holy Spirit, an experience they were blessed with at Pentecost.

- ❑ *Luke 24:40 And when He had said this, **He showed them His hands and His feet.** 41 While they still could not believe it because of their joy and amazement, He said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" 42 They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish; 43 and He took it and ate it before them. 44 Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that **all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.**"*
 - ❑ *45 Then He **opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,** 46 and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the **Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day,** 47 and that **repentance for forgiveness of sins** would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things. 49 And behold, I am **sending forth the promise of My Father upon you;** but you **are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.**"*
- 4:77 Isn't it significant that Luke didn't address the issue of the original apostles needing to forgive sins on behalf of all other believers?

So, what do we make of John 20:23?

- ❑ *John 20:23 If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained."*

Consider the Lord's Prayer. When Jesus taught us how to pray, one part involved forgiveness.

- ❑ *Matthew 6:12 And **forgive us** our debts, as we also **have forgiven our debtors.** (NASB)*
 - ❑ *and **forgive us** our sins, as we have **forgiven those who sin against us.** (NLT)*
- 4:78 Sin separates a person from God. The closeness in our relationship with God is hindered because of sin. Our repentance and God's forgiveness removes that gap. In a similar way, the sins of another person against us hinder our relationship with them. We can't require the other person to repent, but we can do our part by forgiving the person. And while God is the only one who can forgive sins against God which restores our relationship with God, is the forgiveness Jesus refers to in John 20:23 about us restoring our relationship with those who sinned against us by forgiving them?

Consider the following 7 scriptures.

- ❑ *Colossians 3:13 **bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.***
- ❑ *Matthew 18:21 Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, **how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him?** Up to seven times?"*
- ❑ *Matthew 18:35 My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, **if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.**"*
- ❑ *Mark 11:25 Whenever you stand praying, **forgive, if you have anything against anyone,** so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions.*

4: Born Again/Salvation

- ❑ *Luke 17:3 Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; **and if he repents, forgive him.** 4 And if he sins against you seven times a day, and **returns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' forgive him.**"*
 - ❑ *2 Corinthians 2:5 But if any has caused sorrow, he has caused sorrow not to me, but in some degree - in order not to say too much - to all of you ... 7 so that on the contrary **you should rather forgive and comfort him.** ...*
 - ❑ *Ephesians 4:32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, **forgiving each other,** just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.*
- 4:79 Collectively, human beings sin against God and against each other hundreds of billions of times a day. God forgives our sins against Him. In terms of sins that we commit against other human beings, do any of the above verses indicate that forgiveness of our sins against another person is to come from a priest? Or is it to be given by the person against whom we sinned?
- 4:80 Don't all of the above 7 verses show we are to forgive those who sin against us, just as Jesus forgave us for sinning against Him? And thus, isn't John 20:23 which follows Jesus breathing on all those in attendance on resurrection Sunday evening, a message that all believers are to forgive other persons for sins committed against them? If not, why not?

I can't find any verses stating a third party such as a pastor or priest is to forgive my sins against another person. If there is, I would appreciate you letting me know.

- 4:81 Two last questions. If priests were authorized by Jesus to forgive sins in ~30AD on resurrection Sunday evening, why were such confessions not officially part of Catholic church teachings until 1215AD when confession of sins to a priest instead of to God was instituted by Pope Innocent III, in Lateral council? (Note: Details on this and some other practices introduced by the Roman Catholic church are found starting on page 356 of **CEASED?**.)
- 4:82 Starting on page 70, **CEASED?** touched on the issue of whether or not unforgiveness can cause a person to lose their salvation. The discussion raised the issue of whether or not Jesus's commands for us to forgive were in regards to our eternal salvation, or was it to do with the health of our souls and bodies. In other words, on resurrection Sunday evening when Jesus appeared to His disciples and told them if they didn't forgive, their sin of unforgiveness would actually cause harm to their souls and/or bodies?
- ❑ *John 20:22 And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; **if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained.**"*

For me personally, this situation is very real. If you recall from my testimony on page 31 of **CEASED?**, I had a serious case of psoriasis that was caused by bitterness in my heart. My sin of unforgiveness was retained in my soul and manifested through sickness in my body.

People involved

Another key reason cited by Catholics for the need to confess mortal sins to a priest is that God always involves people in key issues related to salvation. Water baptism is cited as an example. In water baptism, another person is absolutely needed to baptize the person needing to be baptized. This is true. However - apart from the issue of whether or not water baptism is required for salvation - it should be noted the instruction was for all believers to water baptize, not just priests or a select few. In terms of always needing a person to be involved, consider this.

1. Per Chapter 6, Holy Spirit automatically baptizes us into the Body of Christ when we're born again. No one else is needed.
2. Per Chapter 8, the Catholic church teaches that Confirmation is very closely tied to salvation. Catholic Confirmation is centered around Baptism of the Holy Spirit and occurs at the hands of a Bishop or delegate. The Bible is clear Jesus is the one who Baptizes a person in the Holy Spirit and Fire. No other person, however, needs to be involved as seen at Pentecost and with Cornelius, family and friends.

Individuals Ordering God

Returning to the issue of communion after that road trip, Roman Catholic teachings hold that priests can command Jesus to be sacrificed because Jesus allowed them to command Him to do so.

"The supreme power of the priestly office is the power of consecrating...Indeed, it is equal to that of Jesus Christ ... When the priest pronounces the tremendous words of consecration, he reaches up into the heavens, brings Christ down from His throne, and places Him upon our altar to be offered up again as the Victim for the sins of man ... The priest speaks and lo! Christ, the eternal and omnipotent God, bows his head in humble obedience to the priest's command." – (John A. O'Brien, Ph.D., LL.D., The Faith of Millions, 255-256)

- 4:83 When a priest commands God to come to earth to be sacrificed, and Christ bows His head in humble obedience - isn't it extremely unusual that a sinful creation is telling the Holy, perfect, and all-powerful Creator what to do? I personally wouldn't try to command God to do something. How about you?
- 4:84 How well would it go for priests who try commanding the Pope to do something daily?

A Scenario to Ponder

If the alternate view is accepted that Jesus is not ordered by the priest to come to be sacrificed, but voluntarily comes upon a priest's request, let me raise what may be a very delicate and perhaps painful issue for some - sexual abuse by priests. If this happened to you, I am so so sorry. But let me paint a picture. A priest involved in sexual abuse or other sexual sins for years has been leading his congregation in communion for years. He also takes communion often by himself, or with one or more other priests. After 20 years, this priest would have been involved in over 1,000 communions with the congregation and many more either by himself or with other priests.

4: Born Again/Salvation

4:85 When taking communion alone or with other priests who were also involved in sexual abuse, does it seem reasonable Jesus would allow Himself to be sacrificed over and over for this priest and/or other priests for sins which they had no intention of stopping?

As mentioned elsewhere, a verse that always gets my attention is Matthew 7:23.

❑ *Matthew 7:23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'*

4:86 In situations where a priest was engaged in sexual abuse or other sexual sins for a long time, doesn't that indicate the priest never really had a desire to repent, to change his way of thinking and behaving, to stop sinning? Does it perhaps indicate that priest didn't really know Jesus, that Jesus was not really His Lord, that he was not born again? And if so, would it be surprising if, upon the priest's death, the priest is told by Jesus to depart from Him?

4:87 Furthermore, if the priest is told to depart upon his death, doesn't it seem rather inconsistent of Jesus to allow Himself to be sacrificed by this priest over and over again when this priest fully intended to engage in these same sins again? As you ponder this, consider God's heart in Isaiah 1.

❑ *Isaiah 1:10 ... rulers of Sodom ... 11 "What are your many sacrifices to Me?" ... "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams And the fat of fattened cattle; And I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs, or goats ... Do not go on bringing your worthless offerings ... I cannot endure wrongdoing ...*

4:88 You may see this as an extreme example and not relevant. However, sexual abuse by church leaders isn't a small issue. It has occurred in large numbers, and probably far more than has been made public. Do you think Jesus would see all the communions led by priests involved in habitual sin as acts of remembrance, as acts of reverence, as acts of deep devotion to Him? Or as acts of hypocrisy on the part of priests involved as well as on the part of those priests and superiors perpetuating such ongoing hideous sins?

4:89 **IF** the Catholic view on communion is correct - which I believe it isn't but on the basis that it is - consider priests who were either repeatedly involved in sexual abuse or enabled these and other horrific sins to continue. Would it be surprising to one day learn that Jesus did not allow himself to be sacrificed during communions led by these priests? If so, wouldn't this mean Jesus's body and blood were not in the wafer and wine received by Catholics participating in communions led by these rogue priests? And wouldn't that mean the venial sins of people in attendance weren't forgiven? Further, would the mortal sins actually be forgiven in the confessional booth if they were confessing to such rogue priests? And what about last rites led by these priests? The implications for Roman Catholics are many.

New Believers

Consider two individuals, Person A and Person B. Both were born in 1980. Person A was born again on May 1, 2010 at age 30. Person B was born again 20 years later on May 1, 2030 at age 50.

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- ❖ My abbreviated understanding of Roman Catholic teaching is that forgiveness for all the sins of Person A that occurred up to May 1, 2010 was provided for by the blood of Jesus. After being water baptized and confirmed, the person is potentially saved. Forgiveness for sins beyond May 1, 2010, is possible through a combination of communion by Catholic priests (for venial sins) and confession to Catholic priests leading to their forgiveness (for the more serious mortal sins) + indulgences + works + etc. + ultimately ... purgatory. Moreover, underpinning this forgiveness is a requirement to be a member of the Catholic church.
- ❖ Similarly, according to Roman Catholic teaching, forgiveness for all the sins of Person B that occurred up to May 1, 2030 was provided for by the blood of Jesus. And again, after being water baptized and confirmed, the person is potentially saved according to Catholic teaching.

4:90 My questions are these.

- i. How is the blood of Jesus able to cover the sins of Person B for the 20-year period from May 1, 2010 through May 1, 2030, but not the sins of Person A during that same 20-year period? If so, doesn't that mean the blessings from Jesus' shed blood, death and resurrection have an expiry date? Or get diluted?
- ii. In other words, consider Person C who is born again when he/she is 80 years old. The sins for the first 80 years of his/her life are covered by what Jesus did on the cross, but sins committed an hour after being born again aren't? Doesn't that seem a bit inconsistent?
- iii. If my understanding is wrong, and communion and a priest's forgiveness are also essential to be initially born again, doesn't that represent a new gospel?
- iv. If communion and a priest's forgiveness aren't required for a person to be initially born again, why isn't Jesus's shed blood, death, and resurrection adequate to cover any and all sins - venial and mortal - that occur at any point in a person's life?
- v. How do Catholics live in peace in regards to eternal life knowing:
 - a. they could die unexpectedly without having all of their venial and mortal sins properly confessed before their passing; and
 - b. the path to heaven through purgatory may not materialize?

Sacrifices Associated with Communion

Paragraph 1367 in the Catechism states the sacrifice of Christ (on the cross) and the sacrifices of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice. Whereas the earthly body of Jesus died on the cross, Jesus is offered for sacrifice in a different way in communion. Jesus does not die again. Which makes me wonder - what exactly is sacrificed?

*"The victim is one and the same: the same now offers through the ministry of priests, who then offered himself on the cross; only the manner of offering is different." **In this divine sacrifice** which is celebrated in the Mass, **the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner** on the altar of the cross is contained and **is offered in an unbloody manner.**"*

4: Born Again/Salvation

- 4:91 On the cross, Jesus suffered in major ways. I think it is fair to say His entire body was sacrificed when He died, and virtually all of His soul was consumed with pain in the last hours before His physical death. His soul was in such pain that He asked Father God why He was forsaken.
- i. Regardless of the perspective - is it reasonable to think any sacrifice by Jesus that enables forgiveness of human sins is very painful for Jesus?
 - ii. In other words, how can there be a sacrifice without significant pain?
 - iii. While Jesus doesn't die physically during communion, what part or parts of Jesus are actually '*sacrificed*' in communion? And does the sacrifice involve all or only a portion of each part that is sacrificed?
 - iv. The Bible gives insight into some of the pain Jesus experienced in His body and soul during His whipping crucifixion. Where does the Bible tell us what kinds of pain Jesus experiences during communion?
 - v. We know God has a soul. Is for example, Jesus being sacrificed in such a way that He experiences considerable soulish pain?
 - vi. Moreover, who actually carries out the sacrifice? Who does what to Jesus to cause the pain endured by Jesus?
 - vii. If Jesus does not experience any pain during communion, then again I ask - what exactly is being sacrificed? And again - how can it truly be a sacrifice unless there is significant pain?

Bloody vs Unbloody Sacrifice

In the Old Testament, sacrifices of animals were a core part of the Jewish life. Jesus's death on the cross and His shed blood were monumental events replacing the need for animal sacrifices. In **both** cases, the blood was key since, without shed blood, there is no forgiveness. We also know it is the blood of Jesus that cleanses us.

- ❑ *Hebrews 9:22 And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and **without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.***
 - ❑ *1 John 1:7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the **blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.***
- 4:92 How does the Catholic communion, a non-bloody sacrifice, provide for additional forgiveness of sins since without additional shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness or cleansing?
- 4:93 When a priest forgives a person's sin in a confessional booth or when the Pope gives a special indulgence for remission of temporal punishment (time immediately following one's death that would otherwise be spent in purgatory for sins committed but not dealt with up to that point in time in a person's life), how is this **additional provision** for forgiveness of sins and remission of punishment possible without **additional shed blood**?

One Crucifixion or One Crucifixion + Billions/Trillions of Sacrifices

Let me approach communion in another way. Whether we view communion as involving a death of Jesus in some form or not, is it fair to think that communion involves one or more kinds of significant pain for Jesus? If not, why not? On the basis there is/are major pains of some kind, consider the following numbers.

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Based on ~220,000 Roman Catholic parishes, and an average of only 1 church per parish, and only one communion at each church every Sunday, Jesus is sacrificed in an unbloody manner ~220,000 times every Sunday around the world.

In 24 hours, there are 86,400 seconds. In other words, Christ is being sacrificed, on average, ~2.5 times every second on Sundays (~220,000 sacrifices divided by 86,400 seconds = ~2.5 sacrifices per second). And those numbers are based on each sacrifice lasting 1 second. If each sacrifice lasted an average of one minute (60 seconds), then ~150 (60 * 2.5) sacrifices are simultaneously going on around the world - and that assumes sacrifices are spread evenly throughout the day.

These ~220,000 sacrifices every Sunday translate to ~11,440,000 sacrifices per year (220,000 * 52). Over a 100-year period, that means Christ would be sacrificed over 1 billion times (11,440,000 * 100 = 1,144,000,000). And remember the 1.1 billion sacrifices are based on only 1 church per parish and only 1 communion per church per week. Many parishes have multiple churches. Many churches have multiple communions on Sundays, plus communions throughout the week. Over the centuries, per Roman Catholic practices, this analysis indicates Christ has been sacrificed tens, if not hundreds, of billions of times - at a minimum.

More on Simultaneous Sacrifices

Based on 24 time zones and 1 church for each of the ~220,000 parishes, on average, there are ~9,000 (220,000 / 24 = 9,167) communions on Sundays in the same time zone. Given most communions tend to be in the morning within a 2-3 hour window of time, that means tens, hundreds of sacrifices occur at the exact same time in Europe and Africa, in North and South America, in Asia and Australia.

- 4:94 Every single Sunday, sinful human beings (i.e. priests) around the world are simultaneously commanding Almighty God - Jesus - to come down to their respective churches to be sacrificed for the forgiveness of the lesser sins of a few people. Close your eyes and mull on that for a few seconds and ask: does that seem consistent with Christ's death on the cross where the payment was made for all sins for all of humanity for all time?
- 4:95 Why does Jesus need to be sacrificed in every church? Isn't one sacrifice of Christ sufficient to cover the venial sins of all Catholics for at least one week? Or even one day?

All of Jesus in each wafer

Paragraph 1377 of the Roman Catholic Catechism states:

*The Eucharistic presence of Christ begins at the moment of the consecration and endures as long as the Eucharistic species subsist. **Christ is present whole and entire in each of the species and whole and entire in each of their parts, in such a way that the breaking of the bread does not divide Christ.***

- 4:96 If indeed the entire body of Jesus is in each species - i.e., each wafer - does the number of sacrifices increase even more? For instance, if the average mass has 100 people taking communion, then wouldn't the above numbers need to be multiplied by 100? And thus, if we are to take Catholic teachings as presented, wouldn't that mean Christ has been sacrificed many tens if not hundreds of trillions of times since Calvary?

4: Born Again/Salvation

For One Person

The Code of Canon Law #276 encourages priests to offer the eucharist daily with others or by themselves if no one else is available. If priests do as encouraged by the Roman Catholic church, that would increase the number of sacrifices to far greater levels than previously mentioned.

- 4:97 Does it seem consistent with God's Word, who God is, and who humans are:
- i. that a sinful priest can ask Christ to be sacrificed for him, just for him, day after day, week after week, year after year if and when the priest so chooses?
 - ii. that this sacrifice of Christ during communion is not enough, '*under ordinary circumstances*', to cover the mortal sins of the one priest or the mortal sins of all those gathered together at a church, but only the less significant venial sins?
Note: '*Under ordinary circumstances*' means God doesn't do something out of the ordinary to forgive the mortal sins at that moment in time.
 - iii. that verbally confessing mortal sins to a priest is somehow able to do what Jesus couldn't do through His one-time death on the cross and all His unbloody sacrifices in communion?

Pain Endured by Christ

- 4:98 Let me return to the issue of pain endured by Jesus during communion. When I think of the crucifixion of Christ, I shudder at His pain, especially when forsaken by Father God. If Jesus is truly sacrificed hundreds of billions of times, wouldn't He be forsaken by Father God hundreds of billions of times as well - once for each sacrifice? If not, why not?

When Peter told the Jewish people they had crucified the Lord, they were pierced to the heart.

- ☐ *Acts 2:36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ - this Jesus whom you crucified." 37 Now when they heard this, they were **pierced to the heart**, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"*

The English word '*pierced*' is derived from the Greek word '*katanusso*' [G2660] which Thayer defines in part as '*to prick, pierce, to pain the mind sharply, agitate it vehemently*'. The thought of being partially responsible for the killing of Christ penetrated their hearts deeply.

- 4:99 If we're to accept the view that we are to sacrifice Christ billions or trillions more times after the cross - a minimum of 220,000 times on Sundays - and that each sacrifice involves considerable pain, how do Catholics ever live in joy when - according to Catholic teachings - Jesus must be suffering greatly, repeatedly, virtually all day long? Shouldn't all Catholics be pierced to the heart every single minute of every day knowing that Jesus is currently being sacrificed and experiencing major pain as a result of one or even thousands of communions occurring - right now?

4:100 If communion is taken to address the less serious sins which do not affect one's salvation - the venial sins - do more sacrifices of Jesus and the associated pain for Jesus seem right?

Wouldn't Clarity be Warranted

Hundreds of billions, if not trillions, of sacrifices of Christ are based on taking a few words literally and not symbolically.

4:101 If God knew Christ was going to be sacrificed hundreds of billions/trillions of times after His crucifixion on the cross, would it be reasonable to expect God's Word to indicate there would be a monumental amount of such sacrifices of Christ going forward? If not, why not?

Instead of finding scriptures showing Jesus would need to be sacrificed over and over again, we find scriptures stating Jesus died once, for all sins, for all mankind.

- ❑ *Romans 5:18 So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through **one act of righteousness** there resulted justification of life to all men.*
- ❑ *Romans 6:9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, **is never to die again**; death no longer is master over Him.*
- ❑ *Romans 6:10 For the death that He died, He **died to sin once for all**; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.*
- ❑ *Hebrews 7:27 who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He **did once for all** when He offered up Himself.*
- ❑ *Hebrews 9:12 ... but through His own blood, He entered the holy place **once for all**, having obtained eternal redemption.*
- ❑ *Hebrews 9:26 Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now **once at the consummation of the ages** He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.*
- ❑ *Hebrews 9:28 so Christ also, **having been offered once** to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.*
- ❑ *Hebrews 10:14 **For by one offering He has perfected for all time** those who are sanctified.*
- ❑ *1 Peter 3:18 For Christ also **died for sins once for all**, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;*

4:102 To reiterate, if this sacrifice was to happen over and over again, wouldn't it be reasonable to expect scriptures to show Jesus's death on the cross was only the first of many sacrifices instead of the one-time sacrifice for all sins message that is given?

4:103 When Jesus continues to be sacrificed over and over again, day in and day out, aren't we saying Jesus's shed blood is not enough, that His death on the cross only paid the price for sins that occurred up to the first communion after the cross, but none after?

4: Born Again/Salvation

4:104 With so many ongoing sacrifices, do we trivialize the cross where it represents only one of billions/trillions of sacrifices?

4:105 When Christ said *"It is finished"* just before He died on the cross, isn't the teaching of the Roman Catholic church saying *"No Jesus, it was not finished. You need to keep being sacrificed and suffer over and over, again and again."*?

On the issue of billions of sacrifices, consider Paul's first letter to the Corinthians.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 11:26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, **you proclaim the Lord's death** until He comes.*

4:106 If Christ was to be sacrificed billions/trillions of times:

- i. why does Paul say we eat the bread and drink the cup to proclaim 1 death and not to proclaim 1 death + billions/trillions of sacrifices;
- ii. given Paul wrote 1 Corinthians ~20 years after he was born again, he would have participated in ~1,040 sacrifices if he had communion only once per week for 20 years. Why doesn't Paul mention this reality at least once by proclaiming and thanking Jesus for the thousands of sacrifices done in Paul's presence, and on Paul's behalf?

Death and Resurrection

We're to preach the gospel, but what exactly is the gospel? The word 'gospel' is derived from the Greek word 'euagglion' [G2098] which means in part 'salvation or good message'. It is referred to 97 times in the New Testament in the NASB. There are several dimensions but the foundation of the gospel is found in 1 Corinthians 15, namely Jesus's death, burial and resurrection.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 15:1 Now I **make known** to you, brethren, **the gospel** which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that **Christ died for our sins** according to the Scriptures, 4 and that **He was buried**, and that **He was raised on the third day** according to the Scriptures.*

Jesus's shed blood and death on the cross are of monumental importance. However, Jesus's resurrection is vital as without it, our faith is useless.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 15:14 **and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain.** 15 Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. 16 For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; 17 and **if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.***

4:107 If Catholic teaching is correct, when Christ was sacrificed again the very first time that communion was taken, wouldn't that sacrifice effectively 'terminate' the initial resurrection of Jesus?

CEASED? 2ND EDITION

4:108 Moreover, if Jesus's death on the cross was not enough to pay the penalty for all sins:

- i. can a one-time resurrection of Christ be adequate? In other words, wouldn't these billions/trillions of sacrifices during communion warrant an equal number of 'resurrections' as well? If not, why not? And if so, when, where and how do these billions/trillions of 'resurrections' occur?
- ii. Given Catholic communion doesn't involve another death of Jesus, then why call communion a non-bloody sacrifice? Doesn't that terminology insinuate death, but with no blood?
- iii. And don't the sacrifices of animals in the Old Testament and Jesus at the cross all involve not only shedding of blood, but also deaths? So why does Catholic communion which is central to additional forgiveness of sins not involve an additional death?

4:109 Whatever part of Jesus is sacrificed during communion, doesn't this part have to be 'resurrected' before He can be sacrificed in another communion?

4:110 However, given many communions are going on simultaneously around the world, how can a 'resurrection' for each sacrifice be possible before the next sacrifice is made?

One Sacrifice - Ongoing Consumption

Before the cross, the Jewish people sacrificed their Passover lambs once, but then had multiple meals of the lamb. If the Eucharist is about a one-time crucifixion and ongoing sacrifices through consumption of the wafer and wine similar to the initial sacrifice and ongoing consumption of the Passover lamb:

4:111 Doesn't that conflict with teachings that each communion is its own unbloody sacrifice?

4:112 And again, how does the act of consumption provide forgiveness of sins since there is no new shed blood involved?

The English Word 'Is'

One last tidbit. The word 'is' in Luke 22:19 is derived from the Greek word 'esti' [G2076] which Strong's defines in several different ways including 'meaneth'.

☐ Luke 22:19 And when He had taken some bread ... "This **is [esti]** My body ..."

4:113 I'm no Greek scholar and I'm easily confused with all the tenses and rules. But consider this. If the word 'is' is changed to a word that relates to 'meaneth', we get something like "And when He had taken some bread ... saying "**View this bread as meaning or representing my body** ...". It provides a different perspective doesn't it?

Two Options

In terms of our own belief about communion, we have two basic choices:

1. we take communion to remember Christ Jesus Himself, and to remember what He did on the whipping post and cross; or
2. we take communion not only to remember what Christ Jesus did on the

4: Born Again/Salvation

cross, but also to sacrifice Him again and again as payment for new venial sins but not new mortal sins.

Most non-Catholics believe communion is symbolic. It is to be taken with gratitude and reverence, and to remember what Christ not only did for us on the whipping post and the cross, but also in a broader sense to thank Jesus for everything else He did back then, has already done in our own lives, and will do in our lives going forward.

There are blessings from communion, but Protestants see any blessings are a result of what Jesus did once on the cross, and not from any further, ongoing sacrifices. It is the blood of Jesus that cleanses us from our collective sins, not Jesus's blood plus billions/trillions of sacrifices after the cross. For me, if there is anything I eat and drink during communion, it is the truths in God's Word about what Jesus did for me. And thus, if you're Roman Catholic, can you see why these radical differences on communion are such a major stumbling block inhibiting Protestants from coming alongside Roman Catholics?

OTHER CATHOLIC TEACHINGS ON SALVATION

In terms of Roman Catholic teachings on salvation, my research indicates getting saved involves 3 basic steps:

1. repentance, believing in Jesus, His death, burial and resurrection;
2. believing in the teachings of the Roman Catholic church; and
3. getting water baptized, the first one of the 7 sacraments.

Roman Catholic teachings also include various 'works' need to be done to keep being saved. A simplified list includes the following:

1. fulfill the other 6 sacraments: confirmation, the eucharist, reconciliation, anointing of the sick, holy orders, and marriage;
2. be a loyal member of the Church;
3. keep the Ten Commandments and if one sins, show sorrow, resolve not to sin again, and perform penance which is self-punishment done to try to right a wrong or to receive absolution from sins. Penance vary, but can involve a public statement, confession to a priest and/or saying several Hail Marys;
4. go to mass preferably weekly, and at least once per year, and take communion - provided the criteria for taking communion have been met;
5. obtain special penance for mortal sins; and
6. receive prayer or penance from others if one is in purgatory; some financial contributions, climbing Sacred Steps, attending special events including online events and properly embracing the Pope's tweets are all acceptable in helping one get out or reduce the time a person spends in purgatory.

Apart from sincerely repenting of sins, I don't find scriptures in the Bible supporting the above kinds of works are required to maintain salvation after the cross. And if we have to keep working to keep the gift of salvation, it raises the issue of was it actually a gift in the first place?

- ❑ *Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, **it is the gift of God**; 9 not as a result of works, so no one may boast.*

Purgatory

- 4:114 On the issue of whether or not there is purgatory, Catholic teachings say it is found in the Old Testament in 2 Maccabees 12:39-45. As Maccabees is part of the Catholic Old Testament and before the cross, I have 3 questions.
- i. How is purgatory relevant to salvation today? Doesn't Christ's death render purgatory invalid even if it did exist at one time before the cross? Aren't we under the New Covenant?
 - ii. How does this Old Testament practice, even if it was valid in Old Testament days, able to do today what Christ's death on the cross wasn't able to do ~2,000 years ago?
 - iii. Once we die, don't truly born-again sons and daughters immediately go to heaven? While all others will go to hell immediately after meeting Jesus?
- ❑ *Luke 23:43 And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise."*
 - ❑ *2 Corinthians 5:8 we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.*

To help illustrate the vast differences between how Protestants and Catholics see issues of purgatory and remission of punishment through indulgences, consider the following article "*How to pray your loved ones out of Purgatory this November*" by Mary Rezac of the Catholic News Agency dated October 31, 2017.

"It's the first week of November, which means it's the best time of year, liturgically speaking, for you to shave off some temporal punishment for all your loved ones in Purgatory.

In case you're unfamiliar with Catholic teaching on the afterlife, there are three places for a soul to go after death: Heaven, Hell, or Purgatory.

According to the Catechism of the Roman Catholic church, those who go to Heaven are "(t)hose who die in God's grace and friendship and are perfectly purified live for ever with Christ."

Those souls that go to Hell are those who have freely chosen through mortal sin "exclusion from communion with God and the blessed."

Purgatory is a place where souls go who die in grace in friendship with God but are still imperfectly purified. Purgatory is where "after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven." These souls are ensured eventual entrance into Heaven, once they are purified.

Souls in purgatory rely on the prayers of souls still on Earth to relieve some of their temporal suffering and speed their journey to Heaven, so be sure to take advantage of these days to pray for them by gaining indulgences for them.

An indulgence is a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven, which the faithful Christian who is duly disposed gains under certain prescribed conditions through the action of the Church which, as the minister of redemption, dispenses and applies with authority the treasury of the satisfactions of Christ and the saints. [CCC 1471]

4: Born Again/Salvation

Here's when and how:

The first chance for gaining a plenary (or full) indulgence for the deceased is available Nov. 2 only. In a Church, recite the Creed and the Our Father for the dead, receive Communion, and pray for Pope's intentions.

The second opportunity lasts through November 8. A person can obtain one plenary indulgence for a deceased person per day if they receive Communion, pray for the deceased at a cemetery, and pray for the Pope's intentions.

Throughout the year, a person can obtain one partial indulgence for a deceased person per day if they receive Communion, pray for the deceased at a cemetery, and pray for the Pope's intentions. November is a good time to remember to do this, since the Church is praying in a special way for souls this month.

In each instance, the person obtaining the indulgences needs to receive the sacrament of confession within about a week of the indulgence act. One confession covers the person obtaining one partial indulgence per day. Additionally, the person needs to be in a state of grace when completing the indulgence act, and have detachment from all sin (which, if that sounds impossible, is more fully explained by a priest in this blog post.)

So take advantage of the month of November, and love your deceased relatives by praying them out of Purgatory!

"Let us help and commemorate them. If Job's sons were purified by their father's sacrifice [Job 1:5], why would we doubt that our offerings for the dead bring them some consolation? Let us not hesitate to help those who have died and to offer our prayers for them" – St. John Chrysostom

4:115 In my study, I struggle to see where all the comments, nuances, and rules related to purgatory and indulgences correspond to what the Bible teaches. Full indulgences on November 2 only, and only if one receives communion. One indulgence per day through November 8 and again, only if one receives communion. Partial indulgences per day through the rest of the year. None of this is in the Bible and resembles anything like what Christ or His apostles taught. Thus, if you're Roman Catholic, can you again see why many Protestants have major difficulties with Roman Catholic teachings?

If you're Roman Catholic, can I encourage you to read the New Testament for yourself and let it speak to you? The Bible is God's love letter to you, and He delights when we spend time reading His Word. Compare what you find in John, Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians to the above article and the 15 promises of the rosary in Chapter 25, and see if there is a clear and total connection - or disconnection.

ALTERNATE PROTESTANT VIEWS

In a broader context, there are other aspects of salvation in some Protestant churches I also don't find in the Bible or seem contrary to the Bible. Two include:

- ❖ 'enough' participation in church activities such as going to church, prayer meetings and Bible studies, helping out, tithing, going on missions etc.; and
- ❖ Baptism in the Holy Spirit (see Chapters 7-10 of **CEASED?**).

CEASED? 2ND EDITION

In terms of the first list of items, the Bible is clear they aren't part of getting us saved or keeping us saved. In terms of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, Chapters 7 and 8 of **CEASED?** will clearly show this Baptism is a separate experience from being born again, although both experiences can occur at virtually the same time.

Some believers see differences in the process of salvation as not being a big deal as long as we believe in Jesus. However, if a person influences anyone to believe in a different gospel than what's in the Bible, Paul writes that person should be accursed. And Paul says it not once, but twice.

- ❑ *Galatians 1:8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, **should preach to you a gospel contrary** to what we have preached to you, **he is to be accursed!** 9 As we have said before, **so I say again** now, if **any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary** to what you received, **he is to be accursed!***

The book of Revelation also gives a warning which some believe only relates to changes to the book of Revelation; others believe it pertains to the entire Bible.

- ❑ *Revelation 22:18 I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: **if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues** which are written in this book; 19 and **if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life** and from the holy city, which are written in this book.*

4:116 Either way we look at Revelation 22:18-19, God warns of consequences of preaching a different gospel, or of adding to or taking away from His Word. I want to only teach the true gospel which is based on the 1-time crucifixion of Christ, 1-time burial and 1-time resurrection. What's your take?

BY GRACE ALONE, BY FAITH ALONE

4:117 A common phrase is that we are saved by grace alone, by faith alone. It is by God's grace and by our faith in God. God's grace alone is correct, but I think there is a bit more to our side than faith alone. Repentance, believing and confessing Jesus from a heart desiring an ongoing personal relationship with God, with no one in between, are all essential.

CLOSING POINTS TO PONDER

God created humans to have a relationship. God's love is unconditional. Father God sent Jesus to die for our sins. We are saved because of God's goodness. As seen in future chapters, when we become true Christians and are truly born again, Holy Spirit comes in [en] us. We become many things. We're a child of God and a joint-heir. We're adopted. We're seated in heavenly places. We become sent ones and ambassadors with a responsibility to share the Good News. Crazy good stuff.

4:118 If salvation depends on what we do to earn it, would this align:
i. with having a close, intimate personal relationship with God; or
ii. with false religions where one needs to strive and perform to prove oneself worthy enough to get into heaven?

4: Born Again/Salvation

- 4:119 When we're born again, we give our life - we surrender our life - to God. God becomes our Lord and *'owner'*. Is it fair to compare being born again to buying land wherein, after we meet the required price and conditions, we get title and deed of the land, and the land becomes ours? The time leading up to ownership may be lengthy or extremely short, but once the price and conditions have been met, is it a situation where one minute we do not own the land, but in the next minute we do? And after we own the land, while there may still be junk and things that go wrong, isn't it still our land? Isn't that similar to when we're born again? One minute - Holy Spirit is not in us, and the next minute He is? And once in us, while we receive so many blessings per Figure 6:1, there is still junk in our land - i.e. in our soul?
- 4:120 On the basis the land purchase is an appropriate analogy, when does the moment of the *'born-again purchase'* occur for Roman Catholics?

A last issue for Roman Catholics to ponder. The COVID-19 pandemic is still going on as I write this **2ND EDITION** of **CEASED?**. Many devoted Catholics still aren't able to go to mass and take communion. What are the implications for the Roman Catholic church of long delays between communions for the vast majority of Catholics? I'll let you decide. Lori and I usually take communion each morning. If you can't go to mass, consider taking a form of communion at home. But if eating/drinking the elements causes you angst, just hold your hearts up and give God praise and worship. After all, it's your heart He wants.

- 4:121 Human beings are prone to forgetting people - even special ones. We so often live *'out of sight, out of mind'*. When Jesus spoke of communion, He did so after spending 3½ years with His disciples? Was His message simply this: *"Eat this bread and drink this wine to remember Me?"* If not, what do Luke 22:19, Matthew 26:26-29 and Mark 14:22-25 say that clearly shows communion is more than remembering Jesus?

God created humans to have a relationship with Him, something we first see when God created Adam and Eve. Sin entered the world and created a separation between human beings and God. Thankfully, God provided a solution through Jesus's death, burial and resurrection - the most important sequence of events since creation. Wicked sinners that we are, God so loved us that Jesus was willing to die for us. And it is God's love, a love that is to flow through His children, which leads a person to want Jesus in their lives and causes them to repent and change their ways.

- *Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

Chapter 5 reviews how Holy Spirit is actually with [para] us, how God draws us to a relationship with Him before we're even born again. Talk about being blessed.

Chapters 6 through 12 go on to discuss aspects of our relationship with God when we're first born again, and in our walk thereafter as a blood-bought, born-again, child of God.

Holy Spirit ‘Withs’ Temporary [Para] & Permanent [Meta]

INTRODUCTION

BEFORE being born again, the apostles were drawn to Christ and followed Jesus after He told them to follow Him. However, many others who were not told to follow Jesus were nevertheless drawn to Him, and followed Him. Chapter 5 discusses how Holy Spirit is with people today in one of two ways.

1. Holy Spirit is temporarily with [para] us while He leads us to Jesus; and
2. Holy Spirit is permanently with [meta] us after we’re born again.

Father God Draws us to Christ

The Bible tells us that Father God draws people to Christ.

- ❑ *John 6:44 **No one can come to Me** unless **the Father who sent Me draws him**; and I will raise him up on the last day.*
- ❑ *John 6:65 And He was saying, “For this reason I have said to you, that **no one can come to Me** unless **it has been granted him from the Father.**”*

To clarify, Father God draws people to Christ through Holy Spirit who convicts people of their sins and helps them realize their need for righteousness and a savior.

- ❑ *John 16:7 But I tell you the truth. **it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you**; but if I go, I will send Him to you. 8 And He, when He comes, will **convict the world concerning sin and righteousness** and judgment;*

Conviction of sin involves a renewing of our mind, a process that leads to repentance which involves not only sorrow, but a commitment and desire to change one’s way of thinking by turning towards God.

- ❑ *John 16:8 And He, when He comes, will convict the world regarding sin, and righteousness, and judgment:*

5: Holy Spirit With [Para/Meta]

A wonderful thing about God is that not only does He want to grow His relationship with those who are saved, but He also wants to establish a personal relationship with those who are not saved. John 14:17 reveals Holy Spirit was **with** those who were listening to Him at that time, but one day in the future, Holy Spirit **will** also be **in** them.

- ❑ *John 14:17 that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides **with [para G3844]** you and will be **in** you.*

The English word 'with' in John 14:17 is derived from the Greek word 'para' [G3844] which Thayer defines as 'from, of at, by, besides, near'.

- 5:1 Before the cross, Jesus tells His apostles they already know Holy Spirit because Holy Spirit dwells with them. And, one day, Holy Spirit shall be in them, which per Chapter 6 occurs when they are born again. Isn't it reasonable to conclude Holy Spirit is with [para] some, many or all non-believers today, just as Holy Spirit was with these unsaved individuals before the cross?

'Para': a Temporary 'With'

One role played by Holy Spirit is to draw people to Jesus. There are two outcomes. The first involves individuals who don't accept Christ as their Lord and Savior and don't enter into a personal relationship with Him. These individuals will unfortunately end up in hell. At that point, Holy Spirit no longer draws them to Jesus - it's too late.

The second outcome involves those individuals who accept Christ and enter into a personal relationship with Him. In this case, they have Jesus. They no longer need Holy Spirit to be with [para] them for purposes of drawing them to Jesus. However, they do now have another variation of a 'with' experience.

'Meta': a Permanent 'With'

In John 14:16, Jesus tells the disciples He will give us another Helper - Holy Spirit. Other translations have other descriptors of Holy Spirit.

- ❑ *John 14:16 I will ask the Father, and He will give you another **Helper**, that He may be **with [meta]** you forever; [NASB]*
- ❑ *John 14:16 And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another **Helper (Comforter, Advocate, Intercessor-Counselor, Strengthened, Standby)**, to be **with [meta]** you forever. [AMP]*
- ❑ *John 14:16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another **Comforter**, that he may abide with you for ever; [KJV]*

A key part of John 14:16 is that Holy Spirit will not just be with us temporarily drawing us to Christ, but will be with us ... forever.

- ❑ *John 14:16 I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be **with [meta]** you **forever**.*

CEASED? 2ND EDITION

The English word 'with' in John 14:16 is based on a different Greek word, 'meta' [G3326], and not 'para' when Holy Spirit draws individuals to Jesus. Meta is defined as 'with, after, behind'.

One view of para and meta is that para indicates Holy Spirit is close by as He draws us to Christ. Whereas para is a temporary relationship, meta is a permanent relationship where Holy Spirit is with us forever after we're born again. This would be consistent with Matthew 1:23 which tells us Jesus will be also with us [*meta*] permanently.

- ❑ *Matthew 1:23 "Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which translated means, "God **with [meta]** us."*
- ❑ *Matthew 28:20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am **with [meta]** you **always, even to the end of the age.***

If you haven't already done so, consider reading books about the Holy Spirit to get to know more about Him. I also encourage you to get to know Him. It's a can't lose proposition. After all, if you're born again, He is in [en] you and has time for you.

CLOSING POINTS TO PONDER

- 5:2 Holy Spirit, Almighty God Himself, is with us as He leads us to Christ. Chapter 6 reveals that Holy Spirit and Jesus are not only with [*meta*] us after we're born again, they are also in [en] us once we're saved. Are we children of God blessed, or what?
- 5:3 And as incredible as these blessings may be, isn't it equally sobering and tragic that some people will reject Jesus and His gift of salvation involving forgiveness of sin and eternal life with Jesus? Is this perhaps the one sin that is unforgivable because those who reject Jesus are effectively saying that what Holy Spirit says about Jesus is a lie?
- ❑ *Luke 12:10 And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him.*

Holy Spirit 'In' [En]

INTRODUCTION

BEFORE we're born again, God is with [para] us as Holy Spirit draws us to Christ. Chapter 6 reviews aspects of what happens when we're born again including:

1. the [en] experience when Holy Spirit comes 'in' a person (page 103);
2. start of an amazing relationship (page 105); the Great Exchange (page 105);
3. the born-again experience of the original apostles and disciples (page 108);
4. was Jesus's breathing on His disciples on resurrection Sunday evening symbolic, or their personal born-again experience (page 109);
5. who did Jesus breathe upon on resurrection Sunday evening (page 114);
6. women and the newly resurrected Christ (page 115); and
7. Holy Spirit's baptism of believers into the Body of Christ (page 119).

Sin Separates

Before we come to Christ, we're separated from God due to sin. We're spiritually dead. Once we're saved, our spirit comes alive as Holy Spirit comes in [en] us. This revival of our spirits was prophesied in the Old Testament.

- ❑ *Isaiah 59:2 But your **wrongdoings have caused a separation** between you and your God,*
- ❑ *Ezekiel 36:26 Moreover, I will **give you a new heart** and **put a new spirit within you**; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 I will **put My Spirit within** you and ...*

IN [EN] EXPERIENCES

Old Testament 'In' Experiences

While researching Holy Spirit coming 'in' a believer, I was surprised to find Holy Spirit was also 'in' various individuals in the Old Testament. Some of them include:

- ❑ *Numbers 27:18 ... "Take Joshua ... a man **in whom is the Spirit** ...;*
- ❑ *Ezekiel 2:2 As He spoke to me **the Spirit entered me** ...*
- ❑ *Daniel 4:8 But finally Daniel ... **in whom is a spirit of the holy gods** ...*

'With' and 'In' the Disciples

Moving on to the New Testament, Chapter 5 in **CEASED?** discussed how Holy Spirit was 'with' the disciples (before the cross), but in the future (after the cross), Holy Spirit will also be 'in' them.

- ❑ *John 14:16 I will ask the Father, and **He will give you another Helper**, that*

He may be **with [meta]** you forever; 17 that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides **with [para]** you and **will be in [en]** you.

This 'in' experience is a big deal. If Holy Spirit isn't in us, we aren't a child of God.

- ❑ *Romans 8:9 However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed **the Spirit of God dwells in [en] you**. But **if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him**.*

However, when we're born again and Holy Spirit comes in [en] us, we become a child of God. The English word 'in' is based on the Greek word 'en' [G1722]. Thayer defines en in part as 'in, by, with'.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 3:16 Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells **in [en] you?***
- ❑ *1 John 3:24 The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that **He abides in [en] us, by the Spirit whom He has given us**.*

When we're born again, we enter a new way of being and living. We're adopted into God's family. Holy Spirit now lives in us. Close your eyes and contemplate how amazing it is that Holy Spirit is **IN** us. And to emphasize the intimacy of this new relationship, we find when we're born again, we become one spirit with Holy Spirit.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 6:17 But the **one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him**.*

Then, to add to those blessings, we also learn Jesus is also **IN** us.

- ❑ *2 Corinthians 13:5 Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! ... that **Jesus Christ is in you** - unless indeed you fail the test?*
- ❑ *Romans 8:10 **If Christ is in [en] you**, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.*
- ❑ *John 15:5 I am the vine, you are the branches; he who **abides in [en] Me** and **I in [en] him**, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.*

We don't worship a God who is in some far-off distant universe. He is here ... in us. God wants a relationship with us, directly. The veil in the temple was torn, and we can go into the Holy of Holies ourselves - direct access to God. No long-distance. No megaphone or intermediary is needed to act on our behalf. We can speak to Him, and hear Him speak to us, in whatever form that takes.

- ❑ *Mark 15:37 And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed His last. 38 And the **veil of the temple was torn** in two from top to bottom.*
 - ❑ *Ephesians 2:18 For through Him we both **have our access** in one Spirit to the Father.*
 - ❑ *John 10:27 My **sheep hear My voice**, and I know them, and they follow Me;*
- 6:1 With both Jesus and Holy Spirit in [en] us, does this enable us to have the kind of personal relationship that Adam had with God in the Garden of Eden where they walked together and talked with each other? If not, why not?

6: Holy Spirit In [En]

- 6:2 Views vary on whether Adam lost none/some/all of the call on his life when he ate of the tree. He had children so he clearly didn't lose all of his calling. For us, however, isn't our ability to fulfill the call God has for our life greatly enhanced when we're made right with God after we're born again, and God Himself is in [en] us?

BEGINNING OF AN INCREDIBLE RELATIONSHIP

When we're born again, the blessings from Holy Spirit living in [en] us are many. For one, Holy Spirit is given as a down payment on our future inheritance of eternal life in heaven. He seals it.

- ❑ *2 Corinthians 1:22 who also **sealed us** and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as **a pledge**.*
- ❑ *Ephesians 4:30 Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, **by whom you were sealed** for the day of redemption.*

Other blessings include Holy Spirit teaching us, helping us remember, and helping us to understand and know things of God and from God.

- ❑ *John 14:26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit ... will **teach you all things**, and **bring to your remembrance** all that I said to you.*
- ❑ *John 15:26 When the **Helper** comes ... the Spirit of truth ...*
- ❑ *1 Corinthians 2:12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, **so that we may know the things freely given to us by God**.*

Jesus is also our one and only supernatural mediator.

- ❑ *1 Timothy 2:5 For there is one God, and **one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus**.*

Romans 8 speaks of other potential blessings we receive when born again.

- ❑ *Romans 8:1 Therefore there is **now no condemnation** ...*
- ❑ *2 ... **set you free from the law of sin and of death** ...*
- ❑ *6 ... the mind set on the Spirit is **life and peace** ...*
- ❑ *11 ... give **life to your mortal bodies** through His Spirit who dwells in you.*
- ❑ *14 For **all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God**.*
- ❑ *15 ... **received a spirit of adoption as sons** by which we cry ... "Abba! Father!"*
- ❑ *16 ... **we are children of God**, 17 and if children, **heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer** with Him ...*
- ❑ *24 For **in hope we have been saved** ...*
- ❑ *26 ... the Spirit **also helps our weakness**; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but **the Spirit Himself intercedes for us** with groanings too deep for words; 27 and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because **He intercedes for the saints** according to the will of God ...*
- ❑ *31 ... **If God is for us, who is against us?***
- ❑ *32 He who did not spare His own Son, ... will He not also with Him **freely give us all things?** ...*
- ❑ *35 **Who will separate us from the love of Christ?** ...*

The in [en] experience is primarily for the benefit of the person in whom Holy Spirit dwells, the person who is born again. Benefits flow to other people, however, due to the influence Holy Spirit has on the born-again person. The extent of God’s blessings is amazing. I believe it was Derek Prince in his book “*Divine Exchange*” who first summarized the blessings from the cross, burial, and resurrection of Christ from the perspective of what Jesus got out of the deal and what we received. Others have created their versions of this exchange. My version is Figure 6:1.

Figure 6:1 The Great/Divine Exchange

What happened to Jesus?	What happened for us?
1. Enslaved in human flesh; earthly living challenges ❖ Luke 9:58; 4:1-12 ❖ Philippians 2:5-8	Blessings in heavenly places ❖ Ephesians 1:3; 2:6
2. Tempted by devil ❖ Matthew 4:1-11 ❖ Mark 1:9-13 ❖ Luke 4:1-12	Works of devil destroyed for us ❖ Colossians 2:15 ❖ 1 John 3:8 Ability to resist/be free from sinning ❖ Matthew 6:13 ❖ Romans 6:6 ❖ Galatians 2:20
3. Sold for the price of a slave ❖ Matthew 26:15; 27:3	Bought with the blood of Jesus ❖ Acts 20:28 ❖ 1 Corinthians 6:20 ❖ 1 Peter 1:18-19
4. Surrendered ❖ John 10:17	Given spiritual authority ❖ Matthew 28:18-20 ❖ Mark 16:15-19 ❖ Luke 10:19 ❖ John 20:21 ❖ Acts 3:6
5. Captured due to sins of world ❖ Acts 2:23	Delivered from the sins of the world ❖ Galatians 1:4
6. Despised, shamed, tormented, mocked ❖ Isaiah 53:3 ❖ Matthew 27:35-44 ❖ Mark 14:65 ❖ Luke 18:32 ❖ Romans 8:18 ❖ Hebrews 12:2	God’s glory, love, peace ❖ Matthew 27:39-44 ❖ John 3:16; 17:22 ❖ Romans 15:7 ❖ Ephesians 1:6 ❖ Philippians 4:7
7. Rejected by many Jews; abandoned by disciples ❖ Matthew 21:42 ❖ Mark 8:31; 14:50 ❖ Luke 2:34	Acceptance/fellowship with God ❖ 1 Corinthians 1:9 ❖ 1 John 1:3-4

Figure 6:1 The Great/Divine Exchange

What happened to Jesus?	What happened for us?
8. Fulfilled the law/made a curse for us ❖ Deuteronomy 21:23 ❖ Matthew 5:17 ❖ Romans 8:1-4 ❖ Galatians 3:13	Free of the law; saved by grace, freed from curse of the law ❖ Romans 7:6 ❖ Galatians 3:1-3; 3:13 ❖ Ephesians 2:8-9
9. Did not sin; took on our sins ❖ 2 Corinthians 5:21 ❖ 1 Peter 2:22; 2:24	Freed from the penalty of our sins; forgiven, made righteous ❖ Acts 5:31 ❖ Romans 3:22-24; 5:17 ❖ Romans 5:8-9; 6:23 ❖ Philippians 1:11 ❖ Colossians 2:14-15 ❖ 2 Peter 1:4
10. Took our sorrows and griefs ❖ Isaiah 53:4	Gladness and joy ❖ Luke 15:10; 15:11 ❖ Acts 14:17 ❖ Hebrews 1:9
11. Body was mangled ❖ Luke 22:19	By His stripe(s), we are healed ❖ Psalm 103:3 ❖ Isaiah 53:5 ❖ 1 Peter 2:24
12. Forsaken/separated from God ❖ Matthew 27:46 ❖ Mark 14:50	Adopted as a child of God ❖ John 1:12-13 ❖ 1 John 3:1 Christ in us ❖ Galatians 2:20 ❖ Ephesians 3:17-21 Holy Spirit in us; leads/guides us ❖ John 14:17 ❖ Romans 8:14-17
13. Died a thankless, cruel death ❖ 1 Corinthians 15:3 ❖ Hebrews 2:9	Eternal life/gift of salvation ❖ Romans 6:23 ❖ 1 Corinthians 15:21-26 ❖ 2 Corinthians 5:15 ❖ 1 John 5:11
14. Died to tear the veil ❖ Matthew 27:51 ❖ Mark 15:38 ❖ Luke 23:45	Direct access to God any time ❖ Exodus 30:10 ❖ Leviticus 16:1-34 ❖ Isaiah 59:1-2 ❖ Acts 17:24-28 ❖ Hebrews 4:14-16 ❖ Hebrews 9:1-9; 10:19-20

Figure 6:1 The Great/Divine Exchange

What happened to Jesus?	What happened for us?
15. Died in total poverty; nothing of earthly value left ❖ 2 Corinthians 8:9	Abundant life ❖ John 10:10; 14:13 ❖ Romans 8:32 ❖ 2 Corinthians 8:9, 9:8 ❖ Galatians 3:9 ❖ Philippians 4:19 Heir of God/Joint heirs with Jesus ❖ Matthew 25:34 ❖ Romans 8:17 ❖ Galatians 3:29; 4:7 ❖ Colossians 1:12; 3:24 Citizen of heaven ❖ Philippians 3:20

ORIGINAL APOSTLES' BORN-AGAIN EXPERIENCE

When a person is born again, we're told the angels celebrate.

- ❑ *Luke 15:10 In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."*

Resurrection Sunday was a very special time. Finding the empty tomb, going inside and being told by angels that Jesus had risen, then learning that the resurrected Jesus would meet them later in Galilee were some of the most exhilarating minutes in history. And the excitement didn't stop. Later, on resurrection Sunday evening, the women and other disciples spent time with the resurrected Jesus after He came into that locked room, a room locked because those gathered were fearful for their lives. Jesus coming to see them Sunday evening was amazing, but to come into a room with locked doors was rather unusual. No wonder Jesus told them to have peace not once but twice.

- ❑ *John 20:19 So when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "**Peace be with you.**" 20 And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord. 21 So Jesus said to them again, "**Peace be with you;** as the Father has sent Me, I also send you."*

After Jesus gave evidence of His risen nature, the disciples rejoiced.

- ❑ *John 20:20 And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples **then rejoiced** when they saw the Lord.*
- 6:3 The disciples spent 3½ years with Jesus witnessing miracles, witnessing the power of God time and time again, and hearing Jesus's superb teaching. They had seen the crucifixion and the empty tomb. They heard Jesus say His temple would be raised on the third day. The hours between learning the tomb was empty and Jesus appearing that evening must have been filled with questions, comments, and perhaps the odd: "*Oh, that's what Jesus*

6: Holy Spirit In [En]

meant!". Then - Jesus appeared to them in a locked room, in person. He showed them his hands and his pierced side. The disciples were no doubt excited to realize Jesus had risen. However, I wonder if they were also still convicted for running away when Jesus was first arrested, and for not helping take Jesus down from the cross, but instead left Him hanging. On resurrection Sunday evening, don't you think the odds are pretty darn high that the disciples were ready to listen to what the resurrected Jesus had to say, were ready to follow Jesus, and were ready to do whatever He wanted them to do?

- 6:4 More specifically, do you believe the disciples were ready on resurrection Sunday evening to accept Christ into their lives as their personal Lord and Savior? If not, why not?
- 6:5 In particular, consider Peter. Three days before, Peter had denied Jesus 3 times. Peter had wept bitterly. Earlier that morning, Peter ran to the empty tomb. He had been waiting for several hours wondering what was going to happen next. Then Jesus appears. When Peter saw the risen Christ, what were the odds Peter would deny anything the resurrected Jesus wanted to give him or ask of him - be it good, bad or indifferent?

Jesus Breathed on the Disciples

After Jesus showed His hands and side to His disciples and said peace to them a second time, Jesus breathed on them and told them to receive the Holy Spirit.

- ❑ *John 20:21 So Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you." 22 And when He had said this, **He breathed on them** and said to them, "**Receive the Holy Spirit.***

Jesus breathing on the disciples is the moment when many believers (including myself) think Holy Spirit came in [en] the disciples, the moment when the disciples were born again, the moment the first Christians as we understand the term today, came onto the scene, and when the Body of Christ and God's church started.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 3:16 Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells **in [en] you?***
- ❑ *1 John 3:24 The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that **He abides in [en] us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.***

BUT, WAS JESUS'S BREATH PURELY SYMBOLIC?

The word 'breathed' is derived from the Greek word 'emphusao' [G1720] which Thayer defines in part as 'to blow or breathe upon'. Some believers teach Jesus's breathing on the disciples was purely symbolic, that Jesus was merely breathing air, and was preparing the disciples for Pentecost when Holy Spirit would come.

- 6:6 Is it likely that after all Jesus went through - ministering for 3½ years, suffering a brutal whipping and crucifixion, being buried and then resurrected - He would follow that up by blowing air on His disciples and tell them to receive the Holy Spirit, purely for symbolic reasons?

Here are 7 reasons why Jesus's breathing on the disciples was not symbolic.

(1) Tense of Jesus's Words

On resurrection Sunday night, Jesus spoke in the present tense when He breathed and told His disciples to *"receive the Holy Spirit"*. By contrast, Jesus spoke in a future tense in Acts 1:4-5 when He commanded them to wait in Jerusalem where they would be Baptized with the Holy Spirit *'not many days from now'*. He also spoke in future tense in Acts 1:8 when He told them they *'will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon them'*. As a result, when Jesus said to *'receive the Holy Spirit'* on resurrection Sunday evening, the present tense tells me they received Holy Spirit right then and there. And that is when they were born again in my view.

6:7 If this breathing was symbolic of a future event:

- i. why did Jesus speak in the present tense? Why didn't He speak in a future tense such as *"Soon, you will receive the Holy Spirit"*; and
- ii. wouldn't Jesus's comments in John 20:21 related to sending and John 20:23 about forgiveness also need to be treated symbolically?

(2) Precedents: God Breathed Life into Adam

First, when God breathed on Adam and Ezekiel spoke to the dry bones.

- ❑ *Genesis 2:7 Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and **breathed into his nostrils the breath of life**; and man became a living being.*
- ❑ *Ezekiel 37:10 So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet - a vast army.*

6:8 When God breathed on Adam, and Ezekiel spoke to the dry bones, didn't God give life to all corresponding human bodies, souls and spirits?

6:9 When Jesus breathed on the disciples, would it follow that God was also breathing life into the disciples, this time spiritual life?

(3) Jesus is Sending Them

A second reason as to why Jesus breathing on the disciples was not symbolic is found in John 20. Before Jesus breathes on the disciples and tells them to receive the Holy Spirit, Jesus advises He is *'sending'* them just as He was sent.

- ❑ *John 20:21 So Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you; as the **Father has sent Me, I also send you.**" 22 And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.*

6:10 As Jesus is sending the disciples out, wouldn't it be beneficial if they were born again and had Holy Spirit in [en] them before they went out?

(4) Spiritual Understanding

A third reason why Jesus's breathing on His disciples was not symbolic is due to one of the many benefits of having Holy Spirit in [en] us - gaining spiritual understanding. The latter part of Luke 24 deals with resurrection Sunday evening. Jesus showed the disciples his hands and feet, and to help them believe, he ate food.

- ❑ *Luke 24:36 Now while they were telling these things, Jesus Himself suddenly stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be to you ... 40 And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. 41 While they still could not*

6: Holy Spirit In [En]

believe it because of their joy and astonishment, He said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" 42 They served Him a piece of broiled fish; 43 and He took it and ate it in front of them

After He ate, Jesus opened their minds to better understand the scriptures.

- ❑ *Luke 24:44 Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." 45 **Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,***

While Jesus appeared to the disciples on resurrection Sunday evening and said He was sending them, He didn't send them right away. Instead, Acts 1 tells us that Jesus first taught the disciples about kingdom of God matters over a 40-day period.

- ❑ *Acts 1:3 To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, **appearing to them over a period of forty days** and **speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.***

Having an enhanced ability to understand Christ's teachings over these 40 days would have been very helpful to these disciples. An issue remains on how Jesus actually accomplished this opening of their minds so they could understand. First, it is helpful to remember that all scripture was inspired by Holy Spirit.

- ❑ *2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is inspired by God and beneficial for teaching, for rebuke, for correction, for training in righteousness;*

Secondly, 1 Corinthians 2 provides insight into how Holy Spirit teaches us.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 2:11 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? **Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.** 12 **Now we have received,** not the spirit of the world, but **the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God,** 13 which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, **but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.** 14 But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.*

6:11 Holy Spirit is key to gaining spiritual insight which is why God's Word comes alive when we're born again. Isn't it logical to think one key reason why Jesus breathed on the disciples on resurrection Sunday night was so they would have Holy Spirit in [en] them to help them understand the Kingdom teachings Jesus would give them over the following 40 days? If not, why not?

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 6:17 **But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him.***

(5) If Not Sunday Evening. When

Moving on, nowhere does Jesus tell the disciples between resurrection Sunday and His ascension 40 days later that they needed to be born again. Thus, if the disciples weren't born again on resurrection Sunday evening, when were they born

again? The most common response is Pentecost. One problem with this view is that the Bible does not show Holy Spirit came in [en] the disciples at Pentecost, but instead only came upon [epi] them, a totally different experience. Moreover, before Jesus's ascension, He never once tells His disciples they still needed to be born again.

6:12 If Jesus's disciples weren't born again when Jesus ascended, don't you think Jesus would have made this gap clear to them before He ascended?

(6) Resurrection Sunday is in [en]; Pentecost is upon [epi]

- ❑ *Acts 1:4 ... He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you **will be baptized with the Holy Spirit** not many days from now." ... 8 but you will **receive power** when the **Holy Spirit has come upon you**; and **you shall be My witnesses** both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and ... the remotest part of the earth."*

Acts 1:4-8 refers to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit when the Holy Spirit comes upon a believer. This upon [epi] experience is dealt with in detail in the next 2 chapters. In brief, the upon [epi] experience would happen in the future in order for them to receive power to be witnesses for Christ. Jesus didn't say the Baptism of the Holy Spirit would occur so the original apostles and disciples would be born again.

John the Baptist provided some clarity by revealing Jesus is the One who Baptizes a person in the Holy Spirit, not another person.

- ❑ *Matthew 3:11 "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; **He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.**"*

Fast forward, and the Baptism in the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, 7 days after Jesus ascended to be with the Father.

- ❑ *Acts 2:1 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested **on [epi]** each one of them. 4 And **they were all filled with the Holy Spirit** and **began to speak with other tongues**, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.*

Later in Acts 2, Peter clarified this Baptism of the Holy Spirit was the beginning of the pouring out of the Spirit upon [epi] believers as was prophesied in the book of Joel. Furthermore, Joel stated the pouring out of the Spirit was relevant to all mankind, including sons and daughters, young and old men.

- ❑ *Acts 2:17 '... in the last days,' God says, 'That I will pour forth of My Spirit **on [epi]** all mankind; And your sons and your daughters shall **prophesy**. And your young men shall see **visions**, And your old men shall dream **dreams**;*
- ❑ *Acts 2:18 Even on My bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days **pour forth of My Spirit** And they **shall prophesy**. 19 'And I will **grant wonders in the sky** above And **signs on the earth below**, **Blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke**. 20 'The sun will be turned into darkness And the moon*

6: Holy Spirit In [En]

*into blood, Before the great and glorious day of the Lord shall come. 21 'And it shall **be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.**'*

Jesus told the disciples in Acts 1:8 they would be Baptized in the Holy Spirit to receive power to witness. 7 days after Jesus's ascension, Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost and came on those gathered, one of whom was Peter. Again, no mention was made of their being born again at this time. Soon afterward, Peter the fisherman, who a few weeks earlier cowardly denied Jesus, now boldly spoke. That same day, ~3,000 gave their life to Christ. Talk about powerful witnessing.

(7) Jesus was Lord

Prior to the cross, the disciples had referred to Jesus as Lord. When the other disciples saw Thomas - who wasn't there on resurrection Sunday evening - they again referred to Jesus as Lord.

- ❑ *John 20:24 But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples were saying to him, "**We have seen the Lord!**" ...*

Soon after, Thomas met Jesus and called Jesus "... **My Lord** and **my God.**"

- ❑ *John 20:26 After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you." 27 Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing." 28 **Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"***

6:13 Is it realistic to think Thomas also gave his life to Jesus the first night he met the risen Jesus? If not, why not? Given all the disciples referred to Jesus as Lord - and if Jesus was truly their Lord - wouldn't anything short of excitedly receiving Holy Spirit be an act of disobedience?

In Summary

Some believers may still feel the original apostles and other disciples gathered together resurrection Sunday evening weren't born again that evening. If so, there are two basic alternatives when they were saved:

- i. between resurrection Sunday and Pentecost; and
- ii. on Pentecost at virtually the same time as Holy Spirit came upon the disciples.

No scriptures indicate the born-again experience occurred in either of these alternatives. By contrast, scriptures show Jesus breathing on the disciples and telling them to receive the Holy Spirit on resurrection Sunday evening, events which are consistent with them being born again. One major benefit of being born again is that with Holy Spirit in [en] the disciples, Holy Spirit was positioned to give them spiritual understanding. This understanding was important when Jesus taught them about kingdom of God issues over the following 40 days until He ascended. After

Christ's ascension, the disciples were together for 7 days as they waited for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, an experience which occurred on Pentecost when Holy Spirit came upon [epi] them and gave them access to supernatural power to be witnesses. Soon after this outpouring of the Spirit, Peter who was once full of fear now boldly witnessed to the observers of the supernatural events at Pentecost.

As a result, I don't believe Jesus's breathing on His disciples on resurrection Sunday evening was symbolic. Rather, I believe it was a major historical event when Holy Spirit came in [en] all of them and the first group of disciples were born again.

WHO DID JESUS BREATHE UPON, AND WHO WAS BORN AGAIN RESURRECTION SUNDAY EVENING?

Valuable insight into both the Cessationist vs Continuationist debate and whether all believers or only Catholic priests are to forgive sins is provided by looking at who Jesus 1) breathed on, and then 2) told to receive the Holy Spirit on resurrection Sunday evening. It also provides insight into who was Baptized in the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and received one or more of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts.

In Principle

- ❑ *Luke 24:13 ... (1) **two of them** were going to a village named Emmaus 15 ... Jesus Himself approached and began traveling with them ... 33 And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and **found gathered together** (2) **the eleven** and (3) **those who were with them**. 34 saying, "The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon." 35 They began to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them ... 36 **While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them** and said to them,*
- 6:14 When Jesus breathed and said "receive the Holy Spirit", He did so after the Bible mentions there were 3 parties in attendance - (1) the 2 disciples (Cleopas and Simon) who met Jesus on the road to Emmaus, (2) the 11 apostles plus (3) 'those who were with them'. If Jesus only breathed on the apostles and only they were born again, what benefit was there to delay the others from being born again? And if the others weren't born again resurrection Sunday evening, when were they born again?
- 6:15 Wouldn't it benefit God's kingdom if all the disciples gathered on resurrection Sunday evening were born again so they could also better understand the teachings Jesus gave over the following 40-day period? Just as He didn't limit all his teachings to just the 12 disciples, but taught many thousands before the cross?
- 6:16 Wouldn't causing all who were gathered to be born again and be involved in hearing Jesus teach during those 40 days be consistent with God's nature of using all of us to advance His Kingdom - no matter our position, age, race, or gender?
- ❑ *Matthew 10:7 And as you go, preach, saying, '**The kingdom of heaven** is at hand.' 8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give.*

6: Holy Spirit In [En]

Let's examine 4 groupings of people who might have been there on resurrection Sunday evening when Jesus showed up.

(1) The Eleven + Two

When the two disciples who encountered Jesus on the road to Emmaus returned to Jerusalem, they found the eleven apostles who are generally believed to have received Holy Spirit when Jesus breathed on them.

(2) My Brethren

On resurrection Sunday morning when the women left the tomb and met Jesus, Jesus told them to tell His brethren to leave for Galilee where they will see Jesus.

- ❑ *Matthew 28:8 And they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to report it to His disciples. 9 And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him. 10 Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and **take word to My brethren** to leave for Galilee, and **there they will see Me.**"*

As per Chapter 3, the word 'brethren' is derived from the Greek word 'adelphos' [G80] which can be used to refer to a limited group such as brothers, but is also used more broadly including referring to a fellow man, or to brethren in Christ.

- 6:17 Given adelphos is used and not other Greek words that pertain to apostles or males only, doesn't this indicate Jesus wanted to see all His close followers, and not just a limited few? If not, why not?

(3) Women Who Found Empty Tomb/ Women and Jesus

In terms of those who were part of the group described in Luke 24:33 as 'those who were with them', consider the group of women that found the empty tomb.

- ❑ *Luke 23:55 Now the **women who had come with Him from Galilee** ...*
- ❑ *Mark 16:1 When the Sabbath was over, **Mary Magdalene**, and **Mary the mother of James**, and **Salome**, bought spices ...*
- ❑ *Luke 24:10 Now they were **Mary Magdalene** and **Joanna** and **Mary the mother of James**; also the **other women with them** were telling these things to the apostles.*
- ❑ *Matthew 28:8 .. left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and **ran to report it to His disciples** ... 10 Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and **take word to My brethren** to leave for Galilee, and **there they will see Me.**"*

- 6:18 Luke 23:55 mentions 'women who came from Galilee'; these women are part of the 'they' mentioned in Luke 24:1-11. In Mark 16:1 and Luke 24:10, 4 women are uniquely mentioned by name - Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Joanna, and Salome. Luke 24:10 mentions 3 of these same 4 women by name, and then says there were 'other women'. If there was a total of only 4 women, then it would have been more appropriate in Luke 24:10 to speak in the singular 'another woman', and not in the plural 'other women'. Doesn't that indicate there were more than 4 women who went to the tomb on resurrection Sunday?

- 6:19 These women ran to tell the disciples of the empty tomb and to tell them to go to Galilee where they would see Jesus.
- i. Do you believe it is reasonable these 5 or more women told 'My brethren' to go to Galilee, then traveled with 'My brethren' to Galilee, and then waited for Jesus alongside 'My brethren'? If not, why not?
 - ii. Moreover, isn't it likely these 5 or more women were part of 'those who were with them' on resurrection Sunday evening? If not, why not?

Shortly after Jesus ascended in Acts 1, Peter called for the vote on Judas's replacement. In this meeting, women and men were together in prayer which is something these early believers were continually devoting themselves to doing.

- ☐ Acts 1:14 *These all with one mind were **continually** devoting themselves to prayer, **along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus**, and with His brothers. 15 At this time Peter stood up in the midst of the **brethren** (a gathering of **about one hundred and twenty persons** was there together ...*
- 6:20 Several/many of the women who had walked with Christ during His ministry were with Jesus at the cross. Some of these women got up early to look after Jesus's body on resurrection Sunday morning. These women had seen the empty tomb and told the disciples of the risen Christ. There were also several women gathered with male disciples in constant prayer after Christ's ascension in Acts 1. Given they were dedicated followers of Christ and were in constant prayer with the men, doesn't this further indicate these same women were likely some of 'those who were with them' gathered together on resurrection Sunday evening, anxiously waiting for the resurrected Christ? If not, why not?
- 6:21 And if they were part of this group, isn't it reasonable to think these same women were amongst the very first, born-again Christians who Jesus told He was sending just as He had been sent, then proceeded to breathe on them and tell them to receive the Holy Spirit? If not, why not? Why would Jesus give this gift to men such as the two men Jesus met on the road to Emmaus, but not to the women who had shown such passion, love, commitment, and devotion to Him?

Women in General

This issue of whether or not women were breathed on by Jesus is an important one. Many Catholic and Cessationist leaders are adamant that women should have limited and quiet, background roles in the church. I disagree. Consider this.

In addition to the women mentioned above, several other women played prominent roles in the New Testament including the 4 virgin daughters who prophesied, Priscilla who joined Aquila in correcting Apollos, Euodia and Syntyche who shared the gospel, Phoebe who Paul said was to receive whatever help she needed, and Junias who was a helper to many.

- ☐ Acts 21:8 *On the next day we left and came to Caesarea, and entering the house of **Philip** the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him. 9 Now this man had **four virgin daughters who were prophetesses**.*
- ☐ Acts 18:24 *Now a Jew named **Apollos**, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent*

6: Holy Spirit In [En]

man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures ... 26 and he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when **Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.**

- ❑ *Philippians 4:2 I urge **Euodia** and I urge **Syntyche** to live in harmony in the Lord. 3 Indeed, true companion, I ask you also **to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel** ...*
 - ❑ *Romans 16:1 I commend to you our sister **Phoebe**, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea; 2 that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and **that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you**; for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well.*
 - ❑ *Romans 16:7 Greet Andronicus and **Junias**, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners, who are outstanding among the apostles ...*
- 6:22 Don't these scriptures show women played a material role in the church after the cross? Given that, why wouldn't women play similar significant and prominent roles today?

This group of initial believers had a very tight bond. They were born again on resurrection Sunday evening - or soon thereafter. They experienced, to varying degrees, teachings on matters pertaining to the kingdom of God. They were told to wait for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Each morning after Jesus's ascension must have been an exciting day wondering - is this the day? I doubt they stayed at home sipping tea and eating croissants, but instead '*continuously gathered*' to worship, give praise, pray and wonder. In the meeting where the disciples voted on Judas's replacement, Peter referred to the men and women gathered together as brethren.

- ❑ *Acts 1:14 These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, **along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus**, and with His brothers. 15 At this time Peter stood up in the midst of the **brethren** (a gathering of **about one hundred and twenty persons** was there together) ...*
- 6:23 As mentioned, the word '*brethren*' is derived from the Greek word '*adelphos*'. Considerable disagreement exists on whether or not *adelphos* refers to only males or to both sexes. Given the above information on women, I think there is a very strong case that *adelphos* can refer to either gender of a believer. On that basis, in regards to women, I again ask. Is it reasonable to think the women who found the empty tomb:
- i. were some of those gathered resurrection Sunday evening; and
 - ii. were present when the vote was held to determine Judas's replacement - potentially voted themselves; and
 - iii. were part of the group gathered at Pentecost where everybody present was Baptized in the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues?
 - iv. If not, why not?

(4) 70 Jesus Sent Out Before the Cross

Before the cross, Jesus sent 70 to do certain things including healing the sick.

- ❑ *Luke 10:1 Now after this the **Lord appointed seventy others**, and sent them*

*in pairs... 9 and **heal those in it who are sick**, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'*

The 70, who possibly included Matthias and Barsabbas, had a great experience.

☐ Luke 10:17 *The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name."*

6:24 Is it reasonable to expect that some, many or even all of these 70 who were still alive, were some of the 'brethren' and part of 'those who were with them' on resurrection Sunday evening? If not, why not?

Others Saved Between Resurrection Sunday and Pentecost

Jesus spoke the words in Acts 1 just before His ascension 40 days after resurrection Sunday. Resurrection Sunday occurred 3 days after Passover which means Jesus ascended 43 days after Passover. Given Pentecost occurred 50 days after Passover, that means Jesus ascended 7 days before Pentecost (50-3-40=7).

6:25 47 days passed between resurrection Sunday and Pentecost. Is it possible some individuals who weren't present on resurrection Sunday - such as the group of 500 - were born again after resurrection Sunday and before Pentecost, and were some of those Baptized in the Holy Spirit at Pentecost?

☐ *1 Corinthians 15:6 After that He appeared to **more than five hundred brethren at one time** ...*

6:26 On the basis that some individuals gave their lives to Christ either i) between resurrection Sunday evening and His ascension, or ii) between His ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, is it reasonable to believe:

- i. the group gathered resurrection Sunday evening may have been smaller than the ~120 gathered 40 in Acts 1 to vote on Judas's replacement; and
- ii. the group gathered at Pentecost may have been larger than the ~120 gathered when the vote was held on Judas's replacement?

6:27 Is there any reason to believe the group gathered on resurrection Sunday evening did not closely resemble

- i. the ~120 gathered in Acts 1:14 who voted on Judas's replacement;
- ii. those who were continually together in the temple praising God; and
- iii. those gathered on Pentecost who were Baptized in the Holy Spirit? If there is a reason, what is it?

☐ *Luke 24:36 While they were telling these things, **He Himself stood in their midst** and said to them, "Peace be to you." ... 49 And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; **but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.**" ... 51 While He was blessing them, **He parted from them and was carried up into heaven.** 52 And they, after worshipping Him, **returned to Jerusalem** with great joy, 53 and **were continually in the temple praising God.***

6:28 Given all the above, is it fair to say that the group gathered at Pentecost was diverse, and included far more than the 11 original apostles plus Matthias?

HOLY SPIRIT'S BAPTISM OF BELIEVERS INTO THE BODY OF CHRIST AND GOD'S CHURCH

In 1 Corinthians, Paul writes that all believers are part of the Body of Christ.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 12:22 ... it is much truer that the **members of the body** which seem to be weaker are necessary; 23 and those **members of the body** which we deem less honorable ... 24 ... But **God has so composed the body**, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, 25 so that there may **be no division in the body**, but that the members may have the same care for one another ... 27 Now **you are Christ's body**, and individually members of it.*

Holy Spirit automatically **baptizes us** into the Body of Christ when born again.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 12:13 For **by one Spirit** we were **all baptized into one body**, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were **all made to drink of one Spirit**.*

The English word 'baptize' is derived from the Greek word 'baptizo' [G907] which Thayer defines in part as 'immerse, to submerge'. When born again, we're surrounded by believers who, along with us, are immersed together into the Body of Christ. And thereafter, Jesus and Holy Spirit are both with [meta] and in [en] us.

Some may believe that while Holy Spirit provides the means by which we're baptized into the Body of Christ, it is Jesus or Father God who initiates this baptism. I'll let you decide for yourself, but from my standpoint, I believe Holy Spirit gives this baptism. This baptism of believers into the Body of Christ is one of the four key baptisms relevant to today's believers, all of which are covered in Chapter 10.

POWER OF GOD IN THE 'EN' AND THE 'EPI'

When we're born again and Holy Spirit comes in [en] us, God is in us, right here. In addition to any power we might have as a result of God being with [meta] us, we're also automatically given access to God's power through His being in [en] us. In the case of the in [en] experience, this power of God is primarily geared to God changing our hearts, convicting us, speaking to us, guiding us, teaching us, leading us etc. But make no mistake, we have the power of God in us, the same Spirit whose power raised Jesus from the dead.

- ❑ *Romans 8:11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.*

Chapter 7 deals with the Baptism of the Holy Spirit coming upon [epi] a believer. In so doing, we gain access to a different kind of God's power that helps us be witnesses for Christ, power that we don't have when we're born again and Holy Spirit is in [en] us and with [meta] us. Believers are sometimes automatically Baptized in the Holy Spirit at the same time they're born again, but most believers receive it later, or not at all as we shall see in Chapters 7, 8 and 10 of **CEASED?**.

- ❑ *Acts 1:8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you ...*

Per Chapter 12 of **CEASED?**, this upon [epi] power manifests in various ways including the 9 Holy Spirit gifts.

CLOSING POINTS TO PONDER

- 6:29 Given the tremendous turmoil Peter experienced when he denied Christ 3 times and the rooster crowed, do you think Peter ever ate chicken again?
- 6:30 Some Charismatics teach that a person does not have Holy Spirit until they have received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Based on this teaching, if a person doesn't have Holy Spirit, that means they aren't born again, they aren't saved and they are not a Christian. And according to this teaching, wouldn't that mean all Cessationists are not born-again Christians? I disagree very strongly with this teaching because the born-again experience involving Holy Spirit coming in [en] a person is a totally separate experience from the Baptism in the Holy Spirit where Holy Spirit comes upon [epi] a believer. Chapters 7 and 8 address this critically important issue in detail.
- 6:31 When we meet another believer, challenging personalities set aside for the moment, don't we typically feel a kind of kinship as soon as we begin talking? And isn't this kinship fostered by the fact that both of us have Holy Spirit in [en] us, and our respective spirits are born again?
- 6:32 Jesus didn't sin while living 33½ years on earth. As we shall see in Chapter 7, Jesus received the 'upon' [epi] experience at the start of His ministry. Is it possible Jesus had a variation of the Holy Spirit 'with' [para/meta] or the 'in' [en] relationship starting when He was young that enabled Him not to sin?
- 6:33 Some Bible teachers state it is foolish to think a believer can feel or sense God's presence. My questions are these:
- i. Why would God come in [en] us if not for intimacy and to enhance communications with us?
 - ii. Given Almighty God, the Creator of the universe, resides inside of us, how can we not sense His presence once in a while?
 - iii. And if a person never senses His presence, could it mean Holy Spirit may not be in [en] the person? That he/she may not be saved?
- 6:34 In my view, the first Christians were born again when Jesus breathed on them resurrection Sunday evening. When we were born again and when new believers come into God's kingdom today - and this is pure speculation on my part - is it possible Jesus welcomes each of us into the Body of Christ by breathing Holy Spirit in us and gently whispering to our heart something like "Welcome Home. Welcome to My Family!"?
- 6:35 I'm not sure how Holy Spirit being with [meta] us differs from being in [en] us. Is this a mystery we'll have to wait until we get to heaven to understand?
- 6:36 As it appears several women played key and public roles in the early church. Doesn't that suggest women should perhaps be playing similar roles today?
- ☐ *1 Corinthians 11:5 But **every woman** who has her head uncovered **while praying or prophesying** ...*

Holy Spirit 'Upon' [Epi]

INTRODUCTION

BEFORE we're born again, Holy Spirit is with [para] us. After we're born again, we live with Holy Spirit in [en] us and with [meta] us. Chapter 7 deals with another Holy Spirit experience, the [epi] experience known as the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Chapter 7 reviews:

1. the what, why and how of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit (page 122);
2. who actually baptizes us in the Baptism of the Holy Spirit (page 123);
3. who was Baptized in the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (page 124);
4. are the in [en] and upon [epi] experiences the same (page 126);
5. 4 of the many impacts of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit (page 126);
6. how to receive our own Baptism in the Holy Spirit (page 129);
7. some of the upon experiences in the Old Testament (page 130); and
8. upon experiences in the New Testament before the cross (page 131).

BORN AGAIN, TRAINED, BUT STILL NEED MORE

By the time the events at Pentecost rolled around in Acts 2, the apostles had walked with Jesus for 3½ years during His ministry. They saw amazing miracles. They heard great teachings. They heard Jesus declare He was God. They saw Him call out the religious people who were filled with knowledge, but not the real truths. They had seen Jesus's gruesome death. They had seen Him after the cross - resurrected and alive. Jesus breathed on them to receive the Holy Spirit, and they were born again. They had the Holy Spirit in [en] experience. From His arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane on Thursday night to His time with them on Sunday night - Jesus's first disciples had witnessed historic events of monumental importance.

In Acts 1, we learn Jesus appeared to the disciples several times over a period of 40 days teaching them about matters of the Kingdom of God. The Bible gives no indication Jesus told them they still needed to be born again, nor was there any indication the disciples needed to be water baptized. Most notably, what Jesus does tell them to do at the end of the 40-day period is ... wait.

- ❑ *Acts 1:3 To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God. 4 Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me;*

“Wait”. That’s what Jesus commanded them to do. “Wait”. Acts 1:4 tells us the reason for waiting is so they can receive the promise of Father God. There are thousands of promises in the Bible from God. In Acts 1:5, Jesus clarifies this particular promise is the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

- ❑ Acts 1:5 for John baptized with water, but you **will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.**

7:1 The word ‘will’ is future tense indicating this baptism will take place in the future, as do the words ‘not many days from now’. Given they already have Holy Spirit in [en] them as a result of Jesus breathing on them on resurrection Sunday evening, doesn’t Acts 1:5 demonstrate this future Baptism of the Holy Spirit where Holy Spirit comes upon [epi] a person is a distinct and separate experience from being born again? If not, why not?

THE WHAT, WHY, AND HOW BEHIND THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

The reason the disciples needed the Baptism in the Holy Spirit is found in Acts 1:8 when three key aspects are revealed - power, upon, and witnessing.

- ❑ Acts 1:8 but you **will receive power** when the **Holy Spirit has come upon [epi] you;** and **you shall be My witnesses** both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

The three items - power, upon [epi] and witness - reflect the what, how, and why behind the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

- ❑ The what: **to receive power** - supernatural enablement;
- ❑ The how: Holy Spirit **comes on or upon** [epi] a believer, as opposed to Holy Spirit coming in [en] a person when born again; and
- ❑ The why: to enable the person to **be a witness** for Christ - whether locally or at the ends of the earth.

Luke confirms the disciples were to wait for the promise until they were clothed with power.

- ❑ Luke 24:49 And behold, **I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you;** but **you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.**”

7:2 Doesn’t the fact that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is to give disciples power to be witnesses further confirm that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit (the upon or epi) is a separate and distinct experience from being saved/born again (the in or en) when one is Baptized into the Body of Christ?

Jesus tells his disciples to wait to be Baptized in the Holy Spirit, then He ascended.

- ❑ Acts 1:9 And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

7:3 Given the instructions related to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit were amongst the last words Jesus gave to His disciples before His ascension, isn’t it reasonable to believe Jesus’s last instructions were very important?

7: Holy Spirit Upon [Epi]

Who Actually Baptizes us in the Baptism of the Holy Spirit

We saw at the end of Chapter 6 that it is Holy Spirit (or Jesus) who baptizes us into the Body of Christ when we're born again.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 12:13 For **by one Spirit, we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.***

So, who Baptizes believers in the Holy Spirit? John the Baptist tells us that it is Jesus who gives this amazing Baptism.

- ❑ *Matthew 3:11 "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but **He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.***
- ❑ *Mark 1:8 I baptized you with water; **but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.***
- ❑ *Luke 3:16 John answered and said to them all, "As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; **He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.***

Talk about a personal touch and how the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit not only work together so uniquely and wonderfully, but they get us involved in the area of baptisms as well. When born again, Holy Spirit (or Jesus) baptizes us into the Body of Christ. Jesus baptizes us in the Holy Spirit if and when we receive this gift. And our Almighty God is so loving, that He gets us involved when we have the privilege of baptizing another disciple in water.

The Upon 'Epi' Experience

A key distinction identifying the Baptism in the Holy Spirit experience is that Holy Spirit comes 'on' or 'upon' a believer. These English words 'on' and 'upon' are derived from the Greek word 'epi' [G1909] which means 'on or upon, at, by or before'.

- ❑ *Acts 1:8 but you **will receive power** when the **Holy Spirit has come upon [epi] you;** and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."*

When born again, Holy Spirit comes '**in [en]**' a person to convict, guide, teach and give us spiritual understanding. This blessing is primarily for our benefit. However, our lives aren't just about ourselves, and our goal is not just about getting to heaven, but is also to include taking the Good News of Jesus to those who don't know Him. And thus, with both Holy Spirit and Jesus in us, we can be a light to this world. This in [en] experience is the beginning of what God has for us - but it's not the end.

When we're Baptized in the Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit comes '**upon [epi]**' us to give us access to power, supernatural enablement as it were, so we can be a witness for Christ. The Baptism in the Holy Spirit is primarily for the benefit of others. But God is so good; as Chapter 7 will soon reveal, we can also be personally blessed from this upon [epi] Baptism.

Who was Gathered Together at Pentecost

Starting midway through Chapter 6, **CEASED?** discussed who was in the groups gathered on resurrection Sunday evening (John 20:19-23, Luke 24:13-45), 40+ days later when Judas's replacement was determined (Acts 1:14-26; Luke 24:46-52) and those gathered at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-2; Luke 24:50-53). For anyone involved at Pentecost, they must have had some fairly incredible moments of joy and excitement along with bewilderment and trepidation. Less than two months earlier, they had seen Jesus crucified, then resurrected. He taught them kingdom matters over 40 days, then He tells them to wait for the Baptism in the Holy Spirit so they could have power. Wouldn't all that get your mind going in a few different ways? Wait - for power? Wow!!

7:4 Between Jesus's ascension and Pentecost, is it hard to understand why the newly born-again believers were not going about their day-to-day routines separate and apart, but were together excitedly awaiting to be Baptized in the Holy Spirit?

- ❑ *Luke 24:50 And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. 51 While He was blessing them, **He parted from them and was carried up into heaven.** 52 And they, after worshipping Him, **returned to Jerusalem with great joy,** 53 and **were continually in the temple praising God.***
- ❑ *Acts 2:1 ... day of Pentecost had come, they were **all together** in one place.*

7:5 Doesn't the word 'all' in Acts 2:1 suggest all the disciples - ~120 of them - were involved at Pentecost, and not just the apostles?

7:6 If this group only included the original 11 apostles plus Matthias, wouldn't scripture likely distinguish the apostles from all disciples such as "When the twelve were together" or "When the apostles were gathered ..."?

What Happened at Pentecost

- ❑ *Acts 2:2 And suddenly there came from heaven a **noise like a violent rushing wind,** and it **filled the whole house** where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared to them **tongues as of fire distributing themselves,** and they **rested on each one of them.** 4 And they were **all filled with the Holy Spirit** and began to **speak with other tongues,** as the Spirit was giving them utterance.*

This Baptism involved an outpouring of Holy Spirit - a manifestation of power - in different ways including noise, tongues of fire, and disciples speaking in tongues.

7:7 Do these tongues of fire indicate that when God sends fire, sometimes the fire is a major blessing to people?

7:8 Isn't it reasonable to believe every person in the group gathered together with one accord at Pentecost was Baptized in the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues? If not, why not?

7:9 On the basis that everyone who was gathered at Pentecost was Baptized in the Holy Spirit, wouldn't that mean every one of them received access to the upon [epi] power to witness as per Acts 1:8? If not, why not?

7: Holy Spirit Upon [Epi]

- 7:10 Acts 2:1-4 indicates everyone at Pentecost who experienced the outpouring of the Holy Spirit spoke in tongues, 1 of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts. Doesn't this clearly show the 9 Holy Spirit gifts were not limited to the original apostles?
- 7:11 In John 20:22 when Jesus breathed and told them to receive the Holy Spirit, it seems like it was a relatively gentle experience. By contrast, the Baptism of the Holy Spirit per Acts 2 was not gentle, but a radical announcement. Does this initial demonstration of God's power in various forms (sound, tongues of fire, people speaking in tongues) again support the notion that the in [en] experience when one is born again is about helping one inside while the upon [epi] experience when one is Baptized in the Holy Spirit is about power to benefit others? And given 3,000 came to the Lord later that day, isn't that a fairly convincing testimony that God's power speaks to non-believers, that His power makes sharing the Good News easier?

Promise of the Father

Later in Acts, Peter tells us Jesus received the promise of the Holy Spirit, and that Jesus in turn poured out the very same promise at Pentecost.

- ❑ *Mark 1:10 Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him;*
- ❑ *Acts 2:33 Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having **received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this** which you both see and hear.*

- 7:12 Does Acts 2:33 confirm Jesus gives the Baptism of the Holy Spirit when Peter states "*He has poured forth this which you both see and hear*"?
- 7:13 Doesn't Acts 2:33 also suggest the same Holy Spirit power Jesus was given access to when He began His ministry is:
- i. the same kind of Holy Spirit power followers at Pentecost were given access to; and
 - ii. the same kind of Holy Spirit power believers can have access to today?

Filled with the Holy Spirit

- 7:14 In Acts 2:4, the disciples who were Baptized in the Holy Spirit were '*filled with the Holy Spirit*'. Given they were filled with the Holy Spirit after being Baptized in the Holy Spirit suggest they were not filled before this Baptism occurred?
- 7:15 Doesn't Acts 2:4 show that while a believer has Holy Spirit in [en] them after being born again, this '*filling*' is a different supernatural experience and related to the power of God? In other words, isn't this another indication the experience when Holy Spirit comes in [en] a person is different than when Holy Spirit comes upon [epi] us?
- 7:16 If being filled in the upon [epi] experience in Acts 2 at Pentecost is not a different experience from the in [en] experience in John 20:22 on resurrection Sunday evening, how then do we explain the 47-day time gap between the two experiences occurring?

Chapter 9 of **CEASED?** discusses being filled with the Holy Spirit more completely. A key goal of Chapter 9 is to determine if *'being filled'* is more closely associated with 1) being born again when Holy Spirit comes in [en] a believer, or with 2) being Baptized in the Holy Spirit when Holy Spirit comes upon [epi] a believer.

STILL NOT SURE EN & EPI ARE SEPARATE EXPERIENCES

If you still believe the disciples did not receive the Holy Spirit in [en] them on resurrection Sunday evening, a few more questions.

- 7:17 Do you believe they were born again between resurrection Sunday evening and 40 days later when Christ ascended to be with the Father? If so, what scripture(s) leads you to that conclusion?
- 7:18 Do you believe they were born again in the 7 days between when Christ ascended to be with the Father and Pentecost? If so, what scripture(s) lead you to that conclusion?
- 7:19 If you believe the disciples were born again and received the in [en] experience on Pentecost, the same time as the upon [epi] experience, what scripture(s) lead you to override John 20:22 where Jesus breathed on them and told them to receive the Holy Spirit?

4 IMPACTS OF A BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

God's blessings are so many. As it relates to blessings from being Baptized in the Holy Spirit, **CEASED?** reviews only 4 of the potential blessings.

(1) Power to be Witnesses - Supernatural Signs

Returning to Pentecost, others who were nearby both heard and saw God's power in the form of noise, tongues of fire, and His disciples speaking different tongues. They were amazed.

- Acts 2:6 And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language. 7 They **were amazed and astonished**, saying, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans?"*

This supernatural act of speaking in tongues was a sign to the non-believers that God was real and alive, and He wanted them to know it. Signs and wonders come in various flavors and are a powerful witnessing tool. Healing is a great example. For instance, when somebody has their broken foot instantly healed, they can't deny the reality. They know God touched them.

- 7:20 Jesus performed many signs and wonders. And aren't all believers called to do the same?
 - John 14:12 Truly, truly, I say to you, he **who believes in Me**, the **works that I do, he will do also**; and **greater works than these he will do**; because I go to the Father.*

7: Holy Spirit Upon [Epi]

(2) Power to be Witnesses - Speaking

Peter explains what happened at Pentecost in a powerful message. The fruit of this sermon, and by extension some of the fruit from the Baptism of the Holy Spirit that took place at Pentecost, was ~3,000 souls coming into God's family.

- ❑ *Acts 2:40 And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!" 41 So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day **there were added about three thousand souls**. 42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*

If we recall, Jesus stated in Acts 1:8 that the reason for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit was to receive power to be witnesses for Christ.

- ❑ *Acts 1:8 but **you will receive power** when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and **you shall be My witnesses** both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."*

Peter and John were fishermen. In the eyes of the Jewish leaders, they were uneducated and untrained. Yet a short time after Pentecost, these leaders marveled at how John and Peter spoke.

- ❑ *Acts 4:6 and Annas the high priest was there, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of high-priestly descent. 7 When they had placed them in the center, they began to inquire, "By what power, or in what name, have you done this?" 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people ... 13 Now as they **observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men**, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.*

Though uneducated and untrained, Peter delivered a powerful message at Pentecost, a message that cut listeners to the core.

- ❑ *Acts 2:37 Now when they heard this, **they were pierced to the heart**, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"*

The ~3,000 coming to Jesus was not only because of Peter's many words. For one, Holy Spirit was with [para] them, drawing them to Christ. In addition, Jesus's earthly ministry, His death and resurrection, Jesus being seen by more than 500 as well as by others between resurrection Sunday and His ascension, and the display of God's power earlier that day, all played a role to some extent. Having said that, it is nonetheless still important to acknowledge that Peter played a key role. The once frightened fisherman who denied Christ ~50 days before Pentecost, was now a passionate spokesperson for Christ. Talk about a transformation!

- ❑ *Acts 2:38 Peter said ... "Repent, and each of you be baptized ... 40 And **with many other words** he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them ...*
- 7:21 Is Peter's sermon consistent with the notion of Peter receiving supernatural power/equipping - Holy Spirit power - that enabled him to speak as he did?

And for Christians today, does Peter's sermon serve as an example that shows God wants to co-labor with all His children today?

A key role of the five-fold ministry is to equip the saints and build up the body.

- ❑ *Ephesians 4:11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 12 **for the equipping of the saints** for the work of service, to the **building up of the body of Christ**;*
- 7:22 Jesus needed the upon [epi] experience for His earthly ministry. Peter clearly benefited from the power of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Chapter 8 of **CEASED?** shows other disciples including Paul who were Baptized in the Holy Spirit. If Jesus, Peter and Paul needed the Baptism of the Holy Spirit in their ministries, is there any reason to think today's believers including laypeople, pastors and teachers wouldn't benefit from a Baptism in the Holy Spirit, and having Holy Spirit come upon them with His power?

(3) Power to be Witnesses - Strength to Say No

As ambassadors, as sent ones for Christ, our very lives are to be a witness for Jesus. We all sin, but being free of sin - especially habitual sin - is key.

- ❑ *1 Thessalonians 3:13 so that He may **establish your hearts without blame in holiness** before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.*
- ❑ *1 Thessalonians 5:23 Now may the **God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely**; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.*
- ❑ *2 Corinthians 2:15 For we are **a fragrance of Christ** to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing;*

If we have a life filled with sin, we're not going to give off the fragrance of Christ. Our sin is why Christ died for us, and God strengthens us so that we can not only overcome, but - ***IF*** we want - we can live lives that are fairly close to being free of sin. Don't think this is too radical. We can surely have lives that are dramatically less sinful than they used to be, and lives that continue to see less and less sin over time.

- ❑ *Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.*
- ❑ *1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.*
- ❑ *Ephesians 3:16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man,*

More on My Freedom from Addiction

When I was Baptized in the Holy Spirit, I was changed. As mentioned before on page 62, I had an addiction to porn which I had grown to really dislike after I was born again. But after my Baptism in the Holy Spirit, my dislike of this sin grew to intense

7: Holy Spirit Upon [Epi]

hatred. Shortly thereafter, by the power of God and the truths in His Word, I was
1) *instantly, totally and permanently set free of any desire for porn; and*
2) *simultaneously delivered from demonic influences that were tormenting me.*

The power of God that flows from the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is more than supernatural signs and wonders. His power helped me, and based on other people's testimonies, gave many others the strength and desire to say no to sin.

7:23 How many of today's believers who struggle with habitual sins such as porn would benefit from being Baptized in the Holy Spirit?

(4) Power to be Witnesses - Increasing our Faith

Paul wrote on how personally experiencing the power of God can help our faith.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 2:5 so that **your faith** would **not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.***

RECEIVING OUR BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

The world is filled with people who don't have a personal relationship with Jesus. Some don't know anything about the true Jesus. Others know things about the true Jesus, but don't know Him personally. Those in Mormon, JW and Islam faiths know about a Jesus, but the Jesus they know is not the Jesus of the Bible. This may seem unkind, but when their respective Jesus's are examined in-depth, and compared to the Jesus in our Bible, it's clear they have a different Jesus. One of the deceptions leading them astray is their erroneous belief that our Bible has been altered over time. The truth is translations that are solidly based on the original Greek and Hebrew have not changed in any material way.

7:24 Would we, as individuals, benefit from having access to some of God's supernatural power when we share the Good News with others who, for one reason or another, don't know the true Jesus? Wouldn't it help put the barriers associated with intellectual debates on the sidelines?

7:25 Luke 12 refers to Holy Spirit helping us defend our faith when confronted. Is it reasonable to expect Holy Spirit will also help when we're confronted and challenged on our faith? And perhaps even more so if we're in touch with God throughout the day and asking Holy Spirit to guide us?

- ❑ *Luke 12:11 When they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not worry about how or what you are to speak in your defense, or what you are to say; 12 for the **Holy Spirit will teach you** in that very hour what you ought to say."*

7:26 Given Jesus is the one who baptizes a person in the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, can one go wrong by seeking Jesus and saying something akin to:

"Jesus, if the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is true and available today, and if You are indeed the one that gives it, I ask You to please give me this Baptism. Shield me from any schemes of the enemy, and provide help so that I use this gift the way You want it used, and for Your glory, not mine. Thank You Jesus. Amen."

7:27 Would the message Peter and John prayed in Acts 4:29-30 be the kind of prayer you would welcome prayed for you?

- ❑ *Acts 4:29 And now, Lord, take note of their threats, **and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence, 30 while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus.***

For those who did receive this prayer in Jerusalem, God showed up.

- ❑ *Acts 4:31 And **when they had prayed, the place** where they had gathered together **was shaken**, and **they were all filled** with the Holy Spirit and **began to speak the word of God with boldness.** ... 33 And **with great power the apostles were giving testimony** to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all.*

Personally speaking, Lori and I want all God has for us even though, in many ways, we understand so little. This means God will often take us out of our comfort zone. And we really, really like being in our comfort zone. But we know God is good, and what He has in store for us will be good. His unpredictable ways are part of what makes a believer's walk with Christ amazing, exciting and fulfilling. And sometimes uncomfortable. And sometimes filled with persecution.

UPON [EPI] EXPERIENCES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Greek word for 'power' is 'dunamis' [G1411], a power for performing miracles. Holy Spirit is often cited as the 'power person' of the Godhead who blesses people through this power, starting thousands of years ago at creation.

- ❑ *Jeremiah 32:17 'Ah Lord God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You,*

And this power continued onwards after creation. Interestingly, God chose to co-labor with humans by placing His supernatural power upon individuals in the Old Testament. Consider the 70 elders, Eldad and Medad, Gideon and Saul.

- ❑ *Numbers 11:25 Then the Lord ... He took of the **Spirit who was upon him** and **placed Him upon the seventy elders.** And when the **Spirit rested upon them,** they **prophesied.** But they did not do it again.*
- ❑ *Numbers 11:26 ... one was Eldad and the name of the other Medad. And **the Spirit rested upon them** ... and they **prophesied** in the camp.*
- ❑ *Judges 6:34 So the **Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon** ...*
- ❑ *1 Samuel 11:6 Then the **Spirit of God came upon Saul** mightily when he heard these words, and he became very angry.*

And then there were David, Elijah, Samson and Zechariah.

- ❑ *1 Samuel 16:13 ... the **Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David** ...*
- ❑ *2 Kings 2:9 ... And Elisha said, "Please, let **a double portion of your spirit be upon me.**"*
- ❑ *Judges 15:14 When he [Samson] ... **Spirit of the Lord came upon him***

7: Holy Spirit Upon [Epi]

mightily ... 15 ... a fresh jawbone ... took it and killed a thousand men ...

- ❑ 2 Chronicles 24:20 Then the **Spirit of God came on Zechariah** ...

God equipped individuals with power for centuries before Jesus walked this earth. And God's power continued to show up as Holy Spirit came upon individuals in the gospels before Christ's crucifixion.

HOLY SPIRIT UPON [EPI] EXPERIENCES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT - BEFORE THE CROSS

(1) **Elizabeth & Zechariah - Parents of John the Baptist**

- ❑ Luke 1:41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and **Elizabeth was filled [Pletho G4130] with the Holy Spirit.**
- ❑ Luke 1:67 ... Zechariah was **filled [Pletho] with the Holy Spirit** and prophesied, saying:

For these two, the key is found in Chapter 9 of **CEASED?** where it discusses why the term 'filled' is much more closely associated with the upon [epi] experience than the in [en] experience. On that basis, my vote is Holy Spirit came upon [epi] both Elizabeth and Zechariah.

(2) **Mary**

The angel Gabriel prophesied Mary would experience Holy Spirit coming upon [epi] her which will enable her to become pregnant.

- ❑ Luke 1:35 The angel answered and said to her, "**The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.**"

(3) **John the Baptist**

John the Baptist's ministry involving speaking of the Kingdom of God, about the Messiah coming, and about the need to repent. He led many people through the baptism of repentance. There's no indication he did any miraculous signs and wonders apart from prophesying. And yet, as the forerunner of the Messiah, John the Baptist was greater than any other man before him.

- ❑ Matthew 11:11 Truly I say to you, **among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist!** ...

Interestingly, the least in the kingdom of Heaven will do greater things than John.

- ❑ Matthew 11:11 ... **Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.**

7:28 Are all believers living today some of the 'least in the kingdom of heaven', and thus aren't we all called to do greater things than John the Baptist did? And since John prophesied, should we be surprised if many of today's believers can prophesy?

There is no specific mention as to whether John the Baptist had an in [en] or upon [epi] type experience. I believe John had an upon experience due to the prophecy he would be 'filled' with the Holy Spirit just as Elizabeth was 'filled' with the Holy Spirit.

- ❑ *Luke 1:15 ... **he will be filled [Pletho G4130] with the Holy Spirit** while yet **in his mother's womb.***
- ❑ *Luke 1:41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and **Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.***

- 7:29 In addition, consider John the Baptist in relation to Peter. Peter was Baptized in the Holy Spirit and had Holy Spirit come upon him at Pentecost. Soon after, he boldly and convincingly spoke. John the Baptist also boldly spoke and convincingly so as many received the Baptism of Repentance. Are their stories purely coincidental? Or is it more evidence that John the Baptist - like Peter - was Baptized in the Holy Spirit and Holy Spirit came on [epi] him?
- 7:30 Is it possible that when Mary arrived and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, that was also when John the Baptist was Baptized in the Holy Spirit?

(4) **Simeon**

Simeon met Mary and Joseph when they brought baby Jesus into the temple.

- ❑ *Luke 2:25 And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; **and the Holy Spirit was upon [epi] him.** 26 And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. 27 And **he came in [en] the Spirit** into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law, 28 then he took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said, 29 "Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace, According to Your word; 30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation,*

Isn't it interesting that besides Holy Spirit being upon [epi] Simeon (verse 25), Simeon 'came in [en] the Spirit' (verse 27) when he went into the temple?

(5) **Jesus**

Before Jesus began His earthly ministry, John the Baptist prophesied that One greater than him would Baptize them with the Holy Spirit.

- ❑ *Mark 1:8 I baptized you with water: but **he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.***

- 7:31 When John the Baptist was making this declaration that 'He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit', we don't know who was all in attendance and able to hear John. But if you were to make a guess, was he likely speaking to:
- i. a select few individuals; or
 - ii. anyone and everyone gathered, which could have been quite a few?
- 7:32 On the basis John the Baptist was making this declaration to anybody and everybody who was present, doesn't this provide further support that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is available for the masses and not a select few?

7: Holy Spirit Upon [Epi]

Concerning Jesus Himself, Isaiah prophesied Jesus would receive the upon experience.

- ❑ *Isaiah 61:1 The **Spirit of the Lord God is upon me**, Because the Lord has anointed me To bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to captives And freedom to prisoners;*

Which is exactly what happened when Jesus started His earthly ministry.

- ❑ *Mark 1:9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the **Spirit like a dove descending upon [epi] Him**; 11 and a voice came out of the heavens: "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased."*
- 7:33 When Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus, didn't this result in Jesus receiving access to supernatural power that enabled Him to do His earthly ministry?
- 7:34 If not, what was the purpose of the upon experience for Jesus?

After this upon experience, Jesus was sent into the wilderness for 40 days. Afterward, He came back into Galilee preaching the gospel.

- ❑ *Mark 1:12 Immediately the Spirit impelled Him to go out into the wilderness. 13 And He was **in the wilderness forty days** being tempted by Satan; and He was with the wild beasts, and the angels were ministering to Him. 14 Now after John had been taken into custody, **Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God**.*

Luke gives more insight when Jesus returned from the desert. He returned ... full of the Holy Spirit ... and in the power ... of Holy Spirit.

- ❑ *Luke 4:1 Jesus, **full of the Holy Spirit**, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness 2 for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And He ate nothing during those days, and when they had ended, He became hungry ... 13 When the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until an opportune time. 14 And **Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit** and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district.*
- ❑ *Acts 10:38 You know of Jesus of Nazareth, **how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power**, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.*

Jesus stated Holy Spirit was upon him for various reasons including the following.

- ❑ *Luke 4:18 "The **Spirit of the Lord is upon [epi] Me**, Because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, And **recovery of sight** to the blind, **To set free** those who are oppressed, 19 To **proclaim the favorable year of the Lord**."*

Scriptures show Jesus's ministry was filled with signs and wonders, but even then, God's Word only contains a minuscule fraction of what Christ did.

- ❑ *John 21:25 And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they*

were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written.

- 7:35 **'IE'**, and I repeat **'IE'**, Jesus had truly shunned all His supernatural nature during His lifetime on earth, but still needed access to God's power, would this explain why Jesus needed to be Baptized in the Holy Spirit when Holy Spirit descended on Jesus?

Who Baptized Jesus in the Holy Spirit

- 7:36 Jesus baptizes believers in the Holy Spirit. In His own Baptism in the Holy Spirit, it's possible Jesus could somehow have baptized Himself. Holy Spirit could have also maybe done it unilaterally. However, per Acts 10:38 and Matthew 3:16, is it more likely that it was Father God who Baptized Jesus in the Holy Spirit?

- ❑ Acts 10:38 You know of Jesus of Nazareth, **how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power**, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.
- ❑ Matthew 3:16 After being baptized, **Jesus** came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the **Spirit of God descending** as a dove and **lighting on Him**, 17 and behold, **a voice out of the heavens said**, **"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."**

- 7:37 Given the importance of Christ's ministry, is it surprising to see the entire Godhead involved in Jesus's Baptism of the Holy Spirit? Father God spoke it, Holy Spirit delivered it, and Jesus received it. It must have been exhilarating to those present to hear Father God's voice from heaven declaring: *"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"*.

- 7:38 Some Christians teach God is only one person, but who manifests in different persons - sometimes as Father God, sometimes as Jesus and sometimes as Holy Spirit. Isn't this 'Oneness Gospel' teaching invalidated when:

- i. all three - the Father, Son Jesus, and Holy Spirit - are simultaneously involved in Jesus's upon [epi] experience (Mark 1:10); and
 - ii. both Holy Spirit and Jesus appear together when Holy spirit remained on Jesus (John 1:32).
- ❑ Mark 1:10 And immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the **Spirit, like a dove, descending upon Him**; 11 and a voice came from the heavens: **"You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased."**
 - ❑ John 1:32 John testified saying, "I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and **He remained upon Him**.

Jesus - Only Man, or Fully Man and Fully God

A divisive issue within the Body of Christ deals with whether Jesus was a man only, or fully man and fully God during his 33½ years on earth.

- 7:39 If Jesus was man only:
- i. How was it possible for Jesus not to sin without some form of supernatural enablement? Was it because he was 'half Jewish' from Mary, and 'half God' through Holy Spirit?

7: Holy Spirit Upon [Epi]

- ii. Was Jesus able to not sin because Holy Spirit was with [para/meta] or in [en] Jesus in some way akin to how Holy Spirit can be with and in born again believers today? And if so, does that give us hope that we can live with virtually no sin in our lives? If not, why not?
- iii. How is it that Jesus was in Father God just as Father God was in Him?
- iv. Given that Jesus is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow, where did the 'God Jesus' go for these ~33½ years + 9 months that Jesus was in the womb or walking around on earth?

7:40 If Jesus was fully man and fully God):

- i. Why did Jesus need Holy Spirit to come upon Him before His earthly ministry?
 - ii. How could Jesus be tempted?
 - iii. How could Jesus be forsaken on the cross?
 - iv. How could Jesus grow in favor with God?
 - v. How do we deal with the facts Jesus had emptied Himself, but later needed God to anoint and fill Him with power? If Jesus was fully God, why did He need to be anointed with Power by Father God?
- ❑ *Philippians 2:7 but **emptied Himself**, taking the **form of a bond-servant**, and being made in the likeness of men.*
 - ❑ *Acts 10:38 You know of Jesus of Nazareth, **how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power**, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.*

7:41 I don't ask the above questions to get answers, nor do I address anywhere near all the considerations warranted to fully review this issue, but to make a point. We believers can spend a lot of time debating an issue for which scriptures could appear to support two or more points of view. In such cases, if it isn't a salvation issue, shouldn't our focus be on what we do know - the Good News - and put our energies towards those people who don't know Christ as opposed to getting caught up in theological debates?

IN, WITH, OF, BY

Various phrases are used to describe the 'upon' [epi] experience including 'Baptism **in** the Holy Spirit', 'Baptism **of** the Holy Spirit', and 'Baptism **with** the Holy Spirit'. The use of which preposition to use - 'in', 'of' and 'with' - is an English grammatical issue, not a theological one. All three prepositions are appropriate. The specific usage depends on our preferences in each situation.

The phrase 'Baptism **by** the Holy Spirit', on the other hand, is different because the word 'by' refers to a baptism done **by** or performed **by** Holy Spirit. The one baptism, touched on in Chapter 4, that Holy Spirit does perform is when He baptizes a new believer into the Body of Christ.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 12:13 For **by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body**, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.*

WITHOUT THE EPI, DO WE HAVE HOLY SPIRIT?

A fairly common Charismatic/Pentecostal teaching that bothers me greatly is that if an individual has not been baptized in the Holy Spirit, they don't have Holy Spirit. I think that is flat out wrong. As shown in Chapters 6-7, the original disciples were born again and had Holy Spirit come in [en] them on resurrection Sunday evening. They had the upon [epi] experience - the Baptism of the Holy Spirit - 47 days later at Pentecost. And thus, while Cessationists have not been Baptized in the Holy Spirit and don't have access to the power associated with this Baptism, they do have Holy Spirit in them - provided of course that they are actually born again.

CLOSING POINTS TO PONDER

When born again, we're God's child and adopted into God's family. We're part of the kingdom of heaven, and the least of us in God's kingdom are still greater than John the Baptist and should expect great things through us in our lifetime.

- ❑ *Luke 7:28 I say to you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."*
 - ❑ *John 14:12 Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father.*
- 7:42 Do the above scriptures imply/tell us that we are also called to a ministry that will have an eternal impact? Impact because we can share the Good News of Christ and play a role in people coming to know Jesus? Impact because Holy Spirit is in [en] us? Impact because we can have access to the supernatural power of God through having Holy Spirit upon [epi] us after we're Baptized in the Holy Spirit?

Jesus felt power leave when the woman with a bleeding disorder touched the hem of His garment. God's power was also evident in the apostles' lives.

- ❑ *Luke 8:43 And a woman who ... a chronic flow of blood for twelve years ... 44 ... touched ... His cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped ... 46 But Jesus said, "Someone did touch Me, **for I was aware that power had left***
- ❑ *Acts 5:15 to such an extent that they even carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and pallets, **so that when Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on any one of them.** 16 Also the people from the cities in the vicinity of Jerusalem were coming together, bringing people who were sick or afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were **all being healed.***

- 7:43 Was it Peter's shadow that healed the sick, or was it the presence of God upon Peter and extending beyond Peter's body to an area represented by his shadow - a shadow that can vary in size - that healed the sick? In other words, was Holy Spirit's presence on Peter so tangible that when sick people got fairly close to Peter, they encountered God and ... bam ... they got healed?
- 7:44 When believers are Baptized in the Holy Spirit, and Holy Spirit comes upon [epi] us, how can we not to sense God's presence - at least once in a while?
- 7:45 If we're never aware of God's presence in our midst - if we never sense He is right here with us - isn't that an issue we should be concerned about?

'En' & 'Epi' After the Cross

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 8 recaps the en and epi experiences in general, then reviews:

- 1: *'in'* [en] and *'upon'* [epi] experiences of the first born-again Christians on resurrection Sunday evening and Pentecost (page 138);
- 2: 10 other individuals/groups and their en and epi experiences (page 140);
- 3: summary of 12 *'en'* and *'epi'* experiences (page 149); and
- 4: some Roman Catholic teachings on the in [en] and [upon] epi (page 151).

SUMMARY OF 'EN' AND 'EPI'

Figure 8:1 on the next page recaps the *'en'* and *'epi'* experiences covered in Chapters 6 and 7. Three scriptures related to the in [en] experience are as follows:

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 12:13 For **by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body**, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.*
- ❑ *John 14:16 I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper ... 17 ... but you know Him **because He abides with you and will be in you.***
- ❑ *Romans 8:9 ... **if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.***

Three scriptures related to the *'upon'* [epi] experience are as follows:

- ❑ *Mark 1:8 I baptized you with water: but **He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.***
- ❑ *Acts 1:8 but **you will receive power** when the **Holy Spirit has come upon [epi]** you; and **you shall be My witnesses** both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."*
- ❑ *1 Corinthians 2:4 and **my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom**, but **in demonstration of the Spirit and of power**. 5 so that **your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.***

Figure 8:1 Overview of En and Epi Experiences

ITEM	"EN" / IN	"EPI" / UPON
Name	Baptism into Body of Christ	Baptism of Holy Spirit
Who does the Baptism	Holy Spirit 1 Corinthians 12:1	Jesus Matthew 3:11
Believer's Encounter	Holy Spirit comes in a believer	Holy Spirit comes on or upon a believer
Greek	In = En [G1722]	Upon = Epi [G1909]
Purpose	Holy Spirit guides, convicts, teaches, gives understanding; overall relationship with God	Access to power to witness for Jesus
Some of Gifts Received	Gift of Salvation Romans 6:2	Access to 9 Holy Spirit gifts 1 Corinthians 12:8-10
Main Beneficiary	Oneself	Others
When Occurs	At the moment a person is born again	At the same time as born again, or any time afterward
Frequency	Once, stays as long as one remains born again	Multiple fillings

THE FIRST CHRISTIANS

Figure 8:2 provides a brief summary of the 'in' [en] and 'upon' [epi] experiences of the believers gathered on resurrection Sunday evening and at Pentecost.

Figure 8:2 First Christians' En and Epi Experiences

ITEM	"EN" / IN	"EPI" / UPON
When	Resurrection Sunday evening John 20:19-22	Pentecost Acts 2:1-4
How	Jesus breathed on them & said "Receive the Holy Spirit"	Jesus baptized believers in the Holy Spirit
Evidence	Continued prayer and worship before Pentecost	Tongues, tongues of fire Peter's sermon Signs & wonders thru disciples

For All or a Few Believers

Some believers today teach that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit was for a select few early believers, and not for everybody. Consider Peter's explanation as to what happened on Pentecost.

- Acts 2:16 but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: 17 'And it shall be in the last days,' God says, 'That I will ***pour forth of My Spirit on [epi] all mankind;*** And ***your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,*** And your young men shall ***see visions,*** And your old men shall ***dream dreams;*** 18 Even

8: En and Epi After the Cross

*on My bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit And they shall **prophecy**. 19 'And I will grant wonders in the sky above **And signs on the earth below**,*

- 8:1 Non-believers who were near the disciples gathered at Pentecost witnessed tongues of fire, loud noises, and/or people speaking in tongues. Were these events the first pouring out of the Holy Spirit as prophesied by Joel? To Holy Spirit coming upon people? To wonders in the sky and signs on the earth? To the Baptism of the Holy Spirit that John the Baptist and Jesus prophesied? If not, what were these events all about?

Joel's prophecy is found in Joel 2:28. Notice Joel did not say God would pour forth Holy Spirit **in** mankind, but **on** mankind.

- ❑ Joel 2:28 "It will come about after this That I will ***pour out My Spirit on all mankind*** ...

This pouring out of the Spirit was also prophesied by Isaiah.

- ❑ Isaiah 44:3 *For I will pour out water on the thirsty land And streams on the dry ground; I will **pour out My Spirit on your offspring** And My blessing on your descendants;*

- 8:2 Joel and Isaiah said Holy Spirit would be poured out on all mankind, to sons and daughters, to offspring - both young and old. In your view, do the words 'all', 'sons', 'daughters' and 'offspring' represent:
- i. the original apostles only;
 - ii. the original apostles + believers who the original apostles laid their hands on;
 - iii. all of the ~120 believers gathered at Pentecost;
 - iv. all believers gathered at Pentecost + any believers after Pentecost who had hands laid upon them by those who were at Pentecost;
 - v. all believers who were alive at the time of Pentecost;
 - vi. all believers who were alive at the time of Pentecost + all believers of all future generations; or
 - vii. all believers of all generations who ask for and then receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

There are a variety of views on who this outpouring relates to. I struggle to see how the words 'all', 'sons', 'daughters' and 'offspring' can be anything but vi. all believers alive at the time of Pentecost + all believers in all future generations, or vii. all who ask for and then receive the outpouring.

- 8:3 If Holy Spirit was to be poured out on all flesh including sons, daughters, and handmaidens, do the initial events at (i) Pentecost - noise, tongues of fire, and speaking in tongues impacting ~120 disciples (Acts 2) plus (ii) Samaria (Acts 8) plus (iii) Cornelius, family and friends (Acts 10) plus (iv) the 12 disciples at Ephesus (Acts 19) meet the criteria of 'all flesh'? In other words, were these the first and last Baptisms of the Holy Spirit?
- 8:4 If your answer is yes, wouldn't that mean there would be no more believers who would be Baptized with the Holy Spirit? If not, why not?

After the ~3,000 people came to Christ, they were devoted to the apostles' teaching, fellowship and prayer. Signs and wonders were a trademark of the apostles.

- ❑ *Acts 2:40 And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!" 41 So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and **that day there were added about three thousand souls.** 42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.43 Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and **many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.***

The signs and wonders done by the apostles should not be a surprise, because 2 Corinthians 12 tells us true apostles are identified by signs, wonders and miracles.

- ❑ *2 Corinthians 12:12 The **signs of a true apostle** were performed among you with all perseverance, by **signs and wonders and miracles.***

Cessationists acknowledge the original 12 apostles did many signs and wonders. But did such signs and wonders end with the apostles? As mentioned elsewhere, there is considerable confusion related to the en and epi experiences. To help clarify the en and epi and to gain more insight as to who was involved in signs and wonders, this next section addresses the experiences of 10 different individuals or groups.

10 INDIVIDUALS/GROUPS AND THEIR 'EN'/'EPI'

(1) **The ~3,000 on Pentecost**

'In' [En]

After Peter's sermon, ~3,000 accepted Christ and had Holy Spirit come in them.

- ❑ *Acts 2:40 ... "Be saved from this perverse generation!" 41 So then, **those who had received his word** were baptized; and that day **there were added about three thousand souls.***

'Upon' [Epi]

Conventional teachings hold that the ~3,000 were not Baptized in the Holy Spirit, but were water baptized. A review of Acts 2:38 in Chapter 10 suggests there may be more to the story.

(2) **Stephen**

Consider Stephen who was chosen to help distribute food to the widows.

- ❑ *Acts 6:1 ... widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food ... 3 Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom ... they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit ...*

'In' [En] / 'Upon' [Epi]

No specific scriptures identify when Stephen was born again or was Baptized in the Holy Spirit. Scriptures do show, however, that while Stephen was responsible

8: En and Epi After the Cross

for food, he did a whole lot more.

- ❑ *Acts 6:8 And Stephen, **full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs** among the people.*

Many Cessationists believe the original apostles were the only true apostles. Many Cessationists also believe the apostles were the only believers after the cross through whom Holy Spirit would do great wonders and signs and miracles. Stephen is but one example of why this belief system may be flawed.

- 8:5 To clarify, if Stephen wasn't an apostle, the Cessationist argument would say Stephen wouldn't be able to do great signs and wonders. However, given Stephen did perform great signs and wonders, and based on the logic that only apostles could do great signs and wonders, wouldn't that logic require Stephen to be an apostle? If not, why not?
- 8:6 If Stephen was an apostle, wouldn't that mean the original 11 apostles plus Matthias were not the only apostles?
- 8:7 If Stephen was not an apostle, do the facts that 1) He was filled with the Spirit and 2) performed great signs and wonders provide evidence he was Baptized in the Holy Spirit? If not, why not?
- 8:8 If Stephen was not Baptized in the Holy Spirit, what enabled Stephen to do such signs and wonders?
- 8:9 If Stephen was Baptized in the Holy Spirit but wasn't an apostle, doesn't that show Baptism of the Holy Spirit wasn't limited to the original apostles, but was potentially for all believers, even those living today? If not, why not?

(3) **Believers at Samaria**

'In' [En]

When Philip came to Samaria, he taught the Good News which led some people to come to Christ.

- ❑ *Acts 8:5 Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them ... 12 But **when they believed** Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike.*

'Upon' [Epi]

- ❑ *Acts 8:14 Now when the **apostles in Jerusalem** heard that Samaria had received the word of God, **they sent them Peter and John**, 15 who came down and **prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit**. 16 For **He had not yet fallen upon [epi]** any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.*

When the apostles in Jerusalem heard of the new believers in Samaria, they would have known Holy Spirit was in [en] the new believers. They were concerned, however, that Holy Spirit had not yet fallen upon [epi] the new believers. Their response was to have John and Peter - two leading apostles - travel to Samaria to ensure the new disciples were Baptized in the Holy Spirit.

- 8:10 Jerusalem and Samaria are over 60 miles walking distance apart. It would

have taken several days for the news of new believers to travel from Samaria to Jerusalem, for the apostles to discuss and decide what to do, and then for John and Peter to travel back from Jerusalem to Samaria. Doesn't the gap of several days provide additional evidence that the 'in' [en] and 'upon' [epi] are two distinct Holy Spirit experiences for believers?

- 8:11 Does Peter and John's trip to Samaria also provide further evidence that while Baptism in the Holy Spirit is not required for salvation, there are important benefits to being Baptized in the Holy Spirit?
- 8:12 Given the apostles saw it necessary for John and Peter to go to Samaria to ensure the new believers were Baptized in the Holy Spirit, does this indicate Philip was known for not ensuring new Christians received this baptism?

(4) Simon the Sorcerer

'In' [En]

Samaria also saw Simon the sorcerer come to Jesus.

- ❑ *Acts 8:9 ... Simon, who formerly was practicing magic in the city and astonishing the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great ... 13 **Even Simon himself believed;** and **after being baptized,** he continued on with Philip, and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place ...*

'Upon' [Epi]

After he believed, Simon stayed with Philip, and saw signs and wonders. After John and Peter came and laid hands on believers to receive the Holy Spirit coming upon them, Simon realized the doorway to these miracles was opened when people had the Holy Spirit 'upon' [epi] experience. And Simon wanted in on the action.

- ❑ *Acts 8:18 Now when Simon saw that the **Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands,** he **offered them money,** 19 saying, "**Give this authority to me as well,** so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."*
- 8:13 Notice Simon realized believers received the Holy Spirit when the apostles, not Philip, laid their hands on them. Does this provide further evidence that Philip did not take steps to ensure believers received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit? And if true, is it somewhat perplexing given Philip was used by God in many signs and wonders? A heart issue perhaps? Only God knows.

Simon was a believer. He had Holy Spirit in him. He had been water baptized. But he had a history of using sorcery to impress people. He had exploited demonic powers for his personal benefit. Now he saw Something/Someone even better. His desire to be involved in the supernatural was so strong that he was willing to pay money so he could help believers receive the upon [epi] Holy Spirit experience. Peter said no as Simon's heart still clearly needed some sanctifying work.

- ❑ *Acts 8:20 But Peter said to him, "**May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!**" 21 You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. 22 Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you.*

8: En and Epi After the Cross

- 8:14 Before Simon believed in Christ, his magic had astonished people and he claimed he was great. Whether he wanted glory, money or both, we don't know. However, isn't Simon's heart something all believers need to be conscious of - that we're not to use our relationship with God for personal glory, fame, status, or ungodly wealth? I ask that question with some confidence as it wasn't too long ago when a key part of why I wanted to see people instantaneously healed was because I wanted some of the glory. If you ever feel led to pray for me, please pray that I truly die to self and my heart is to live and minister only for God's glory.
- 8:15 There are many 'Charismatics' who seem to be doing things for personal gain. And thus, is the core issue plaguing many Charismatics more a heart issue than a theological one?
- 8:16 Having said that, I wonder how many non-Charismatics are using their positions for personal gain?

(5) Ethiopian Eunuch

'In' [En]

- ❑ Acts 8:26 *But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, "Get up and go south ... 27 So he got up and went; and there was an Ethiopian eunuch ...*
- ❑ Acts 8:36 *... came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?" 37 [And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."] 38 And he ordered the chariot to stop; and **they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him.***

Philip the evangelist - as opposed to Philip the apostle - preached Jesus to the Ethiopian eunuch who confessed his belief in Jesus, and then wanted to be water baptized. Philip responded by baptizing him in water.

- 8:17 Philip wasn't an apostle. Doesn't his water baptism of the eunuch show any believer can water baptize another believer, not just priests, pastors, or other church leaders?
- 8:18 Given both the eunuch and Philip went into the water, doesn't this indicate the eunuch's baptism was full immersion and not a few drops of sprinkled water? And wouldn't full immersion be consistent with John the Baptist baptisms who baptized near Salim because there was a good deal of water?
- ❑ John 3:23 *Now John also was baptizing in Aenon, near Salim, **because there was an abundance of water** ... people were coming and being baptized*
- 8:19 Further, given Jesus's disciples baptized people in the baptism of repentance before the cross, isn't it likely they baptized as did John the Baptist - i.e. full immersion? And most likely baptized via full immersion after the cross?
- ❑ John 4:1 *Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John 2 (although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples), [ESV]*

'Upon' [Epi]

- 8:20 Philip does not appear to have taught the eunuch about Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Does this again indicate Philip may not have taught on the Baptism of the Holy Spirit?
- 8:21 Doesn't the lack of mention of Baptism in the Holy Spirit again demonstrate believers don't need to be Baptized in the Holy Spirit to be saved?

(6) Saul / Paul

'In' [En]

The conversion of Paul en route to Damascus is a clear example of God's love, and His somewhat unpredictable nature. The Bible doesn't say exactly when Paul was born again. When Jesus first speaks to Ananias, He tells Ananias that Paul is praying.

- *Acts 9:11 And the Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying, 12 and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight."*

Ananias obeys and goes to meet with Saul.

- *Acts 9:17 So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "**Brother Saul**, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."*
- 8:22 Since Ananias referred to Saul as 'brother', and there is no discussion regarding sin, repentance, born again confessing with one's mouth etc. - doesn't this indicate Paul was already born again - that Holy Spirit was already in Saul - by the time Ananias arrived?

'Upon' [Epi]

- *Acts 9:17 So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and **be filled with the Holy Spirit.**" 18 And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he **got up and was baptized;** 19 and he took food and was strengthened.*

Ananias laid hands and told Paul he would regain his sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit. As per Chapter 9 of **CEASED?**, being filled with the Holy Spirit occurs when Holy Spirit comes upon [epi] a believer - when the believer is Baptized in the Holy Spirit. On this basis, verse 17 indicates Paul was Baptized in the Holy Spirit and healed physically as soon as Ananias laid hands on him.

- 8:23 Acts 19:18 indicates Paul was water baptized. Doesn't the fact that Paul was Baptized in the Holy Spirit before being water baptized clarify:
- i. water baptism is not required to be saved, but is important;
 - ii. water baptism can occur before or after Baptism in the Holy Spirit; and
 - iii. a non-apostle (a non-church leader) can both water baptize a person, and be involved in helping a person get Baptized in the Holy Spirit?

8: En and Epi After the Cross

Soon after Paul met with Ananias, Paul was in synagogues teaching about Jesus.

- ❑ *Acts 9:19 ... Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus, 20 and **immediately** he **began to proclaim Jesus** in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God."*

8:24 Given Paul 'immediately' began preaching, would this be evidence Paul received power to witness just as Peter received power to witness - in the form of preaching - at Pentecost in Acts 2? And when Paul was praying before Ananias arrived, was that when God gave Paul spiritual truths that enabled Paul to immediately begin to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues?

(7) **Cornelius, Family and Friends**

'In' [En] / 'Upon' [Epi]

Cornelius was a Gentile, an Italian centurion living in Caesarea. God sent an angel to Cornelius and put Peter in a trance which ultimately resulted in Peter coming to Cornelius's home and sharing the gospel.

- ❑ *Acts 10:25 When Peter entered, Cornelius met him ... 42 And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead.*

As Peter shared the gospel, Cornelius, family and friends were all Baptized in the Holy Spirit as Holy Spirit came upon [epi] them while they were listening.

- ❑ *Acts 10:44 **While Peter was still speaking** these words, the **Holy Spirit fell upon [epi] all** those who were listening to the message. 45 All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because **the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out [epi] on the Gentiles also**. 46 For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered, 47 Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?" 48 And **he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ**. ...*

Holy Spirit fell on **all** who were listening. No mention was made of their verbally accepting Christ. However, as per pages 58 and 59, when Peter realized Holy Spirit had fallen upon Cornelius, family and friends, he had them baptized in water.

- 8:25 Scriptures say a key part of the reason that Peter realized Holy Spirit had fallen upon Cornelius, family and friends, was because they were speaking in tongues and exalting God. Is it reasonable to conclude speaking in tongues can be a sign (a sign, not a guarantee) that a person has both been born again and Baptized in the Holy Spirit?
- 8:26 After the Cornelius group was Baptized in the Holy Spirit, they were water baptized. Is this evidence that water baptism is not required for salvation, and that water baptism can come after one is Baptized in the Holy Spirit?
- 8:27 Given Jesus Baptized this group in the Holy Spirit without anyone laying their hands on them, does this demonstrate Jesus can give this Baptism in the Holy Spirit - to whoever He wants, whenever He wants, by Himself or in conjunction with others, and with or without laying on of hands?

8:28 Does there appear to be a direct link between Holy Spirit coming upon a person and the person engaging in Holy Spirit gifts such as tongues?

Acts 10:45 identifies the Baptism of the Holy Spirit as a gift of the Holy Spirit. Peter repeats this in Acts 11 when he returned to Jerusalem, met with the disciples and explained what happened to Cornelius, family and friends.

❑ *Acts 11:15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as He did upon us at the beginning. 16 And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' 17 Therefore **if God gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ**, who was I that I could stand in God's way?" 18 When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, "Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life."*

8:29 The disciples responded by concluding - because the Gentiles had been Baptized in the Holy Spirit - the Gentiles must have also been born again which meant God must have also given them His free gift of salvation.

- i. In other words, were they concluding that Cornelius, family and friends must have had Holy Spirit in [en] them in order for them to have been Baptized in the Holy Spirit and have Holy Spirit come upon [epi] them?
- ii. If you believe the gift of the Holy Spirit does not refer to the upon [epi] experience but the in [en] experience, on what basis can this conclusion be made as only the [epi] experience is referenced in Acts 11:15-18?

8:30 In Acts 8:17, John and Peter laid hands on those in Samaria one by one and they were Baptized in the Holy Spirit. Ananias laid his hands on Paul which appears to be when Paul received his Baptism in the Holy Spirit. However, at Pentecost, no one laid hands on the ~120 when they were Baptized in the Holy Spirit. Similarly, for Cornelius and company, no scripture suggests Peter or anyone else laid hands on them when they were Baptized in the Holy Spirit. Jesus just did it. Is it possible therefore to be Baptized in the Holy Spirit without anyone laying hands, or even being involved? And given Jesus is the one who gives the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, doesn't that mean we can go to Jesus directly and ask Him to Baptize us in the Holy Spirit?

(8) Believers at Antioch

'In' [En] / 'Upon' [Epi]

After Stephen's murder, believers scattered from Jerusalem. Some were bold enough to preach the gospel to the Greeks at Antioch.

❑ *Acts 11:19 ... those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews 20 ... some of them, **men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus.** 21 And the **hand of the Lord** was with them, and **a large number who believed turned to the Lord.***

8: En and Epi After the Cross

Verse 21 says the 'hand of the Lord' was with them. The Amplified translation elaborates on this issue by saying the 'hand' is the power and presence of God.

- ❑ Acts 11:21 And the **hand (the power and presence)** of the Lord was with them, and **a great number who believed** turned to the Lord [for salvation, accepting and drawing near to Jesus as Messiah and Savior]. (AMP)
- 8:31 Given the power of God was present and a great many believed, doesn't this indicate these believers from Cyrene and Cypress had been Baptized in the Holy Spirit which gave them access to power to be witnesses for Christ? If not, what is the power in Acts 11:21 all about?
- 8:32 Does this group of believers provide further evidence that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the associated power and giftings that come with it were not limited to the apostles, but potentially available to all believers?

(9) Believers at Iconium

'In' [En] / 'Upon' [Epi]

There are no details regarding the in [en] or upon [epi] experiences for the believers at Iconium. But it's noteworthy as the book of Acts moves along, that we see God doing miracles through His followers everywhere they went. When people at Iconium witnessed these miracles, they started to speak highly of Paul and Barnabas. And while Paul and Barnabas wanted no praise, the power of God had clearly caught the attention of the believers at Iconium.

Paul also taught the Thessalonians that the gospel isn't just about words.

- ❑ 1 Thessalonians 1:5 For **our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit** and with full conviction ...
- 8:33 Wouldn't sharing the gospel today be a lot easier if non-believers have previously witnessed or experienced God's power themselves?

Healing of a Lady with a Limp

I was spending time with "Frank" who was homeless and struggling. He had left the Jehovah's Witness faith but still believed much of their false teachings. A lady came by limping and using a cane. She was clearly in pain. I asked if I could pray for her. She said ok. I prayed a simple prayer. She gave me a big grin. I told her Jesus loves her. She said "I know", and walked away without limping, flipping her cane around and around Charlie Chaplin style. Frank was stunned. He didn't know what to make of it, but he knew he had seen the power of the true Jesus. I only saw Frank a couple more times after that, and don't know where he is with Christ today. However, I do know he was greatly impacted by seeing the love and power of Jesus during the short encounter with that precious woman.

(10) 12 Believers at Ephesus

'In' [En]

Paul went to Ephesus where he met 12 disciples who had already 'believed'.

- ❑ Acts 19:1 It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and **found some disciples**. 2 He said to them, "**Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?**" And they said to him, "No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." 3 And he

said, **“Into what then were you baptized?”** And they said, “Into John’s baptism.” 4 Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus.” 5 When they heard this, they were **baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.** 6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, **the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying.** 7 There were in all **about twelve men.**

- 8:34 Paul didn’t ask if the disciples knew Jesus, what was required to be born again or what it meant. He didn’t share the gospel. Instead, he asked if they had received Holy Spirit ‘when you believed’. Given they were called disciples and Paul knew they had believed, isn’t it reasonable to expect Paul knew these 12 disciples were born again and would have already automatically received Holy Spirit through the in [en] experience? If not, why not?
- 8:35 Paul didn’t ask if they were water baptized but if they had received the Holy Spirit ‘when you believed’.
- i. If Paul wasn’t asking about Baptism in the Holy Spirit, what was he asking?
 - ii. And on the basis Paul was asking them if they had been Baptized in the Holy Spirit, doesn’t this show Paul’s first priority for new believers was for them to get Baptized in the Holy Spirit?

‘Upon’ [Epi]

In response to being asked if they had received the Holy Spirit, the disciples advised they had not heard of receiving the Holy Spirit. Paul then basically said (using my words) “Well, if you haven’t been Baptized in the Holy Spirit, what baptism did you receive?” The disciples advised they had received John’s baptism which Paul explained was about repentance - turning their minds and lives towards God.

The first thing Paul did was to ensure the 12 believers at Ephesus were water baptized. Secondly, Paul laid hands on them, Holy Spirit came upon [epi] them, and the 12 disciples immediately spoke in tongues and prophesied.

- ☐ Acts 19:5 When they heard this, **they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.** 6 And when **Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on [epi] them,** and they began **speaking with tongues and prophesying.**

- 8:36 If the baptism in Acts 19:5 does refer to water baptism, wouldn’t this show that water baptism is not required to be born again? Doesn’t it also show that even though individuals may have received the baptism of repentance before the cross, they still needed to be water baptized after the cross?
- 8:37 Even though Paul had the 12 disciples water baptized (something he could do) before they were Baptized in the Holy Spirit, again I ask: Doesn’t the fact that Paul inquired first about whether or not they had received the Holy Spirit indicate Paul’s first priority was Baptism in the Holy Spirit (something only Jesus can do) and not water baptism?

After Paul laid hands on the 12 disciples and Holy Spirit came upon [epi] them, the 12 disciples spoke in tongues and prophesied immediately, or soon thereafter.

8: En and Epi After the Cross

- 8:38 Does there again appear to be a direct link between Holy Spirit coming upon [epi] a person and their engaging in gifts such as tongues and prophecy?
- 8:39 Acts 1:8 states the apostles were to wait for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit to receive power to be witnesses. Given these 12 disciples spoke in tongues and prophesied right after the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, are these examples of the types of power (supernatural enablement) to be used by believers to facilitate their witnessing for Christ?
- ❑ *Acts 1:8 but you **will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon [epi] you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.***"

SUMMARY OF 12 'EN' AND 'EPI' EXPERIENCES

Figure 8:3 reviews the timing and time between 12 en and epi experiences.

Figure 8:3 Time between 12 Unique En and Epi Experiences

Individual / Group	When had in 'en' experience	When had upon 'epi' experience	Time between en & epi
1. 10 apostles, 2 Emmaus disciples and 'those who were with them'	Resurrection Sunday Evening	Pentecost	47 days
2. Thomas	8 days after resurrection Sunday	Pentecost	39 days
3. ~3,000 at Pentecost	Pentecost	At/after Pentecost?	Unknown
4. Stephen	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
5. Believers at Samaria	After Philip's teaching	After Peter & John at Samaria	Several days **
6. Simon the Sorcerer	"	Unknown	Unknown
7. Ethiopian Eunuch	"	Unknown	Unknown
8. Saul/Paul	After encounter with Jesus	After Ananias laid on hands	0 to 3 days
9. Cornelius, family & friends	As Peter was sharing gospel	As Peter was sharing gospel	Virtually nil
10. Antioch believers	After Stephen's persecution	Unknown	Unknown
11. Iconium believers	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
12. Disciples at Ephesus	Unknown	After Paul laid on hands	Unknown, unlikely zero

**Several days were required for the news to travel from Samaria to Jerusalem, for the apostles to decide what to do, and for John and Peter to then travel back to Samaria.

Four groups or individuals - (1) the group gathered on resurrection Sunday evening, (2) Thomas, (4) the new believers at Samaria, and (11) the 12 disciples at Ephesus - clearly had varying periods of time between their in [en] and upon [epi] experiences.

8:40 Don't the varying lengths of time between the different in [en] and upon [epi] experiences make it clear the epi experience is separate from the en experience?

Figure 8:4 provides information on 5 of the scenarios of Baptisms in the Holy Spirit that occurred in the Book of Acts.

Figure 8:4 Activities Related to 5 Baptisms of the Holy Spirit

Believers receiving Baptism in the Holy Spirit	Major Noise, Signs when Occurred	Laying on of Hands Before Baptism		Baptism of Holy Spirit immediately followed by Tongues	Baptism of Holy Spirit immediately followed by Prophecy	Water Baptism before or after Baptism in Holy Spirit
Pentecost	X			X		N/A
Samaria		X				Before
Saul/Paul		X				After
Cornelius+				X		After
Ephesus		X		X	X	Before

God is the same, yesterday, today and forever. However, while God's character never changes, how God does things seems to change constantly.

❑ *Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*

8:41 The above summary doesn't reflect all the details of what happened when individuals were Baptized in the Holy Spirit. However, based on what we know, don't the variety of ways by which believers were Baptized in the Holy Spirit, the variety of ways by which Jesus healed people, and the variety of ways God demonstrated His power, all indicate we should remember God moves in mysterious and unusual ways, that we can't put God in a box, and He might do things today that haven't been done before?

8:42 And thus, when individuals say they had some crazy encounters with God, shouldn't we be careful not to condemn or criticize too quickly? After all, imagine if you were trying to explain how God spoke to you in a burning bush, parted the Mississippi River for you, sent an axe head floating up to your boat, or how you had caught a fish and a valuable coin was inside, or how birds brought you bacon while you sat on the porch having a coffee? Can you imagine the commentary from some 'Christians' on social media?

8:43 Yes, some people experience 'miracles' that are made up or are of the enemy. But isn't the possibility of crazy things one more reason why we need to be

8: En and Epi After the Cross

constantly talking with God and seeking Holy Spirit's guidance and revelation as to what's really going on?

- ❑ *Matthew 6:33 But **seek first His kingdom** and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided to you.*
- ❑ *1 Thessalonians 5:16 Rejoice always; 17 **pray without ceasing**; 18 in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*
- ❑ *1 John 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but **test the spirits** to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*

ROMAN CATHOLIC TEACHINGS ON BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

When researching the Roman Catholic church's teachings, I found many in the main Catholic church view the 9 Holy Spirit gifts as having ceased, while others view them as existing but for Charismatic Catholics only. I found Baptism of the Holy Spirit wasn't even mentioned by name in the Catechism, while receiving power to be witnesses wasn't the first reason in Catholic teaching for this Baptism. I found no specific mention of the [en] and the [epi] experiences, no distinction between the two experiences, and no Biblically-based clarity on their respective purposes and relationship to the various Holy Spirit gifts. I found the in [en] and upon [epi] experiences were intermixed with each other and incorporated with other aspects not taught in the Bible. Let me illustrate some of my findings using the following information I copied on February 11, 2020 from the link:
www.aboutcatholics.com/beliefs/catholic-confirmation-explained/.

Highlighting and numbering are mine. I inserted numbers in brackets (1), (2) etc. to facilitate linking content in the article to my comments that follow. I left the text unchanged including the typo 'howver' in the last paragraph. And trust me. I'm not judging. I get typos; you probably saw some in **CEASED?** already.

Catholic Confirmation Explained

BY ABOUT CATHOLICS TEAM

Confirmation is a sacrament of initiation which completes baptism through sealing in Holy Spirit and anoints the recipient as priest, prophet, and king.

1: Who can receive Confirmation?

*In the Catholic Church, (1) **anyone that has been baptized properly** can and should be confirmed.*

2: What is Catholic Confirmation?

*Confirmation is a Sacrament in the Catholic Church in which the one who is confirmed (confirmandi) (2) **receives the gifts of the Holy Spirit through the imposition of hand and anointing with oils by the bishop. It's considered a sacrament of initiation which means that it (3) brings you deeper into communion with the Church.***

3: Who administers Confirmation?

(4) Bishops are the original ministers of Confirmation along with other Catholic sacraments (Lumen Gentium 26).

"Bishops are the successors of the apostles. They have received the fullness of the sacrament of Holy Orders. The administration of this sacrament by them demonstrates clearly that **(5a) its effects is to unite those who receive it more closely to the Church, her apostolic origins,** and **(5b) her mission of bearing witness to Christ.**" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 1313)

In the Eastern churches (non-Latin rites) the priest is the ordinary minister of this sacrament and performs it immediately after baptism. However, it is performed with chrism oil that has been consecrated by the bishop expressing the apostolic unity. In the Latin rite (which is the largest of all rites) the bishop is the ordinary minister. Read about the history of Confirmation.

In the west, most churches have the Bishop come and visit the local parish to confirm an entire class (age group) of students who spent the year preparing for confirmation. However, the Bishop can also 'delegate' his apostolic authority to perform the sacrament of confirmation to the local priest who is then able to administer the sacrament without the bishop having to be present.

4: How many times can one be Confirmed?

"Like Baptism which it completes, (6a) Confirmation is given only once, for (6b) it too imprints on the soul an indelible spiritual mark, the 'character,' which is the sign that Jesus Christ has marked a Christian with the seal of his Spirit by (7) clothing him with power from on high so that he may be his witness." (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1304)

(8) In other words, just once! It's a permanent thing that is fully completed and doesn't expire.

5: What is the matter and form of Confirmation?

(9) Catholic Confirmation is performed with the ordinary minister extending his hand over the one to be confirmed and anointing his/her head with the oil of chrism saying, "be sealed with the Holy Spirit." The actual Confirmation ceremony is much longer than this, but this is the "meat" of the action. The oil of chrism is consecrated by the bishop at the Chrism Mass on Holy Thursday and is reserved for special things like Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Orders, blessing of tower bells, consecration of churches, altars, chalices and patens.

6: What are the effects of Confirmation?

In short it **(10) Is the full outpouring of the Holy Spirit as once granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost.** Confirmation brings Catholics a deepening of baptismal grace and unites us more firmly to Christ. **(11) It increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit and (12) leaves an indelible mark on the soul just like baptism.**

8: En and Epi After the Cross

7: What are the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit?

The **(13) Seven gifts of the Holy Spirit received through Confirmation** are:

- | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 1: Wisdom | 2: Understanding | 3: Knowledge |
| 4: Fortitude or Courage | 5: Counsel | 6: Piety or Love |
| 7: Fear of the Lord | | |

Where is this sacrament found in Scripture?

Anointing with oil is an ancient Biblical tradition originating in the old testament with the Jewish people. The Jews had a messiah and it was usually their king at the time, however they were also awaiting a greater messiah, one that would deliver them and raise them up. This messiah happened to be Jesus. The sign of the Messiah was that he was royal and messiahs were put in their position by being anointed with oil and an appointment from God. This tradition carried on in Christianity with the teaching of the sharing in Christ's messiahship and his royal priesthood. **(14) In fact, the first example of Catholic Confirmation can be found in Acts 8:14-17.**

In terms of the above, I congratulate the authors of this website for their ability to succinctly summarize the Catholic position. A few observations and questions.

Per point (10), the effects of Catholic confirmation are "... full outpouring of the Holy Spirit as once granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost." Moreover, per (14), "... first example of Roman Catholic Confirmation is found in Acts 8:14-17".

□ Acts 8:14 Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, 15 who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. 16 **For He had not yet fallen upon [epi]** any of them ...

8:44 The outpourings at Pentecost and Acts 8:14-17 are two examples where individuals were clearly Baptized in the Holy Spirit. This plus other information clearly shows that Confirmation is primarily about Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Having said that, if you're Roman Catholic, how confident are you that Catholic teachings on Confirmation/Baptism of the Holy Spirit are consistent with the Bible: (1) extremely (2) quite (3) so so (4) no idea?

In the Roman Catholic church, Confirmation is the second sacrament that occurs after the first sacrament of water baptism. Water baptism, according to the Catholic church, is required for a person to be born again. On the basis that water baptism is required to be saved or born again and is thus required for the in [en] experience to occur, and on the basis that Confirmation relates to the upon [epi] experience, let's see how the Confirmation teaching stands up.

8:45 Point (1) **Anyone that has been water baptized properly** can receive confirmation. Cornelius, family and friends were Baptized in the Holy Spirit before being water baptized. Paul's focus at Ephesus was ensuring the 12 disciples were Baptized in the Holy Spirit. Water baptism was secondary. While I think it was likely they were baptized in water, there is no mention

the original apostles or others gathered with the apostles at Pentecost were baptized in water before - or after - they were Baptized in the Holy Spirit. On the basis that Confirmation is primarily about Baptism of the Holy Spirit, isn't point (1) of Catholic teaching that requires a person to be baptized in water before they can be Baptized in the Holy Spirit in error?

8:46 Point (2) **receives the gifts of the Holy Spirit through the imposition of hand and anointing with oils by the bishop**. Jesus is the one who Baptizes a person in the Holy Spirit. No hands were laid on believers at Pentecost or on Cornelius, family and friends. No oils were used on any individuals who were Baptized in the Holy Spirit. Hands were laid on Saul/Paul, and on the believers at Samaria and Ephesus, but those hands of service can be - like water baptism - of any disciple such as Ananias, and not limited to a select few leaders. Point (4) refers to the fact that **Bishops are the original ministers of confirmation**. Similar to point (2), while another believer can be involved when a person is Baptized in the Holy Spirit, no other person is required for this baptism to occur. We can ask Jesus ourselves or Jesus can just do it as He did at Pentecost and with Cornelius, family and friends. On the basis Confirmation is primarily about Baptism of the Holy Spirit, aren't points (2) and (4) of Catholic teaching inherently in error?

8:47 Point (3) **brings you deeper into communion with the church**. Point (5a) **its effects is to unite those who receive it more closely to the church, her apostolic origins** and (5b) **her mission of bearing witness to Christ**. Baptism in the Holy Spirit is given for power to be witnesses for Christ, evidenced in ways including gifts such as tongues and prophecy. While an individual who has been Baptized in the Holy Spirit may be more united with believers who also received this baptism, there is no mention in the Bible that Baptism in the Holy Spirit is intended to bring a person into deeper communion with the church.

- i. On the basis Confirmation is primarily about Baptism of the Holy Spirit, aren't parts (3) and (5a) of Catholic teaching in error?
- ii. If Baptism in the Holy Spirit was intended to bring a person into a deeper communion, shouldn't the deeper communion be with God as opposed to a church? Or does the Roman Catholic church rank ahead of God? I do note that between points (10) and (11), the commentary acknowledges Baptism of the Holy Spirit can unite us more firmly to Christ, but why isn't it all about God?
- iii. Point (5b) is somewhat consistent with scripture where Baptism of the Holy Spirit is about power to witness. But isn't Baptism of the Holy Spirit about individual believers being witnesses for Jesus, as opposed to an organization or church?

8:48 Point (6a) **Confirmation is given only once**. Point (8) **In other words, just once! it's a permanent thing that is fully completed and doesn't expire**. Per Chapter 9, Baptism of the Holy Spirit relates to being filled with the Holy Spirit. The upon [epi] experience results in God's presence coming upon us, but as per Chapter 9, it's intended to flow from or through us to others for

8: En and Epi After the Cross

their benefit. As a result, we need fresh filling, fresh baptisms upon [epi] us. The in [en] experience happens once when we're born again; and Holy Spirit comes in us and does not flow out of us in the same way as the upon [epi]. On the basis Confirmation is primarily about Baptism of the Holy Spirit, aren't parts (6a) and (8) of Catholic teaching in error?

- 8:49 Point (6b) **imprints on the soul an indelible spiritual mark, the 'character', which is the sign that Jesus Christ has marked a Christian with the seal of His Spirit.** The Bible does not indicate Baptism of the Holy Spirit leaves an imprint of character. Moreover, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit when we're first born again and Holy Spirit comes in [en] us. On the basis Confirmation is primarily about Baptism of the Holy Spirit, isn't point (6b) of Catholic teaching in error?
- *Ephesians 1:13 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation - **having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit** of the promise,*
- 8:50 Point (12) **leaves an indelible mark on the soul just like baptism** Per above, leaving a mark is not even mentioned as a result of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. It certainly can impact one's soul - as it did mine - but those are secondary impacts. Views vary on what the impacts are from water baptism. I'll let you decide what's what.
- 8:51 Point (9) **ordinary minister extending his hand over the one to be confirmed and anointing his/her head with the oil of chrism saying "be sealed with the Holy Spirit"**. Per point 6b, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit when we're born again and Holy Spirit comes in [en] us - not when Holy Spirit comes upon [epi] us. No extending of hands or anointing with oil of chrism is required. On the basis Confirmation is primarily about Baptism of the Holy Spirit, isn't point (9) of Catholic teaching in error?
- 8:52 Point (11) **increases the gifts of the Holy Spirit,** and point (13) involves **7 gifts of the Holy Spirit received through Confirmation.** For the 3 groups (Pentecost, Cornelius family and friends, and the 12 disciples at Ephesus), the immediate impact after being Baptized in the Holy Spirit was that they all spoke in tongues, while the 12 disciples also prophesied. Comparing the Confirmation gifts to the 9 Holy Spirit gifts accessed as a result of being Baptized in the Holy Spirit, we get the following:

7 Gifts through Confirmation

1. *Wisdom*
2. *Understanding*
3. *Knowledge*
4. *Fortitude or Courage*
5. *Counsel*
6. *Piety or Love*
7. *Fear of the Lord*

9 Gifts from Baptism in Holy Spirit

- 1: *Word of Wisdom*
- 2: *Word of knowledge*
- 3: *Faith*
- 4: *Gifts of healing*
- 5: *Miracles*
- 6: *Prophecy*
- 7: *Distinguishing of spirits*
- 8: *Tongues*
- 9: *Interpretation of tongues*

CEASED? 2ND EDITION

Potentially 2 of the 7 gifts received through Confirmation – wisdom and knowledge – could be identified as resulting from the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. On the basis that Confirmation is primarily about Baptism of the Holy Spirit, aren't points (11) and (13) of Catholic teaching in error?

According to Roman Catholic teachings, Confirmation is not a new type of experience with the Holy Spirit (which it is), but an intensification of the presence and power of Holy Spirit received when born again after being water baptized. Per prior discussions, water baptism is not required to be saved which contradicts part of this teaching. In addition, per Chapter 9, we leap the upon [epi] power and seek ongoing Baptisms in the Holy Spirit. Finally, in Chapter 8, the upon [epi] experience is the outpouring of the Spirit as prophesied by Joel, and - as taught by Jesus - is given so we have a different kind of power that enables us to be witnesses.

8:53 Point (7) *clothing him with power on high so that he may be his witness.*

On the basis Confirmation is primarily about receiving power to be witnesses and is therefore primarily about the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, isn't point (7) essentially correct?

8:54 Point (10) *the full outpouring of the Holy Spirit as once granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost.* Again, on the basis Confirmation is primarily about Baptism of the Holy Spirit, isn't point (10) of Catholic teaching correct in terms of the apostles received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit? However, where it finds the mark of error is that the outpouring was limited to the original apostles and to Pentecost, which it wasn't. Thus, isn't point (10) correct, but only to a very small degree?

Both the mainstream and Charismatic streams of the Roman Catholic church associate the sacrament of Confirmation with Baptism of the Holy Spirit, and an intensification of the presence and power of Holy Spirit. However, there is no clear distinction between the in [en] and the upon [epi] experiences. Instead, there is an intermixing of the two experiences along with other aspects such as water baptism and 7 gifts other than the 9 Holy Spirit gifts.

8:55 The last command Jesus gave before His ascension was for His born-again disciples to wait for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit which they received 7 days later at Pentecost. This baptism was clearly important, and glimpses of why became evident at Pentecost. If indeed the information contained in **CEASED?** on the in [en] and upon [epi] is correct (and if it isn't correct in any area, I would really appreciate knowing so I can correct it):

- i. Isn't it awfully surprising the Catholic church has so many incorrect teachings on Baptism of the Holy Spirit given it claims:
 - a. the Catholic church is the one true church with roots going back to the very beginning of the early church; and
 - b. the Catholic church has the correct teachings which are supported by the writings of early church fathers, some of whom were disciples by the original apostles?
- ii. The original apostles emphasized the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and treated the upon [epi] as distinct from the in [en] experience. Why

8: En and Epi After the Cross

doesn't the Catholic church clearly teach that today? And why does the Charismatic Catholic movement only date back to the 1960's, instead of 1,900 years earlier to right after the cross - the 30's, 40's, 50's, 60's, and 70's - when the bulk of New Testament was being written, and the 9 Holy Spirit gifts were clearly in full swing in the Body of Christ?

CLOSING POINTS TO PONDER

En and Epi Experiences

After reviewing Chapters 6-8, hopefully the following points became clearer.

1. The en and epi are two very distinct experiences with Holy Spirit:
 - i. the one-time in [en] experience occurs when a person is born again and Holy Spirit automatically baptizes the person into Body of Christ; and
 - ii. the multiple-time upon [epi] experience which involves Jesus baptizing a believer in the Baptism of the Holy Spirit to gain access to power in order to be a more effective witness for Christ.
2. There is no example of any believer being born again and having Holy Spirit come in [en] them as a result of being water baptized. There are examples, however, including Cornelius, family and friends, and the 12 disciples at Ephesus, who were all born again and therefore had Holy Spirit in [en] them, but who had not yet been water baptized.
3. No verse states the original apostles were water baptized after the cross. If one argues they didn't need to be water baptized because they had received John the Baptist's baptism of repentance before the cross, that contradicts the situation at Ephesus where Paul made sure the 12 disciples were water baptized even though they had already received the baptism of repentance.
4. For some believers (Samaria, Ephesus), water baptism occurred before being Baptized in the Holy Spirit. For others (Paul, Cornelius), the order was reversed. Baptism in the Holy Spirit first and water baptism second.
5. The original apostles ensured new believers were Baptized in the Holy Spirit as evidenced by John and Peter at Samaria, and Paul at Ephesus.
6. For the groups at Pentecost, for Cornelius, family and friends, and for the 12 disciples at Ephesus, supernatural gifts such as tongues and/or prophecy began for some believers immediately after they were Baptized in the Holy Spirit. Clearly, such gifts were not limited to the apostles.
7. Jesus is the one who Baptizes a person in the Holy Spirit. Jesus can do so unilaterally (Pentecost, Cornelius), as a result of another believer laying on of hands (Saul/Paul, Samaria, and Ephesus), or not at all. Anointing with oil was never part of Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Roman Catholic Considerations

- 8:56 The Roman Catholic church does not clearly distinguish between the in [en] and upon [epi] experiences, but mixes them together. There are major errors in the teachings of the 1st sacrament (water baptism) and the 2nd sacrament (Baptism in the Holy Spirit), 2 sacraments which are the foundation of the other 5 sacraments. I won't repeat all the other issues here, but if you're

Roman Catholic, do you again see why many Protestants do not accept the Roman Catholic church as the one true church with the correct teachings?

- 8:57 Evidence that a person has been Baptized in the Holy Spirit and having received the upon [epi] experience is provided when we see the person operating in the Holy Spirit gifts such as prophecy, words of knowledge and/or tongues. As the sacrament of Confirmation is largely centered around Baptism in the Holy Spirit, let me ask a few questions.
- i. Why don't we see all Catholics - or at least the vast majority of Catholics - who have gone through Confirmation operate in these gifts instead of just the 100-125 million labeled as Charismatic Catholics?
 - ii. Could part of the reason why most Roman Catholics don't operate in these gifts be because Jesus is the One who Baptizes a person in the Holy Spirit - not a Bishop or priest? And because of that, could this mean many Catholics may not be actually Baptized in the Holy Spirit even though they went through the Confirmation rituals?
 - iii. Is another possible reason most Roman Catholics don't operate in these gifts because the Roman Catholic church has ignored or effectively taught - much like many Protestant Cessationists have taught - that the 9 Holy Spirit gifts ceased with the early church?
 - iv. If the Catholic church has always taught these gifts were available and to be used, why was the Charismatic movement within the Catholic church such a novel and controversial movement? Furthermore, why haven't lay Catholics been uniquely identifiable by their involvement in the 9 Holy Spirit gifts - tongues, prophecy, healings, words of knowledge etc. - ever since the Catholic church's establishment?

Three last issues for Chapter 8.

- 8:58 My understanding of Catholic Confirmation is i) it is required ii) it's foundation is the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and iii) it results in being sealed with the Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit gifts such as tongues and prophecy are a good indicator that a person has been Baptized in the Holy Spirit. Given Catholicism teaches Baptism of the Holy Spirit seals a person with the Holy Spirit, should Catholics be concerned if they don't operate in any of these Holy Spirit gifts and thus may not be sealed with the Holy Spirit? And thus, based on Catholic teachings, should they worry they may not be saved?
- 8:59 Pentecost is considered the birthday of the Roman Catholic church because that is when the disciples starting going out to spread the message of Jesus. But why Pentecost and not resurrection Sunday evening when the apostles were saved, when the first born-again Christians came to be?
- 8:60 Finally, in my view, the lack of clarity in Catholic teachings on the in [en] and upon [epi] experiences, contributes to incorrect teachings and considerable confusion elsewhere. Such errors can be shown by comparing Catholic teachings to what the Bible says. How does one get comfortable with Catholic teachings that cannot be checked against the Bible?

Filled/Refilled With the Holy Spirit

INTRODUCTION

WHEN I hear the word fill, I tend to think of something being filled on the inside, like an empty bottle being filled with water. When it's full, it overflows. The terms '*filled with the Holy Spirit*' and '*spirit-filled believer*' are often used in the context of both the in [en] experience and the upon [epi] experience. The question is do these phrases apply to both experiences, or only one. And if only one, which one.

16 SCRIPTURES - FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

I found 16 New Testament scriptures related to being full of, or filled with the Holy Spirit. **CEASED?** reviews all 16 scriptures with each scripture labeled by an identifier **(1 of 16), (2 of 16)** etc. In addition to these 16 scriptures, I occasionally added a few scriptures to provide context.

In these 16 scriptures, 3 different Greek words for full or filled are used:

- ❖ *Pletho* [G4130] - *to fill, to be fulfilled, to be filled;*
- ❖ *Pleroo* [G4137] - *to fill, make full, fill up, to influence fully; and*
- ❖ *Pleres* [G4134] - *full, i.e., filled up (as opposed to empty), covered in every part, full, i.e. complete, lacking nothing, perfect.*

John the Baptist, Elizabeth and Zacharias

Of the scriptures using the term '*filled with the Holy Spirit*', 3 apply to John the Baptist and his parents, Elizabeth and Zechariah.

- ❑ **(1 of 16)** *Luke 1:15 For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled [Pletho G4130] with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb.*
- ❑ **(2 of 16)** *Luke 1:41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled [Pletho G4130] with the Holy Spirit:*
- ❑ **(3 of 16)** *Luke 1:67 And his father Zechariah was filled [Pletho G4130] with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:*

The experiences that Elizabeth, John the Baptist, and Zechariah had with Holy Spirit occurred before the cross. They could not have been born again as was

possible after the cross, and thus the permanent indwelling experience, the [en] experience, wasn't available to them in the same way we have today. They could have enjoyed the blessings of a temporary indwelling [en] of the Holy Spirit, or they could have had an upon [epi] experience as others did in the Old Testament.

- 9:1 John was extremely bold in his ministry. Doesn't that support the notion that John had a form of an upon [epi] experience which gives the recipient power to be a witness as Peter and Paul both demonstrated in Acts?
- 9:2 Zechariah prophesied. As per Chapters 7, 8 and 12, Baptism of the Holy Spirit is linked to the 9 Holy Spirit gifts, one of which is prophecy. Doesn't that suggest Zechariah also received an upon [epi] experience?
- 9:3 Elizabeth's being filled with the Holy Spirit occurred ~34 years before the cross. All of us, including Elizabeth, benefit from Holy Spirit comforting us, guiding us, etc. No doubt Elizabeth would have benefited from a temporary in [en] experience, even if it was only for the time spent raising John. On the other hand, would it be a total surprise if one day we learn Elizabeth also received an upon [epi] experience, and received power that enabled her:
- i. to be a mother to an unusual son, John the Baptist; and
 - ii. to receive a 'word of knowledge' from Holy Spirit that Mary was carrying her Savior in her womb?
- ❑ *Luke 1:41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42 And **she cried out with a loud voice and said**, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!*

Jesus

- ❑ *John 1:32 John testified saying, "I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained **upon [epi]** Him.*
- ❑ *(4 of 16) Luke 4:1 Jesus, **full [Pleres G4134] of the Holy Spirit**, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness,*
- ❑ *Luke 4:14 And Jesus returned to Galilee in the **power of the Spirit**, and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district.*
- 9:4 The Bible doesn't make any mention of Holy Spirit coming in Jesus. However, it does describe Holy Spirit coming upon Jesus like a dove, and remaining. Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit as He went into the desert. 40 days later, Jesus returned from the desert in power. Is it reasonable to believe that Jesus's upon [epi] experience was directly linked to His initially being full of the Holy Spirit, and His returning to Galilee in power? If not, to what is His being full of the Holy Spirit linked?

Group of ~120 at Pentecost

- ❑ *(5 of 16) Acts 2:4 And they were all **filled [Pletho G4130] with the Holy Spirit**, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.*
- 9:5 On the morning of Pentecost, the group of ~120 was Baptized in the Holy Spirit. They spoke in tongues. Given the simultaneous nature of these events, doesn't both their speaking in tongues and being filled with the Holy Spirit

9: Filled With the Holy Spirit

appear to be directly related to their Baptism in the Holy Spirit when Holy Spirit came upon [epi] them, and not the in [en] experience when they were born again 47 days earlier on resurrection Sunday evening? If not, why not?

Peter and John

- ❑ **(6 of 16)** Acts 4:8 Then Peter, **filled [Pletho G4130] with the Holy Spirit**, said to them, "Rulers and elders ..."
- ❑ **(7 of 16)** Acts 4:31 And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, **and they were all filled [Pletho G4130] with the Holy Spirit** and began to speak the word of God with boldness.

After their release from prison, Peter and John shared their experience with other believers. They began praising God who responded by filling them with the Holy Spirit. The result was they spoke the Word of God with boldness, a chain of events quite similar to events at Pentecost.

- 9:6 Would Peter being filled in Acts 4:8 and all of them being filled in Acts 4:31 be more likely the result of:
- i. a fresh upon [epi] experience as we see happening at Pentecost that initially resulted in Peter boldly sharing the gospel; or
 - ii. the in [en] experience when the disciples were born again in John 20:22 on resurrection Sunday evening?
 - iii. If you say the in [en] experience, does that mean Holy Spirit is not always in us after we are born again?
 - iv. Would it be appropriate to rephrase the term 'filled with Holy Spirit' to read 'filled with the power of the Holy Spirit'?

Stephen

- ❑ **(8 of 16)** Acts 6:2 So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. 3 Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, **full [Pleres G4134] of the Spirit and of wisdom**, whom we may put in charge of this task.
 - ❑ **(9 of 16)** Acts 6:5 The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man **full [Pleres G4134] of faith and of the Holy Spirit**, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch.
 - ❑ **(10 of 16)** Acts 6:8 And Stephen, **full [Pleres G4134] of grace and power**, was performing great wonders and signs among the people.
 - ❑ **(11 of 16)** Acts 7:55 But being **full [Pleres G4134] of the Holy Spirit**, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God;
- 9:7 As believers, we have Holy Spirit in [en] us. If being filled in the Holy Spirit refers to this automatic indwelling that occurs when we're born again, let me ask.
- i. Why would the 12 disciples want 7 men 'full of the Holy Spirit' per Acts 6:3 unless there was a significant benefit to their being filled?

- ii. Given the 12 disciples wanted 7 men full of the Spirit, doesn't being filled with the Holy Spirit serve as a unique criterion that qualified some men and eliminated others? Furthermore, doesn't that suggest some believers were full of the Holy Spirit, and some were not filled?
 - iii. When born again, Holy Spirit automatically comes in [en] a person. In other words, all believers have Holy Spirit. Given some believers are not filled with the Holy Spirit, doesn't it necessarily follow that being filled must be associated with a Holy Spirit upon [epi] experience rather than the in [en] experience? If not, why not?
- 9:8 Stephen was full of faith, full of the Holy Spirit, full of grace and power, and performed great wonders and signs. Would these references to being full of the Holy Spirit be more consistent with the upon [epi] experience which results in power to be witnesses, or the indwelling in [en] experience?

Saul/Paul

- **(12 of 16)** Acts 9:17 *So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled [Pletho G4130] with the Holy Spirit."*
- 9:9 Ananias laid his hands upon Saul in order for Saul's sight to be restored and for Saul to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Ananias never mentioned anything about salvation or about Paul's need to be born again. On the basis that Paul was born again before Ananias made his visit, doesn't Paul being 'filled with the Holy Spirit' in Acts 9:17 more likely relate to the upon [epi] experience than the in [en] experience? If not, why not?
- **(13 of 16)** Acts 13:8 *But Elymas the magician (for so his name is translated) was opposing them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. 9 But Saul, who was also known as Paul, filled [Pletho G4130] with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze on him, 10 and said, "You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord? 11 Now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and not see the sun for a time." And immediately a mist and a darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking those who would lead him by the hand. 12 Then the proconsul believed when he saw what had happened, being amazed at the teaching of the Lord.*
- 9:10 Doesn't Paul's boldness and the prophecy he gave in verse 11 relate more closely to the upon [epi] experience - the power experience - than the in [en] experience of the Holy Spirit? And as such, wouldn't it follow that the reference to Paul being filled with the Holy Spirit relates to an upon [epi] experience, and not to an in [en] experience?

Now consider Paul's message to the Ephesian believers.

- **(14 of 16)** Ephesians 5:18 *And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled [Pleroo G4137] with the Spirit.*
- 9:11 All believers have Holy Spirit in [en] us. If being filled with the Holy Spirit

9: Filled With the Holy Spirit

refers to this indwelling that occurs automatically when born again, why would Paul encourage them to be filled with the Holy Spirit if they were already filled?

Paul and Barnabas

- **(15 of 16)** Acts 13:45 *But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began contradicting the things spoken by Paul, and were blaspheming. 46 Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. 47 For so the Lord has commanded us, 'I have placed You as a light for the Gentiles, That You may bring salvation to the end of the earth.'" 48 When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. 49 And the word of the Lord was being spread through the whole region ... 52 And the disciples were continually filled [Pleroo G4137] with joy and with the Holy Spirit.*
- 9:12 Paul and Barnabas were witnessing boldly. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit was given to receive power to be witnesses for Christ. Does their speaking boldly and being continually filled with the Holy Spirit fit with being Baptized with the Holy Spirit on an ongoing basis? If not, what does it relate to and why?

Barnabas

- **(16 of 16)** Acts 11:22 *The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. 23 Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord; 24 for he was a good man, and full [Pleres G4134] of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord ...*
- 9:13 Many people were added to God's kingdom, in part possibly due to Barnabas being a good man, having worked closely with Paul, and having Holy Spirit in [en] him. However, in addition, was the influence Barnabas had on people also partly due to his being full of the Holy Spirit, a result of being Baptized in the Holy Spirit? If not, why not?
- *Acts 1:8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."*
- 9:14 When I review the 16 scriptures above, I believe they collectively show being filled with the Holy Spirit relates to the upon [epi] experience (Baptism with the Holy Spirit) and not the in [en] experience when we're born again and baptized by Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ. If you disagree, what scriptures lead you to believe it relates to the in [en] experience? And let me remind readers that when a person is born again, they have the most important Holy Spirit experience which is when Holy Spirit comes in [en] us.

I'm in no way trying to diminish the importance of this experience. I'm merely trying to clarify which Holy Spirit experience that the terms '*full of the Holy Spirit*' and '*filled with the Holy Spirit*' are primarily associated with.

Spirit-Filled Believer

Further to the above, I believe when we're Baptized with the Holy Spirit, we are filled with the Holy Spirit and thus become a '*spirit-filled*' Christian. When I make this claim, some may suggest I believe a person who hasn't been Baptized in the Holy Spirit doesn't have the Holy Spirit. This is not the case. All born-again believers have Holy Spirit in [en] them. However, not all believers are spirit-filled, and won't be filled until we've been Baptized in the Holy Spirit - by Jesus.

9:15 There are amazing ministries filled with love and which bless so many people without relying on the power and supernatural aspects associated with Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the 9 Holy Spirit gifts. My question is ... would such ministries be able to bless people even more if they hosted the presence of God upon [epi] them and operated with the supernatural power and associated 9 Holy Spirit gifts functioning as a normal part of their ministry?

9:16 If you believe Baptism of the Holy Spirit is of limited, if any, value in such ministries, why did the disciples feel it was imperative that the leaders of the ministry serving widows and orphans needed to be spirit-filled?

- ❑ *Acts 6:1 Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food ... 3 Therefore, brethren, **select from among you seven men** of good reputation, **full of the Spirit** and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task.*

AFTER RECEIVING THE EPI, DO WE 'LEAK'?

It's not uncommon for spirit-filled believers to say we leak where Holy Spirit's presence upon us can dissipate over time. As a result, we need a fresh filling - a fresh Baptism of the Holy Spirit. But is this so? We can gain some insight on this issue from the Old Testament. Consider Samson who had Holy Spirit come upon him, and then depart from him.

- ❑ *Judges 15:14 ... the Philistines shouted as they met him. And the **Spirit of the Lord came upon him** mightily so that the ropes that were on his arms were as flax that is burned with fire, and his bonds dropped from his hands.*
- ❑ *Judges 16:20 She said, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" And he awoke from his sleep and said, "I will go out as at other times and shake myself free." **But he did not know that the Lord had departed from him.***

The same thing happened to King Saul.

- ❑ *1 Samuel 11:6 Then the **Spirit of God came upon Saul** mightily when he heard these words, and he became very angry.*
- ❑ *1 Samuel 16:14 Now the **Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul**, and an evil spirit from the Lord terrorized him.*

9: Filled With the Holy Spirit

One of the first times we read about the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, is in relationship to Jesus.

- ❑ *Luke 3:21 Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened, 22 and the **Holy Spirit descended upon Him** in bodily form **like a dove**, and a voice came out of heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased."*

Doves are delicate birds. Unlike an elephant with looks at most adversity with a shrug and maybe a swing of its trunk, a dove will quickly move away when it experiences the least amount of adversity or unease. Merriam Webster dictionary defines a dove in part as '*any of numerous pigeons ... a gentle woman or child or one who takes a conciliatory attitude and advocates negotiations and compromise*'.

In many sermons, Bill Johnson teaches about this dove-like descending of Holy Spirit upon Jesus, and that not only did Holy Spirit come upon Jesus, but Holy Spirit remained on Jesus.

- ❑ *John 1:32 John testified saying, "I have seen the Spirit **descending as a dove** out of heaven, and **He remained upon Him**."*
- 9:17 If a 'dove' came upon [epi] us today, is it reasonable to expect the degree or duration to which the 'dove' stays on us may depend to a large extent on how much peace we provide to the 'dove'?

Perhaps that's one reason we are called to imitate Christ.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 11:1 Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.*

Jesus's ministry featured signs and wonders that displayed God's power over and over again. Jesus was in a public place a great deal of time. Jesus stood for truth. Jesus showed compassion. Jesus loved everybody. Jesus was no respecter of persons. He treated the '*least*' the same as the '*greatest*'. Jesus didn't play mind games though some parables were mind-numbing. Jesus didn't gossip. Jesus didn't sin. Jesus also spent much time alone in communion with Father God and only did what Father God did. Is it any surprise that Holy Spirit remained upon Jesus?

- 9:18 If we spend time with God in private, live a life that pleases God and seek Him first in all things, aren't the odds higher that Holy Spirit will remain on us for longer periods?
- ❑ *Mark 1:35 In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there.*
 - ❑ *Mark 6:45 Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side to Bethsaida, while He Himself was sending the crowd away. 46 After bidding them farewell, He left for the mountain to pray.*

Holy Spirit and Water

Jesus refers to Holy Spirit as living water.

- ❑ *John 4:10 Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you **living water**."*

- ❑ *John 7:38 He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, **'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'**"*
- 9:19 Rivers flow. When the presence of God (Holy Spirit) is upon us, is His presence to flow from us to others as part of being a witness for Christ?

Consider the woman who had been hemorrhaging for 12 years.

- ❑ *Mark 5:25 A woman who had had a hemorrhage for twelve years, 26 and had endured much at the hands of many physicians, and had spent all that she had and was not helped at all, but rather had grown worse - 27 after hearing about Jesus, she came up in the crowd behind Him and touched His cloak. 28 For she thought, "If I just touch His garments, I will get well." 29 Immediately the flow of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction. 30 Immediately Jesus, **perceiving in Himself that the power proceeding from Him had gone forth**, turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched My garments?"*
- 9:20 This woman was healed by the power of God, a power that was upon Jesus and 'leaked' from Him when her healing occurred. We are to imitate Jesus. Does this mean that, like Jesus, the power upon us is intended to flow out from us so that others are blessed?
- 9:21 Should we seek God so much and be so filled with the Holy Spirit that His presence overflows from us into our immediate environment, in the vicinity of our 'shadow' just like it did within the vicinity of Peter's 'shadow'?
- ❑ *Acts 5:15 to such an extent that they even carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and pallets, so that when Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on any one of them.*
- 9:22 Would this outflow of power to bless others be consistent with how the Body of Christ is also to come alongside each other, in good times and bad times?
- ❑ *1 Corinthians 12:20 But now there are many members, but one body ... 25 so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. 26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.*
- 9:23 If the power of God upon us is intended to flow to others - a river that flows from us on an ongoing basis - doesn't this suggest we need to get filled up regularly? And wouldn't this require us to be plugged into the power source all the time by having ongoing communications with Holy Spirit throughout our waking hours?

Are we to be Re-Baptized with the Holy Spirit

Jesus baptizes believers in the Holy Spirit which gives a person their initial filling. That is clear. No scripture specifically says we are to ask Jesus to Baptize us again in the Holy Spirit. However, consider what happened to Peter and John after they were released from prison in Acts 4.

- ❑ *Acts 4:23 When they had been released, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. 24 And*

9: Filled With the Holy Spirit

*when they heard this, they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, "O Lord, it is You who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them, 25 who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Your servant, said ... 31 And **when they had prayed**, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and **they were all filled with the Holy Spirit** and began to speak the word of God with boldness.*

After the disciples gave praise and prayed, they were **ALL** filled with the Holy Spirit ... again.

- 9:24 Doesn't this suggest our filling comes primarily from spending time with God in prayer, praise and worship either privately or corporately similar to when the disciples were gathered in prayer in Acts 1 before the events of Pentecost took place? And when Peter and John were released from jail?
- 9:25 Does this leaking explain why many Charismatics ask and pray for a fresh baptism, a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit so they can be filled again and again with the Holy Spirit?
- 9:26 In terms of asking for a fresh baptism, do we need to guard against getting into the habit of simply asking for a fresh baptism as opposed to spending time with God just for the blessings of spending time with God? And if God chooses to give us a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit, we thank Him. And if we don't receive, we thank Him for that too?
- 9:27 Please hear me. I'm not saying we shouldn't ask for a fresh filling. What I am saying is we need to check our hearts. If our approach is simply to ask for a fresh filling instead of first seeking to spend time with God, don't we run the risk of becoming focused on God's power instead of on Him? And is this an issue that has perhaps contributed to many Charismatics going astray?
- 9:28 When Jesus tells us to seek first the Kingdom of God and to ask Father God for our daily bread, could one of the blessings from doing so be a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit which enables us to be a vessel out of which Holy Spirit can flow to others? Does interaction with God throughout each day keep our souls in a healthy, submitted state and strengthen our vessels to hold and 'dispense' Holy Spirit more effectively?
- ❑ *Matthew 6:33 But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*
 - ❑ *Matthew 6:9 "Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. 10 'Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. 11 'Give us this day our daily bread. 12 'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.'*
- 9:29 Our personal walk with Jesus has ups and downs. If our focus changes from God's way to our way, from God's glory to our glory, can we expect to see different manifestations of God's power in our own life? And could this be one reason why miracles happen in one season of our life but not in another?

ROMAN CATHOLIC TEACHINGS ON FILLED

Catholic teachings do not associate the term *'being filled with the Holy Spirit'* as being related to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Rather, being filled is associated more with the born-again experience where Holy Spirit comes in [en] a believer.

9:30 Does this incorrect Catholic teaching on filled again result from incorrect teachings on the two separate experiences, the in [en] and the upon [epi]?

CLOSING POINTS TO PONDER

God is amazing. When it comes to being filled with Holy Spirit, my review shows that we leak and need to be refilled. How this all works, I don't know. A friend of mine and I had too much sugar and caffeine one night and brainstormed potential answers to a few, somewhat unorthodox questions:

- ❖ How do the in [en] and upon [epi] experiences actually work together?
- ❖ Does a believer have all of Holy Spirit or just part of Him when we're born again and have the in [en] experience, but not the upon [epi] experience?
- ❖ Do we have all of Him, or just access to Him?
- ❖ Do all believers - collectively as a group - have all of Holy Spirit?
- ❖ If believers as a group have all of Holy Spirit, does part of Holy Spirit leave us and go into a new believer when they enter the scene?
- ❖ Elisha wanted a double portion of Elijah's spirit 'upon' himself. How does one measure a double portion, especially if we leak?

We were clearly off kilter that night. God's complexity is way beyond human understanding. One part - His Word - is so complex. One aspect - the Great Exchange - has so many dimensions. And yet, in some ways, God is not complex. His core messages are not complex. We can come to Him as little children. We are to love Him and others. So complex. So simple. My head hurts.

The spiritual world God created is also very complex. I don't have much of a clue as to what goes on when we're filled or have the para, meta, en and epi experiences. I don't understand much of how the supernatural, spiritual world actually works, which more and more makes me realize why faith is so central to our Christian walk, why we need constant communication with God, and why we need to be led by Holy Spirit in so much of our lives.

I'm not sure who first said it, but I love the notion that evangelizing and sharing the great news of Christ is not something we do, it's who we are. If you're not comfortable in evangelizing, I've been there and get it. But ... I encourage you to make it a priority. I've been told by several Christians that sharing the gospel is not needed. We just need to love people. I disagree. Loving people all the way to hell does them no good from an eternal standpoint. At some point, they must hear the gospel. Some of these same Christians have also said that God will let all *'good'* people into heaven. When I encounter such views, I like to turn them to scriptures such as Mark 16:15-19.

9: Filled With the Holy Spirit

- *Mark 16:15 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and **preach the gospel** to all creation. 16 The one who has believed and has been baptized will be saved; but **the one who has not believed will be condemned.** 17 These **signs** will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will **cast out demons**, they will **speak with new tongues**; 18 they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not harm them; they will **lay hands on the sick**, and **they will recover.**" 19 So then, when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, **He was received up into heaven** and sat down at the right hand of God.*

A person's last words are often extremely important. This is the case in Mark 16:15-19 which includes some of the very last words Jesus spoke before He ascended. Within these 4 verses, it's important to focus on the words and phrases bolded and underlined in these 4 verses. It's especially important to take note 1) of the fact that Jesus calls us to preach the gospel and 2) the reason we're to preach the gospel is because those who don't believe in Jesus will be condemned - and if they don't know about Jesus - how can they come to know Him? After ensuring these points are clarified, I try to point out that signs for believers include casting out demons, speaking in tongues and healing the sick. If these items aren't occurring in their lives, I ask them to consider if something of importance may be missing in their walk with Jesus.

If you haven't evangelized before, there are several approaches. Building relationships at work and elsewhere, loving them, being real and letting them see Christ in you, are all key steps. Then, when opportunities arise such as when they want prayer, you're there for them with the love and power of Jesus. Adopting teachings from evangelists such as Billy, Franklin and Will Graham are impactful as is the approach taught and used by Ray Comfort. No question. However, 'power' evangelism where God's power manifests through a miraculous healing or a word of knowledge, impacts people differently. When these events occur, people know they experienced or observed a supernatural event, and it opens the door to share the truth of Jesus. If you've never been involved in these kinds of amazing experiences, don't worry. You can do it. Holy Spirit is with you and other believers will come alongside to help you.

And - for those who like to share theological knowledge - my experience is that intellectual debates/discussions seldom yield much fruit, unless the other person is being drawn by Holy Spirit and is truly open to listening. And per Chapter 1 of **CEASED?** I think the main reason why the fruit of theological debates is limited is that most of us are more loyal to our beliefs than we are to seeking the truth.

Going forward, Chapter 10 reviews 9 different Baptisms in the Bible - yep, 9 of them - while Chapter 11 shows how these baptisms and the para, meta, en and epi Holy Spirit experiences all fit together.

4 Baptisms Relevant Today, 9 in Total?

INTRODUCTION

WHEN researching baptisms in the Bible, I was surprised to find there were 3-4 baptisms related to today’s believer, another 3 that Jesus experienced, and at least two other baptisms. In addition to reviewing each of these 9 baptisms, Chapter 10 examines whether Peter’s statement “*Repent and be baptized ...*” in Acts 2:38 refers to water baptism or Baptism in the Holy Spirit (page 187).

REVIEW OF THE 9 BAPTISMS

When I ask believers if they have been Baptized in the Holy Spirit, believers who have received this baptism usually know what I mean because they were impacted in a tangible way. For those who haven’t received this baptism, a very common answer is still “*Yes, I have*”. When I ask when they received this baptism, the most common response is “*When I was water baptized*”. This kind of confusion was one of the catalysts that led me to share insights I’ve discovered over the years.

The Bible speaks of several baptisms. The exact count depends on how one groups and differentiates the baptisms. While **CEASED?** discusses 9 baptisms, there may be more, or less, depending on how you view scripture. Of these 9 baptisms, 4 apply to believers today. Before getting into these 4, let’s look at the other 5.

#1: BAPTISM INTO MOSES

Figure 10:1 Baptism into Moses

#	Name of Baptism	Purpose	Who Baptized Who	When Occurred
1	Baptism into Moses	Deliverance of Israel through the Red Sea	God 'baptized' people of Israel with Moses	40 Years of Exodus

After Moses returned from his 40-year exile to set Israel free, God put 10 plagues on Egypt. The last plague involved killing the firstborn of Egypt, both human and animal.

10: 9 Baptisms, 4 Relevant Today

- ❑ *Exodus 12:12 For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will **strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast:** and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments - I am the Lord. 13 The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.*

Fortunately for Israel, their eldest children were saved at Passover through the shed blood of many lambs. Moses and the rest of the Israelites began their exodus from Egypt by going to, and then through, the Red Sea. After that, Moses led Israel through the desert for 40 years with the protection and guidance of the cloud by day and the fire by night.

- ❑ *Exodus 13:21 The Lord was going before them in a **pillar of cloud** by day to lead them on the way, and in **a pillar of fire** by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night.*

10:1 Doesn't this pillar of fire indicate that when God sends fire, sometimes the fire is actually a major blessing?

During this 40-year journey, Moses and the people of Israel had many 'interesting' situations. They were inextricably linked on this journey.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 10:1 For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; 2 and **all were baptized into Moses** in the cloud and in the sea; 3 and all ate the same spiritual food; 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were **drinking from a spiritual rock** which followed them; and **the rock was Christ**.*

Compared to a baptism where a person is fully submerged under water, I liken part of this 'baptism into Moses' as being submerged together in the presence of God for 40 years. They were immersed together as one body, with Moses as their earthly leader, a leader who was in turn being led by Almighty God.

10:2 Was this 40-year journey of individuals living totally dependent on God a foreshadowing of the way that God wants each of us to have a personal relationship with Him today - depending on Him, being led by Him etc., but without the whining and the excess meat coming out of our nostrils?

- ❑ *Numbers 11:18 Say to the people, 'Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, and you shall eat meat; for you have wept in the ears of the Lord, saying, "Oh that someone would give us meat to eat! For we were well-off in Egypt." Therefore the Lord will give you meat and you shall eat. 19 **You shall eat**, not one day, nor two days, nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days, 20 but a whole month, **until it comes out of your nostrils** ...*

10:3 Besides showing us that our requests may sometimes have unintended consequences, does the journey of Moses and the Jewish people - the Baptism into Moses as it were - serve as a foreshadowing of Jesus's life, death, burial and resurrection, and His being the spiritual rock from which we drink?

#2: BAPTISM OF REPENTANCE

Figure 10:2 Baptism of Repentance

#	Name of Baptism	Purpose	Who Baptized Who	When Occurred
2	Baptism of Repentance	Sign of repentance; foreshadowing righteousness of Christ & water baptism	John the Baptist, and followers of Jesus baptized Jews	A limited number of years before the cross

A core part of John the Baptist’s ministry was telling the Jewish people they needed to repent. They needed to change their way of thinking and turn their hearts back to God because the kingdom of heaven was coming. Or, as the words ‘*at hand*’ indicated, it was already there.

- ❑ *Matthew 3:1 ... John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, 2 “**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**”*

One way that the people of Israel displayed their repentance was by undergoing a baptism of repentance in the Jordan River.

- ❑ *Mark 1:4 John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness **preaching a baptism of repentance** for the forgiveness of sins. 5 And all the country of Judea was going out to him, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.*
- ❑ *Luke 3:2 in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, the son of Zechariah, in the wilderness. 3 And he came into all the district around the Jordan, **preaching a baptism of repentance** for the forgiveness of sins;*
- ❑ *Acts 13:24 after John had proclaimed before His (i.e. Jesus) coming a **baptism of repentance** to all the people of Israel.*

While John the Baptist is the person primarily associated with the baptism of repentance, disciples of Jesus also led people through this baptism before the cross.

- ❑ *John 4:1 Therefore when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John 2 (although **Jesus Himself was not baptizing**, but **His disciples were**), 3 He left Judea and went away again into Galilee.*

10:4 Given disciples of Jesus carried out the baptism of repentance per John 4:1, isn’t it rather likely these disciples received the baptism of repentance themselves?

10: 9 Baptisms, 4 Relevant Today

John the Baptist's ministry hit the mark as many people from Judea, Jerusalem and around the Jordan were baptized.

- ❑ *Mark 1:4 John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 And **all the country of Judea** was going out to him, and **all the people of Jerusalem**; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.*
- ❑ *Luke 3:3 And he came into **all the district around the Jordan**, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins;*

In addition, as discussed before, believers as far away as Greece were baptized.

- ❑ *Acts 19:1 It happened that while Apollos was **at Corinth**, Paul passed through the upper country and came to **Ephesus**, and found some disciples. 2 He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said to him, "No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." 3 And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" **And they said, "Into John's baptism."** 4 **Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance**, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus."*

10:5 Was this spreading out of the baptism of repentance, in part, due to not only John the Baptist performing this baptism, but to Jesus's disciples as well?

10:6 In a similar way, is the sharing of the gospel today:

- i. to be the focus of a few, select leaders; or
- ii. what a few believers do, or who a few believers are; or
- iii. what all believers are called to do, and called to be?

In terms of individuals identified by name who were baptized by John the Baptist, the only one I can find is Jesus. His baptism is unique and reviewed in baptism #3.

- ❑ *Luke 3:21 Now when all the people were baptized, **Jesus was also baptized** and while He was praying, heaven was opened,*

The baptism of repentance involves changing one's way of thinking and the turning of one's heart and life back towards God.

10:7 Does this mean the baptism of repentance was related to individuals who were old enough to make an informed decision by themselves or do you believe it also applied to all Jewish people including babies? In other words, how likely is it that John the Baptist and the disciples of Jesus baptized babies and young children in a baptism of repentance?

10:8 When doing this baptism, John the Baptist was in the river. Do you think John sprinkled water on the head of the person or immersed the person in water? If the former, why did he need to go into the river?

#3-#5: THREE BAPTISMS EXPERIENCED BY JESUS

Figure 10:3 Baptisms Experienced by Jesus

#	Name of Baptism	Purpose	Who Baptized Jesus	When Occurred
3	Jesus's Baptism in Water	Anointing to start ministry	John the Baptist	Beginning of Jesus's Ministry
4	Jesus's Baptism in the Holy Spirit	Power to witness	Father God	Beginning of Jesus's Ministry
5	Baptism of Cup/Cross/Suffering	To take all sins on behalf of humans	Father God	On the Cross

#3: Jesus's Baptism in Water

- ❑ *Luke 3:21 Now when all the people were baptized, **Jesus was also baptized** and while He was praying, heaven was opened,*

As mentioned earlier, the baptism of repentance was related to changing one's way of thinking and turning one's heart back to God. But as Jesus had no sins and had not turned from God, Jesus didn't need to repent. As a result, I see Jesus's water baptism as different than Baptism #2, John the Baptist's Baptism of Repentance.

There are different views on what John the Baptist's baptism of Jesus represented. Some assert John's baptism of Jesus resulted in "*fulfilling all righteousness*", by fully immersing Jesus into His priesthood. Others see the baptism as a form of hand-off from John the Baptist to Jesus. Others believe His water baptism had nothing to do with purifying Jesus, but the opposite - that Jesus purified the water, a foreshadowing of the cleansing power of His blood and/or the cleansing associated with water baptism. Others view John's baptism of Jesus as a means by which Jesus identified with sinful humans who need to be washed clean. Still others view the baptism of Jesus as being symbolic, modeling what future believers should do, and/or a foreshadowing of water baptism identifying with Christ's death and resurrection. I'm not trying to complete an exhaustive study of this issue, but I do have a couple of comments.

John the Baptist spoke of the kingdom of heaven being at hand and that One greater than him (Jesus) will baptize the Jews with the Holy Spirit and Fire.

- ❑ *Matthew 3:2 "Repent, for the **kingdom of heaven is at hand.**"*
- ❑ *Matthew 3:11 "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but **He who is coming after me is mightier** than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He **will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.**"*

A tell-tale sign revealing the identity of the Messiah would be provided when John sees Holy Spirit descending and remaining. John 1:32 testifies to that reality.

- ❑ *John 1:32 ... "I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. 33 I did not recognize Him, but **He who sent me to***

10: 9 Baptisms, 4 Relevant Today

baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.' 34 I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God."

10:9 After John baptized Jesus in water, Holy Spirit came upon [epi] Jesus which highlighted the start of Jesus's earthly ministry. In addition to John playing a key role in this start to Jesus's ministry, John also revealed that Jesus is the one who Baptizes a person in the Holy Spirit. Does the declaration by John that Jesus would Baptize individuals in the Holy Spirit serve to indicate this future Baptism was an important one? And just as important or perhaps even more important than water baptism?

#4: Jesus's Baptism in the Holy Spirit

Holy Spirit came upon [epi] Jesus as He came out of the water after being baptized by John the Baptist. Whether or not we view Holy Spirit coming upon Jesus as unique and distinct from the Baptism of the Holy Spirit received by followers of Christ (Baptism #8) is not a critical theological issue for me. However, for those who are more detailed by nature, I share some thoughts. To start, as just mentioned, Jesus is the one who Baptizes believers with the Holy Spirit.

- ❑ *Matthew 3:11 "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; **He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.***

In the case of Jesus's own Baptism with Holy Spirit coming upon [epi] Him, the choices as to who baptized Jesus are Father God, Jesus Himself or Holy Spirit. Yes, John the Baptist immersed Jesus in water but I don't think John was able to tell Holy Spirit "Now Holy Spirit, come upon Jesus." If John did this, I suspect God's Word would say so. Consider Acts 10:38 and Matthew 3:17.

- ❑ *Acts 10:38 You know of Jesus of Nazareth, **how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power ...***
- ❑ *Matthew 3:16 After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the **Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him,** 17 and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "**This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.**"*

I don't see any scriptures that Jesus baptized Himself or that Holy Spirit unilaterally carried out this baptism. Luke 3:21-22 - to me at least - shows that Jesus prayed to Father God who responded by opening the heavens and sending Holy Spirit upon Jesus. In other words, Father God baptized Jesus in the Holy Spirit.

- ❑ *Luke 3:21 Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus also was baptized, and **while He was praying, heaven was opened,** 22 and the **Holy Spirit descended upon Him** in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came from heaven: "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well pleased."*

John 1 adds another dimension to Jesus's Baptism with the Holy Spirit by stating that Holy Spirit not only came on Jesus, but remained on Jesus.

- ❑ *John 1:33 I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water*

said to me, 'He upon whom you see the **Spirit descending and remaining upon Him**, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.'

10:10 Given Holy Spirit remained upon Jesus, does it follow that a key to the miracles done by Jesus, including physical healings, was not only Holy Spirit coming upon Jesus but remaining and not leaving?

10:11 If not, what was the significance of John mentioning that Holy Spirit remained on Jesus? If it wasn't about Jesus retaining access to Holy Spirit's power when He returned from the desert 40 days later after His initial Baptism in the Holy Spirit, what is the significance of Holy Spirit remaining?

❑ *Luke 4:14 And **Jesus returned** to Galilee **in the power of the Spirit**, and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district.*

10:12 Without Holy Spirit coming upon [epi] Jesus, wouldn't Jesus have had similar power as the ordinary person - virtually none? If earthly Jesus had divine power, or 24/7 ready access to divine power, before He was Baptized with the Holy Spirit:

- i. why did Jesus need to be Baptized with the Holy Spirit if He already had the power; and
- ii. how could Jesus serve as a role model for believers today if He had divine power, or had access to some of God's power that we can't access?

10:13 On the basis that Holy Spirit coming upon Jesus enabled Him to access Holy Spirit power, doesn't that mean we can also access the same kind of power when Holy Spirit comes upon [epi] us? If not, why not?

10:14 Is this access to power a key reason why Jesus states that those who believe in Jesus will do greater works than He did?

❑ *John 14:12 ... **he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do;** because I go to the Father.*

10:15 Are you seeing greater works in your life than those Jesus did in His life? Are you seeing greater works in the lives of other believers you are associated with, such as at your church? If not, is it reasonable to ask why not and to take steps to equip yourself and saints you influence so these greater works do occur?

If you find questions such as 10:15 to be irrelevant because you still believe the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the 9 Holy Spirit gifts have ceased, consider checking out Chapters 13 through 20. They provide much more evidence showing why these blessings from God haven't ceased.

#5: Baptism of the Cup/Cross/Suffering

All humans are sinners and deserve separation from God. Jesus was sin-free, but loved us so much that He was willing to pay the penalty for all our sins on the cross.

❑ *2 Corinthians 5:21 He made Him who knew no sin **to be sin on our behalf** so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

10: 9 Baptisms, 4 Relevant Today

Jesus had previously forewarned His disciples of the suffering He would endure.

- ❑ *Mark 10:32 ... And again He took the twelve aside and began to tell them what was going to happen to Him, 33 ... Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will **condemn Him to death** and will hand Him over to the Gentiles. 34 **They will mock Him and spit on Him, and scourge Him and kill Him**, and three days later He will rise again.”*

This immersion by Jesus in our sins, His suffering for us, is the 5th baptism.

- ❑ *Mark 10:38 But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to **be baptized with the baptism** with which I am baptized?”*
- ❑ *Matthew 26:39 ... “My Father, if it is possible, **let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.**”*
- ❑ *Luke 22:42 saying, “Father, **if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done.**”*

After the cross, Peter warned believers we will suffer as we take up our cross.

- ❑ *1 Peter 4:12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, ... 13 **but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ** ...*
- ❑ *Matthew 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, **he must deny himself, and take up his cross** and follow Me.*
- ❑ *Mark 10:39 They said to Him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “**The cup that I drink you shall drink; and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized.**”*

We’re all called to be ready to suffer for the Kingdom of God, and thus to some extent, this baptism might be considered as one that we are to willingly participate in today. Whether we actually do suffer a great deal or not is another story. Suffering and persecution will vary with some believers having fairly comfortable lives overall while others may face major persecution, and even martyrdom.

One last comment on this baptism: “Thank You Jesus! I can’t imagine the physical, emotional and spiritual pain you endured for us.”

#6-#9: FOUR BAPTISMS FOR BELIEVERS TODAY

Before I make any comments on the 4 baptisms summarized in Figure 10:4 on the next page, I recognize some readers may already be sharpening your theological weapons. I ask for your patience. I think patience is mentioned somewhere in the Bible. When I started my review, I thought there were only two baptisms relevant today so I had my own share of ‘oh gosh’ moments. And when I shared with some friends the notion of 4 baptisms relevant for today’s believers and 9 in total, I received a taste of what is likely to come my way. However, I digress.

When a person is born again, the blessings received are much more than just eternal salvation and getting a ticket into heaven. Figure 6:1, the Great Exchange, highlights some of them. One key blessing is Holy Spirit coming into the new believer, the in [en] experience. Take a few seconds again and think about that.

Almighty God ... resides in each of us for the rest of our earthly lives. For me, it's hard to grasp what that really means. I look at the stars, the sun and moon, and the vastness of the ocean, forests and mountains near where I live. God created all of that, and so much more. And God Almighty resides in me. I shake my head at times in absolute awe at the goodness, power and creative genius of God.

Figure 10:4 Baptisms for Today's believers

#	Name of Baptism	Purpose	Who Baptizes Believer	When Occurs
6	Baptism into Body of Christ	Become a child of God; part of God's family	Holy Spirit	Automatically when born again
7	Water baptism	Symbolic of dying to self; new life; various blessings	Another believer	On request by believer; after born again
8	Baptism of the Holy Spirit	Power to be a witness	Jesus	After born again; often on request; sometimes Jesus just does it; repeatable?
9	Baptism of Fire	Zeal, desire to witness; Refining	Jesus	Separate or along with Baptism of Holy Spirit? Spontaneous or on request

#6: Baptism into Body of Christ

The baptism of believers into the Body of Christ is, by far, the most important baptism a person can receive, and it happens automatically. God is so good. Allow me to build on what was previously provided on page 119.

In addition to Holy Spirit coming in [en] us when we're born again, we also receive the amazing blessing of becoming children of God.

- ❑ *Romans 9:8 That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are **children of God** but **the children of the promise** are regarded as descendants.*
- ❑ *1 John 3:1 See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that **we would be called children of God**; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.*

Other scriptures show that besides being adopted sons and daughters, we're heirs of God.

- ❑ *Galatians 4:5 so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive **the adoption as sons**. 6 Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" 7 Therefore you are no longer a slave, but **a son**; and if a son, then **an heir** through God.*

Blessings for believers are many. We're part of one family - the Body of Christ.

- ❑ *Romans 12:5 so we, **are one body in Christ**, and individually members ...*
- ❑ *Ephesians 3:6 ... **Gentiles are ... fellow members of the body** ...*

10: 9 Baptisms, 4 Relevant Today

- ❑ *Ephesians 5:23 ... as **Christ also is the head of the church**, He Himself **being the Savior of the body**.*
- ❑ *Colossians 1:18 He is also **head of the body, the church** ...*
- ❑ *Colossians 1:24 ... my share **on behalf of His body, which is the church** ...*

An associated blessing is that Holy Spirit automatically baptizes us into this body.

- ❑ *Galatians 3:27 For all of you who were **baptized into Christ** ...*
- ❑ *1 Corinthians 12:13 For **by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body** whether Jews or Greeks ... and we were all **made to drink of one Spirit**.*

In terms of this Baptism, Holy Spirit is with [para] us before we're born again and in [en] us after we're born again. As a result, I tend to believe that Holy Spirit automatically baptizes us into Christ and the Body of Christ at the moment we're born again. This baptism isn't talked about much, and some may think it isn't really a true blessing. If that's you, that's ok. But for me, it is a direct result of being born again and the single most important baptism in our lives.

Given Baptism into the Body of Christ receives little attention, it made me wonder about some teachings as they relate to the words 'baptism' and 'baptisms'.

10:16 To begin, given we automatically belong to God's church - the Body of Christ - when we're born again, is requiring a believer to 'officially' become a member of a church or denomination a requirement of God, or of man?

10:17 Given Holy Spirit baptizes new believers into the Body of Christ, is this the 'one baptism' referred to in Ephesians 4:4?

- ❑ *Ephesians 4:4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, **one baptism**, 6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.*

10:18 Similarly, does the baptism in Mark 16:16 refer to the Baptism into the Body of Christ?

- ❑ *Mark 16:16 He who has **believed** and **has been baptized** shall be saved; but he who has **disbelieved shall be condemned**.*

10:19 Finally, consider Galatians 3:27 and Romans 6:3. Do they refer to:

- i. when we're baptized into the Body of Christ; or
- ii. when we're water baptized?

- ❑ *Romans 6:3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been **baptized into Christ Jesus** have been baptized into His death?*
- ❑ *Galatians 3:27 For all of you who were **baptized into Christ** have clothed yourselves with Christ.*

Re question 10:19, I'll let you decide. From my view, if we're both born again and water baptized, it's a done deal one way or the other. The key is we're saved, and we can turn to the lost and hurting. And while you're pondering, I've heard it said that Romans 6:3 does not deal with water baptism or Baptism in the Holy Spirit, but rather to when we have truly '*died to self*' which is essential for us to become a new, resurrected creation.

#7: **Water Baptism for Believers**

Few topics have a greater diversity of views than what water baptism is all about. Let me put my 2 cents into the water baptismal pool.

Is Water Baptism Symbolic Only, or Does it Come with Blessings

To begin, consider Jesus's command:

- ❑ *Matthew 28:19 Go therefore and **make disciples** of all the nations, **baptizing** them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit:*

- 10:20 Jesus tells us to be baptized as well as to go and baptize others. Are there blessings through just being obedient and getting water baptized ourselves? Are there also benefits in educating and then helping other believers to be water baptized, and done either by ourselves or by other believers? In other words, are there heavenly benefits to discipling others?
- ❑ *Luke 11:28 But He said, "On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it."*

Look at the Israelites going through the Red Sea. Bill Johnson, who has some great teachings on this issue, and many others believe this event is a foreshadowing of water baptism today. The Jewish people had a choice. They could follow Moses or stay in Egypt. Pharaoh's army was in pursuit and getting closer and closer which probably made a few hearts pump faster than normal. They chose to follow Moses, and God's parting of the Red Sea allowed the people of Israel to get through to the other side. Shortly thereafter, the Egyptian army was wiped out. The people of Israel were free of that threat which brought several blessings - no doubt an immediate sense of peace being one of them.

- 10:21 On the basis going through the Red Sea is a foreshadowing of water baptism, is it reasonable to expect that 'some army or armies of Pharaoh' that have been pursuing us in our life may get buried when we're water baptized?
- 10:22 I also wonder to what extent the blessings associated with water baptism are linked to the condition of our heart. For instance, could there be different blessings if our heart viewed water baptism as a religious obligation that we 'have to do' versus having a passionate desire to obey God and to please Him by getting water baptized?

This condition of the heart is no small issue. For instance, I wonder how many people have said a version of the sinner's prayer as a 'Get into Heaven' insurance policy, not realizing that claims on some insurance policies are denied. The scariest words for a person who believes they're saved but aren't, are found in Matthew 7.

- ❑ *Matthew 7:23 And then I will declare to them, '**I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.**'*

Historically speaking, I haven't been a fan of the Message translation, but recently the Lord has opened my eyes and heart so that I treat it as a friend speaking to me to get a point across using their own words. Consider what Mr. Peterson had to say.

10: 9 Baptisms, 4 Relevant Today

- *Matthew 7:21-23 "Knowing the correct password - saying 'Master, Master,' for instance - isn't going to get you anywhere with me. What is required is serious obedience - doing what my Father wills. I can see it now - at the Final Judgment thousands strutting up to me and saying, 'Master, we preached the Message, we bashed the demons, our God-sponsored projects had everyone talking.' And do you know what I am going to say? 'You missed the boat. All you did was use me to make yourselves important. You don't impress me one bit. You're out of here.' 24-25 "These words I speak to you are not incidental additions to your life, homeowner improvements to your standard of living. They are foundational words, words to build a life on. If you work these words into your life, you are like a smart carpenter who built his house on solid rock. Rain poured down, the river flooded, a tornado hit - but nothing moved that house. It was fixed to the rock. 26-27 "But if you just use my words in Bible studies and don't work them into your life, you are like a stupid carpenter who built his house on the sandy beach. When a storm rolled in and the waves came up, it collapsed like a house of cards." (MSG)*

Rather sobering words.

Is Water Baptism Required for Salvation

Starting on page 55 of Chapter 4 of **CEASED?**, I outline why I don't believe water baptism is required for salvation. Acts 2:38 is often cited as evidence that we need to be water baptized to be saved.

- *Acts 2:38 Peter said to them, "**Repent, and each of you be baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

But does Acts 2:38 refer to water baptism, or to Baptism in the Holy Spirit? A detailed review of this issue is provided at the end of this chapter.

Who does the Water Baptism

- *Matthew 28:19 **Go** therefore and **make disciples** of all the nations, **baptizing** them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,*
- 10:23 Does Matthew 28:19 mean any true believer can baptize, not just pastors, priests, elders, deacons, and other leaders of churches? If not, why not?
- 10:24 If only pastors, priests, elders, deacons and other leaders are to water baptize another believer, then are these same pastors, priests, elders and other leaders the only ones who are supposed to '*go therefore and make disciples*'? And if so, what do the rest of us do - sit back and watch?
- 10:25 Some believers baptize babies in water and believe this guarantees their salvation even though it bypasses their free will to choose to follow Christ, or not. I can't find a teaching on baptizing babies after the cross in the Bible though I certainly acknowledge there are general references to everybody in families getting saved and baptized. But there's an assumption that babies were part of the group who were baptized. And to me, basing a key teaching on an assumption is risky. I wonder how many

adults today believe they are saved because they were water baptized as a baby? And as such, do they run the risk of Jesus telling them that He never knew them per Matthew 7:23?

- ❑ *Matthew 7:23 And then I will declare to them, '**I never knew you; depart from Me ...**'*

Can/Should we be Water Baptized More than Once

The Bible is silent on whether we can or should be water baptized more than once. Both Lori and I felt led in recent years to be water baptized a second time. In Lori's case, she felt Holy Spirit prompting her to do so because she had recently come out of a prolonged period of willful disobedience. In my case, it was because my first water baptism occurred before I was born again.

#8: Baptism of the Holy Spirit for Believers

- ❑ *Matthew 3:11 "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; **He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.**"*

As touched upon at length already, the Baptism of the Holy Spirit results in Holy Spirit coming upon a believer - the epi experience. This baptism results in a believer being immersed in Holy Spirit to receive power to be a witness for Christ's kingdom. Many in the Old Testament, Jesus Himself and many believers in the New Testament also had this upon [epi] type experience.

In Jesus's upon experience, Holy Spirit came on Him like a dove ... and remained.

- ❑ *John 1:31 I did not recognize Him, but so that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water." 32 John testified saying, "I have seen the **Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him.**"*

Another point worth noting about Baptisms in the Holy Spirit is that they vary. While Holy Spirit descended like a dove on sinless Jesus - the one who took the sins of the world - Pentecost was radically different when Holy Spirit came upon flawed believers in a major display of power.

- ❑ *Acts 2:2 And suddenly there came from heaven **a noise like a violent rushing wind,** and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared to them **tongues as of fire** distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to **speak with other tongues,** as the Spirit was giving them utterance.*

10:26 At Pentecost, God was making a rather emphatic statement to the world that the Good News has arrived, people are to take note of God's actions, and to also take note of how God is revealing Himself through His children. Could we use more of God's presence, His evident power, in the world today? Could Holy Spirit be hovering over many of His children today waiting for Jesus to Baptize them in the Holy Spirit, just as Holy Spirit hovered over the waters in creation?

10: 9 Baptisms, 4 Relevant Today

Receiving the Baptism in the Holy Spirit

Jesus baptizes believers in the Holy Spirit. Some received this baptism from Jesus with hands laid on (Saul/Paul, 12 disciples at Ephesus) and with prayer, while others received it from Jesus (Pentecost, Cornelius et al) with no other believers involved. Receiving this Baptism can be in the quiet of your home when alone, in the presence of another believer, or with a group of believers. There are no perfect words to say in seeking this gift. The following three examples are provided merely to illustrate alternatives we can use to ask Jesus for this baptism.

Example Prayer for Another Person's Baptism in the Holy Spirit

"Lord Jesus, we come before to You today as Your children. We are so blessed and thank You for all that You have done in our lives. I now ask You Lord Jesus to Baptize (name) with the Holy Spirit. I also ask You Lord Jesus to shield (name) from any schemes of the enemy, and bring other believers alongside (name) to assist (him/her) in their walk, and to help (name) use this gift in the ways You intend it to be used. Thank You Jesus."

Example Prayers for Our Personal Baptism in the Holy Spirit

1: *"Jesus, the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is true and available today, and since You are the one that gives it, I ask You to please give me this Baptism. Shield me from any schemes of the enemy, and provide help so that I use this gift the way You want it used, and for Your glory, not mine. Thank You Jesus. Amen."*

2: *"Lord Jesus, thank You for all that You have done in my life. Without You, I don't know where I would be today. Your Word says that You baptize Your children in the Holy Spirit. There are no other requirements than to be Your son or daughter. I meet that requirement and I come to You now seeking the blessing of being Baptized with the Holy Spirit. I want to receive all of the blessings You have for me, including those that come with this baptism. I trust that what I receive is from You. I receive, by faith, the gift of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and all the supernatural blessings including any and all of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts, if and when Holy Spirit chooses to give them to me. I ask that You shield me from any false gifts and tactics of the enemy, and that You bring people into my life that will help me grow in the proper use of these supernatural blessings. I also ask that You will reveal anything in my heart that is not right. Thank You Jesus! In Your mighty name, I pray. Amen."*

#9: Baptism with/in/of Fire

Two of the 4 Gospels write of John the Baptist prophesying that Jesus would Baptize believers with the Holy Spirit.

- ❑ *John 1:33 I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, **this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.**'*
- ❑ *Mark 1:8 I baptized you with water; but **He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.***

The other two Gospels write of John prophesying that Jesus would Baptize believers with both the Holy Spirit and Fire.

- ❑ *Matthew 3:11* “As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will **baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.**
- ❑ *Luke 3:16* John answered and said to them all, “As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will **baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.**

Many believers treat the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and Fire as one Baptism. In **CEASED?**, I separate them to address what I see as two separate issues - power and fire.

On the Day of Pentecost, tongues showed up, and so did fire.

- ❑ *Acts 2:1* When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared to **them tongues as of fire [pur] distributing [diamerizo G1266] themselves,** and they rested on each one of them. 4 And they were **all filled with the Holy Spirit** and began to **speak with other tongues,** as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

The reference to ‘tongues as of fire distributing themselves’ is translated in various ways including but not limited to ‘i) flames of fire coming to rest on every one of them, ii) small separate fires ... touched every person, iii) cloven tongues like as of fire ... one rested on each of them and iv) tongues like fire and it sat upon each of them.’

The Greek word underlying ‘distribution’ is ‘diamerizo’ [G1266]. Diamerizo means to ‘cut into pieces, to be divided into parts or to distribute’. In other words, each of the ~120 were given their own piece of Holy Spirit Fire.

So, was this fire good or bad? The English word ‘fire’ is derived from the Greek word ‘pur’ [G4442] which Strong’s defines as ‘... fiery, fire’. A common reaction to the word ‘fire’ is to think of judgment which has negative, even horrible, connotations. With that belief, many of us would tend to be cautious of receiving this baptism, and may even take steps to avoid receiving it.

- ❑ *Matthew 3:12* His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but **He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire [pur].**
- ❑ *Luke 17:29* but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it **rained fire [pur] and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.**

That kind of begs the question - does the fire associated with Acts 2 have one or more purposes other than judgment? To begin, God used fire to make His presence known.

- ❑ *Exodus 3:2* The angel of the **Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire** from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed.

10: 9 Baptisms, 4 Relevant Today

Fire is also used to provide comfort and protection.

- ❑ *Exodus 13:21 The Lord was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a **pillar of fire by night to give them light** that they might travel by day and by night.*
- ❑ *John 18:18 Now the slaves and the officers were standing there, having made a **charcoal fire**, for it was cold **and they were warming themselves**; and Peter was also with them, standing and warming himself.*

Fire is also used for refining and testing.

- ❑ *Zechariah 13:9 "And I will **bring the third part through the fire**, **Refine them** as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested ..."*
- ❑ *Isaiah 48:10 "Behold, I **have refined you**, but not as silver; I have tested you **in the furnace of affliction**."*

God sent fire to end the plague that arose because of David initiating a census.

- ❑ *1 Chronicles 21:14 So the Lord sent a plague on Israel, and 70,000 men of Israel fell. 15 ... 16 Then David raised his eyes and saw the angel of the Lord standing between earth and heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem ... 26 Then David built an altar to the Lord there and presented burnt offerings and peace offerings. And he called on the Lord, and **He answered him with fire from heaven** on the altar of burnt offering. 27 Then the Lord commanded the [avenging] angel, and he put his sword back into its sheath. [AMP]*

10:27 Some believers are critical of believers asking for fire to come down. But do we need to consider the kind of fire being requested before criticizing those seeking it? And doesn't Jesus - who Baptizes us with the Holy Spirit and Fire - know our heart and intent? And what we need most? Such as giving us what we need to get us to where we have no spot or wrinkle?

- ❑ *Ephesians 5:27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.*

10:28 If you're critical of requests such as 'fire come down', would you have advised the ~120 to avoid the Baptism of Fire Jesus gave at Pentecost?

Fiery, not Fire

I played a few sports in my younger years. I recall teammates and opponents who had a real desire to win. They had a passion, a zeal, a fire in their belly as it were.

10:29 Are we believers also called to have a zeal, a fire in our belly?

- ❑ *John 2:17 His disciples remembered that it was written, "**Zeal** for Your house will consume me."*
- ❑ *2 Corinthians 7:11 ... what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what **zeal**, what avenging of wrong ...*

10:30 If God wants to give disciples access to supernatural power as per the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, would Jesus want God's power to sit idle, or

would He want us to also have a strong desire to use this power to advance His Kingdom? Would Jesus want us to have a fire in our belly to witness for Him just as He had for His Father's house?

- 10:31 Strong's defines the Greek word 'pur' [G4442] in part as '... fiery, fire'. Is it reasonable that 'fiery' just might be an appropriate description of the word 'fire' in Baptism of Fire?

My Baptism in the Holy Spirit and Fire

As shared previously, I was Baptized in the Holy Spirit a few months after I was born again. When I got home after this baptism, Lori looked at me and asked what the heck happened to me. She could see God's presence all over me. I didn't know what she meant; I was kind of out of it. The next morning, I couldn't stop sharing Jesus even though I didn't know how to do so. Everywhere I went, I had to talk about Jesus one way or another. I had the zeal, the fire in my belly. Was this a result of the Baptism of Fire? I believe it was.

The other thing that happened to me was that I began to really hate a major addiction in my life - pornography. After I was born again, I disliked it. But after my Baptism in the Holy Spirit, the temperature gauge went way higher. I hated it. I learned more about spiritual warfare, and I soon got totally and permanently free of porn. I didn't learn how to cope. I got set free, and Lori and I took steps to ensure temptations were minimized so I could stay free. Was this change in attitude to the porn a result of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, the Baptism of Fire, or both? Absolutely, and Acts 1:8 offers some insight.

Witnesses vs Witnessing

Jesus told His disciples in Acts 1:8 to wait in Jerusalem so they could be Baptized in the Holy Spirit, and receive power to be witnesses. The English word 'witnesses' is derived from the Greek word 'martus' [G344] which means in part 'those who have proved the strength and genuineness of their faith in Christ'. Martus is a noun, not a verb, and thus the word 'witnesses' is a noun. As a result, the power to be a witness (noun) - in my view - is more than having access to supernatural power to do signs and wonders. No question, these signs and wonders are central to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit; scripture is clear on that. But I suggest there is another dimension to this power - a dimension that helps enable us to be a witness for God. The way we live - notably our attitudes, countenance, holiness, words and behavior - should give reasons to non-believers to want the same high-moral life. And a key part of getting to that way of living is to be healed in our souls so we have 'moral power and excellent in soul', one of the definitions Strong's applies to the Greek word 'dunamis'.

In addition to the Baptism in the Holy Spirit helping us in this regard, I also personally believe the Baptism of Fire is key to helping our inner self get refined, purified, and even get healed of soul issues and set free of demonic influences.

- 10:32 Doctors ... doctor. Runners ... run. Teachers ... teach. We born-again Christians are to be witnesses (noun). Doesn't that mean born-again Christians who are witnesses of and for Jesus should ... witness (verb). And if born-again Christians need Baptism of the Holy Spirit and Fire to witness most effectively, shouldn't we earnestly seek such gifts?

10: 9 Baptisms, 4 Relevant Today

Timing of Baptism of the Holy Spirit and Fire

When a person is born again, should we immediately ask Jesus to have the person Baptized in the Holy Spirit? For me, the answer is 'Yes'.

Scriptures support that argument as various new believers including Cornelius, his family and friends were Baptized in the Holy Spirit at virtually the same time as they were born again. Paul was Baptized in the Holy Spirit within 3 days of his encounter with Jesus. New believers at Ephesus were prayed over to receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. John and Peter made it a point to go to Samaria to ensure new believers were Baptized in the Holy Spirit. Clearly, there is scriptural evidence for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit right after we're born again. But there's another important reason - Jesus. Jesus is the One who baptizes believers in the Holy Spirit, and I believe Jesus will give this baptism to a believer whenever He wants, and His 'whenever' is way better than my whenever. If Jesus wants to delay giving this gift, or not give this gift at all, that's His choice. Jesus knows best, and I trust Jesus. As a result, I believe it's worth asking Jesus, and then trusting by faith we received it.

Where the responsibility of other believers comes into play is to help the new recipient understand what is going on, and how to use the power and blessings that come with this baptism. When a person starts to use one of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts, coming alongside them is hugely valuable - provided of course we know what we're doing. We especially need to help believers remember the importance of using the power in a way that benefits and doesn't hurt God's kingdom, and to use it for God's glory and not ours. If signs and wonders become our identity, changes are needed.

If the Baptism of Holy Spirit and/or Fire involves refining, and God wants to refine us, isn't it best to get refined, even if it's difficult? And if the Baptism of Fire is about receiving a deep zeal to share the gospel, then shouldn't we want that as well?

ACTS 2:38 - WHICH BAPTISM?

As mentioned before, Acts 2:38 is often used as evidence that we need to be water baptized in order to be saved.

- ❑ *Acts 2:38 Peter said to them, "**Repent, and each of you be baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will **receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**.*

To begin, keep in mind there are 3 baptisms to which Peter could be referring:

- i. water baptism - done by disciples;
- ii. Baptism in the Holy Spirit (and Fire) - done by Jesus; or
- iii. Baptism into the Body of Christ - done automatically by Holy Spirit (or Jesus) when we're first born again.

There are at least 5 reasons why Acts 2:38 does not refer to water baptism but to Baptism in the Holy Spirit (or Holy Spirit and Fire if you think they are one).

Reason 1: Peter tells the crowd to repent, but does not share what's involved in salvation before telling them to repent and be baptized. He does not say anything about believing, converting, confessing with one's mouth etc.

He may well have done so later in the day and before the 3,000 came to the Lord, but Peter didn't do so by the time he said *'be baptized'*. Peter also made no specific and clear mention of water baptism being required in Acts 3:19, or anywhere else in God's Word.

- ❑ *Acts 3:17 And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also. 18 But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. 19 **Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away**, in order that times of refreshing may come ...*

Reason 2: Acts 2:38 says we're to repent and be baptized *'in the name of Jesus'*. I found six verses that spoke of being *'baptized in the name of'*. Four of the verses derive the English word *'in'* from the Greek preposition *'eis'* [G1519] which means *'into, unto, to, towards, for, among'*.

- ❑ *Matthew 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them **in [eis] the name** of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,*
- ❑ *Acts 19:5 When they heard this, they were baptized **in [eis] the name** of the Lord Jesus.*
- ❑ *1 Corinthians 1:13 Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized **in [eis] the name** of Paul?*
- ❑ *Acts 8:16 For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized **in [eis] the name** of the Lord Jesus.*

One verse derives the word in from the Greek word *'en'* [G1722], the same word used when one is born again and Holy Spirit comes in us.

- ❑ *Acts 10:48 And he ordered them to be baptized **in [en] the name** of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days.*

The 6th and last verse - Acts 2:38 - does not use either *'eis'* or *'en'*.

- ❑ *Acts 2:38 Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized **in [epi] the name** of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins ...*
 Instead, Acts 2:38 uses the Greek word for upon *'epi'* [G1909], the same preposition used elsewhere to describe the Baptism of the Holy Spirit when Holy Spirit comes upon a person. I can remember when Holy spirit prompted me to research this issue and I realized *epi* was the root Greek word. I was astounded and said something like *"Holy smokes Batman. Why have I never seen this before?"*

Does the use of *'epi'* indicate Peter was saying something like *"Repent and you need to receive this epi Baptism, the baptism where Holy Spirit comes upon [epi] you"*? After all, Peter had just experienced the upon [epi] baptism personally and seen ~120 others receive the gift they had been waiting expectantly for 7 days after Jesus ascended - 7 long, exciting days. More on this in reason #4.

10: 9 Baptisms, 4 Relevant Today

Reason 3: Both Acts 2:38 and Acts 10:45 refer to the Gift of the Holy Spirit which Peter stated in Acts 10 referred to Baptism of the Holy Spirit, not water baptism nor the Baptism into the Body of Christ when we're born again.

- ❑ *Acts 2:38 Peter said to them, "**Repent, and each of you be baptized ... you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.***
- ❑ *Acts 10:45 All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the **gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles** also.*

As previously mentioned on page 125 of **CEASED?**, Peter states that Jesus received the promise of the Holy Spirit, and that Jesus in turn poured out the very same promise at Pentecost.

- ❑ *Mark 1:10 Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him;*
- ❑ *Acts 2:33 Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having **received** from the Father **the promise of the Holy Spirit. He has poured forth this** which you both see and hear.*

Does it make sense that immediately after Peter states in verse 33 that he and others had just received the promise - the gift of the Holy Spirit - which was the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, that seconds later he would switch gears [per verse 38 above] and give a message akin to "... but this baptism in the Holy Spirit is not for you. It was only for us. You will get water baptized instead." - a baptism for which there is no specific mention that Peter himself received.

Reason 4: The 4th reason involves putting Acts 2:38 into context. As water baptism is a major salvation issue for many denominations and individuals, please be patient as I address this 4th reason in some detail.

3½ years before Peter spoke the words in Acts 2:38 at Pentecost, Peter left fishing to follow Jesus. He heard Jesus teach in ways not heard before. He saw Jesus stand up to the religious people of the day. Peter saw Jesus do amazing miracles. Jesus empowered the 70 to go and do miracles. Peter called Jesus Lord. Peter briefly walked on water to get to Jesus. 50 days before Pentecost, Peter could not stay awake to pray with Jesus. He ran from the scene when Jesus was arrested. Peter denied Jesus 3 times. He wept when the rooster crowed. Peter didn't help take Jesus down from the cross, but left Jesus hanging on it. Peter didn't help with the burial, and didn't go with the women to help deal with Jesus's body early on resurrection Sunday morning.

However, after the women reported the empty tomb on resurrection Sunday morning, Peter ran to see for himself that the tomb was empty. Later that day on resurrection Sunday evening, Peter saw the resurrected Christ. Jesus proved who He was, and then told the disciples

to receive Holy Spirit when he breathed on Peter and the others. Peter was now born again and gained, amongst other things, spiritual understanding. The group returned to Jerusalem on an emotional high.

- ❑ *Luke 24:52 And they, after worshiping Him, returned to Jerusalem with great joy, 53 and were continually in the temple praising God.*

Over those 40 days, Jesus showed Peter forgiveness and love. He healed Peter's heart and ensured Peter knew all was good between them. Jesus taught Peter and the other disciples more about the kingdom of God. Peter knew his mandate, which like the other disciples, was focused on sharing the Good News in love, words and power.

- ❑ *John 21:15 ... Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" ... 16 ... a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" ... 17 ... the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" ...*
- ❑ *Matthew 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,*

Before Jesus's ascension, Jesus tells the disciples they aren't yet ready to share the Good News, that they needed to wait for the Baptism in the Holy Spirit to receive power to be more effective witnesses for Christ. Those 7 days waiting must have been emotionally charged as Peter and the other disciples waited together in anticipation. Pentecost finally comes around and Holy Spirit comes upon the ~120 including Peter.

- ❑ *Acts 2:1 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there **came from heaven a noise** like a violent rushing wind, and it **filled the whole house** where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared to **them tongues as of fire distributing themselves**, and they rested on each one of them. 4 And they were **all filled with the Holy Spirit** and **began to speak with other tongues**, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.*

Holy Spirit shows up with a bang - a noise from heaven filling the whole house, tongues of fire, and believers speaking in tongues. Approximately 120 people were Baptized in the Holy Spirit, Peter included, in a radical way. Observers see and hear the events unfold. Some wonder while others mock. Peter, the emotional and excitable fisherman, responds with a passionate speech starting with an explanation that these events resulted from an outpouring of Holy Spirit in fulfillment of an ancient prophecy.

- ❑ *Acts 2:15 For these men are not drunk ... for it is only the third hour of the day; 16 but **this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel:***
- ❑ *Acts 2:17 '... in the last days,' God says, 'That I **will pour forth of My Spirit on all mankind;** And your **sons and your daughters shall prophesy**. And your **young men shall see visions**, And your **old men shall dream***

10: 9 Baptisms, 4 Relevant Today

dreams: 18 Even on My bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit And they shall prophesy.

Peter explains the reality to the observers - they were responsible for the crucifixion of the Messiah. They were crushed, and asked what to do?

- Acts 2:37 Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "**Brethren, what shall we do?**"

- 10:33 Do you think this question - "*Brethren, what shall we do?*" was asked in:
- i. a bland, emotionless tone as seen while ordering for the 2,345th time, a large coffee misto, medium blend, skinny, 3 pumps of white chocolate, 3 pumps of pumpkin spice, 145 degrees, to go; or
 - ii. a highly-charged tone filled with confusion, regret, distress and fear?

Peter responds:

- Acts 2:38 Peter said to them, "**Repent, and each of you be baptized ...**"

- 10:34 On the basis the question '*What shall we do?*' was asked in a mindset '*filled with confusion, regret, distress and fear*' - did Peter respond with:
- i. a monotonic, low-key '*Repent and each one of you be baptized*' tone like a well-rested mom would speak to her 6-month-old baby; or
 - ii. an excited '**REPENT AND EACH ONE OF YOU BE BAPTIZED!!!**' tone?

To come at this from another angle, consider which baptism makes the most sense after considering Peter's time with Jesus during His earthly ministry, Peter's denial of Jesus, Jesus's death, the empty tomb, the events of resurrection Sunday evening, Peter's time with Jesus over the following 40 days, the 7 days of waiting after Jesus's ascension until Pentecost, and the events at Pentecost which happened minutes before.

- 10:35 Given all the above, which baptism would excitable Peter likely refer to:
- i. **Water baptism** which is never reported as having a major impact on anybody when first baptized. There is also no mention of Peter, or any of the ~120 at Pentecost even being water baptized;
 - ii. **Baptism by Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ** which happens automatically when we're born again and happened to Peter 47 days previously. No significant and visible impact was reported; or
 - iii. **Baptism in the Holy Spirit and Fire** which happened just minutes before in an amazing way featuring some of God's amazing power including an outpouring of God's Spirit on the ~120 including Peter himself?

Reason 5: Consider the 4 parts of Acts 2:38:

- 1: repent
- 2: be baptized
- 3: forgiveness of your sins; and
- 4: receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

- Acts 2:38 Peter said to them, “**Repent**, and each of you **be baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ for the **forgiveness of your sins**; and you will receive the **gift of the Holy Spirit**.”

There are 2 actions (*repent; be baptized*) and 2 results (*forgiveness; receive the gift of Holy Spirit*). As mentioned above, I believe the baptism in Acts 2:38 refers to Baptism in the Holy Spirit. On the basis I am right (which happens occasionally), and if I was involved in paraphrasing Acts 2:38 in lay English terms, I might suggest something along the lines of:

- Acts 2:38 Peter said to them, “First, repent in order to be forgiven of your sins. Secondly, get Baptized in the Holy Spirit in order to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit so you can be filled with the Holy Spirit and receive power to speak in unknown languages like you just saw, and much more.” (DD)

In this way, Peter would be telling people to repent - to change their way of thinking and turn to God - so they can be forgiven of their sins. And once saved, they are then able to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit by getting Baptized in the Holy Spirit.

As a result of the above reasons, I don't believe Acts 2:38 refers to water baptism. In addition, there are a few other considerations worth pondering.

4 Other Considerations

1: Catholic Influence Carried on into Protestant Teaching

A common Protestant point of view - and as shown in Chapter 4 of **CEASED?** - water baptism is not required for salvation. For Protestants, consider this.

- i. The Catholic church teaches water baptism is required for salvation.
- ii. Acts 2:38 is a key verse in support of Catholic teaching.
- iii. Many Protestant teachings have their roots in Catholic teachings.

10:36 Let me ask. To what extent is teaching of the word 'baptism' in Acts 2:38 in Protestant circles a result of carrying on what was taught for centuries by the Catholic church: the phrase 'be baptized' in Acts 2:38 refers to water baptism?

2: In the Name of Jesus

In Chapter 23, **CEASED?** touches on the topic of authority given to children of God, and the authority associated with the name of Jesus. On the basis that Acts 2:38 is not referring to water baptism, but instead to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, part of page 340 in Chapter 23 of **CEASED?** reads as follows:

“... an expanded version of the highlighted middle portion of Acts 2:38 might then read along the lines of ‘... **ask Jesus to baptize you in the Holy Spirit by the authority given to Jesus** ...’.

10: 9 Baptisms, 4 Relevant Today

23:29 *Consider that Acts 2:38 does refer to Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Given Jesus has been delegated all authority, and given Jesus is the one who baptizes believers in the Holy Spirit, would this explain why only the name of Jesus was mentioned in Acts 2:38, and not all of The Father, Jesus and Holy Spirit?*

3: What about the Baptism into the Body of Christ

In my view, Peter was not referring to Baptism into the Body of Christ. 4 reasons.

1. The Bible isn't clear if Jesus even taught about this baptism before Pentecost although He could have done so during the 40 days between resurrection Sunday evening and His ascension.
2. This baptism is not done in the Name of Jesus.
3. This baptism doesn't refer to the gift of the Holy Spirit (reasons #3 & #5).
4. Until that time, this baptism is not identified as having an immediate and major impact on individuals, whereas individuals were significantly and immediately impacted after being Baptized in the Holy Spirit (reason #4).

4: Acts 2:41

One scripture that made me scratch my chin a bit as to whether or not Peter was referring to water baptism or Baptism in the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:38, is Acts 2:41.

- *Acts 2:41 So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.*

Here's 'my' view. Peter and the apostles had just been Baptized in the Holy Spirit, an incredible experience they wanted others to have as well. Thus, the comment "Repent and be baptized" in Acts 2:38. Their Baptism in the Holy Spirit was their only experience with this baptism, however, and they were likely unsure as to what steps to take in order for the 3,000 to be Baptized in the Holy Spirit, a baptism actually given by Jesus and not them. In contrast, Peter and the other disciples were familiar with a form of water baptism as they had baptized people before the cross in the Baptism of Repentance. Jesus had clearly told the apostles to water baptize new believers, and thus water baptizing 3,000 new believers was something within their control and something which they would be comfortable doing. They probably did get them water baptized, but also took steps to get them Baptized in the Holy Spirit.

CLOSING POINTS TO PONDER

Chapter 10 covered 9 baptisms. You may agree that 4 baptisms are relevant today. You may believe we can also be baptized in the Cup of Suffering which makes it 5. You may believe Baptism of the Holy Spirit and Baptism of Fire is 1 baptism, not 2. You may believe there are other baptisms not covered. My objective was not to cover all baptism-related issues, but to try to help clear up some of the confusion surrounding water baptism and Baptism in the Holy Spirit. I hope I met that goal.

The most important baptism, by far, is when Holy Spirit automatically baptizes us into the Body of Christ as a result of being born again. We can choose to be water baptized, or not. We can choose to ask Jesus to Baptize us in the Holy Spirit, or not. Jesus may choose to Baptize us in the Holy Spirit when we ask, He may not, or He may Baptize us when we don't ask. It's His choice. My desire is that many more believers will seek and receive this wonderful gift of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Tying Chapters 3 to 10 Together

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTERS 3 through 10 touch on issues of spirit, soul and body (Chapter 3), salvation (Chapter 4), the ‘*para*’, ‘*meta*’, ‘*en*’ and ‘*epi*’ experiences with Holy Spirit (Chapters 5-9), and the 9 baptisms (Chapter 10). Chapter 11 ties the various components together using two different frameworks.

1. Framework 1 (Figures 11:1 through 11:10) deals with the interaction of our spirit, soul and body with Father God, Jesus and Holy Spirit (page 195). Please know upfront these Figures are not intended to be perfect representations of what happens. They are simplistic, but hopefully are representative enough to get across some key points.
2. Framework 2 (Figure 11:12) addresses the path of unbelievers on the road to hell as well as 3 paths of believers on their journey to heaven (page 201).

In addition, Figure 11:11 provides a brief summary of what happens to our spirit, soul and body when various experiences with God occur (page 200).

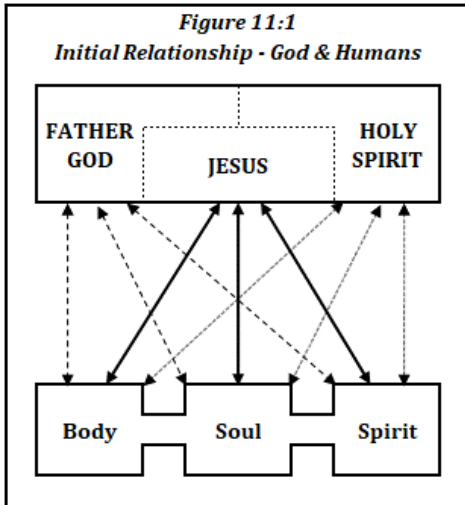
GOD AND OUR SPIRITS, SOULS AND BODIES

First up is the framework on our 3 parts: spirit, soul and body.

- ❑ *1 Thessalonians 5:23* Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your ***spirit*** and ***soul*** and ***body*** be kept complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

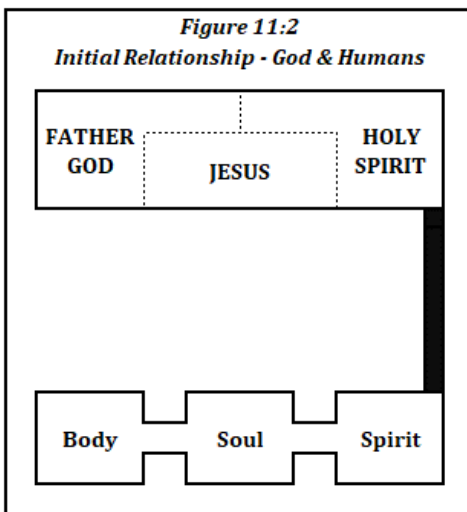
Figures 11:1 through 11:10 collectively, but very briefly, touch on issues related to how the human spirit, soul and body were designed to interact with God at creation, and then what this relationship looks like in a variety of situations after the fall of Adam and Eve. Other situations include Jesus’s ministry before the cross and at the cross, after our salvation, our walk as a Christian before and after being Baptized in the Holy Spirit, and ultimately, what happens after our earthly life ends and our heavenly life begins. Three Figures, 11:4, 11:5 and 11:6, relate to Jesus during His earthly life.

FRAMEWORK #1: OUR SPIRIT, SOUL AND BODY



1: God and Humans - Both 3 in 1
God is 3 persons - Father God, Jesus and Holy Spirit. Humans are 3 parts - spirit, soul and body. God's design enables humans and God to communicate in many ways. We can talk with The Father, Jesus and Holy Spirit. They hear us. God knows our thoughts, and can communicate with or touch our spirit, soul or body in any way He chooses. However, scriptures reveal a unique link between our spirit and Holy Spirit. And as opposed to our 'physical person', it is through our spirit person that we gain spiritual understanding from Holy Spirit.

- *1 Corinthians 2:12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, 13 which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. 14 But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.*



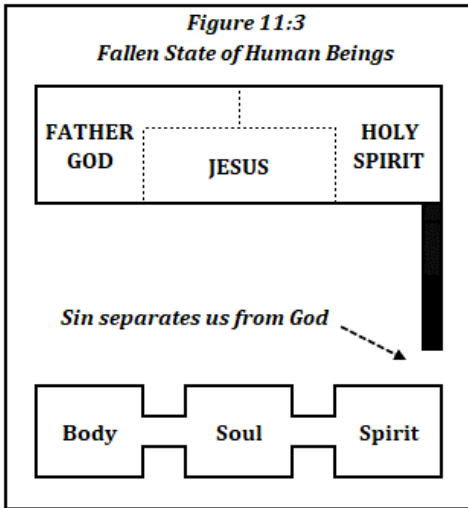
2: Communicating spirit to SPIRIT
A very simplistic depiction of God's design of our relationship with Him is found in Figure 11:2. Figure 11:3 and the subsequent Figures beyond also provide simplistic depictions of the relationships between the 3 persons of the Godhead as well as how we humans connect through our spirit with God through the person of Holy Spirit.

- *Matthew 10:20 For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.*
- *Ephesians 2:18 for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.*

3: The Fall

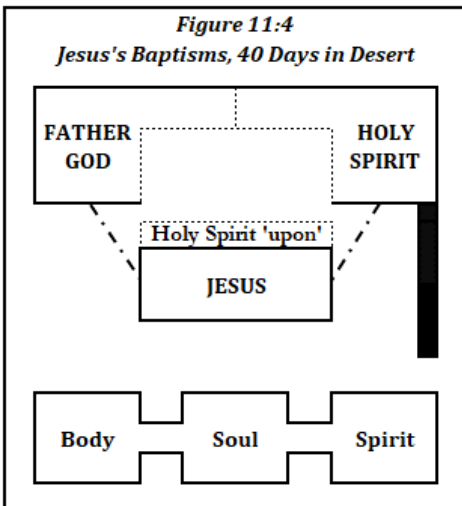
Adam and Eve had an intimate relationship with God. When they ate of the tree, they disobeyed God. They sinned. Their sins separated them from God. Their bodies and souls remained alive, but their spiritual relationship died. God still loved them, but the close intimacy was gone - because of sin.

☐ *Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*



4: Two of Jesus's Baptisms

During Jesus's earthly ministry, His relationship with people and God was different from any other human. Figure 11:4 shows the beginning of Jesus's earthly ministry at age 30 when John the Baptist baptized Him in water. As Jesus came out of the water, Father God baptized Jesus in the Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit came upon [epi] Jesus. Jesus spent 40 days in the desert, then began His ministry.



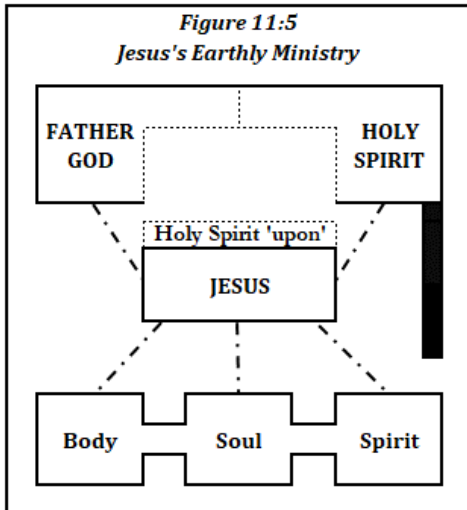
☐ *Luke 3:22 and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased."*

11: Tying Chapters 3-10 Together

5: Jesus's Earthly Ministry

For the next 3½ years, Jesus fulfilled His earthly ministry. Empowered by Holy Spirit who remained upon [epi] Him, Jesus did what He saw the Father do. He visibly impacted mankind in two parts of their beings - their bodies and souls - and most likely their spirits as well.

- ❑ *Luke 4:14 And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district.*

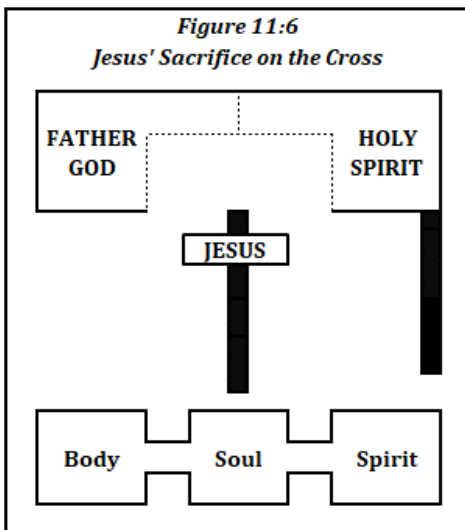


- ❑ *John 5:19 Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner ..."*

6: Jesus's Crucifixion: 3rd Baptism

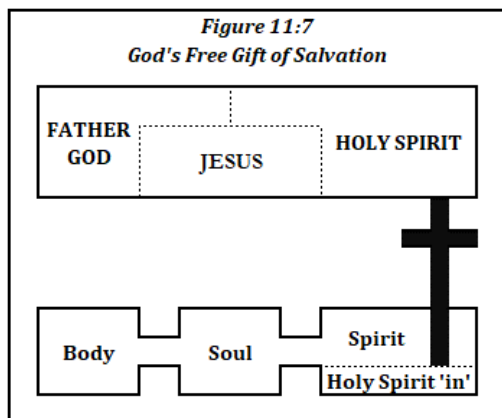
Jesus died after He took on all the sins of the world, and the consequences of those sins. He was baptized in His Cup of Suffering. Our sins caused Jesus to be separated from God; Jesus was forsaken and totally alone in his suffering because of you and me.

- ❑ *Mark 15:34 At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which is translated, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"*



7: Free Gift of Salvation

After Jesus’s death, burial and resurrection, God provided a way for people to be redeemed, for our spirit to again have an intimate relationship with God just as Adam and Eve had in the garden. If we truly accept Jesus, we have a relationship with Him as per Figure 11:7. If we reject Jesus, we are separated and have no relationship with Him as per Figure 11:6 except that Jesus is no longer on the cross.



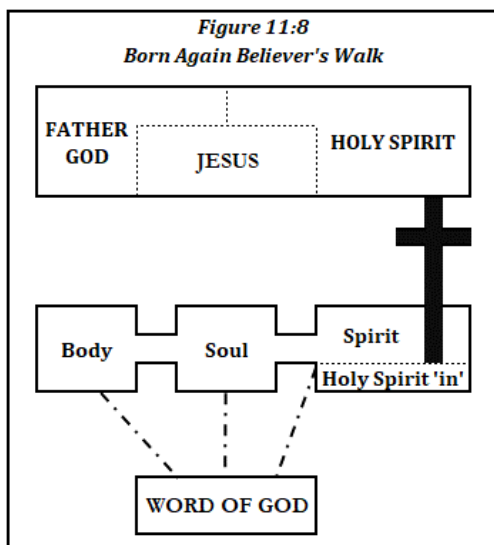
- ❑ *Ephesians 1:7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace*

In addition to the above, we should marvel at the notion that when we’re saved and truly born again, our spirit becomes one with Holy Spirit.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 6:17 **But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him.***

8: Born-Again Believer’s Walk

When we’re born again, we receive many divine blessings. As per Figure 6:1, a Divine Exchange was made. The best and biggest blessings are eternal life and having Holy Spirit come in [en] us. We now have direct access to Holy Spirit, Jesus and Father God. We also gain spiritual understanding. God’s Word becomes alive to us and, hopefully, becomes central to our lives.

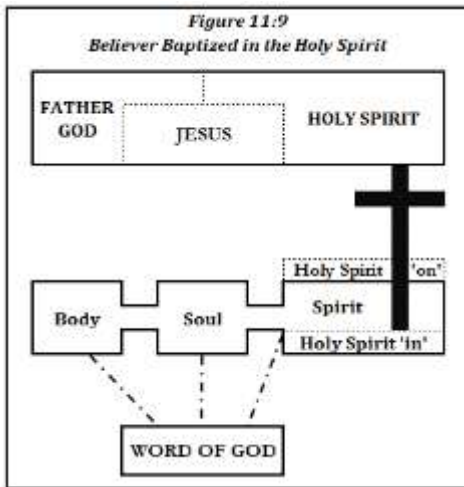


- ❑ *Ephesians 2:18 for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.*

- ❑ *Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

11: Tying Chapters 3-10 Together

9: Born-Again Believer after Baptism in the Holy Spirit

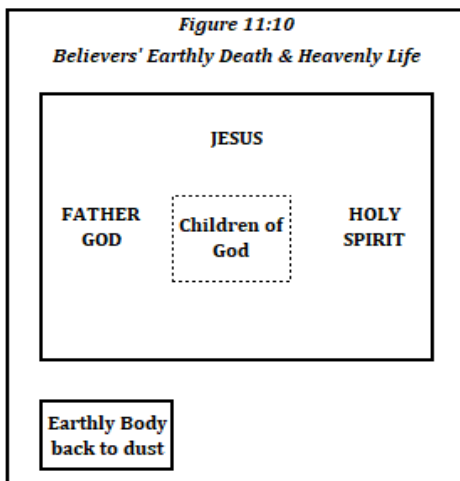


When born again, Holy Spirit automatically baptizes us into the Body of Christ. We can choose to be water baptized, or not. We can ask Jesus to baptize us with the Holy Spirit, or not. If we are Baptized in the Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit comes on/upon [epi] us. We can ask Jesus to baptize us with Fire, or not. It's all up to Jesus.

- *John 1:33 I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.'*
- *Acts 10:44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. 45 All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.*

10: When Believers Die

When believers die, our earthly bodies go back to 'dust' until our resurrection. Our spirit and soul go on to heaven where we are surrounded by, and immersed in, God's presence. We will receive a transformed body.



- *John 14:2 In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.*

- *Philippians 3:21 who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.*

11: God and Our Spirit, Soul, Body

I've heard the flesh described as the combination of body and soul (*mind, will and emotions*), while our heart is the combination of soul and spirit. Before we're born again, our flesh rules. After we're born again, there is a battle in our heart between our spirit which is aligned with God and is strengthened by Holy Spirit so we become more like Jesus, and our soul which still often likes the bodily and worldly desires.

- *Ephesians 3:16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner self,*

Figure 11:11 is a **very simplistic summary** of what happens to our spirit, soul and body when various experiences with God occur.

Figure 11:11 Impacts on Body, Soul and Spirit from Different Encounters

Time / Event	Spirit	Soul	Body
Conceived	Spirit from Father God	From Father God?	Mom & Dad ...
Before Born Again	'Dead' in that our spirit is separated from God	Led by fleshly desires, some good, many aren't.	Aligned with worldly activities, some can be good; many are not
After Born Again; Holy Spirit in [en]	Redeemed, made right with God; Sealed with Holy Spirit	Changes may be dramatic or minimal at first; should see major changes over time re holiness and fruits of the Spirit	Changes may or may not be evident; usually nothing dramatic
Baptized in Holy Spirit; upon [epi]	Enhanced closeness to God; Access to power to witness for God; Increased desire for holiness		Countenance can change in a major way for a time
Baptism of Fire	Zeal to share Jesus and/or a refining		Unsure
Water Baptized	Different views	Different views	Usually little
Walking out the Christian Life	Who rules: a) Holy Spirit leading our spirit, soul & body; or b) flesh (desires of body & soul)	Changes over time through the sanctification process; Working out the salvation of our soul	May be dramatic healings; All of us deteriorate over time with aging
Death	Heaven, if born again; Hell, if not saved	Heaven, if born again; Hell, if not saved	To 'dust' until the resurrection / second coming; Does person have a body in hell?

11: Tying Chapters 3-10 Together

FRAMEWORK #2: TYING CHAPTERS 3 TO 10 TOGETHER

Figure 11:12 which is found a couple of pages further on, builds on Figures 11:1 through 11:10 to illustrate:

- ❖ the 3-5 baptisms in Chapter 10 that can impact believers today; and
- ❖ the parallels between the journeys of believers today and the people of Israel when they followed Moses out of Egypt and Joshua into the Promised land - plus - how all 9 baptisms in Chapter 10 align with these two journeys.

The idea for this second framework has its roots from Bill Johnson's teaching in his book *'Face to Face with God'*. I remember looking at my friend when he gave me Bill's book and wondering why on earth would he give me a book from an off-the-wall guy like Bill. I shelved it. A few months later, I decided to peruse the book. I soon found myself thinking *"Hey, wait a minute; this guy has some really good things to say. What are people talking about?"* My eyes had been so tainted by what I had heard about Bill and Bethel, I almost missed what turned out to be a life-impacting book and season. Don't get me wrong, I don't believe everything Bill and Bethel teach. Nor do I believe everything anybody teaches. Lori and I disagree on a few things. But we are open to examining any teacher of depth, take what we believe is right, and leave the rest behind. So, if you think Bill and Bethel are heretics, and you haven't personally taken a comprehensive look, but base your belief on what others say or on a select few seconds or minutes of videos or teachings, you might want to reconsider your approach before rendering judgment, and certainly before speaking out. Lori and I went to Bethel in the summer of 2018. We had never experienced more love and more passion for Christ or His Word. We were blown away.

While some are totally against Bill and Bethel, others will say teachers such as John MacArthur are off the rails. If this is you, I encourage you to listen to John's interview with Ben Shapiro. Neither Bill, John or anyone else have it all figured out. The reality is the Body of Christ needs the Bill Johnsons, the John MacArthurs, the Robert Morris's, the Justin Peters, the Tony Evans, the Kay Arthurs and the Beth Moores. All are friends of God, and we might be wise to recall what Miriam endured by speaking against Moses.


Lori and I have learned many lessons in our day. Some lessons seemed to take too many tries and too much time to understand. Hopefully, we'll learn future lessons easier and quicker as we season. I now realize we have to be so careful how we think and speak about our brothers and sisters. Unless we know for sure, and God is calling us to speak out, we could easily find ourselves speaking partial or even total, divisive untruths. We need to watch our tongues. No wonder God's Word has so many scriptures about the tongue.

- ❑ *Romans 14:4 Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.*
- ❑ *Ephesians 4:29 Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.*

- ❑ *James 4:11 Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge of it.*
- ❑ *Proverbs 17:27 He who restrains his words has knowledge, And he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding. 28 Even a fool, when he keeps silent, is considered wise; When he closes his lips, he is considered prudent.*

With that said, in Chapter 4 of his book “*Face to Face with God*”, Bill Johnson talks about how our Christian walk today was foreshadowed in the Old Testament by the people of Israel, their exodus from Egypt, and their travels through to the Promised Land. The night after I had completed the first draft of the 9 baptisms, I felt it was incomplete. Soon after, God gave me a revelation on the framework seen in Figure 11:12. I’m a computer guy who prefers drawing using Excel; I seldom draw by hand. But that night ... for some reason ... I felt like drawing by hand. So I did. A short time later with an eraser reduced to pieces, I had the framework. However, I also felt something was missing. Then I listened to various YouTube teachings by Derek Prince and felt I needed to beef up the information on spirit, soul and body. This led to Figures 11:1 through 11:10, 21:1 and 23:2. God’s goodness is beyond measure and His timing of things, large and small, is impeccable.

Figure 11:12

When reviewing Figure 11:12, there are 3 sections - A, B and C. Each will be discussed in turn. The 9 baptisms discussed in Chapter 10 are identified  by a heptagon with the baptism number recorded within. The legend for the 9 baptisms is found on the bottom left-hand corner of Figure 11:12.

Top Section A of Figure 11:12 Old Testament Exodus from Egypt

The top section shows the seasons faced by the people of Israel as they moved from being in bondage in Egypt to the Promised Land. On the far right is eternity, which in the Old Testament, was considered to be part of God’s blessings and wrath. In the New Testament, specific reference is made to heaven and hell. The first baptism, the Baptism of Moses, pertains to two seasons beginning with the Passover and ending up in the desert next to the Jordan River.

Middle Section B of Figure 11:12: Ministry of Jesus

John the Baptist’s ministry paved the way for Jesus. His Baptism of Repentance, baptism #2 is on the far left. When Jesus entered the scene, He received two baptisms - #3 His Baptism in Water and #4 His Baptism in the Holy Spirit. As Jesus carried out His ministry, His disciples also led people through the same Baptism of Repentance that John was doing. On the cross, Jesus endured the 5th baptism, His Baptism of Suffering.

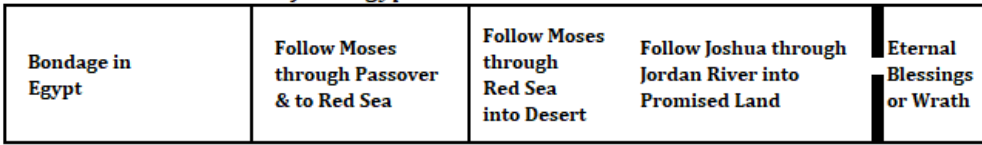
Bottom Section C of Figure 11:12: For Believers and Non-Believers Today

The bottom section relates to believers and non-believers today, and their walk starting as sinners and ending up spending eternity in either heaven - or hell.

11: Tying Chapters 3-10 Together

Figure 11:12 9 Baptisms in Bible and How 4 Baptisms Fit In Today

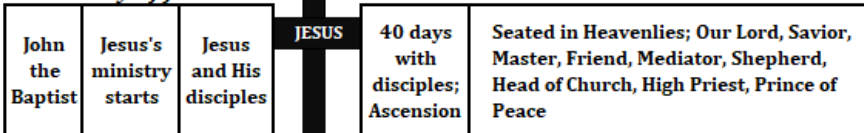
A: Old Testament Exodus from Egypt



①

①

B: Ministry of Jesus



②

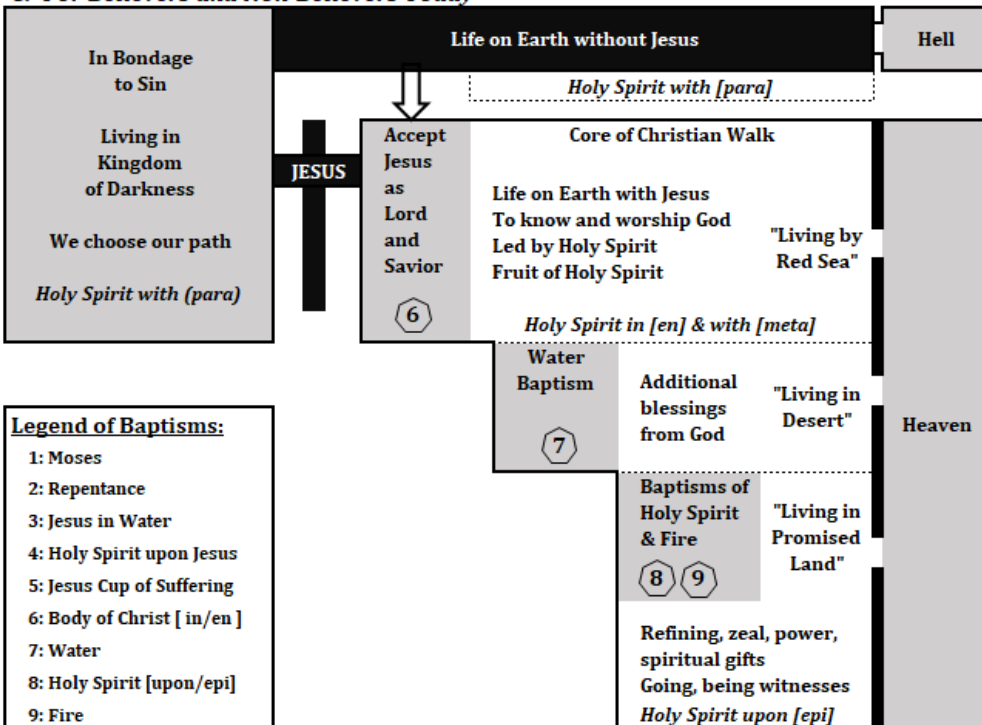
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C: For Believers and Non-Believers Today



Starting at the top left corner of Section C, all of us are sinners and living in the kingdom of darkness. If we don't change our ways and begin a personal relationship with Christ, we will live without Jesus here on earth, and forever afterward. That's not an opinion; that's what the Bible teaches. And since the Bible is the inerrant Word of God, it is the Truth. The harsh reality is people who don't accept Christ here on earth will one day face the reality they are going to hell - forever. Before accepting Jesus, Holy Spirit draws people to Christ by being with them - the '*para*' experience.

When Born Again

For those who choose to follow Jesus, we leave the kingdom of darkness thanks to what Jesus did on the cross. Numerous blessings occur including baptism #6, which is Holy Spirit Baptizing us into the Body of Christ. We begin a new life with no barrier between us and God. We're saved, our spirit is born again, and we have received the gift of eternal, heavenly life with God.

If we look at the journey the people of Israel had in comparison to our walk, we see the foreshadowing that Bill Johnson talks about. When the people of Israel followed Moses to the Red Sea, they didn't know what was going to happen. Similarly, when we're first born again, many/most of us don't have a clue as to what our life with Jesus is going to be about. I sure didn't.

The Red Sea and Water Baptism

After reaching the Red Sea, the people of Israel chose to go through the Red Sea. They certainly had a strong incentive to do so as Pharaoh's army was closing in on them. Nonetheless, they made a choice. They were able to get through the Red Sea and Pharaoh's army did not. Blessings flowed.

The parallel to going through the Red Sea, a body of still water, is when believers get water baptized, which also typically occurs today in a body of still water.

When a believer is water baptized - baptism #7 - there may well be blessings associated with i) being obedient in getting baptized and ii) from the baptism itself. Like the drowning of Pharaoh's Army, one or more 'things' attacking or tormenting us could be 'drowned'. Spiritual blessings flow.

We can also choose not to get water baptized and forego potential blessings. However, whether we get water baptized or not, I believe we're still saved as discussed in Chapter 4.

In the Desert

Once through the Red Sea, the people of Israel followed Moses through the desert for 40 years. The people of Israel had many blessings from God including, but not limited to, manna, clothing, a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. They received many provisions for sure.

Even though they were cared for, their walk to the Promised Land ended up short for many Jews. The distance from the Red Sea to the Jordan River was only a few days walk using the shortest route available, but yet the people of Israel wandered 40 years. Obedience and gratitude were not their strong points. Nor were they ready for major adversity such as war.

Moses was a man of humility. A dedicated leader. Yet, it appears to many that disobedience resulted in Moses not being allowed to lead the people through the Jordan into the Promised Land. But was that so bad? As a friend recently pointed out, Moses eventually appeared at the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor along with Elijah and Jesus. And as Lori noted, God Himself buried Moses, and Moses was free of the burdens of leading a somewhat challenging group of people. Hmmm.

- ❑ *Deuteronomy 34:5 So Moses ... died there in the land of Moab ... 6 And **He buried him** in the valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor; **but no one knows** his burial place to this day.*

11: Tying Chapters 3-10 Together

If believers get water baptized, the parallel is that we are out of the Red Sea and into the desert. Like the people of Israel, we have access to many of God's blessings. But the question remains: are we still in a desert of some kind? Is our Christian life dry in comparison to what God intended it to be?

Our Promised Land

When Joshua led the people of Israel through the Jordan River into the Promised Land, that was incredible. And incredible things continued to happen afterwards. They conquered the land with amazing victories. I love the 'battle' of Jericho.

The water in the Red Sea is still. By contrast, the Jordan River is a river that flows. Holy Spirit is often referred to as living water, and like the Jordan River, His living water is to flow from Him, to upon us, and from upon us to others as we witness to them.

- ❑ *Isaiah 44:3 'For I will pour out water on the thirsty land And streams on the dry ground; I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring And My blessing on your descendants;*
- ❑ *John 7:37 Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. 38 He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From **his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.**'"*

To briefly step back, recall that when we're born again, Holy Spirit comes in [en] us. We have the living water to guide, comfort, teach, etc. However, we're called to share the Good News, to heal the sick, to cleanse the lepers, to cast out demons. Such supernatural events in our lives will be a sign that shows we're believers.

- ❑ *Mark 16:17 These signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will **cast out demons**, they **will speak with new tongues**; 18 they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they **will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.***

Jesus told His disciples in Acts 1 to do many supernatural things. However, after 3½ years with Him and 40 more days of teaching after the resurrection, they were still not ready. They were not yet adequately equipped. They were told to wait for the promise of Father God - to wait until they were Baptized with the Holy Spirit.

- ❑ *Acts 1:4 Gathering them together, He **commanded them not to leave Jerusalem**, but **to wait** for what the **Father had promised**. "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; 5 for John baptized with water, but **you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit** not many days from now."*

As stated before, Baptism of the Holy Spirit is to give access to power to witness.

- ❑ *Acts 1:8 but you **will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon [epi] you**; and **you shall be My witnesses** both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."*

The Jordan River flows. Going through the Jordan River was the way for the people of Israel to move into, and then live in, the Promised Land. Similarly, after

being born again, we're initially on *'this'* side of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Our form of the Promised land - whatever that looks like - is found on the other side of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. To get to the other side, we need to be Baptized in the Holy Spirit and Fire. And when we do, we may experience additional blessings including seeing some walls of Jericho come down in our lives as well as seeing the power of God manifest in and through our lives, and the lives of those around us.

Not All 12 Tribes Crossed the Jordan

Per the book of Joshua, only 9½ of the 12 tribes of Israel crossed the Jordan River and after their conquests, permanently settled in the land of Canaan west of the Jordan. The other 2½ tribes - the Reubenites, Gadites and ½ of the tribe of Manasseh - never crossed the Jordan. They decided to settle on the east side of the Jordan.

- *Joshua 1:10 Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, 11 ... for within three days you are going to cross this Jordan, to go in to take possession of the land which the Lord your God is giving you, to possess it.” But to the **Reubenites**, to the **Gadites**, and to the **half-tribe of Manasseh**, Joshua said, 13 ...The Lord your God is giving you rest, and will give you this land ...*

11:1 Based on the notion that crossing the Jordan is a foreshadowing of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, and given 9½ tribes crossed and settled permanently west of the Jordan while 2½ did not cross, does this foreshadow (and confirm) today's reality? Consider:

- i. many believers have chosen not to be Baptized in the Holy Spirit - are they the believers who choose to *'live east of the Jordan today'*; and
- ii. many others have chosen to be Baptized in the Holy Spirit - are they the believers who choose to *'live west of the Jordan today'* in Canaan, the promised land?

11:2 For those choosing not to be Baptized in the Holy Spirit today but to *'live east of the Jordan in the desert'*, does that suggest their lives may be *'drier'* than the lives of believers living in the promised land as a result of not experiencing the supernatural power of God in ways such as prophecies, words of knowledge, healings and tongues?

11:3 Consider the 2½ tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh. The reason they wanted to live east of the Jordan was because it was a great place to raise livestock. And thus, doesn't this demonstrate that today's believers who are not Baptized in the Holy Spirit can still have an amazing Christian life?

- *Numbers 32:2 Now the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad had a very large number of livestock. So when they saw the land of Jazer and the land of Gilead, that it was indeed a place suitable for livestock,*

11:4 When Gad, Reuben and Manasseh asked Moses to have their inheritance east of the Jordan, Moses agreed to their request but only if they first went to war with the other 9½ tribes and helped them settle in the promised land. Doesn't this mean if we choose not to be Baptized in the Holy Spirit, that we are nonetheless called to support other believers - including other family

11: Tying Chapters 3-10 Together

members - who want to, or have already been, Baptized in the Holy Spirit?

- ❑ *Numbers 32:5 And they said, "If we have found favor in your sight, **let this land be given to your servants as our property; do not take us across the Jordan.**" 6 But Moses said to the sons of Gad and the sons of Reuben, "**Should your brothers go to war while you remain here ...** 17 but we ourselves will be armed, hurrying ahead of the sons of Israel, until we have brought them to their place, while our little ones live in the fortified cities because of the inhabitants of the land. 18 **We will not return to our homes until every one of the sons of Israel has gained possession of his inheritance.***

11:5 God's Word is clear that not all believers will work in miracles, speak in tongues or prophesy. Could this result occur - in part - because some of today's believers have chosen to live 'east' of the Jordan and do not wish to be Baptized in the Holy Spirit, the means to access these 9 Holy Spirit gifts?

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 14:29 All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? 30 All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they? ...*

Our Walk with Jesus

The bottom right-hand side of Figure 11:12 shows the two baptisms, #8 Baptism of the Holy Spirit and #9 Baptism of Fire. For many believers, the notion of supernatural, miraculous events being part of their life - tongues, prophecy and immediate, miraculous healings to name a few - may be a disconcerting, if not a downright scary thought. And it's understandable - to a degree. There are and have been many frauds. There are many over-the-top individuals whose words and actions raise questions as to their authenticity or motives.

I don't know the extent to which these over-the-top individuals are motivated by pride, greed, deep hurts, or a need to be recognized and have attention and/or fame. Still others may have been impacted by poor teaching or by influences from the demonic world. I don't know. None of us know what is truly in another person's heart. But what I do know is that God's Word is truth, and neither the experiences of others nor the teachings of others are my final guide or my final authority. God's Word is my final guide, my final authority and when I look at God's Word, I see God doing some pretty crazy and bizarre things through different people. One of God's teachings is He wants us to be Baptized in the Holy Spirit in order to have access to power to be more effective witnesses for Jesus. And thus, I encourage believers to seek this Baptism and mentorship on seeking and using the 9 Holy Spirit gifts.

Additional Foreshadowing

To enter the Holy of Holies, the priest would come into the outer court through the only entrance - akin to Jesus being the only Way. After entering into this outer court, three things were required before the priest was able to safely go into the Holy of Holies, and into God's presence:

- i. sacrifice a lamb on the alter - akin to the sacrifice and shed blood of Jesus;
- ii. wash in the laver with water - akin to water baptism;

- iii. be anointed with oil - akin to being anointed in the upon experience through the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

While only one priest went behind the veil in the Holy of Holies once per year, Jesus's death tore the veil allowing today's believers to be in direct contact with God, at any time, on every day, in every year. As if to eliminate all doubt about wanting this contact, God makes it pretty easy. Holy Spirit comes in [en] us when we're born again. He's right here.

- ❑ *Matthew 27:51 And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split.*

God's Word tells us that believers are to be water baptized and to be Baptized in the Holy Spirit. We can do so, or not. It's our choice. If we choose not to, we still have personal, direct access to God. But if we choose not to receive these baptisms - most notably the Baptism of the Holy Spirit - we might want to know if our decision is because of valid biblical reasons, or not-so-good reasons such as misbehaviors of other believers, contrary teachings, long-held beliefs, fear of being judged by others in the church and the Christian community at large, or perhaps deep down, some fear, not fully trusting God or not believing all of His Word? If that's where you're at, that's ok; that's where you're at. But that doesn't mean God wants you to stay where you're at. Just know God has good things for you.

CLOSING POINTS TO PONDER

I don't believe in compromising God's Word for the sake of unity. Sometimes unity is simply not possible. In areas such as the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the 9 Holy Spirit gifts, there has been extremely strong and vocal disagreement, and some fairly nasty disunity. Hopefully **CEASED?** will help overcome some of this unwarranted disunity by revealing the truth in God's Word. Not through compromise, but through truth. I hope **CEASED?** has shown:

- ❖ the Baptism into the Body of Christ, the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, and water baptism are 3 separate experiences:
 - Baptism into the Body of Christ is done by Holy Spirit when a person is first born again and Holy Spirit comes in [en] a new believer;
 - Baptism of the Holy Spirit is done by Jesus after or at the same time a person is born again and Holy Spirit comes upon [epi] a believer;
 - Water baptism is done by another disciple after a person is born again and can be done before or after one is Baptized in the Holy Spirit;
- ❖ the in [en] and upon [epi] experiences can occur at virtually the same time or there can be lengthy periods of time between the two experiences; and
- ❖ neither water baptism nor Baptism of the Holy Spirit is required to be born again (become a Christian) while Baptism into the Body of Christ and the in [en] experience are a direct and automatic result of being born again;

I also hope **CEASED?** has shown:

- ❖ there are blessings for those who are water baptized; and

11: Tying Chapters 3-10 Together

- ❖ there are additional blessings for those who are Baptized in the Holy Spirit and Fire. Blessings include, but are not limited to, receiving access to a different form of power than we receive when we're born again. Power that can help refine us, give us a zeal to share Jesus and the gospel, and enable us to be used to deliver one or more of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts.

A few final questions related to topics raised in Chapters 5 through 11.

- 11:6 As asked above, if we choose not to pursue being Baptized in the Holy Spirit:
- i. Shouldn't our hearts be like those of the 2½ tribes that went to war with the other 9½ tribes and ensured their countryman were settled on their land in Canaan before returning to their lands on the east of the Jordan? Or should we step away like the tribes of Dan and Reuben did later on in Judges 5?
 - ii. Shouldn't our hearts be to support and pray for those who do seek the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, and perhaps pray even more when they are Baptized in the Holy Spirit?
- 11:7 And if we are Baptized in the Holy Spirit, shouldn't our hearts be that it's ok if someone else doesn't want to seek this gift and the associated blessings? And to support and pray for all those who chose differently than we did?
- 11:8 Finally, if both the Cessationist and Charismatic groups of Christians support each other, shouldn't we expect many blessings to flow, one of which would be increased unity within the Body of Christ? For those of us who are prone to criticize and especially those who are strongly engaged in criticizing others who make a different decision on these issues, what is our ratio?

Number of hours praying for those 'wrong' or different views
Number of hours researching, writing and speaking against

- 11:9 In closing, consider this bit of a sidebar topic. There are so many issues in today's world where the truths in God's Word are ignored. For instance, consider that human beings are 3 parts - spirit, soul and body, and that the demonic forces frequently written about in the Bible are still active today. Then consider these truths in relation to issues such as addictions or same-sex attractions. In the world, the focus for helping people is on their body and soul which is totally understandable. But for much of the Body of Christ, is it all that different? What proportion of the Body of Christ would even consider questions such as:

"To what extent are addictions or same-sex attractions an issue related to influence(s) from a person's i) body, ii) soul, iii) spirit or iv) demonic influence? And to what extent do we use the authority given believers to cast out demons and seek access to the power of God - in the form of the upon experiences [epi, Baptism of Holy Spirit, Baptism of Fire] and the 9 Holy Spirit gifts - to help set people free?"

Are we sometimes providing solutions in the form of tweezers when we can access the surgical knowledge, skill and power of God?

Link of 9 Holy Spirit Gifts to Baptism of the Holy Spirit

INTRODUCTION

WHEN Baptized in the Holy Spirit, a believer receives access to supernatural power. Chapter 12 briefly reviews:

- 1: some ways God demonstrated His power (page 210);
- 2: how Holy Spirit gifts and Baptism in the Holy Spirit are linked (page 211);
- 3: should we expect to see the power of God in our lives (page 213).

GOD'S DIVERSE DEMONSTRATIONS OF POWER

God's power manifested in the Bible in some wide-ranging and very unusual ways.

- ❖ Creation of heavens and earth;
- ❖ Building of Noah's ark and the global flood;
- ❖ 10 plagues on Egypt including frogs, lice, flies, boils, hail and locusts;
- ❖ Burning bush where God speaks to Moses;
- ❖ Parting of the Red Sea and Jordan River;
- ❖ Walls of Jericho tumbled down;
- ❖ Ravens bring Elijah bread and meat for breakfast and dinner;
- ❖ Peter finds a coin in a fish while Jonah spends 3 days in a large fish;
- ❖ Floating axe head;
- ❖ Darkening of the sky, splitting of rocks, and tearing of the veil when Christ died;
- ❖ Individuals who died before the cross had their tombs opened, were raised, and walked around Jerusalem after the cross; and
- ❖ Resurrection and ascension of Christ.

12:1 Given the wide variety of ways in which God's power was displayed in the Bible, and the fact this power was seldom repeated in the same way, should it be surprising if God displays His power today in ways not seen before?

12: Link of 9 Gifts to Baptism of Holy Spirit

LINK BETWEEN 9 HOLY SPIRIT GIFTS AND BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The 9 Holy Spirit gifts per 1 Corinthians 12 are as follows:

- ❑ 1 Corinthians 12:8 For to one is given the **word of wisdom** through the Spirit, and to another the **word of knowledge** according to the same Spirit;
- ❑ 9 to another **faith** by the same Spirit, and to another **gifts of healing** by the one Spirit,
- ❑ 10 and to another the effecting of **miracles**, and to another **prophecy**, and to another the **distinguishing of spirits**, to another various kinds of **tongues**, and to another the **interpretation of tongues**.

Figure 8:4 in Chapter 8 summarized various aspects of 5 different settings where people experienced a Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Figure 8:4 Activities Related to 5 Baptisms of the Holy Spirit

Believers receiving Baptism in the Holy Spirit	Major Noise, Signs when Occurred	Laying on of Hands Before Baptism	Baptism of Holy Spirit immediately followed by Tongues	Baptism of Holy Spirit immediately followed by Prophecy	Water Baptism before or after Baptism in Holy Spirit
Pentecost	X		X		N/A
Samaria		X			Before
Saul/Paul		X			After
Cornelius+			X		After
Ephesus		X	X	X	Before

At the outset, note that on 3 of the 5 occasions, speaking in tongues and/or prophesying immediately followed the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. In addition, both Peter and Paul immediately began to share the gospel after they were Baptized in the Holy Spirit. The related scriptures are as follows:

Pentecost

- ❑ Acts 2:1 When the day of Pentecost had come ... 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. 4 And **they were all filled with the Holy Spirit** and **began to speak with other tongues**, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

Cornelius, Family and Friends

- ❑ Acts 10:44 While Peter was still speaking these words, **the Holy Spirit fell upon all those** who were listening to the message. 45 All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the **gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also**. 46 **For they were hearing them speaking with tongues** and exalting God ...

12 Disciples at Ephesus

- ❑ Acts 19:6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, **the Holy Spirit came on them**, and they **began speaking with tongues and prophesying**. 7 There were in all about twelve men.

Peter and Paul

- ❑ Acts 2:14 But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, **raised his voice and declared to them: "Men of Judea and all you** who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words.
- ❑ Acts 9:17 So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and **be filled with the Holy Spirit**." 18 And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized; 19 and he took food and was strengthened. Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus, 20 **and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues**, saying, "He is the Son of God."

12:2 Doesn't the timing of these events demonstrate Baptism of the Holy Spirit is the doorway to gifts such as prophecy and tongues, and to a supernaturally enabled ability to powerfully preach? If not, how do we explain the prophecies, tongues and emboldened teaching occurring immediately after individuals were Baptized in the Holy Spirit? Coincidence?

Jesus's Teaching

Jesus told His disciples in Acts 1 that they would be Baptized in the Holy Spirit to receive power to witness. The sights and sounds plus speaking in tongues at Pentecost caught the attention of many. When Cornelius, family, and friends started speaking in tongues, that caught the attention of Peter and those with him. The tongues confirmed to Peter and his colleagues that Cornelius, family, and friends were not only born again, but they had also received the gift of the Holy Spirit - the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Some time later, other believers were also involved in these supernatural gifts including Stephen, and the four daughters of Philip, the evangelist. God's power through individuals was on full display.

- ❑ Acts 6:8 And Stephen, full of grace and power, was **performing great wonders and signs** among the people.
- ❑ Acts 21:8 On the next day we left and came to Caesarea, and entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him. 9 Now this man had **four virgin daughters** who were **prophetesses**.

12: Link of 9 Gifts to Baptism of Holy Spirit

POWER OF GOD IN BELIEVER'S LIVES

Paul was very clear that the power of God was central to his sharing of the gospel.

- ❑ 2 Corinthians 12:12 The **signs of a true apostle** were performed among you with all perseverance, **by signs and wonders and miracles**.
- ❑ 1 Corinthians 2:4 and **my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.**
- ❑ 1 Thessalonians 1:4 knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you; 5 for **our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit ...**
- ❑ Philippians 3:10 that I may know Him and **the power of His resurrection** and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;

Paul tells us we are to be imitators of Christ just as he was. A key part of how Paul shared the gospel was to do so in power.

- ❑ 1 Corinthians 11:1 Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.
- ❑ 1 Corinthians 4:20 For the **kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power.**
- ❑ Romans 15:18 For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, 19 **in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.**

12:3 If the power of God is not evident in our lives, how can we share the full gospel and explain/demonstrate the kingdom of God in ways that will impact un-believers as Paul and other early believers were able to do?

Jesus did many miracles, and tells us we will too.

- ❑ Mark 16:17 **These signs will accompany those who have believed:** in My name they will **cast out demons**, they will **speak with new tongues**; 18 they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; **they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.**
- ❑ John 14:12 Truly, truly, I say to you, **he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do;** because I go to the Father.

How do we gain access to power to do miracles? As always, God's Word tells us. In this case, one way is to look at the very last words from Jesus before His ascension where he told His disciples not to go, but to wait for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

- ❑ Acts 1:4 Gathering them together, He **commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."** ... 8 but **you will receive power** when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My

witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

12:4 If Jesus was walking amongst us today, wouldn't He tell us we need to be Baptized in the Holy Spirit to be better witnesses for Him? If not, why not?

To Leaders of our Ministries and Churches

12:5 Pastors, teachers and other leaders have difficult jobs. If this is you, I don't know how you do everything that's on your plate, especially dealing with all of us people. But let me ask. If leaders haven't been equipping the sheep they influence on how to access the power of God and how to properly use the 9 Holy Spirit gifts associated with the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, doesn't a wonderful opportunity exist for them to do so going forward? Can many leaders now begin to experience more of God's blessings in their own lives, and then help those they influence to also begin experiencing new blessings?

- ❑ *Ephesians 4:11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 12 for the **equipping of the saints** for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.*

If this is your situation, the enemy may try to tell you that you have fallen short in your walk, hindered your family, or failed your congregation. There may be some truth to that, but God reveals things in His timing, and now is a time of revelation for some of His children. It's not a time of regret, but a time of expectation and celebration. And potentially a time to take advantage of one of the biggest unfilled opportunities in today's church.

God's ways are not our ways. He didn't need to use believers to advance His kingdom. He chose to. He gives us amazing support including His Word and Holy Spirit coming in [en] us when we're born again. But God offers more to us, including access to Holy Spirit's power that enables us to live a life where the supernatural is central to our lives - but all for God's glory. If you still don't believe Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the 9 Holy Spirit gifts are relevant today, but have ceased, consider the evidence in the next few chapters.

CLOSING POINT TO PONDER

12:6 Jesus is our role model. The original apostles and other believers after the cross are role models. They were all sent ones. We're today's sent ones. Several signs reveal who is a follower of Christ. Love for God and our neighbor, and a desire to proclaim Jesus are 3 such signs. Changes in our life, our attitudes, our responses to problems are additional signs. But miraculous signs and wonders done by God through us are also an indicator. And if supernatural signs and wonders aren't a regular part of our life, aren't we missing out, and potentially causing other believers to miss out too?

- ❑ *Mark 16:17 These **signs will accompany** those who have believed: in My name they will **cast out demons**, they will **speak with new tongues**; 18 they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will **lay hands on the sick, and they will recover**.*

Ceased by the Numbers

INTRODUCTION

PAUL'S teachings in 1 Corinthians include encouragement to pursue spiritual gifts. Chapters 13 through 19 examine God's Word to see if the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the 9 Holy Spirit gifts have ceased or continue. As this information is shared, please know my heart is to provide evidence that these gifts from God have not ceased. I am not trying to attack or demean anybody who has a different view. I am simply trying to provide objective evidence that readers can accept or reject.

Chapter 13 starts this review by briefly examining how many believers were living when Paul wrote these words of encouragement to pursue spiritual gifts, and the significance of these words and these numbers.

Encouraging Pursuit of Spiritual Gifts

Consensus seems to be that Paul wrote 1 Corinthians somewhere between ~52 and 57AD, some 20 to 25 years after the cross. In 1 Corinthians, Paul made several comments regarding the 9 Holy Spirit gifts including prophecy and tongues.

- ❑ 1 Corinthians 12:31 ***But earnestly desire the greater gifts ...***
- ❑ 1 Corinthians 14:1 *Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but ***especially that you may prophesy.****
- ❑ 1 Corinthians 14:5 *Now I ***wish that you all spoke in tongues,*** but even more that you would ***prophesy;*** and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, ***unless he interprets,*** so that the church may receive edifying.*
- ❑ 1 Corinthians 14:39 *Therefore, my brethren, ***desire earnestly to prophesy,*** and ***do not forbid to speak in tongues.*** 40 *But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner.**

Given the above, let me ask:

13:1 Is it reasonable to expect Paul would only be encouraging believers to prophesy and speak in tongues if indeed it was God's will for them to pursue such gifts? If not, why would Paul have encouraged them to do so?

Number of Believers

So how many believers were living when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians? In other words, in ~52-57 AD, how many believers were being encouraged by Paul to pursue

the 9 Holy Spirit gifts? Starting in Acts 1, the book of Acts provides considerable insight into this issue.

- ❑ Acts 1:15 *In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said,*
- ❑ Acts 2:41 *So those who had received his word were baptized, and that day there **were added about three thousand souls.***
- ❑ Acts 2:47 *praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord **added to their number day by day** those who were being saved.*
- ❑ Acts 4:4 *... the number of the men came **to about five thousand.***
- ❑ Acts 5:14 *And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were **constantly added** to their number.*

John MacArthur, a high-profile Bible teacher and staunch Cessationist, writes about the early church growth in a 2010 message entitled "A Biblical Response to the Church-Growth Movement". Mr. MacArthur writes:

*"You come to (Acts) chapter 5 and verse 14, "And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number, or to the church." Now it's in the **multitudes of thousands and tens of thousands.**"*

Another perspective is provided by Vance Pitman who wrote in a November 2018 article '4 Things That Caused the Early Church to Spread Like Wildfire':

*"... historians and scholars go on to tell us that **within six months of Pentecost, there were over one hundred thousand new Christians in the city of Jerusalem.**"*

The growth continued into Acts 6.

- ❑ Acts 6:7 *The word of God kept on spreading; and the **number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem,** and a **great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.***

Now consider Paul's conversion and his initial efforts in sharing the gospel.

- ❑ Acts 9:4 *... "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" 5 And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting ... 20 **and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues** ...*
- ❑ Acts 9:31 *So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up. And going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it **continued to increase.***

Peter takes the gospel to the Gentiles starting with Cornelius, family and friends.

- ❑ Acts 11:15 *... **Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning** ... 18 *When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life."**

Stephen was murdered which led to a scattering of believers, some of whom shared Jesus with both the Jews and the Greeks.

13: Cessationism: By the Numbers

- ❑ *Acts 11:19 So then those who were scattered **because of the persecution** that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone. 20 But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began **speaking to the Greeks also**, preaching the Lord Jesus. 21 And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a **large number who believed turned to the Lord**. 22 The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch ... 24 ... a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And **considerable numbers were brought to the Lord**.*

As Acts moves on, the number of believers increased significantly with scriptures showing the numbers multiplied and/or increased daily.

- ❑ *Acts 12:24 But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be **multiplied**.*
- ❑ *Acts 13:47 For so the Lord has commanded us, "I have placed You as a light for the Gentiles, That You may bring salvation to the end of the earth." 48 When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. 49 **And the word of the Lord was being spread through the whole region**.*
- ❑ *Acts 16:4 Now while they were passing through the cities ... 5 So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were **increasing in number daily**.*
- ❑ *Acts 17:12 Therefore **many** of them therefore **believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men**.*

Paul's travels took him to many other places before reaching Athens and then Ephesus in ~52AD.

- ❑ *Acts 19:1 It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to **Ephesus**, and **found some disciples** ... 6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the **Holy Spirit came on them**, and **they began speaking with tongues and prophesying**. 7 There were in all about twelve men.*

- 13:2 Given i) John and Peter traveled to Samaria to ensure the new believers were Baptized in the Holy Spirit and ii) Paul made an effort to ensure believers at Ephesus were Baptized in the Holy Spirit, is it consistent to conclude:
- i. Steps were taken by church leaders to ensure all believers up to that point in time were being Baptized in the Holy Spirit? If not, why not?
 - ii. On the basis that steps were being taken to ensure all believers were being Baptized in the Holy Spirit, wouldn't that also mean all believers living at that time were in a position to potentially receive gifts such as prophecy and speaking in tongues? If not, why not?

Paul took the gospel not just to part of Asia, but to all of Asia.

- ❑ *Acts 19:8 And he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out **boldly for three months**, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. 9 But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the people, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples, **reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus**. 10 This took place for*

*two years, **so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.***

To Recap the Numbers

By Acts 5, believers numbered in the tens of thousands. Tens of thousands before Paul's coming to Christ in Acts 9. Tens of thousands before the Gospel was taken to the Gentiles in Acts 10. Tens of thousand before believers were scattered in Acts 11 due to persecution following Steven's murder. Tens of thousands before it was taken to Asia in Acts 19. More than ten times, the book of Acts mentions the number of believers increased, increased daily, or multiplied.

In my way of thinking, if the number of believers was doubling, God's Word would say they doubled, but it doesn't. The Bible uses the word '*multiply*' which suggests more than doubling. For illustrative purposes only, consider the following. **IF** there were 40,000 believers by the end of Acts 5 and **IF** the number of believers increased by multiples of 3 by Acts 9 and another 3 times by Acts 12, that would equate to 120,000 born-again Christians by Acts 9 (40,000 * 3 = 120,000) and 360,000 born-again Christians by Acts 12 (120,000 * 3 = 360,000). By the time the events of Acts 19 rolls around when Paul was in Ephesus, there were many more.

Or consider this simplistic approach. At least 20 years passed between the cross and Paul's going to Ephesus. 20 years equates to ~7,300 days (365 days per year * 20 years). If the Body of Christ grew, on average, at a rate of only 10 believers per day from Pentecost to the time Paul visited Ephesus, that amounts to 73,000 believers. 100 new believers per day would equate to 730,000 believers.

These two mathematical approaches aren't intended to be theologically sound or statistically valid estimates of actual numbers of believers. Their inclusion is purely to illustrate how quickly the number of believers can add up, and to provide further support that there were many tens of thousands, if not many hundreds of thousands of believers when Paul visited Ephesus in Acts 19 in ~52 AD. There were even more believers when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians in ~52 to 57 AD.

Consider again the following scriptures,

- ❑ 1 Corinthians 12:31 But **earnestly desire the greater gifts ...**
- ❑ 1 Corinthians 14:1 Pursue love, yet **desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.**
- ❑ 1 Corinthians 14:5 Now I **wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy ...**
- ❑ 1 Corinthians 14:39 Therefore, my brethren, **desire earnestly to prophesy and do not forbid to speak in tongues ...**

A core issue related to the Cessationist/Continuationist debate is identifying who Paul was encouraging to pursue the Holy Spirit gifts. Alternatives include:

- i. original apostles only;
- ii. original apostles + believers at Pentecost + believers at Corinth;
- iii. original apostles + all believers living when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians; or
- iv. all believers including those of us living today.

13: Cessationism: By the Numbers

- 13:3 Given Paul was encouraging the believers at Corinth to pursue the 9 gifts doesn't this mean that all believers living at that point in time could have potentially received one or more of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts? If not, why not?
- 13:4 If you have a Cessationist view and your answer to question 3:3 is something like "*No, Paul's words of encouragement do not change anything. No ordinary lay believers living at Corinth could be given one or more of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts*", Paul would have known the gifts were not available to them. And thus, why would Paul encourage them to pursue something he knew that they couldn't have? And if that was the case, what does that mean other messages in 1 Corinthians and Paul's other letters also weren't relevant for other believers living at that time? Or for believers living today? If not, why not?
- 13:5 If your answer to question 13:3 is "*Yes, Paul's words of encouragement do mean believers living at Corinth could be given one or more of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts*", doesn't that mean the 9 gifts were available to the hundreds of thousands of other believers living at that time? If not, why not?
- 13:6 And if your answer to question 13:5 is "*Yes, Paul's words of encouragement do mean the other believers living at the time Paul wrote 1 Corinthians could be given one or more of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts*", doesn't that mean all other believers including those of us living today could also receive such Holy Spirit gifts? If not, why not?
- 13:7 If you still believe that the 9 Holy Spirit gifts ended with the early church, what is the benefit of Paul even mentioning the gifts in 1 Corinthians 12, a book he wrote ~25 years after the cross and the events of Pentecost?

CLOSING POINTS TO PONDER

- 13:8 Similar to the issues raised above, why would Paul talk about the 5 offices/functions if two of them - apostles and prophets - had already effectively ended which is the claim of leading Cessationists?
- ❑ *Ephesians 4:11 And He gave some as **apostles**, some as **prophets**, some as **evangelists**, some as **pastors** and **teachers**, 12 for the equipping of the saints*

There were hundreds of thousands of believers when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians and who Paul encouraged to seek spiritual gifts including tongues and prophecy.

- 13:9 Why would Paul introduce the gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 ~25-30 years after the cross, if they were not available?
- 13:10 Would you have encouraged all those people to pursue gifts when they weren't able to use them? And if you wouldn't, why did Paul do just that?
- 13:11 God is love. God is truth. All Scripture is inspired by God. Given these scriptures written by Paul are from God, how could Paul's words of encouragement be ignored today? And thus, how can the gifts not apply to all believers including those of us living today?
- ❑ *2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*

Did the 9 Holy Spirit Gifts Decline, then End?

INTRODUCTION

A key reason Cessationists claim as to why the 9 Holy Spirit gifts including prophecy and tongues have ended is the claim of an apparent decline in these gifts in the latter chapters of Acts, and the virtual non-existence of such gifts in the books following Acts. Chapter 14 analyzes whether or not this perspective is accurate. And to clarify, Chapter 14 does not deal with all signs and wonders, but only with the 9 Holy Spirit gifts such as prophesy and tongues. It excludes other supernatural events such as casting out demons, or angels freeing disciples from jail.

Chapter 14 Analysis includes only 9 Holy Spirit Gifts

In terms of gifts, **CEASED?** deals with whether or not the Holy Spirit gifts as per 1 Corinthians 12 declined, and then ended. As a result, Chapter 14 does not deal with all signs and wonders, but only with the 9 Holy Spirit gifts such as prophesy and tongues. In so doing, it excludes other supernatural events such as casting out demons, or angels freeing disciples from jail.

Many For the Start, and None For the End

Scriptures clearly show both John the Baptist and Jesus prophesied that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit will occur. In contrast, Cessationists and Continuationists both agree there isn't one scripture stating the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the 9 Holy Spirit gifts ended at a specific time or with a specific group.

- 14:1 If the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the 9 Holy Spirit gifts were to exist for only a short time after the cross, doesn't it seem a bit unusual several scriptures prophesy the Baptism of the Holy Spirit will occur, but there isn't one scripture saying the 9 Holy Spirit gifts were for a short time, or were limited to a select few people?

LACK OF MENTION IN NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS

Before getting into the book of Acts itself, let's examine the Cessationist argument that the decline and ultimate cessation of the 9 Holy Spirit Gifts is shown by the virtual lack of mention of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts in the New Testament books following Acts. Three points are worth noting.

1. The Cessationist explanation for the lack of mention of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts in these books is because there were very few signs and wonders occurring. In other words, the Cessationist argument is based on the premise there is a

14: Did the 9 Gifts Decline, then End?

direct, positive correlation between the extent to which the Holy Spirit gifts are taking place, and the extent to which they are mentioned in the Bible. The more that signs and wonders were occurring, the more mention was made. The less that signs and wonders were occurring, the less mention was made. And thus, by extension - since virtually no signs and wonders are mentioned in these books - the Cessationist argument contends that no signs and wonders were occurring at that time.

2. The Cessationist observation has a truth. There is virtually no specific mention of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts in these books.
3. The Cessationist argument also often contends the frequency of occurrence of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts began to decline after Paul's travels in Acts 19-21.

However - is there more to the story?

Which Books to Examine and How

To analyze the evidence in the other New Testament books, I excluded the 4 Gospels as very little of their content deals with events after Pentecost. I also excluded Revelation as it is quite controversial, and filled with much prophecy and/or symbolism as opposed to day-to-day events going on at that time. The evidence in the remaining 21 books (*27 New Testament books in total less the 4 Gospels, Acts and Revelation*) should be more than enough for our needs.

For these 21 books, there are at least 2 reasonable ways to examine the contents:

- Method 1: examine the 21 books according to the order they are listed in the Bible, which is the basis of the standard Cessationist analysis; and
- Method 2: examine the 21 books according to when they were written.

To facilitate this review, Figure 14:1 on page 223 provides a brief summary of the 21 New Testament books including the estimated year they were written and one or more of the key themes in each book. Figure 14:1 also includes the dates of a few events to provide context. The dates for the books and events are a topic of much debate. My review included various articles, websites and study Bibles. Let me just say, it was an interesting exercise as I observed some rather divergent opinions. The dates shown are what *'seem'* to be reasonably accepted dates. If you disagree, put in your own dates and adjust my analysis as you see fit.

Method 1: Order Listed in the Bible

When using the first method, we find all 21 books follow the book of Acts.

- 14:2 Is it reasonable to expect many lay readers might think the books are shown in the chronological order that the events in the books occurred? In other words, would many believers think the first of the 21 books contain details on the earliest events (*when the gifts were operating to a larger degree*), while the latter of the 21 books would contain details that happened later on (*when the gifts had supposedly declined a great deal, and were well on their way to cessation*)? In your view, does this approach seem reasonable?

CEASED? 2ND EDITION

To assess Method 1, consider the book of James. In terms of the order in which the 21 books after Acts are listed, James is 15th of the 21 books. In terms of when it was written, however, James is often considered to be the first of the 21 books to be written in ~45 AD, ~7-10 years before Paul's journeys in Acts 19-21. Based on the Cessationist argument, the book of James was written at a time when the gifts were in full operation, and thus - for the Cessationist premise that the extent of gifts mentioned is directly related to the extent of occurrence to hold up - James should include extensive mention of the gifts.

14:3 On the basis James does have significant mention of the Holy Spirit gifts, wouldn't this pose a major dilemma for the Cessationist argument since extensive mention of the gifts in a book positioned late in the Bible would infer the gifts had not ceased, but were actually in full operation?

My review of James resulted in this: there was not a single mention of the occurrence of a specific Holy Spirit gift being used in a specific ministry situation. And yet, James was written when the gifts were in full operation.

14:4 Don't the findings in James contradict the Cessationist argument that the lack of mention of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts in James (*and the other 20 books following Acts*) is because there were very few signs and wonders occurring? In other words, is the premise of the Cessationist argument that there is a positive correlation between the extent to which the Holy Spirit gifts were taking place and the extent to which they are mentioned in the Bible - an invalid premise? If you believe this correlation still holds, how?

Having said that, just because that particular premise doesn't hold up in one book, doesn't mean it won't hold for other books nor does it mean the gifts still didn't decline and then cease. Let's see what insights Method 2 will yield.

Method 2: Examine the 21 Books According to When Written.

This method results in the books being listed as per Figure 14:1. The first book written was James; the last of the 21 books written was 3 John. The Cessationist argument contends that the frequency of occurrence of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts began to decline after Paul's 3rd missionary journey in Acts 19-21. As a result, I separated the books into two periods:

- i. those written before Paul's travels in Acts 19-21; and
- ii. those written after.

14:5 Based on the Cessationist view the 9 gifts were in full operation before Acts 19-21 but were on the decline afterward, shouldn't we see the following?

- i. Extensive information on signs and wonders in the books written before Paul's travels in Acts 19-21: if not, why not?
- ii. Limited if any mention of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts in the books written after Paul's travels in Acts 19-21: if not, why not?

14: Did the 9 Gifts Decline, then End?

Figure 14:1 Did 9 Holy Spirit Gifts Decline in 21 Books Following Acts?

Book	~Year	Primary Themes of Book / Events
1. James 2. Galatians *	~30AD	Pentecost
	34AD	Paul encounters Jesus
	late 30's	Acts 10: Peter takes the gospel to Gentiles
	43	James (brother of John) martyred
	46 - 47	Acts 13-14 Paul's 1st missionary journey
3. 1 Thessalonians * 4. 2 Thessalonians *	44 - 62	Christian living
	48 - 57	True/false Gospels, faith/life in Christ
5. 1 Corinthians * 6. 2 Corinthians *	49 - 51	Acts 15-18 Paul's 2 nd missionary journey
	51	Mentoring new believers
	51 - 52	Correction in teachings/standing firm
7. Romans *	52 - 58	Acts 18-21 Paul's 3rd missionary journey
	52 - 57	Acts 19: Paul and 12 disciples at Ephesus
8. Ephesians * 9. Philippians * 10. Philemon * 11. Colossians * 12. Acts 13. 1 Timothy *	55 - 57	Conduct, gifts to edify & unify
	55 - 57	Confirm disciples; defends character, explains his authority
	56 - 58	Theology: sin/righteousness/ faith etc.
	57 - 58	Acts 20: Eutychus brought back to life
	58 - 60	Acts 23: Paul imprisoned at Caesarea
	58 - 60	Acts 25-26: Paul appears before Agrippa
14. Titus * 15. 1 Peter	60 - 61	Acts 27: Paul goes to Rome; Malta miracles
	61 - 63	Acts 27-28: Paul under house arrest
16. 2 Timothy * 17. 2 Peter	61 - 63	Grace/justification/conduct
	61 - 63	Joy-filled life serving/experiencing God
18. Hebrews *	61 - 63	Forgiveness
	61 - 63	Supremacy of Christ
19. Jude 20. 1 John	61 - 63	Supremacy of Christ
	61 - 64	Early church in word and power
21. 2 John 22. 3 John	64 - 65	Proper conduct, duties/advice for leading
	64 - 65	Need for good works/purity/kindness
21. 2 John 22. 3 John	64 - 65	Some keys to Christian living
	66 - 67	Endurance amid difficulties
21. 2 John 22. 3 John	67 - 68	Holiness/perseverance/false teachers
	65 - 68	Superiority of Christ
21. 2 John 22. 3 John	67 - 68	Paul martyred
	68 - 70	Contend for faith/love; deceivers warned
21. 2 John 22. 3 John	90 - 95	Time with God/true & false teachings
	90 - 95	Expose false teachings
21. 2 John 22. 3 John	90 - 95	Christian hospitality in love
	90 - 95	Christian hospitality in love

* Books identified with an asterisk '*' are generally believed to be written by Paul.

14:6 When examining the 21 books, we find at least 3 more books - Galatians, and likely 1 and 2 Thessalonians - were written before Paul's travels in ~52-55AD. We already know there was no mention of the gifts in James but what about these three? Given these 3 books were also written when the 9 Holy Spirit gifts were occurring big time, then according to the Cessationist

argument, shouldn't we should find extensive mention of the Holy Spirit gifts in these books. If not, why not?

My count of the number of times these 4 books give details of an event where one of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts occurred after Pentecost and before Paul's travels in Act 19-21 showed the following:

James:	None
Galatians:	None
1 Thessalonians:	None
2 Thessalonians:	None

- 14:7 Doesn't the fact there isn't a single specific mention or record - that I could find - of any of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts in these 4 books invalidate the view that there is a direct correlation between the amount of the gifts occurring, and the extent to which they're mentioned in God's Word? And thus, isn't it an invalid argument to claim the 9 Holy Spirit gifts were on the decline after the events of Acts 19-21 simply because there is no specific mention of them in the books written after the events of Acts 19-21? If not, why not?
- 14:8 A review of the 17 books written after Paul's journeys in Acts 19-21 shows there were also no details of specific signs or wonders. In that regard, this validates the Cessationist claims that there is indeed a lack of mention of the gifts. However, per above, it does not mean the gifts weren't happening. Consider this. In these 21 books where no mention of specific gifts is made, I found more than 50 general references to the 9 Holy Spirit gifts or related items such as the office of the prophet. Don't these general references - most of which were written after the events of Acts 19-21 - provide concrete evidence that the 9 Holy Spirit gifts haven't ceased? If you believe these general references don't support their existence, then shouldn't these dozens of general references support your belief that the gifts have ceased? And if so, how exactly do they do that? Or do we just ignore them?
- 14:9 Given there was considerable mention of signs and wonders and other historical events in the 4 Gospels and Acts, is it surprising that the focus of these 21 books is on themes and not events? And thus, given the focus in these books is on themes and not events, doesn't that make the lack of details of signs and wonders in these 21 books an unreliable indicator as to whether or not the 9 Holy Spirit gifts were increasing or decreasing?

Book of Hebrews

Of these 21 books, Paul is frequently viewed as having authored 10 of the 11 books written before Luke wrote Acts, and 3 of the 10 books written after Luke wrote Acts. Paul frequently wrote about the importance of sharing the gospel not only in words, but in power. Hebrews was the last book that many - but not all - Christians believe was written by Paul in ~65-68 AD. As a result, Hebrews was written ~10-15 years after Paul's travels in Acts 19-21, and ~10 years after Paul wrote 1 and 2 Corinthians. And yet, in Hebrews, we find the author reaffirming that signs and wonders are still to be central to our sharing of God's kingdom.

14: Did the 9 Gifts Decline, then End?

- ❑ *Hebrews 2:4 God also testifying with them, both by **signs** and **wonders** and by various **miracles** and by **gifts of the Holy Spirit** according to His own will.*

14:10 Doesn't Hebrews 2:4 support the argument that the 9 Holy Spirit gifts were continuing and expected to continue? If not, why not?

FREQUENCY OF HOLY SPIRIT GIFTS IN ACTS

Per above, there is no clear correlation between frequency of mention of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts and frequency of occurrence of the 9 gifts. Having said that, this section does get into the numbers and takes on a slightly different tone as it involves providing actual counts of the 9 gifts occurring in Acts 2 through 28. The objective is to see whether the Cessationist claim - that the 9 Holy Spirit gifts decline is evident even in Acts as it comes to a close - is valid. To start, here's a brief recap of Acts.

- ❖ Acts 1: Jesus teaches over 40 days, tells disciples to wait for the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, Matthias voted to replace Judas;
- ❖ Acts 2: Pentecost, initial Baptism of the Holy Spirit after the cross, tongues of fire, speaking in tongues, 3,000 are born again;
- ❖ Acts 3: Lame man healed;
- ❖ Acts 4: After confronted by Jewish leaders, Peter filled with Holy Spirit, courageously preached the Word of God;
- ❖ Acts 5: Apostles performed many signs and wonders, healing through Peter's '*shadow*' (*God's presence*);
- ❖ Acts 6: Stephen performed great wonders;
- ❖ Acts 8: Many paralyzed and lame healed, miracles and signs;
- ❖ Acts 9: Saul encounters Jesus, born again, Baptized in the Holy Spirit, Aeneas healed, Dorcas resurrected;
- ❖ Acts 10: Cornelius plus family and friends born again, Baptized in the Holy Spirit, spoke in tongues;
- ❖ Acts 11: Agabus prophecy;
- ❖ Acts 14: Signs and wonders, lame man at Lystra healed, Paul potentially healed/brought back to life after stoned and left for dead; and
- ❖ Acts 18: Paul in Corinth for 18 months, no signs and wonders other than God speaking to Paul in a vision.

14:11 Does the lack of mention of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts (or any signs and wonders for that matter) while Paul spent 18 months in Corinth per Acts 18 indicate one way or another:

- i. that the 9 Holy Spirit gifts had ceased or were on a major decline during these 18 months; or
- ii. that the Holy Spirit gifts were still occurring during these 18 months and later per Acts 19 but there was no mention of them in the Bible?

Acts 19-21 shows more miracles occurring although these chapters are viewed by some Cessationists as the beginning of the decline of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts.

- ❖ Acts 19: 12 believers at Ephesus are Baptized in the Holy Spirit, spoke in tongues and prophesied, people are healed by touching Paul's

handkerchiefs and aprons;

- ❖ Acts 20: Paul arrived in Troas, brought Eutychus back to life; and
- ❖ Acts 21: Paul sails to Tyre, Agabus prophesies Paul will be bound and handed over to the Gentiles. It happened.

14:12 Do the above indicate the 9 Holy Spirit gifts were declining or continuing?

14:13 If the events in Acts 19 through 21 occurred in the same length of time in your life, would you view that as ho-hum, or significant and exciting?

The last part of Acts 21 and the next 5 chapters deal with Paul's legal battles.

- ❖ Acts 21: Jewish people spoke against Paul, Paul is beaten with intent to kill him, taken into custody, asked to speak to crowd, request granted;
- ❖ Acts 22: Paul gives testimony leading to his appearing before Sanhedrin;
- ❖ Acts 23: Paul speaks, jailed, moved to Caesarea due to plot to kill him;
- ❖ Acts 24: Paul appears before Felix who defers judgment, Paul retained in Caesarea for 2 years until Festus replaces Felix;
- ❖ Acts 25: Paul appears before both Festus and King Agrippa; and
- ❖ Acts 26: Paul provides defense to Festus and King Agrippa.

14:14 Acts 22 through 26 deal with Paul being imprisoned. Considerable detail is given on this part of Paul's journey in these chapters. Given there's no mention of any of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts, does this indicate:

- i. the 9 Holy Spirit gifts had ended, or were on their way to ending; or
- ii. there is no indication of change one way or another, and the lack of mention is similar to there being no mention of the gifts when Paul was in Ephesus for 18 months in Acts 18?

14:15 Furthermore, does the lack of mention of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts while Paul was in Caesarea mean signs and wonders weren't occurring through the other apostles? Or is it simply a situation - as per James, Galatians, 1st and 2nd Thessalonians - where no mention is being made of the 9 gifts that were nonetheless occurring?

- ❑ *Acts 5:12 At the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people ...*

Consider the last two chapters of Acts.

- ❖ Acts 27: Paul sails to Rome. Paul states the voyage is going to end in disaster, which is a message from his flesh or he prophesies a word received from God. Paul later advises an angel of God told him not to be afraid and that all 276 onboard would survive. The trip does end in disaster, all survive, all cargo is lost, and the boat sinks.

- ❖ Acts 28: Paul arrives on Malta, is bitten by a viper but isn't harmed to the amazement of all. The father of the island's chief officer, Publius, was healed through Paul as were many people on the island who were sick. Major miracles occur. Paul reaches Rome where he lived for 2 years with a soldier guarding him. No mention of supernatural miracles is made during these 2 years.

14: Did the 9 Gifts Decline, then End?

- 14:16 Do the miracles in the last two chapters of Acts - 2 prophecies fulfilled, Publius's father healed, Paul unaffected by the viper's bite, and many sick people on the island healed - suggest the 9 Holy Spirit gifts were continuing, or on the decline and en route to ceasing?
- 14:17 If you believe the 9 Holy Spirit gifts are on the decline because of the lack of mention, consider the following:
- i. there is also no specific mention in these verses of faith, love, heaven, hell, demons, sick people, or sin in these chapters. Does their lack of mention indicate they were on the decline as well?
 - ii. There is also no mention of Peter or any of the other apostles being involved in miracles. Does that mean God had stopped using all of them to perform signs and wonders as well? That God's presence in Peter's shadow was no longer there?

By the Numbers

Figures 14:2 and 14:3 summarize the number of times the Holy Spirit gifts are used but referred to in a general way, or are specifically identified in each chapter of Acts starting with Acts 2, after Pentecost morning. The numbers or counts:

- ❖ include references to the general term '*signs and wonders*', and to specific references of the 9 gifts, notably '*tongues*', '*prophecy*' and '*healings*'.
- ❖ exclude references to supernatural events that don't involve one of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts such as casting out demons and God freeing people from jail.

To explain the layout and the meaning of the data, let me review Figure 4:2 which covers Chapters 2 through 21 of Acts. Figure 4:3 has the same structure.

- ❖ Starting with the 1st row of numbers (**bolded**) in Figure 4:2, a general reference to the 9 Holy Spirit gifts and/or at least one of the gifts is referenced on 4 different occasions (Column A) in only one chapter (Column B) which equals 4 total occurrences (Column C which equals A*B). The one chapter in which gifts are referred to 4 times (Column D) is Chapter 5.
- ❖ In the 2nd row, the gifts are mentioned 3 times (Column A) in 1 chapter (Column B) for a total of 3 occurrences (Column C = 1 *3). The 1 chapter is Chapter 20.
- ❖ In the 3rd row, the gifts are mentioned 2 times (Column A) in 6 chapters (Column B) for a total of 12 occurrences (Column C = 2 * 6). The 6 chapters are 2, 8, 9, 14, 19, and 21.
- ❖ Row 4 shows the 9 gifts are referred to once in 5 chapters while Row 5 shows the 9 gifts are not referenced at all in the remaining 7 chapters.
- ❖ In total, per the third and second last rows (I:), there are 24 references to the gifts which equates to an average of 1.2 occurrences per chapter (24 occurrences divided by 20 chapters).
- ❖ If we examine the frequency of the gifts (last row, II) by only looking at chapters where they are referenced at least once (13) - thus excluding the 7 chapters where no mention is made - the average frequency of mention increases to 1.8 times per chapter (24 occurrences divided by 13 = 1.8).

Figure 4:2 Counts for 20 Chapters, Acts 2-21

A # Times Occurred in Chapter	B # Chapters with that Frequency	C Total Occurrences (C = A * B)	D Chapter Numbers
4 times	1	4	5
3 times	1	3	20
2 times	6	12	2, 8, 9, 14, 19, 21
1 time	5	5	3, 6, 10, 11, 15
0 times	7	0	4, 7, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18
Total	20	24	
I: Average # of occurrences per chapter if count all 20 chapters $24 / 20 = 1.2$		24 occurrences divided by 20 chapters = 1.2 occurrence per chapter, if all 20 chapters are considered.	
II: Average # of occurrences if only count the 13 chapters (first 4 rows of data above) where gifts are mentioned $24 / 13 = 1.8$		24 occurrences divided by 13 chapters = 1.8. In other words, a reference to one of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts is mentioned, on average, 1.8 times per chapter when using only the 13 chapters where the gifts are referenced at least once.	

Figure 14:3 Counts for 7 Chapters, Acts 22-28

A # Times Occurred in Chapter	B # Chapters with that Frequency	C Total Occurrences (C = A * B)	D Chapter Numbers
3 times	1	3	28 **
2 times	1	2	27
1 time	0	0	
0	5	0	22, 23, 24, 25, 26
Total	7	5	
I: Average # of occurrences per chapter if count every one of the last 7 chapters of Acts $5 / 7 = 0.7$		5 occurrences divided by 7 chapters = .7 times per chapter. In other words, a reference of one of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts is mentioned, on average, less than 1 time per chapter when all 7 chapters are counted.	
II: Average # of occurrences if we only count the 2 chapters (first 2 rows of data above) where the gifts are mentioned $5 / 2 = 2.5$		5 occurrences divided by 2 chapters = 2.5 times per chapter. In other words, a reference to one of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts is mentioned, on average, 2.5 times per chapter when the chapters to Paul's legal issues are excluded and only the last 2 chapters of Acts are counted.	

** While many beside Publius's father were healed on Malta, it is counted as 1.

14: Did the 9 Gifts Decline, then End?

Comparing Results of Figure 14:2 to Figure 14:3

Two key findings per Figure 14:2 (based on Chapters 2-21) and Figure 14:3 (based on Chapters 22-28) are as follows.

- ❖ When comparing results of I: (average occurrences per chapter when using all chapters), there was a small decline in the frequency that gifts were referenced, from 1.2 time per chapter (per Figure 14:2) to .7 times per chapter (per Figure 14:3).
 - ❖ When comparing results using II: (average occurrences when we only include chapters in which gifts were mentioned), we find the average frequency of mention increased from 1.8 times per chapter (per Figure 14:2) to 2.5 times per chapter (per Figure 14:3). More insight on these numbers is provided below when we consider the time frames involved.
- 14:18 When we remove the chapters related to Paul's legal issues, don't the counts show there was no decline in the 9 Holy Spirit gifts? If not, why not?
- 14:19 Whether or not one includes Chapters 22-26 where 163 of the 165 verses are focused on Paul's legal issues over a very short period of time, is a very important issue when looking at the Cessationist vs Charismatic divide. To me, these considerations plus the fact there is no mention of all the other apostles and disciples who were engaged in signs and wonders in that period, make these chapters an unreliable indicator. Two things:
- i. On that basis, wouldn't it be even more appropriate to compare the average results of 1.2 or the 1.8 gifts per chapter in Figure 14:2 to the 2.5 gifts in Figure 14:3? And if we follow the Cessationist argument that frequency of mention is an indication of the frequency of occurrence, don't these numbers show signs and wonders were on the increase as Acts winds down? If not, why not?
 - ii. If you believe Chapters 22-26 should be included, what makes these chapters a reliable indicator of the gifts occurring?
 - iii. To look at the numbers from another perspective and to simplify calculations, if only the 12 apostles were used in the total of 29 gifts for the ~25-30 years covered by the events of Acts, that equates to an average of less than 0.1 gift per apostle per year ($29/12/25=.1$), or ~1 gift per apostle every 10 years. Does that come remotely close to the actual frequency of the gifts being used? And if not, is caution warranted into not reading too much into the numbers, and is even more caution warranted on general comments on the decline of gifts where no numerical analysis is provided at all?

CONSECUTIVE CHAPTERS

Another simplistic way of looking at the frequency of gifts occurring is to compare the frequency of mention in the last 2 chapters of Acts to the frequency of gifts in any 2 consecutive chapters in Chapters 2-21. The results are as follows:

- ❖ no two consecutive chapters combined have a higher rate of occurrence than the average 2.5 times per chapter that the gifts were specifically referenced in Acts 27 and 28;
- ❖ only 3 sets of consecutive chapters (5 & 6, 19 & 20, 20 & 21) have a

- ❖ comparable rate of 2.5 times per chapter in Acts 27 & 28; and
- ❖ all other combinations of 2 back-to-back chapters in Chapters 2- 21 have the 9 gifts mentioned less than the 2.5 times per chapter as per Acts 27 and 28.

To me, the above analysis shows that as we exit Acts, the gifts were not declining. In fact, a case can be made that, if anything, the gifts were continuing and even increasing in frequency. Having said that, it is important to recognize the above counts represent only a small fraction of the actual numbers of the signs and wonders occurring in the form of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts. As a result, I suggest caution in putting too much weight onto any of the above numbers. I also suggest even less weight should be placed on general comments that gifts were on the decline as Acts comes to a close where no numerical analysis is provided at all.

CONSIDER THE TIME FRAMES INVOLVED

As mentioned, Paul's legal issues at Jerusalem and Caesarea are addressed in 6 chapters in Acts - the last part of Chapter 21, and Chapters 22 through 26. In Acts Chapters 22, 23 and 24, everything but the last 2 verses in Chapter 24 of Acts occurred in a matter of days. The time frames included the 'next day' (Acts 22:30), the 'night immediately following' and 'day' (Acts 23:11-12), the 'by night' and 'next day' (Acts 23:31-32), and 'some days' (Acts 24:24).

- ❑ Acts 22:30 But on **the next day**, wishing to know for certain why he had been accused by the Jews, he released him and ordered the chief priests and all the Council to assemble, and brought Paul down and set him before them.
 - ❑ Acts 23:11 ... the **night immediately following**, the Lord stood at his side...
 - ❑ Acts 23:31 ...brought him by night to Antipatris. 32 **But the next day** ...
 - ❑ Acts 24:24 But **some days later** Felix arrived with Drusilla ...
- 14:20 Given that the proceedings of Paul's legal issues in Chapters 22- 24 took place over a matter of days, is that a long enough period to know whether or not the 9 Holy Spirit gifts were increasing, decreasing or had ceased?

The last 2 verses in Chapter 24 make a general reference to what happened in the following 2 years with Paul and Felix.

- ❑ Acts 24:26 At the same time too, he was hoping that money would be given him by Paul; therefore he also used to send for him quite often and converse with him. 27 **But after two years had passed**, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, and wishing to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul imprisoned.
- 14:21 Does the lack of mention of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts while Paul was in Caesarea for 2 years indicate the 9 gifts had ceased or were on a major decline during this time? If yes, how?

Chapters 25 and 26 review Paul's dealings with Festus and Agrippa which again take place over a short period. Events in Chapter 25 take 'three days' (Acts 25:1), 'eight or ten days' (Acts 25:6), the 'next day' (Acts 25:6), 'several days' (Acts 25:13), 'many days' (Acts 25:14), the 'next day' (Acts 25:17) and 'tomorrow' (Acts 25:22).

- ❑ Acts 25:1 Festus then, having arrived in the province, **three days** later went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea.

14: Did the 9 Gifts Decline, then End?

- ❑ Acts 25:6 After he had spent **not more than eight or ten days among them**, he went down to Caesarea, and on **the next day** he took his seat on the tribunal and ordered Paul to be brought.
- ❑ Acts 25:13 Now when **several days** had elapsed, King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea and paid their respects to Festus.
- ❑ Acts 25:14 While they were spending **many days** there ...
- ❑ Acts 25:17 ... but on the **next day** took my seat on the tribunal ...
- ❑ Acts 25:22 Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I also would like to hear the man myself." **Tomorrow**, he said, "you shall hear him."
- ❑ Acts 25:23 So, on the **next day** when Agrippa came together with Bernice ...

Acts 26 is entirely based on Paul's defense ending with Agrippa and Festus discussing that Paul was probably innocent. Acts 26 covers one day.

- ❑ Acts 26:1 Agrippa said to Paul, "You are permitted to speak ..." Then Paul ... proceeded to make his defense ... 30 The king ... and the governor and Bernice, and those who were sitting with them, 31 and when they had gone aside, they began talking to one another, saying, "This man is not doing anything worthy of death or imprisonment." 32 And Agrippa said to Festus, "This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar."

165 verses deal with Paul's legal issues beginning with the last 14 verses in Acts 21 and through the next 5 chapters, Acts 22 through 26. A total of 163 verses cover events that occurred over a matter of days. By contrast, only 2 verses make general reference to what happened over the 2 years while Paul was in jail in Caesarea.

14:22 Doesn't this combination of dramatically different verse counts and time periods make these chapters less than ideal when trying to identify whether or not gifts were continuing or decreasing? If not, how can they be used in a meaningful way?

Acts 2-21 Compared to Acts 22-28

Figures 14:2 and 14:3 compared the frequency that the Holy Spirit gifts were mentioned between Acts 2 to 21 in relation to Acts 22 to 28. A variation of this methodology involves looking at the frequency of mention of the gifts based on the number of years these chapters covered. Figure 14:4 shows the results.

- ❖ **Acts 2-21**: ~20-25 years passed from Pentecost until when Paul's legal troubles began late in Acts 21. To be conservative, I only use 20 years in my calculations to ensure the calculations work in favor of the Cessationist camp. Based on 20 years and Holy Spirit gifts being referenced 24 times in these '20' years, that equates to ~1.2 times per year that the gifts are mentioned (Last row per Point 'III'; 'A' in Figure 14:4 - next page).
- ❖ **Acts 21-26**: A period of ~2.5 years is covered wherein Paul faced arrest and legal issues. 2 of these years are covered in only 2 of the 165 verses in these 5+ chapters. No mention of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts is made.

- ❖ **Acts 27-28:** The last 2 chapters cover ~3 years. ~1 year includes Paul’s travels to Malta, the shipwreck, delays and ministry on Malta, delays and final travel to Rome. Slightly more than 2 years were spent in Rome. The 9 gifts are referenced 5 times or an average of ~1.7 times per year (Point ‘III:’, ‘C’). However, it is debatable if the 2 years spent in Rome should be included in the analysis as little information is given. Removing the 2 years increases the frequency to an average of 5 times per year (Point ‘III:’, ‘D’)
- *Acts 28:30* Now Paul stayed two full years in his own rented lodging ...

Figure 14:4 Summary of Frequency of Occurrence

Description of Analysis	Acts 2-21	Acts 22-26	Acts 27-28	Acts 22-28
I: Average occurrences per chapter if count all chapters	24/20 = 1.2	0/5 = 0	5/2 = 2.5	5/7 = .7
II: Average occurrences per chapter if only count chapters where gifts are mentioned	24/13 = 1.8	0/0 = 0	5/2 = 2.5	5/2 = 2.5
III: Average # of occurrences per year based on years covered in chapters	A: 24/20 = 1.2	B: 0/.5=0	C: 5/3.0 =1.7 D: ** 5/1=5.0	E: 5/3.5 = 1.4 F: ** 5/1=5.0

Data for I: and II: are taken from Figures 14:2 and 14:3.

** D: and F: are based on only 1 year. The 2 years in Acts 28:30 are excluded.

14:23 In the last chapters of Acts, once Paul’s legal issues were resolved, Holy Spirit again moved through Paul in the form of signs and wonders. Miracles occur 5 times in Acts 27 and 28. I look at the frequency that the 9 gifts were mentioned as Acts draws to a close, and fail to see a decline. As a result, I struggle to see the validity of Cessationist claims that a decrease is occurring in the 9 Holy Spirit gifts as the book of Acts comes to a close. If you see a clear decrease, would you be willing to show me where my analysis is off and where this decrease is?

In a nutshell, at least to me, the above numerical analysis shows that as we exit Acts, the gifts were not declining. In fact, a case can be made that, if anything, the gifts were continuing and potentially increasing in frequency.

THE 9 GIFTS: A CRITERION FOR APOSTLES

As discussed in Chapter 16, 1 of 3 criteria cited by Cessationists that must occur in order for a believer to be considered a true apostle is that they must have

14: Did the 9 Gifts Decline, then End?

performed signs and wonders and miracles.

- ❑ *2 Corinthians 12:12 The **signs of a true apostle** were performed among you with all perseverance, by **signs and wonders and miracles**.*

As it relates to the apostles, Cessationists and Continuationists typically agree that signs and wonders would have included gifts such as prophecy and tongues. The Bible mentions specific details of individual healings through Peter and John (lame man) and to Peter alone (Dorcas/Tabitha). However, none of the other 10 original apostles are identified as having been used for a specific sign or wonder.

14:24 Does the fact only two of the original 12 apostles had signs and wonders attributed to them mean the remaining 10 apostles weren't involved in them? Or does it simply mean the other 10 apostles were involved, but the Bible simply excludes the details?

14:25 Doesn't Acts 5:12 give the answer. And isn't this further evidence that signs and wonders could have been done by other believers, but that it wasn't documented?

- ❑ *Acts 5:12 At the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people ...*

GIFTS PERFORMED BY OTHER EARLY BELIEVERS

Mark 16:17 reveals that signs of a believer are casting out demons, speaking in new tongues, and laying hands on the sick who will recover.

- ❑ *Mark 16:17 **These signs will accompany those who have believed:** in My name they will **cast out demons**, they will speak with **new tongues**; 18 they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; **they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.***

14:26 Some non-apostles such as Stephen and Philip's 4 daughters are referenced as doing miracles. But if such signs and wonders are a sign for all believers, and there were hundreds of thousands of believers by the time Acts 19 rolled around, wouldn't it be consistent with God's Word to see these hundreds of thousands of believers collectively performing hundreds of thousands of miracles regularly. If not, why not?

14:27 And wouldn't these multitudes of miracles be examples of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts occurring, but not being documented in God's Word? If not, why not?

14:28 Would the lack of mention of 9 Holy Spirit gifts performed by these 10 apostles and other believers be consistent with Jesus's life where a tiny fraction of the miracles He performed are actually mentioned in the Bible?

- ❑ *John 21:25 And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written.*

14:29 In addition, would the lack of specific examples of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts by the 10 original apostles and other early believers also be consistent with the information presented in Chapters 1 and 18 where God's Word referenced many hundreds of individuals who prophesied, but the specifics of whose prophecies are not actually described in the Bible?

WHAT ELSE DECLINED/CEASED?

If you still believe that considerable mention of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts should have been provided in the books written after Paul met with the 12 disciples in Ephesus in Acts 19 in order to substantiate the gifts were not declining and on their way to cessation, consider Figure 14:5 on the next page. Using www.Biblegateway.com's website and the NASB translation, I counted the number of books in which 10 different Biblical words appeared at least one time. To clarify, if a word such as 'hell' occurred 4 times in the same book, I counted it as 1. If the word 'hell' occurred in 4 different books, I count it as 4. The analysis excludes the 4 Gospels and Acts.

14:30 As an example, the English word 'cross' (#7 in the table) appears in 5 of the 11 books (45%) written before Acts was written, but in only 2 of the 11 books (18%) written after Acts was written. If we use frequency of being mentioned as an indicator of importance, does the decline in mention of the cross mean its importance has declined?

14:31 Does the fact that mentions of love, faith and hope all declined as well also mean they were on the way to cessation? If not, why is the lack of mention of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts in the books written after Paul's trip to Ephesus reason to believe they ceased?

The analysis of these words in Figure 14:5 is very simplified. It is merely used to show that, just because an issue isn't mentioned in some books, doesn't mean it's no longer relevant or has lesser value. If this analysis doesn't accomplish that limited goal and has been a waste of your time, well - coffee is on me if we meet.

Figure 14:5 Frequency of Some Key Biblical Words

Word	11 Books Written Before Acts	11 Books Written After Acts
1. Agapao love	9 or 82% of 11 books	7 or 64% of 11 books
2. Faith	11 / 100%	10 / 91%
3. Hope	10 / 91%	7 / 64%
4. Sin	10 / 91%	9 / 82%
5. Heaven	10 / 91%	5 / 45%
6. Salvation	6 / 55%	8 / 73%
7. Cross	5 / 45%	2 / 18%
8. Resurrection	3 / 27%	4 / 36%
9. Sanctification	5 / 45%	4 / 36%
10. Hell	2 / 18%	4 / 36%

SELF-FULFILLING DECLINE/CESSATION

Related to the Cessationist view that the Holy Spirit gifts ended is the argument there were no valid outpourings of Holy Spirit since the early church. Any outpourings of Holy Spirit including Azusa Street in Los Angeles in the early 1900's seem to be viewed by Cessationists as fraudulent. I'm not adequately trained - academically speaking - to review the literature to determine if such reports of Holy

14: Did the 9 Gifts Decline, then End?

Spirit outpourings are valid or not. And thus, I won't. However, I do ask 4 questions:

- 14:32 When we look at historical literature on any Biblical topic, how many of us have such strongly held views that we ignore or otherwise minimize the value or credibility of information contradicting our prevailing belief(s)?
- 14:33 Is the key reason many believers today don't see the 9 Holy Spirit gifts occurring in their lives or in the lives of people with whom they associate because God caused the 9 gifts to cease, or because these believers choose not to seek these gifts?
- 14:34 North American denominations including but not limited to the Reformed, 7th Day Adventist, Mennonite and Baptist churches have typically taught the 9 Holy Spirit gifts have ceased. However, given a belief system that the 9 Holy Spirit gifts have ceased, isn't it understandable that believers in these denominations wouldn't seek or expect such gifts? And if they don't seek the gifts, isn't it reasonable to expect that the gifts don't occur? In other words, is it a situation of "*we have not because we ask not*"?
- ❑ *James 4:2 You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. **You do not have because you do not ask.***
 - ❑ *Matthew 21:22 And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.*
 - ❑ *1 John 5:14 This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, **if we ask anything according to His will,** He hears us.*
- 14:35 And thus, is the Cessationist belief system prone to be self-fulfilling for believers who don't believe in the 9 Holy Spirit gifts? And is it even more likely to be self-fulfilling for those who view such activities as being heretical, or who publicly criticize other believers involved in these gifts?

CLOSING POINTS TO PONDER

Chapter 14 analyzed the rate that the Holy Spirit gifts were occurring by comparing the frequency of mention to the number of chapters as well as the time spans involved. As per Figure 14:4, the analysis shows that the 9 Holy Spirit gifts were not on the decline. Yes, there was no mention of the 9 gifts in the 5+ chapters where Paul was dealing with legal issues, but when he later began his travels to Rome, the 9 gifts were clearly back in operation more frequently than before.

There is no scripture specifically stating the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and 9 Holy Spirit gifts were to exist for a short time and/or for a select few individuals. If we look at the entire Bible, we find prophecies and other supernatural manifestations of Holy Spirit have been going on since creation. We see items such as prophecy occurring from Genesis through to Revelation. Cover to cover.

- 14:36 God hasn't changed. Why would God's demonstrations of power through means such as the 9 gifts end right after He delivered His gift of salvation and just started to use His children to take the Good News to the world?
- 14:37 Many signs and wonders occurred but were not documented. Was one reason for this possibly because God is to receive all glory? And that documenting such signs and wonders might inappropriately elevate attention and give unwarranted amounts of credit to humans?

Did The Purposes of Signs and Wonders End?

INTRODUCTION

MY understanding of a commonly held Cessationist view is that there are two primary reasons why the 9 Holy Spirit gifts came into being:

1. help prove Jesus was the Messiah; and
2. help powerfully launch the gospel.

With these two items fulfilled, many Cessationists now believe the 9 Holy Spirit gifts including prophecy and tongues are no longer needed. But is this so?

OTHER REASONS FOR SIGNS AND WONDERS

To begin, the two reasons given in the Introduction are not in dispute. But are there more key reasons for signs and wonders?

(1) Spreading the Gospel

Signs and wonders were beneficial in launching the gospel. But are they also beneficial to help spread the gospel after the initial launch? God's Word tells us that believers are called to share the Good News. Paul emphasized we need to share the gospel in words, but even moreso in power.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 4:20 For the **kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power.***
 - ❑ *Romans 15:18 For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, 19 **in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit;** so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum **I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.***
- 15:1 Paul shared the gospel in words and power. Paul fully preached the gospel. If signs and wonders aren't evident in our lives today, are we able to fully preach the gospel? If yes, how can we do so when Paul couldn't?

When Peter explained events at Pentecost, he related them to Joel's prophecy.

- ❑ *Joel 2:28 "It will come about after this That I will pour out My Spirit on **all mankind;** And **your sons and daughters** will prophesy, Your old men will*

15: Did Purposes of Signs and Wonders End?

*dream dreams, Your young men will see visions. 29 "Even on the **male and female servants** I will pour out My Spirit in those days.*

Immediately after Peter was Baptized in the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, he boldly shared the gospel and ~3,000 came to Jesus. In Acts 4, Peter and John were imprisoned for preaching Jesus. After they were freed from prison, they prayed for more signs and wonders, were filled with the Holy Spirit (Baptized afresh in the Holy Spirit), and once again shared the gospel - with boldness.

- ❑ *Acts 4:29 And now, Lord, look at their threats, and grant it to Your bond-servants to speak Your word with all confidence, 30 **while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus.**" 31 And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all **filled with the Holy Spirit** and began to **speak the word of God with boldness.***

15:2 Given there were other outpourings of the Holy Spirit at Samaria, at Cornelius's home with his family and friends, at Ephesus, and even on John and Peter in Acts 4, doesn't that mean Joel's prophecy was not completely fulfilled at Pentecost?

15:3 Mark 16:16-18 has been quoted several times in **CEASED?**. Wouldn't it be beneficial today to have outpourings of Holy Spirit manifesting in the form of tongues, prophecies, words of knowledge, and healings of bodies serving as signs for unbelievers thereby facilitating sharing of the Gospel?

- ❑ *Mark 16:16 He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. 17 These **signs will accompany those who have believed:** in My name they **will cast out demons,** they will **speak with new tongues;** 18 they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they **will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.***

15:4 I can't find one scripture that says signs and wonders are only for launching the gospel, and not for the additional spreading of the gospel. If signs and wonders helped in the launch, wouldn't they help in the spreading too?

(2) **Making it Easier to Share the Gospel**

God made His presence known in the Old Testament through many diverse signs and wonders.

- ❑ *Exodus 4:30 and Aaron spoke all the words which the Lord had spoken to Moses. He then **performed the signs** in the sight of the people.*
- ❑ *Exodus 14:31 **When Israel saw the great power** which the Lord had used against the Egyptians, the **people feared the Lord,** and **they believed in the Lord** and in His servant Moses.*
- ❑ *Psalm 77:14 **You are the God who works wonders; You have made known Your strength** among the peoples.*

God's power continued to be shown in the New Testament, the most significant of which is through Jesus's earthly life, ministry and resurrection. In Mark 2, we learn *'all the people'* were coming to Jesus where He was teaching them.

- ❑ *Mark 2:12 And he got up and immediately picked up the pallet and went out in the sight of everyone, **so that they were all amazed** and were glorifying God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this."¹³ And He went out again by the seashore; and **all the people were coming to Him**, and He was teaching them.*

15:5 Do you believe Jesus was able to teach so many people in large part because of the signs and wonders that He performed? If not, why not?

Consider what gave Herod the desire to see Jesus.

- ❑ *Luke 23:8 Now **Herod** was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, **because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him**.*

Peter healed the lame man which allowed him to share the Good News of Jesus. The result of the miracle and Peter's teaching was - many believed.

- ❑ *Acts 3:6 Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give to you. **In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene - walk!**" ... 10 ... and **they were filled with wonder and amazement** at what had happened to him.*
- ❑ *Acts 4:4 **But many of those who had heard the message believed**; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.*

Consider what happened when Aeneas and Tabitha were healed.

- ❑ *Acts 9:34 Peter said to him, "**Aeneas**, Jesus Christ heals you; get up and make your bed." Immediately he got up. 35 And **all who lived at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord**.*
- ❑ *Acts 9:36 Now in Joppa there was a disciple named **Tabitha** ... 37 And it happened at that time that **she fell sick and died**; and when they had washed her body, they laid it in an upper room ... 40 But Peter sent them all out and knelt down and prayed, and turning to the body, he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. 41 And **he gave her his hand and raised her up; and calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive**. 42 **It became known all over Joppa, and many believed in the Lord**.*

The apostles performed many signs and wonders, events that impacted many.

- ❑ *Acts 5:12 At the hands of **the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place** among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico. 13 But none of the rest dared to associate with them; however, the people held them in high esteem. 14 And **all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added** to their number, 15 to such an extent that they even **carried the sick out into the streets** and laid them on cots and pallets, so that when Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on any one of them. 16 Also the **people from the cities in the vicinity of***

15: Did Purposes of Signs and Wonders End?

Jerusalem were coming together, bringing people who were sick or afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all being healed.

These signs and wonders got people's attention and were key in leading more people to Jesus.

15:6 As believers share the Good News of Jesus today, wouldn't their efforts be helped by signs and wonders of God? If not, why not?

15:7 Where are the most accessible opportunities to share the Good News with non-believers: in our churches or in the streets, grocery stores, gas stations, offices and malls of our communities? And what would be the most impactful way of sharing the gospel:

- i. in love, words and works;
- ii. in love, words, works, and the power of God; or
- iii. sitting in a pew and waiting for the pastor(s) to do it?

15:8 Many ministries today do considerable amounts of good works that impact many lives. They are an essential part of what the Body of Christ brings to the world. But which is more evident in leading people to consider Christ:

- i. good works without supernatural events; or
- ii. supernatural signs and wonders?

No question good works are important, but my research of God's Word showed that time and time again, signs and wonders were the key to people coming to Jesus - not good works. Even when Jesus fed the 5,000, Jesus used supernatural provision to demonstrate not only His love, but who He was.

- ☐ *Matthew 14:19 And ordering the crowds to sit down on the grass, He took the five loaves and the two fish ... He blessed the food ... gave them to the crowds. 20 And they all ate and were satisfied, and they picked up what was left over of the broken pieces: twelve full baskets. 21 There were about five thousand men who ate, besides women and children.*

As mentioned previously in **CEASED?**, Stephen was one of seven men chosen to help distribute food to the widows. One of the requirements to be selected was that the man needed to be filled with the Holy Spirit. And one of the impacts of being filled is that Stephen did much more than help ensure proper serving of food.

- ☐ *Acts 6:1 ... widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food ... 3 Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom ... they chose Stephen, a man **full** of faith and **of the Holy Spirit** ...*
- ☐ *Acts 6:8 And Stephen, **full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs** among the people.*

I repeat question 8:8 from Chapter 8.

8:8 If Stephen was not Baptized in the Holy Spirit, what enabled Stephen to do such signs and wonders?

Healed Knee of Sikh Security Guard

After prayer one night, Lori and I stopped by our regular grocery store. On the way into the store, we paused and started to speak to a Sikh security guard. As I talked, Lori listened and prayed quietly. A couple of minutes later, she asked the guard what was wrong with his knee. He was startled and initially said there was nothing wrong. Lori briefly paused, then repeated her question. He somewhat reluctantly responded by telling us that he hurt his knee about ten years before. Lori asked him if she could pray for his knee. He said yes in a somewhat hesitant and confused state. Lori prayed a simple "Knee, in the name of Jesus, pain go and knee be healed." He was instantly healed - and shocked. We told him Jesus loved him, and then felt led to leave him and go into the store. As we exited the store a short time later, he followed us to our truck. He wanted to give Lori praise which she quickly shut down, but it opened the door for Lori to more fully share the good news about Jesus. A week later, we came back to the store after another prayer meeting and talked to him again. His knee was still healed. Once again, he wanted to worship Lori which she gently but clearly refused, then took the opportunity to once again share Jesus with him.

I encourage you to take a minute and answer the following question:

15:9 *"If God used me to miraculously heal people, to give them supernatural wisdom or some other obviously supernatural gift that would bless them, would that make my witnessing not only more fruitful but also more exciting?"*

15:10 Our respective Baptisms in the Holy Spirit have emboldened both Lori and I to share the Good News. It was God's power that gave this man indisputable, lasting and personalized evidence that Jesus is real and loves him.

- i. Sharing the gospel can often be a challenge, but wasn't sharing the gospel with this individual made much easier when God's power showed up?
- ii. And doesn't our experience with this man show why Paul talks about the importance of being able to share the gospel in words, good works and power?
- iii. If signs and wonders have not been occurring in your life to date, but going forward God did such miracles through you - and through those you influence - wouldn't that make sharing the gospel a different ball game than by using words and/or good works only?

When Lori and I first started to share the gospel in power as well as words, we were nervous. Our mustard seeds were pretty small. We had both been Baptized in the Holy Spirit and Fire long before, but I think we had leaked quite a bit. We had a desire to see people healed, but we were unsure as to what to do. Fortunately, we found some people to teach us. We first looked at scriptures on authority and healing. We were then taught a simple approach on how to pray for the sick. With that background knowledge, we then witnessed actual, real-time healings being done in our presence. No scam, no fakes. In a weekend of our early equipping, we

15: Did Purposes of Signs and Wonders End?

listened, watched, then went and did it. Jesus healed over 20 strangers through us in 3 days. It was, and still is, so exciting and humbling to see Jesus heal people instantly. The reality is that, until believers actually see God heal someone through them, we can't really understand it. Even afterward, it's still a wonderful mystery.

(3) Confirm God's Word

In Acts 16, we learn the disciples 'went out and preached everywhere' and the word they preached was confirmed by the signs that followed.

- ❑ *Mark 16:19 So then, when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. 20 And **they went out and preached everywhere**, while the Lord worked with them, and **confirmed the word by the signs that followed**.*
- ❑ *Hebrews 2:2 For if **the word** spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, 3 how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, **it was confirmed to us by those who heard**, 4 **God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit** according to His own will.*

15:11 Would signs and wonders such as healing miracles help us today in confirming that God's Word is still true? And help refute the many lies that God's Word has been changed or is out of date?

God is so good. He gives us children access to incredible power. And when signs and wonders happen as per Hebrews 2:4, God is right there testifying with us.

(4) Glorify God

John 2:11 reveals that the miracles Jesus performed not only confirmed that Jesus was who He claimed to be, but also served to glorify God.

- ❑ *John 2:11 This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and **manifested His glory**, and **His disciples believed** in Him.*
- ❑ *Mark 2:3 ... bringing to Him a paralytic, carried by four men. 4 Being unable to get to Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him; and when they had dug an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic was lying. 5 And Jesus **seeing their faith** said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." ... 10 But **so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins**" He said to the paralytic, 11 "I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home." 12 And he got up and immediately picked up the pallet and went out in the sight of everyone, so **that they were all amazed and were glorifying God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this."***

(5) Signs for Unbelievers and Believers

At Pentecost, Jesus baptized ~120 in the Holy Spirit and enabled them to speak in tongues in the form of earthly languages they didn't know. The tongues spoken at Pentecost were a sign for unbelievers.

- ❑ *Acts 2:7 They were **amazed and astonished**, saying, "Why, are not all these*

who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born?

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 14:22 So then **tongues are for a sign**, not to those who believe but **to unbelievers**; but prophecy is for a sign, not to unbelievers but to those who believe.*

Per page 145 of **CEASED?**, when Cornelius, family and friends were Baptized in the Holy Spirit and started speaking in tongues, it caused Peter to realize God had granted eternal life to both Gentiles and Jews. In this case, tongues were a sign for believers, namely Peter and the 6 Jews who had joined Peter.

Tongues is a very interesting, and quite controversial topic. There are also many benefits of tongues, 10 of which are reviewed in Chapter 21.

(6) Demonstrate the Authority of the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth

The original apostles walked with Jesus for 3½ years. They heard His teachings. They witnessed many signs and wonders. People of that time knew about spiritual matters. They weren't surprised by demons, only that the demons obeyed Christ.

- ❑ *Luke 10:17 The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name."*

The English phrase 'in my name' comes from three Greek words 'eis' [G1519], 'emos' [G1699] and 'onoma' [G3686].

- ❖ 'Eis' is defined as 'into, unto, to, towards, for, among'.
- ❖ 'Emos' is defined as 'my, mine, etc.'
- ❖ 'Onoma' refers to names in different contexts including 'the name, i.e., for one's rank, authority, interests, pleasure, command, excellences, deeds'.

Jesus's name matters. Everything in this universe was created through Him. All authority has been delegated to Jesus. And thus, understandably, His Name is not any name, but the Name above all names, the Name that carries all authority.

- ❑ *Philippians 2:9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him **the name which is above every name**,*
- ❑ *Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me.**"*

Jesus has all authority, authority which is associated with His Name. And as sent ones, as ambassadors for Christ, we have not only the right, but the responsibility, to use Jesus's Name to advance the Kingdom of God.

- ❑ *Acts 4:7 When they had placed them in the center, they began to inquire, "**By what power, or in what name, have you done this?**" 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people, 9 if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, 10 let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, **that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene**, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead - by **this name this man stands here before you in good health.**"*

15: Did Purposes of Signs and Wonders End?

In the world, we hear the phrase *'by the authority vested in ...'*. People generally recognize the authority they have, and - to some extent - the authority given to others. Given *'in the name'* refers to authority, when Peter healed the paralytic using the words *'in the name of Jesus'*, he effectively was saying *'by the authority Jesus has delegated to me'*.

After the rulers asked *'in what name was Peter able to heal the paralytic'*, Peter was very clear that it was by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene - by the authority not of any Jesus but of Jesus Christ of Nazarene - that the man was healed. Signs and wonders demonstrated the authority of the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the same authority that today's believers have been given as well.

- ❑ Acts 3:6 But Peter said, "I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: **In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene** - walk!"

(7) **Demonstrate and Use the Authority over Demons**

Believers are told to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers and cast out demons. Scriptures show that the demonic world and sickness are sometimes related.

- ❑ Job 2:7 Then **Satan** went out from the presence of the Lord and **smote Job with sore boils** from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.
- ❑ Mark 9:25 ... Jesus ... rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "**You deaf and mute spirit**, I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again."
- ❑ Luke 13:11 ... **for eighteen years had had a sickness caused by a spirit**: and she was bent double, and could not straighten up at all.
- ❑ Acts 5:16 Also the people from the cities in the vicinity of Jerusalem were coming together, **bringing people who were sick or afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all being healed.**

15:12 Would healings of people's souls and bodies arising from casting out demons have significant impacts on people today, just as they did 2,000 years ago? If not, why not?

There are many diverse views on the issue of demons and whether or not believers today are to be involved. Chapter 23 provides some insights.

(8) **Showed God's Compassion**

Another purpose for signs and wonders is to show Jesus's compassion.

- ❑ Matthew 14:14 When He went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and **felt compassion for them and healed** their sick.

Father God sent Jesus, and just as Father God sent Jesus, Jesus is in turn sending us.

- ❑ John 20:21 So Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you; **as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.**"

15:13 As we go out as Jesus's sent ones, wouldn't miraculous healings occurring through believers still be considered an act of compassion today?

(9) Sending People a Warning Message

Some of God's signs and wonders got people's attention. Peter prophesied to Ananias and Sapphira they would die because of their lies. They died very soon after these prophetic words were spoken. As a result of their death and the prophetic word being fulfilled - fear came over many.

- *Acts 5:1 But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, 2 and kept back some of the price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, "Ananias, **why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit** and to keep back some of the price of the land? ... 5 And as he heard these words, **Ananias fell down and breathed his last**; and great fear came over all who heard of it ... 10 And immediately **she fell at his feet and breathed her last**, and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. 11 And **great fear came over the whole church, and over all who heard of these things.***

(10) Forewarning Believers

- *Acts 11:28 One of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there **would certainly be a great famine all over the world.** And this took place in the reign of Claudius.*
- 15:14 If a famine or major hardship such as a virus or market meltdown was coming that would greatly impact you and others you care about, wouldn't it be beneficial to hear that reality from God in advance?
- 15:15 If such warnings were given today by believers who have a credible track record in the prophetic, how many Christians would dismiss the warnings at first? And then when the prophecy came true, dismiss it or blame the individuals for not being clearer or not being bolder in proclaiming the prophecy? In other words, do many of us tend to deflect and blame others, as opposed to taking responsibility for our own shortcomings?
- 15:16 Further to when prophets are criticized for not warning the rest of us on a pending disaster or difficult time, doesn't such criticism assume God tells at least one if not more prophets of each and every future 'challenging' event? Is this a valid assumption?

NOT EVERYBODY APPROVES

The Bible shows some people didn't like the miracles and teachings of the original apostles.

- *Acts 5:17 But the high priest rose up, along with all his associates (that is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with jealousy.*
- 15:17 As people hear the truth about God in word, signs and wonders, would it be surprising to learn of some people responding negatively, even though they saw them firsthand or were told of miracles by people they trust?
- 15:18 Per Acts 5:17, are there elements of fear, discomfort or jealousy today by some who may want signs and wonders in their lives, but don't?

15: Did Purposes of Signs and Wonders End?

CLOSING POINTS TO PONDER

15:19 Chapter 15 outlined 10 reasons for using signs and wonders in addition to proving Jesus was the Messiah and to help launch the gospel. Wouldn't these other reasons still be beneficial today?

1. spreading the gospel;
2. making it easier to share the gospel;
3. confirming God's Word;
4. glorifying God;
5. providing signs for believers and unbelievers;
6. demonstrating the power of the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth;
7. demonstrating and using authority over demons;
8. showing God's compassion;
9. sending people a warning message; and
10. providing forewarnings.

15:20 Many who claim to be followers of Christ mock efforts by other believers who are involved in casting out demons or who try to raise someone from the dead. Let me ask: Don't scriptures state that all believers are to do those things? And if we haven't done it or even tried to do it - how are we in a position to tell someone else that they are not to do it, or how they are to do it, or that they're doing it wrong? If we have concerns, shouldn't our hearts be to pray that God will guide them, and give them revelation and wisdom?

15:21 When it comes to raising the dead, casting out demons or seeking instantaneous healing miracles, how many of us haven't seen these miracles occur in our lives simply because we haven't tried? In my case, I haven't yet tried to raise someone from the dead in person. And the result - I haven't raised anyone from the dead.

☐ *Matthew 10:8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those with leprosy, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give.*

15:22 When it comes to raising the dead, casting out demons or seeking instantaneous healing miracles, how many of us haven't seen these miracles occur in our lives simply because we haven't tried?

15:23 I know a couple Christians who believe the 9 Holy Spirit gifts are still relevant, but don't share their views or their giftings for fear of persecution. I don't how widespread this issue is, but I suspect it is more significant than we realize. Survey anyone?

Did the 9 Gifts End with Specific Groups?

INTRODUCTION

ANOTHER reason some Cessationists believe the 9 Holy Spirit gifts have ceased is because the need for the gifts ended once the gospel was taken to the 4 different gatherings at the 4 locations mentioned in Acts 1:8 (Group 1 - below).

- ❑ *Acts 1:8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in (1) **Jerusalem**, and in al (2) **Judea** and (3) **Samaria**, and even to the (4) **remotest part** of the earth."*

Other Cessationists believe the 9 Holy Spirit gifts ended when the group of believers charged with launching the gospel had passed on and gone home to heaven. Opinions vary as to who exactly is in this group. Three commonly cited alternatives are as follows:

- Group 2: original apostles + other believers gathered at Pentecost (page 252);
- Group 3: original apostles + others at Pentecost + believers upon whom the apostles laid hands (page 252); and
- Group 4: original apostles only (page 253).

In addition, a 5th group - the 3,000 who accepted Jesus at the end of Acts 2 - is another group that warrants consideration and which could invalidate the entire Cessationist argument of the gifts ending with the above 4 groups. This issue is touched upon at the end of Chapter 16.

GROUP 1

GATHERINGS IN 4 LOCATIONS PER ACTS 1:8

The 4 Groups and Baptisms in the Holy Spirit

As mentioned, a common Cessationist view is that after the gospel was taken to the first gathering at Pentecost and the 3 subsequent Pentecost-like gatherings, the 9 Holy Spirit gifts declined and ceased soon thereafter.

- ❑ *Acts 1:8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in (1) **Jerusalem**, and in al (2) **Judea** and (3) **Samaria**, and even to the (4) **remotest part** of the earth."*

16: Did 9 Gifts End with Specific Groups?

This Cessationist view typically matches the gatherings and locations as follows:

<u>Scriptures</u>	<u>Who's there</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u># Believers</u>
Acts 2	Jews	Jerusalem	~120
Acts 8	Samaritans	Samaria*	Unknown
Acts 10	God-fearers	Caesarea**	Cornelius, family, friends
Acts 19	Gentiles	Ephesus***	12

* Samaria was both a city and territory in Israel

** Caesarea was the capital of a Roman province in Judea

*** Ephesus was a city in ancient Greece/modern-day Turkey, the '*remotest part*' on earth

Literal or Symbolic

Contradicting this Cessationist view is the belief that the 4 locations in Acts 1:8 - Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the remotest part of the earth - are more than physical locations where the gospel was first taken. Like so many other scriptures, there is a double meaning wherein these actual locations are also symbolic of much bigger geographic areas. One symbolic view of these geographic areas is as follows:

Jerusalem:	Take the gospel to the town or city where we live;
Judea:	Take the gospel beyond our town or city into the rest of our state or province, and those states and provinces nearby;
Samaria:	Take the gospel to the rest of our country; and
Ephesus:	Take the gospel to the rest of the world including countries that are furthest away - the remotest parts of earth.

Remotest part of Earth

In the phrase '*the remotest part of the earth*', the English word '*part*' is derived from the Greek Word '*eschatos*' [G2078] which Thayer defines in part as '*extreme, the last, the uttermost part, the end, of the earth*'. Strong's defines it in part as '*ends of, last, latter end, lowest, uttermost*'.

Acts 15 discusses Paul taking the gospel to the Thessalonians prior to his trip to Ephesus in Acts 19. When he did, the gospel did not come just in words, but '*in power and in the Holy Spirit*'.

- ❑ 1 Thessalonians 1:1 Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians ... 5 for ***our gospel*** did not come to you in word only, but also ***in power*** and in the ***Holy Spirit*** and with full conviction...

- 16:1 When Paul met the 12 disciples at Ephesus, his first priority was to ensure they were also Baptized in the Holy Spirit. At Thessalonica, Paul took the gospel '*in power and in the Holy Spirit*'. Doesn't that indicate Paul likely taught the Thessalonians about the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and took steps to ensure they were also Baptized in the Holy Spirit? If not, why not? Why would Paul not do at Thessalonica what was a priority to do at Ephesus?
- 16:2 Doesn't the fact the Thessalonians became imitators of Paul, Silvanus and Timothy and an example to other believers, also indicate they were indeed Baptized in the Holy Spirit?

- ❑ *1 Thessalonians 1:6* You also **became imitators of us** and **of the Lord**, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, **so that you became an example to all the believers** in Macedonia and in Achaia.
- 16:3 If believers at Thessalonica were Baptized in the Holy Spirit, doesn't that represent an outpouring of the Holy Spirit wherein Holy Spirit came upon believers? If not, why not? How is it different than what happened at Ephesus?
- 16:4 Thessalonica was further away from Israel than Ephesus. On the basis an outpouring - a Baptism of the Holy Spirit - occurred at Thessalonica, doesn't that invalidate the argument Ephesus was the remotest part on earth to receive an outpouring?
- 16:5 Rome was further away from Israel than Ephesus. There were many other cities, towns and/or inhabited regions further away from Israel than Rome including Iconium and Spain. Ephesus was not the remotest part when Jesus told His disciples they would be witnesses to the remotest part of the earth. As a result, doesn't this all serve to invalidate the argument that we should take the locations in Acts 1:8 literally, and instead validates the argument that we should take the locations symbolically? If not, why not?
- 16:6 If we're to take Ephesus as also being the symbolic representation of the remotest part, then shouldn't we also take Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria symbolically as well?
- 16:7 And if we can't take all 4 locations in Acts 1:8 literally, doesn't that invalidate the Cessationist argument that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit ended when Pentecost and the 3 Pentecost-like events happened at these 4 locations?

After Ephesus

- 16:8 If the 9 Holy Spirit gifts were no longer required once the Baptism in the Holy Spirit had occurred at the last location - Ephesus - why would the Holy Spirit gifts be needed in the future for anyone including the apostles? With this initial mission accomplished, wouldn't the apostles and others simply stop engaging in signs and wonders? And do we just ignore evidence such as Paul likely making it a priority to have the believers at Thessalonica Baptized in the Holy Spirit, just as he later did for the 12 believers at Ephesus?
- 16:9 If there was no longer a need for the 9 gifts, why would Paul encourage believers to pursue these gifts after he met the 12 believers in Ephesus? Why would Paul even write of his sharing the Gospel in both words and power in the form of supernatural gifts after his trip to Ephesus, if there was no further need for such power? And why encourage future pursuit of the gifts?
 - ❑ *1 Corinthians 14:1* Pursue love, yet **desire earnestly spiritual gifts**, but especially that you may **prophesy**.
 - ❑ *1 Corinthians 2:4* and my **message and my preaching** were **not in persuasive words of wisdom**, but **in demonstration of the Spirit and of power**.
 - ❑ *1 Corinthians 4:20* For the **kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power**.

16: Did 9 Gifts End with Specific Groups?

- ❑ *Romans 12:6 However, since **we have gifts that differ** according to the grace given to us, each of us is to use them properly: **if prophecy**, in proportion to one's faith;*

Fulfill Joel's Prophecy

Cessationists typically acknowledge that all of the believers at these 4 locations were Baptized in the Holy Spirit. And in so doing, the Cessationist argument goes on to say that the outpourings at these 4 locations collectively fulfilled the prophecy as per Joel 2:28-29.

- ❑ *Joel 2:28 "It will come about after this That I will pour out My Spirit on **all mankind**; And **your sons and daughters** will prophesy, Your old men will dream dreams, Your young men will see visions. 29 "Even on the **male and female servants** I will pour out My Spirit in those days.*

16:10 Do these 4 outpourings upon a small number of believers equate to:

- 'all mankind'
- + 'your sons and daughters'
- + 'old men (who) will dream dreams'
- + 'young men (who) will see visions'
- + 'male and female servants (upon whom) I will pour out My Spirit'?

16:11 If the groups at Jerusalem, Samaria, Caesarea and Ephesus do not refer to all believers including those of us living today, then who does 'all mankind, sons, daughters, old men, young men, male and female servants' **specifically** refer to? And why would Paul make so many comments about the Holy Spirit gifts being part of believers' lives including Romans 12:6?

- ❑ *Romans 12:6 However, since **we have gifts** that differ according to the grace given to us, **each of us is to use them properly: if prophecy**...*

No Mention of Partial or Total Fulfillment

When the other Baptisms in the Holy Spirit took place at Samaria, Cornelius's home, and Ephesus, no scripture mentions these baptisms were in partial or full fulfillment of the four locations in Acts 1:8.

16:12 If these baptisms marked partial and final fulfillment of the prophecy in Acts 1:8, wouldn't it be reasonable to expect Peter (who spoke about the Joel prophecy) or another apostle to have noted every partial fulfillment as well as the final fulfillment of this prophecy in Ephesus? If not, why not?

4 Locations or 2 Groups

The Bible takes the gospel to two groups - the Jews and the Gentiles. When Cornelius, family and friends were Baptized in the Holy Spirit, Peter had them immediately water baptized.

- ❑ *Acts 10:46 For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered, 47 "Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?" 48 And he **ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ**. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days.*

In Acts 11, Peter tells other disciples back in Jerusalem what happened to Cornelius, family and friends.

- ❑ *Acts 11:15 And as I began to speak, the **Holy Spirit fell upon them** just as He did upon us at the beginning. 16 And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' 17 Therefore **if God gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing** in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?" 18 **When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, "Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life."***

Judging by the responses, the major significance for Peter (verse 17) and the other Jerusalem disciples (verse 18) when it comes to the experiences of Cornelius, family and friends, was not the fact they had been Baptized in the Holy Spirit, or that they spoke in tongues, or that this was a partial fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. The major issue for them was God had given eternal life to Gentiles as well as Jews.

- 16:13 Given the disciples at Jerusalem were most amazed at God giving the gift of eternal life to the Gentiles, doesn't that show the key issue in Acts 1:8:
- i. was not a partial fulfillment wherein Jesus's disciples were witnesses to believers at one of 4 different geographic locations;
 - ii. but - due to being equipped through an outpouring of Holy Spirit - they were able to take the gospel to all nations of the world including not only the Jews who received the gift of salvation first, but now also to the Gentiles?

Saul/Paul

Saul was Jewish. To align with the Cessationist argument, Saul would be considered part of the first location/gathering - the Jewish believers who were at Pentecost in Jerusalem. However, as Saul was born again after Pentecost and was Baptized in the Holy Spirit after Ananias laid his hands upon him in Damascus, Saul was clearly not part of the Jewish gathering of believers at Pentecost.

- 16:14 Based on the argument that the 9 Holy Spirit gifts ceased with the gatherings at these 4 locations, does Saul's Baptism in the Holy Spirit mean there were 4 gatherings or groups ... plus one person? Is it ok to ignore all exceptions? Or only for those with special callings such as Paul?

16:15 But if so, don't all believers have a special calling?

- 16:16 If the 9 Holy Spirit gifts ceased with the 4 gatherings plus perhaps Saul, are we to believe that none of the 3,000 who came to Christ at Pentecost were Baptized in the Holy Spirit, even though they had witnessed the disciples receiving this Baptism?

Baptized into one Body

This Cessationist argument that the gifts ended when the gospel was taken to the 4 groups is also partially based on the fact all believers are baptized into one body.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 12:12 For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also*

16: Did 9 Gifts End with Specific Groups?

*is Christ. 13 For **by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body**, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.*

The Cessationist argument goes on to say that:

- i. since the outpouring of the Holy Spirit deals with power for witnessing; and
- ii. since this outpouring has occurred in full once the gospel had been taken to the groups, and
- iii. since all believers are baptized together into one body,
- iv. then: all believers have the power of the Holy Spirit for witnessing and ministry. No further Baptisms of the Holy Spirit are required.

To backtrack just a bit, Jesus is the one who baptizes believers in the Baptism of the Holy Spirit (*the 'upon' or 'epi'*) which is done to receive power to witness. Holy Spirit, on the other hand, is the one who baptizes believers into the Body of Christ when a person is born again and has Holy Spirit come in [en] them. While the in [en] experience is automatic and given to all believers when born again, the upon [epi] experience is not automatically given at the same time one is born again, and - as foreshadowed by the 2½ tribes who chose not to settle in the promised land - not given to all believers. The in [en] and upon [epi] experiences are two different baptisms, two different experiences.

16:17 Isn't it a major problem when one baptism - the upon [epi] experience (Baptism in the Holy Spirit) - is merged/intermixed with a second baptism - the in [en] experience (Baptism in the Body of Christ) - and treated as the same baptism, when they aren't?

16:18 Without this merging of the two baptisms, the in [en] experience would not have the power that comes from the upon [epi] experience. Doesn't that invalidate the portion of the Cessationist argument '*because we're born again, we're fully empowered to be witnesses for Christ*'?

16:19 If the in [en] experience is adequate for witnessing and we don't need the upon [epi] experience:

- i. why did Jesus tell the group of believers in Acts 1 they were not ready to share the gospel but needed to wait for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit: and
- ii. why was it such a priority for John and Peter to go to Samaria to ensure those new believers were Baptized in the Holy Spirit; and
- iii. why was Paul's first concern for the 12 disciples at Ephesus to find out whether or not they had been Baptized in the Holy Spirit?

Group 1 Summary

There are several reasons to question the argument that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the associated Holy Spirit gifts ended with the 4 outpourings of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Samaria, Ephesus, and with Cornelius, family and friends.

- ❖ The last of the four locations, Ephesus, was not even close to being the remotest part of the earth that was populated at that time.

- ❖ Paul most likely had believers Baptized in the Holy Spirit at Thessalonica prior to his travels to Ephesus, one of many cities that were further away than Ephesus.
- ❖ The people at the 4 locations do not represent all the types/groups of people prophesied in Joel 2:28.
- ❖ Signs and wonders continued after the gospel was taken to these 4 locations.
- ❖ Treating the 'in' [en] and 'upon' [epi] baptisms as one baptism is flawed. They are two separate baptisms with different purposes.
- ❖ Treating the indwelling of the Holy Spirit when we're born again as being adequate empowerment for believers to be witnesses contradicts Biblical teaching where the upon [epi] experiences, not the in [en] experience, is needed for witnessing and to be able to fully share the gospel.
- ❖ Jesus, Paul, and the original apostles notably John and Peter, all made it a priority to ensure believers were Baptized in the Holy Spirit.

GROUP 2 THOSE GATHERED AT PENTECOST

This second group serves as a kind of a catch-all group because due to a lack of specifics as to who was at Pentecost, one can try to argue almost any person who performed a sign and wonder after Pentecost was Baptized in the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

16:20 Saul/Paul, the 12 disciples at Ephesus, and Cornelius, friends and family were all involved in signs and wonders including tongues and/or prophecy. However, none of them were Baptized in the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. As a result, don't these two facts invalidate this second group? If not, why not?

GROUP 3 THOSE UPON WHOM APOSTLES LAID HANDS

This expanded group includes the original apostles + others at Pentecost + believers upon whom believers at Pentecost laid hands. This third group includes, if you will, the last 'ordinary' believers to be involved in the 9 Holy Spirit gifts.

Consider the experiences of Cornelius, family and friends who began speaking in tongues immediately after being Baptized in the Holy Spirit.

- ❑ *Acts 10:44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. 45 All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. 46 For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God ...*

16:21 No believer laid hands upon Cornelius, family and friends when they were Baptized in the Holy Spirit and immediately began to speak in the gift of tongues. Jesus just gave this baptism when He chose to do so, just as He did to the ~120 at Pentecost. Given no one laid hands on these individuals, doesn't that invalidate the argument that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the associated spiritual gifts ended with individuals upon whom the earliest believers laid hands?

16: Did 9 Gifts End with Specific Groups?

16:22 I can't find a Biblical reason showing the gifts would end with those upon whom the apostles laid their hands. Thus, is the rationale for this group Biblical in nature, or is it potentially a scenario of individuals being more loyal to their beliefs than to seeking the truth? And if so, wouldn't this show that believers can be vulnerable to looking for reasons to support our belief and then lean on these reasons that may be lacking in substance?

GROUP 4 ORIGINAL APOSTLES

The 4th group that Cessationists commonly associate with the ending of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts, and thus Baptisms in the Holy Spirit, is the original group of apostles. The original 12 apostles were as follows:

- ❑ *Mark 3:14 And **He appointed twelve**, so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out to preach, 15 and to have authority to cast out the demons. 16 And He appointed the twelve: [1] **Simon** (to whom He gave the name Peter), 17 and [2] **James**, the son of Zebedee, and [3] **John** the brother of James (to them He gave the name Boanerges, which means, "Sons of Thunder"); 18 and [4] **Andrew**, and [5] **Philip**, and [6] **Bartholomew**, and [7] **Matthew**, and [8] **Thomas**, and [9] **James** the son of Alphaeus, and [10] **Thaddaeus**, and [11] **Simon** the Zealot; 19 and [12] **Judas Iscariot**, who betrayed Him.*

We know this original 12 changed when Judas betrayed Jesus, hung himself, and then was later replaced by Matthias. A common Cessationist definition of a true apostle - such as these 12 - is that the person met 3 criteria:

1. witnessed with their own eyes the physical, resurrected Christ;
2. was personally/directly appointed by Christ; and
3. was able to work miracles such as tongues, healings and prophecy.

If the three criteria were Biblical, the criteria would hold up under any circumstance. Do they?

Criterion 1: Personally Witnessed the Resurrected Jesus

Paul was cited as an apostle in the Bible.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 1:1 **Paul called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ** through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,*
- ❑ *Romans 1:1 **Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,***

Paul was a devout man of God whose coming to Christ was unexpected.

- ❑ *Acts 9:3 As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and **suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; 4 and he fell to the ground and heard a voice** saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" 5 And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, 6 but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do." 7 **The men who traveled with him stood***

speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. 8 Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus. 9 And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

Acts 9 revealed Paul experienced God's light, fell to the ground, heard a voice, and was blinded.

16:23 in Acts 9, I don't see any verse indicating Paul actually saw the physical, resurrected Jesus. If Paul didn't see the resurrected Christ, wouldn't that invalidate the first condition of being a true apostle which is the apostle must have personally seen the physical, resurrected Jesus?

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul talks about the time Jesus appeared to him.

☐ 1 Corinthians 15:7 then He **appeared to James**, then to **all the apostles**; 8 and last of all, as to one untimely born, **He appeared to me also.**

16:24 In terms of Paul's description of Jesus appearing to him, the Greek word underlying the English word 'appeared' is 'optanomai' [G3700] which Strong's defines as '... appear, look, see, shew self'. One may argue the word appear indicates Paul saw the physical, resurrected Jesus. But given Luke's description in Acts 9, was it a situation where Jesus revealed himself to Paul through His presence - the light, His voice - but not in a physical way as He did to the other disciples on resurrection Sunday evening? Or was it a situation where the light coming from Jesus was so bright Paul couldn't see anything? And thus, is it highly likely that Paul did not see the resurrected physical Jesus in the same way the other early disciples (excluding Thomas who saw Jesus 8 days later) saw Him on resurrection Sunday evening?

Criterion 2: Directly Appointed By Christ

In Acts 1, the original disciples voted for Judas's replacement. This individual, who turned out to be Matthias, was part of the initial ministry that launched the gospel.

☐ Acts 1:14 *These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, **along with the women**, and **Mary the mother of Jesus**, and with His brothers. 15 At this time Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of about **one hundred and twenty persons** was there together), and said ... 23 So they put forward two men, Joseph called Barsabbas (who was also called Justus), and Matthias. ... 26 And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he **was added to the eleven apostles.***

Adding Matthias increased the number of apostles back to 12. Acts 6:2 confirms Matthias is 1 of the 12 and makes no distinction between Matthias and the other 11.

☐ Acts 6:2 **So the twelve summoned the congregation** of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables.

16: Did 9 Gifts End with Specific Groups?

- 16:25 Matthias was appointed by the ~120 disciples of Jesus. Does this invalidate the Cessationist definition where an apostle must be appointed by Jesus? If not, why not?
- 16:26 The voting to replace Judas was a significant event. Given some of the ~120 were women, and if perchance all of the ~120 were involved in voting to select Barsabbas or Matthias, wouldn't this again indicate women played a central role in the early church?

Criterion 3: Performed Signs and Wonders

The third criterion cited by Cessationists for being an apostle was they must have been able to perform signs and wonders.

- ❑ *2 Corinthians 12:12 The **signs of a true apostle** were performed among you with all perseverance, by **signs and wonders and miracles**.*

On that point, there is little debate as to whether or not the apostles were involved in signs and wonders. They were.

- ❑ *Acts 5:12 At the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico.*

A question arises, however, as to whether or not signs and wonders were limited to these apostles. They weren't. Consider others who gathered at Pentecost and spoke in tongues, Stephen who did great wonders, Cornelius, family and friends who spoke in tongues, Agabus who prophesied, the 12 disciples at Ephesus who spoke in tongues and prophesied, and Philip's 4 virgin daughters who were prophetesses.

- ❑ *Acts 2:1 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place ... 4 And they were **all filled** with the Holy Spirit and began to **speak with other tongues**, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.*
- ❑ *Acts 6:8 And Stephen, full of grace and power, was **performing great wonders and signs** among the people.*
- ❑ *Acts 10:24 ... Now **Cornelius** ... **his relatives and close friends**... 46 For they were hearing them **speaking with tongues** and exalting God ...*
- ❑ *Acts 11:27 Now at this time **some prophets** came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28 **One of them named Agabus** stood up and began to **indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world**. And this took place in the reign of Claudius.*
- ❑ *Acts 19:1 ... Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found some disciples ... 6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, **the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying**. 7 There were in all about **twelve men**.*
- ❑ *Acts 21:8 On the next day we left and came to Caesarea, and entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him. 9 Now this man had **four virgin daughters who were prophetesses**.*

CEASED? 2ND EDITION

16:27 Doesn't the fact that signs and wonders were done by many believers who were not apostles demonstrate that signs and wonders were for all believers, and not just a few - something that coincides with Mark 16 and confirmed by Galatians 3:5?

- ❑ *Mark 16:17 These **signs will accompany those who have believed**: in My name they will **cast out demons**, they will **speak with new tongues**; 18 they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; **they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover**.*
- ❑ *Galatians 3:5 So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and **works miracles** among you, do it by works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?*

Who were all the Apostles

In regards to this 4th group being the ones with whom the 9 Holy Spirit gifts both started and ended, a common Cessationist view is the apostles consisted of the original 11 plus Matthias and, in some cases, Paul. But were there other apostles besides these original 13 apostles?

James, the Brother of Jesus

- ❑ *Galatians 1:19 But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother.*

16:28 Doesn't Galatians 1:19 suggest James, the brother of Jesus, was also an apostle? Making it 14 apostles? If not, why not?

Barnabas

- ❑ *Acts 14:14 But when the **apostles Barnabas and Paul** heard of it, they tore their robes and rushed out into the crowd, crying out*

16:29 Doesn't Acts 14:14 suggest Barnabas was also an apostle? Making it 15 apostles? If not, why not?

16:30 Some Cessationists say the original 11 apostles plus Matthias and Paul had a special calling that no other apostles had. Given Barnabas and James were also apostles - and James wrote the book of James - what evidence is there to suggest every one of the original 13 had a calling that was above Barnabas and James?

Other Possible Apostles

Were there even more apostles in the early church? Consider the following:

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 15:4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that **He appeared to Cephas**, then to **the twelve**, 6 After **that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time**, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; 7 then He **appeared to James**, then to **all the apostles**; 8 and last of all, as to one untimely born, He **appeared to me also**. 9 For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.*

16: Did 9 Gifts End with Specific Groups?

16:31 After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to Peter, to the 12, to more than 500, to James, to 'all the apostles' and finally - in one way or another - to Paul. If Jesus was seen by the twelve as per verse 5, then doesn't the phrase 'then to all the apostles' in verse 7 indicate there were other apostles other than the 12 (original 11 plus Matthias), James and Paul? If not, then who does 'all the apostles' refer to?

Timothy and Silvanus

Per the above, the English word 'apostle' in the Greek is 'apostolos' (G652) which Strong's defines in part as 'applied to other eminent Christian teachers - Barnabas, Timothy and Silvanus'.

- ❑ *Romans 16:7 Greet Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners, who are outstanding among the **apostles**, who also were in Christ before me.*
- ❑ *1 Thessalonians 1:1 **Paul and Silvanus and Timothy**, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.*
- ❑ *Acts 14:14 But when the **apostles Barnabas and Paul** heard of it, they tore their robes and rushed out into the crowd, crying out*

16:32 Paul and Barnabas were clearly apostles. Why would Strong's definition of apostle include Timothy and Silvanus as being examples of apostles - if they weren't? I ask that somewhat tongue in cheek because if you say that Strong's is wrong, and we shouldn't believe everything we read without checking it out thoroughly, I agree. And I wonder how much you and I believe because we never independently researched the issue.

Andronicus and Junia

- ❑ *Romans 16:7 Greet **Andronicus and Junias**, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners, **who are outstanding among the apostles**, who also were in Christ before me. [NASB]*
- ❑ *Romans 16:7 Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are **well known to the apostles**, and they were in Christ before me. [ESV]*
- ❑ *Romans 16:7 Greet Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen and [once] my fellow prisoners, **who are held in high esteem in the estimation of the apostles**, and who were [believers] in Christ before me. [AMP]*

16:33 There is disagreement over whether Andronicus and Junia were apostles, or 'ordinary believers' who were well known by the apostles. Consider Junia who was female.

- i. If Junia was indeed an apostle, that clearly shows the function of apostle did not cease with the original 12 apostles; and
- ii. If Junia was not an apostle, doesn't the fact she was highly regarded by the apostles provide more substantive evidence that women were centrally involved in the early church, and to be centrally involved in the Body of Christ going forward? If not, why not?

The 70

Before the cross, Jesus appointed 70 individuals who were sent, among other things, to heal the sick and tell the people that the kingdom of God is upon them.

- *Luke 10:1 Now after this **the Lord appointed seventy others**, and sent them in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come ... 3 **Go**; behold, **I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves** ... 9 **and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'** ... 17 The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, **even the demons are subject to us in Your name.**"*

Consider the similarity in their mandate to the one Jesus gave the 12 apostles.

- *Mark 3:14 And **He appointed twelve**, so that they would be with Him and **that He could send them out to preach**, 15 and to have **authority to cast out the demons**.*
- 16:34 Would these 70 individuals, already experienced in serving as sent ones, be logical candidates to be sent out after the cross, potentially as apostles?
- 16:35 Would it be all that surprising if - one day - we learn they were part of the group referred to as 'all the apostles' in 1 Corinthians 15:7?
- *1 Corinthians 15:4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that **He appeared to Cephas**, then to **the twelve**. 6 After **that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time**, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; 7 then He **appeared to James**, then to **all the apostles**;*

For These Potential Apostles

- 16:36 To the extent some or all of these individuals were indeed apostles, we don't know one way or another how many of them saw the resurrected Jesus. But in terms of them being personally appointed the position of apostle by Jesus, isn't there reason to believe a good many were not appointed by the physical, resurrected Jesus? And if so, doesn't this throw a lot of water on that Cessationist criterion.

Three Other Considerations

1: Would it be Inconsistent of God to Limit the Gifts

Let's go back to Cornelius, his family and friends.

- *Acts 10:24 On the following day he entered Caesarea. Now **Cornelius** was waiting for them and had called together **his relatives and close friends** ... 44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. 45 All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. 46 For they were hearing them **speaking with tongues** and exalting God ...*
- 16:37 Some Cessationists argue that signs and wonders ended with the Gospel going to the Gentiles as represented by Cornelius, family and friends. If so, why would God give the gift of tongues to this small group and no other Gentiles, especially when miracles are signs that show one is a believer?

16: Did 9 Gifts End with Specific Groups?

- ❑ *Mark 16:17 These signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will **speak with new tongues**; 18 they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; **they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.***

2: Messengers/Sent Ones

The English word 'apostle' in the Greek is 'apostolos' (G652) meaning in part 'a delegate, messenger, one sent forth with orders a) specifically applying to the twelve apostles of Christ, and b) applied to other eminent Christian teachers - Barnabas, Timothy and Silvanus'.

Apostolos originates from the Greek word 'apostello' [G649] which means in part '1. to order (one) to go to a place appointed, to send away or dismiss.'

An associated Greek word is 'apostole' [G651] which means in part 'a sending away of the sending off of a fleet, consuls with an army'.

The 3 Greek words all refer to a person who has been sent to accomplish a task. These Greek words were not only used in reference to the original disciples, but also to Paul, Barnabas and James, the brother of Jesus.

- ❑ *Acts 2:43 Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the **apostles [apostolos G652]**.*
- ❑ *Acts 14:14 But when the **apostles [apostolos G652]** Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their robes and rushed out into the crowd, crying out*
- ❑ *Galatians 1:19 But I did not see any other of the **apostles [apostolos G652]** except James, the Lord's brother.*

The related Greek Word 'apostello' [G649] was also used in reference to the 70, Silas, Epaphroditus, Titus and those with Titus.

- ❑ *Luke 10:1 Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and **sent [apostello G649]** them ...*
- ❑ *Acts 15:27 "... we have **sent [apostello G649]** Judas and Silas ...*
- ❑ *Philippians 2:25 But I thought it necessary to send to you **Epaphroditus**, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your **messenger [apostolos G652]** and minister to my need;*
- ❑ *2 Corinthians 8:23 As for **Titus**, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brethren, they are **messengers [apostolos G652]** of the churches, a glory to Christ.*

When we look at the group labeled apostles, it is useful to consider them in the broader context as being part of the Body of Christ. Ephesians 4 advises of 5 functions - apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.

- ❑ *Ephesians 4:11 And He gave some as **apostles**, and some as **prophets**, and some as **evangelists**, and some as **pastors** and **teachers**, 12 for the **equipping of the saints for the work of service**, to the building up of the body of Christ; 13 **until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God**, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature] which belongs to the fullness of Christ.*

- 16:38 In terms of equipping the saints *'until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Word of God'*, was all the required equipping completed by the time the original apostles died? If so, why are there so many indicators today showing this is not the case?
- 16:39 Do we have a need today for sent ones, some of whom would do things similar to the original apostles in sharing the gospel and helping plant churches, equip the saints and when necessary - bring correction? If not, am I missing something?

3: Jesus and All Believers are Sent Ones

Jesus is our High Priest. In addition, He was an Apostle during His earthly ministry. And in my view, I suggest Jesus was our most important apostle.

- *Hebrews 3:1 Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider the **Apostle** and High Priest of our confession: **Jesus**;*

Jesus was sent by Father God, and just as He was sent, Jesus sends us.

- *John 20:21 So Jesus said to them again, "Peace be to you; just as the Father has sent Me, I also send you."*

- 16:40 Given that 100% of today's believers are sent ones - just like Jesus - doesn't it seem inconsistent that 0.0% of today's believers are apostles?

Summary on Apostles

Cessationists commonly cite three criteria to be a true apostle:

1. the person witnessed with their own eyes the physical, resurrected Christ;
 - Scriptures suggest Paul did not actually see the resurrected Christ, but was acutely aware of His presence.
2. the person was personally appointed by the physical, resurrected Christ:
 - Matthias was not appointed by Jesus but by the believers in Acts 1;
 - There is no certainty that Jesus personally appointed apostles such as Barnabas or James, or that Jesus appointed them in the same way He appointed the original 11 or Paul.
3. the person was involved in gifts such as tongues, healings and prophecy:
 - The original apostles were certainly involved in the Holy Spirit gifts, but so were many other non-apostles. Thus, signs and wonders do not make an apostle unique.

The Cessationist argument holds that the original apostles included the original 11 plus Matthias and maybe Paul. Scriptures indicate otherwise.

1. James, a brother of Jesus, and Barnabas weren't part of the original apostles, but were clearly cited as apostles.
2. A reference to *'all the apostles'* in 1 Corinthians 15:7 indicates there could have been other apostles including Timothy, Silvanus, Andronicus, Junia, the 70, Judas, Silas, Epaphroditus and Titus.

The Cessationist argument also holds that signs and wonders in the form of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts ended with the apostles. However, as cited many times, scriptures

16: Did 9 Gifts End with Specific Groups?

show many believers other than the apostles performed signs and wonders. These include the others who were part of the ~120 gathered at Pentecost, Cornelius family and friends, Stephen, Agabus, the 12 disciples at Ephesus, Philip's 4 daughters, and the Galatian believers.

The Bible also makes it clear that signs and wonders are to be the norm, and will serve as an indication that a person is a follower of Christ.

- ❑ *Matthew 10:8 **Heal the sick, raise the dead, ... cast out demons ...***
- ❑ *Mark 16:17 **These signs will accompany those who have believed: ... cast out demons, ... speak with new tongues; 18 ... they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.***
- ❑ *1 Corinthians 14:1 Pursue love, **yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.***
- ❑ *Galatians 3:5 So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and **works miracles** among you, do it by works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?*

Apostolic Gifts

- 16:41 Because the 9 Holy Spirit gifts are viewed by some believers as limited to the original apostles, these gifts are often referred to as the 'apostolic gifts'. However, given some of these 9 gifts were active in many other believers besides apostles - ~108 of the ~120 at Pentecost, Stephen, 4 daughters who prophesied, Cornelius, family and friends, Agabus, and the 12 believers at Ephesus - isn't it inaccurate to label them apostolic gifts?

5th GROUP? / OTHER "GROUPS"?

- 16:42 Chapter 10 reviews why Peter's "*Repent and be baptized*" in Acts 2:38 refers to Baptism in the Holy Spirit, not water baptism. If so, and if some or all of this group were Baptized in the Holy Spirit, wouldn't they represent a 5th group? And even more significantly, confirm the view that all believers can receive the Baptism in the Holy Spirit?

CLOSING POINTS TO PONDER

- 16:43 Would you agree that if the 9 Holy Spirit gifts ended with the early church, Paul would be well aware of that fact?
- 16:44 If you believe the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the 9 gifts were limited to the 4 locations - and possibly Paul's experience - doesn't that mean Paul had his own Baptism in the Holy Spirit and then never took steps to have any other believers Baptized in the Holy Spirit for ~20 years until - all of a sudden - he made it a priority to do so at Ephesus? And then never took steps i) to have anyone else receive their Baptism in the Holy Spirit nor ii) to equip believers to operate in the 9 gifts ... apart from a few ... such as those at Corinth in 1 Corinthians 11 who were praying and prophesying?
- 16:45 If your view is - "*Yes, Paul never took any steps to get others Baptized in the Holy Spirit or to operate in the 9 gifts after the events of Ephesus in Acts 19*" - why would Paul encourage believers in 1 Corinthians 14 (a book Paul wrote after the events of Acts 19) to pursue gifts such as prophesy and tongues if Paul knew no more of these gifts would be given out?

If the 9 Gifts Ceased, What Else Ceased?

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 17 focuses on the issue: If the 9 Holy Spirit gifts such as prophecy and tongues, and roles such as prophets and apostles have ceased, what else has ceased?

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 12:8 For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.*

Jesus's Gifts: Now a 3-Fold, not a 5-Fold Ministry?

As mentioned before, Ephesians 4 discusses 5 functions which are often called the 5-fold ministry. A key role of these functions is to equip the saints for service and to build up the Body of Christ.

- ❑ *Ephesians 4:11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ:*

- 17:1 If the functions/positions of prophet and apostle have ceased, why would the other 3 functions of evangelists, pastors and teachers continue?
- 17:2 Ephesians was written in ~60-62 AD, ~30 years after the cross. By that time, there were even more Christians than when Paul visited Ephesus in ~52-55AD. Why would Paul speak about these functions if they were going to be phased out in a few years when the remaining original apostles died? Or, if some of the functions were temporary, why wouldn't he at least clarify which functions were temporary and which were permanent?
- 17:3 Without prophets and apostles, how can today's saints be adequately equipped or the Body of Christ adequately built up?

What Other Gifts Ceased

Consider 1 Corinthians 12:28.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 12:28 And God has appointed in the church, first apostles,*

17: If Gifts Ceased, What Else Ceased?

second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.

17:4 Again, if the functions/positions of prophet and apostle have ceased, doesn't that mean other items such as teachers, helps, and administrations also ceased? If not, why not?

17:5 Further, if functions of prophets and apostles and the 9 Holy Spirit gifts were going to cease in the very near future, why wouldn't 1 Corinthians 12:28 exclude apostles, prophets, miracles and gifts of healings and only include things that wouldn't be ceasing, namely teachers, miracles, helps and administrations?

And how about Romans 12 which speaks of the Father's gifts.

❑ *Romans 12:6 Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; 7 if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; 8 or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.*

17:6 Once again, if the 9 Holy Spirit gifts including prophecy have ceased, why wouldn't issues such as service, teaching, exhortation, giving, leading and showing mercy have also ceased? And why would prophecy be mentioned if it was going to cease very soon?

17:7 Some Cessationists say 'normative' gifts (love, good works etc.) continue but 'non-normative' gifts - the supernatural gifts - such as prophecy, words of knowledge, healings and tongues have ceased. But isn't everything about God supernatural? And as children of God who are sent ones, who are told to heal the sick, to cast out demons and to raise the dead, shouldn't the supernatural be a regular occurrence in our lives?

17:8 If the supernatural non-normative gifts were a daily occurrence in our lives as we co-labor with God, wouldn't the supernatural become normative, and thus show we're a believer?

❑ *Mark 16:17 These signs will accompany those who have believed: ... cast out demons, ... speak with new tongues; 18 ... they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.*

17:9 Whose definition of normative should we use - God's, or humans?

Special Knowledge

Finally consider:

❑ *1 Corinthians 13:8 Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away.*

17:10 If gifts such as prophecy and tongues have already ceased, wouldn't knowledge have ceased by now as well? If not, why not?

17:11 There is no question that one day, gifts of prophecy and tongues and human knowledge as we understand these items today, will all cease when

we are home, and living face to face with Jesus. The love of God and the presence of God, however, will never cease. Isn't this the point that Paul was trying to make in 1 Corinthians 13:8?

Some Cessationists argue that the knowledge that has gone away in 1 Corinthians 13:8 refers to '*special knowledge*'. Interestingly, Bible translators didn't write it that way. The English word '*knowledge*' is derived from the Greek word '*gnosis*' [G1108] which means in part as '*general knowledge of the Christian religion, things lawful and unlawful for Christians, moral wisdom*'.

17:12 When I consider the above definition of '*knowledge*', I struggle to see the specifics of the '*special knowledge*' that have ceased. If you believe such special knowledge has ceased, can you provide more specific details on the special nature of this knowledge, rather than just making a general claim that special knowledge has ceased?

SOME, NOT ALL, NOT JUST A FEW

17:13 Consider 1 Corinthians 12:27 and Ephesians 4:11 again. If the 9 Holy Spirit gifts (and roles/offices of apostles and prophets) ended with the original apostles / very earliest of believers - why wasn't Paul clear that these offices and gifts were only given to a few individuals and were no longer available to these believers at Corinth and believers at Ephesus beyond the original 12 believers Paul met at Ephesus?

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 12:28 And God has appointed ... **first apostles, second prophets, third teachers**, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, and various kinds of tongues. 29 **All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? 30 All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?***
- ❑ *Ephesians 4:11 And He gave **some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, some as pastors and teachers***

CLOSING POINT TO PONDER

17:14 Page 21 of Chapter 2 of **CEASED?** lists Father God's gifts, Jesus's gifts and Holy Spirit's gifts. If the 9 Holy Spirit gifts such as prophecy and tongues ceased, and roles such as prophets and apostles have ceased, and these gifts and functions are all listed and intermingled with other gifts and functions, the core issue raised in Chapter 17 is - why haven't all the functions and gifts ceased? And why haven't they all ended in churches that loudly support Cessationism? Especially the gift of giving?

- ❑ *Romans 12:6 Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; 7 if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; 8 or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who **gives**, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.*

Is All Divine Revelation in the Bible? Sufficiency of Scripture

INTRODUCTION

A central reason why many Cessationists believe the Baptism in the Holy Spirit and the 9 Holy Spirit gifts ended is because all necessary divine revelation is already provided in the Bible. Nothing more including prophecies or personal messages from God are needed. Beginning after question 1:15, Chapter touched on this issue when we tested our hearts. Chapter 18 expands on this issue further. In addition, note Chapter 18 involved a major re-write in the 2nd Edition of **CEASED?**.

OPENING POINT TO PONDER

Many scriptures in the New Testament speak of true and false prophets. If there were no true prophets today, why would the Bible encourage believers to listen to any prophet, or to distinguish between true and false prophets? Why wouldn't God's Word say there will be no more prophets, and anyone claiming to be a prophet is automatically a false prophet? Why not make it obvious? Unless ... it isn't.

SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE

A core teaching in the Cessationist camp is that everything we need to know from God is found in God's Word and that believers have no need to hear from God in any way, shape or form outside of His Word. This view is *termed 'Sufficiency of Scripture'*. A core scripture underpinning this belief is 2 Timothy 3:15-16.

- ❑ *2 Timothy 3:15 and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus 16 All Scripture is inspired by God and beneficial for teaching, for rebuke, for correction, for training in righteousness;*

While '*All Scripture is inspired*' and thus of God, I struggle to see how this equates to everything we need to know from God is in Scripture. I also wonder how millions of believers over the centuries lived Christian lives '*led by God*' when they didn't have access to Bibles or quality Bible teachers? Same for all the believers today who don't have Bibles or a quality teacher.

3 Questions to Start

18:1 Some of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts including prophecy, words of knowledge, words of wisdom, tongues and interpretation of tongues involve God communicating to believers. If the 9 Holy Spirit gifts are valid today, wouldn't the communications between God and believers during the use of these gifts invalidate the Sufficiency of Scripture argument? If not, why not?

Now, consider these scriptures.

- ❑ *Mark 16:17 **These signs** will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will **cast out demons**, they will **speak with new tongues**; 18 they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will **lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.**"*
- ❑ *Matthew 10:8 **Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons.** Freely you received, freely give.*

18:2 If the Bible is sufficient for all our needs, does that mean the Bible also includes enough information to show believers how to do all that God wants us to do such as how to hear God's prophetic words, words of knowledge etc, and how to cast out demons? If not, why not?

18:3 Consider the items in the above verses - cast out demons, speak with new tongues, heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers:

- i. Are these items something that all believers should be equipped to do, and should be involved in today?
- ii. If so, in order for the Sufficiency of Scripture argument to hold, shouldn't the Bible provide enough information on how to do all the aforementioned things?
- iii. If the Bible does not provide enough instructions, does that again invalidate the Sufficiency of Scripture argument, and support the argument that believers need to hear from God in other ways to carry out these tasks?
- iv. If the Bible does not provide enough information but the above are not being done, is that a case of disobedience?
- v. If believers who you know are not equipped to do these things today, is that because their leaders are not making the training available, the believers are choosing not to get involved, or a combination of both?

Hearing from God Today

Cessationists believe God speaks to us through His Word and we speak to God through prayer. Others disagree and believe God speaks to believers not only through His Word but in other ways as well. A verse cited by many who believe we can hear from God today is John 10:27.

- ❑ *John 10:27 **My sheep listen to My voice**, and I know them, and they follow Me; 28 and I give them eternal life, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.*

18: Is All Divine Revelation in the Bible?

In a message to Grace Community Church, Justin Peters - a key Cessationist - taught God does speak to unbelievers today. In terms of John 10:27-28, Justin said: "... *this (John 10:27) is salvation ... before you and I came to Christ, we were lost sheep, lost sheep wandering around out in the pasture of life, grazing, minding our own business, but all of a sudden we hear a voice, and we lift our heads up and we see the Shepherd and we go to Him ...*"

To come at this viewpoint another way, this teaching means God does not speak to people today in any way, shape or form other than speaking (one time?) to us before we are born again. And it's ok for us to pray to God - sometimes/often for help - with faith that God will help us or others, but it is not ok to expect God to speak back to us? In other words, we can expect God to do things for us, but He remains silent while doing so. Not to be nit-picky, but when God answers our prayers, isn't that a form of God communicating to us?

To put this into context, God had 2-way communications with Adam and Eve before the fall, and immediately after the fall. After that, communication between God and mankind in Old Testament times was limited to a few individuals. Some communications were 2-way; others seem 1-way. In the time covered by New Testament writings, God spoke to many different people including His giving prophetic words to Philip's 4 daughters who were prophetesses and to women in 1 Corinthians 11 who were praying and prophesying. After John finished writing Revelation, God only speaks to people before we are born again, but once we are saved and become a child of God, God stops speaking with us until we die. Fair?

18:4 If believers can't hear from God today, how are non-believers able to not only hear Jesus today, but they can also 'see' Him and 'go to' Him? Isn't this saying we can go to God but He won't speak back to us once we decide we want Him in our life? If so, isn't that a rather interesting way to treat a new child, to treat His bride?

18:5 After we are born again, Jesus is in us. Doesn't this enable us to hear Jesus's voice, perhaps even easier than before we were born again?

- ❑ *2 Corinthians 13:5 Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! ... that Jesus Christ is in you - unless indeed you fail the test?*
- ❑ *Romans 8:10 If Christ is in [en] you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.*

In Chapter 5, we saw how Holy Spirit is **with** [para] a person, convicting us of our sins and drawing us to Jesus

- ❑ *John 14:17 that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with [para G3844] you and will be in you.*
- ❑ *John 16:7 But I tell you the truth. it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. 8 And He, when He comes, will **convict** the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment;*

CEASED? 2ND EDITION

Chapters 6 and 8 reviewed how Holy Spirit comes ***in*** [en] us when born again. As believers, Holy Spirit will - amongst other things - teach, guide, convict, lead etc.

- John 14:17 ... He abides **with** you and will be **in** you.*
- John 14:26 ... Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will **teach** you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."*
- John 16:13 ... He will **guide** you into all the truth; ...*
- Romans 8:14 For all who are **being led** by the Spirit of God ... are sons of God.*

18:6 In terms of Holy Spirit:

- i. if Holy Spirit draws us to Jesus, doesn't that mean Holy Spirit also communicates to/with us before we are born again just as Jesus does?
- ii. does having Holy Spirit come in us enable this communication from Holy Spirit before we're born again to continue after we're born again? Or does Holy Spirit - like Jesus - speak to/with us before we're saved and then stop speaking to/with us after we're born again until we die?
- iii. If Holy Spirit does not speak to believers today, what is the reason for Holy Spirit being in us and how does Holy Spirit teach, guide and lead us if He doesn't communicate with us?
- iv. Why can we hear Jesus and Holy Spirit before we are born again, but not afterwards when both are in us - all the time?

18:7 Coming at this from another angle, consider the following scriptures that are addressed to believers, not unbelievers.

- Acts 13:2 While they were worshiping the Lord ... the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."*
- Galatians 5:16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.*
- Hebrews 3:7 Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, "Today if you hear His voice, 8 Do not harden your hearts as when they provoked Me,*

Which alternative is supported by the above scriptures?

- i. Living a life by relying on God's Word only; or
- ii. living a life that is a combination of God's Word plus speaking to and hearing from God directly?

18:8 If we are believers, and God is in us - teaching, guiding, leading us etc.:

- i. how can we not sense His presence from time to time;
- ii. is it more likely we will hear from Holy Spirit than not; and
- iii. If we don't hear from Holy Spirit when He is in [en] us, then is it fair to ask '*what's the point of Holy Spirit coming in [en] us?*' And if we say something akin to '*in order to give us spiritual understanding*', doesn't that involve Holy Spirit communicating with us?

Religion or Relationship

When Jesus died on the cross, so many blessings are made available. The Divine Exchange in Chapter 6 lists some of them. Let me ask upfront.

18: Is All Divine Revelation in the Bible?

- 18:9 Are we first and foremost called to know God or to know about God? In other words, did God create people to have a relationship with Him here on earth, a relationship that starts here and continues on into heaven? Or to know tonnes of information about God and His views, commands, ways etc. while we live on earth, and then to begin a relationship with him in Heaven? In other words, is the Christian life on earth to be closer to:
- i. the personal relationship the disciples had with Jesus on earth; or
 - ii. the religious relationship that the Pharisees and Sadducees had with the Torah and the Law?
- 18:10 Satan enticed Eve to sin and Adam followed along. The relationship between God and the human race was dramatically changed. Centuries later, Jesus came to destroy the works of the enemy. Were satan's works destroyed in part by making a way for humans to again be able to have a personal relationship with God here on earth somewhat similar to what Adam and Eve had with God?
- ❑ *1 John 3:8 ... for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.*
- 18:11 As a youngster, I knew many things about Bobby Orr and Gordie Howe, but I never knew them. If I showed up at their home, I doubt they would have invited me in because I didn't have a personal relationship with them. I didn't know them. Won't God do the same to those who don't have a personal relationship with Him? He won't open the door to heaven?
- ❑ *Matthew 7:23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'*
 - ❑ *Luke 13:24 ... many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able ... 27 ... 'I do not know where you are from; leave Me, all you evildoers.'*

IS ALL NECESSARY DIVINE REVELATION IN THE BIBLE

- 18:12 In my view, divine revelation is God's supernatural revealing of information directly or through one or more persons that is relevant for one or more persons. In order for the Sufficiency of Scripture argument to be valid, wouldn't that mean all necessary divine revelation is found in the Bible? If this seems confusing, hang in there for just a bit.

Consider 2 Peter.

- ❑ *2 Peter 1:20 But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, 21 for **no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.***
- 18:13 If prophecies from God are part of God's divine revelation and all divine revelation is in the Bible, doesn't it follow that one or more details of all prophecies given by God in Biblical times will be found in either the Old Testament or the New Testament? If not, why not?

Are All Prophecies in the Bible?

Tightly linked to the notion of Sufficiency of Scripture and whether all necessary divine revelation is in the Bible or not, is this issue of whether all prophecies given by God in Biblical times are included in the Bible or not. Before getting into the evidence on this issue, let me ask two questions.

- 18:14 Is it reasonable to believe that every person the Bible says prophesied, or who is deemed a legitimate prophet or prophetess was given at least one prophetic word by God that - according to the Sufficiency of Scripture argument - should be recorded in the Bible? If not, why not?
- 18:15 For the Sufficiency of Scripture argument to hold, are these assumptions also inherent in this point of view?
- i. every single person who prophesied in Biblical times is mentioned or referred to in the Bible;
 - ii. every single prophecy given by every single one of the individuals mentioned in God's Word including Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Zechariah, and Malachi is in the Bible?

Scripture shows women were prophetesses or prophesied both before and after the cross, but for whom the details of specific prophecies are not given in the Bible.

- Acts 21:9 *Now this man had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses.*
- 1 Corinthians 11:4 *Every **man** who has something on his head while **praying or prophesying** disgraces his head. 5 But every **woman** who has her head uncovered while **praying or prophesying** disgraces her head ...*
- Luke 2:36 *And there was a **prophetess, Anna** the daughter of Phanuel ...*
- Exodus 15:20 ***Miriam the prophetess**, Aaron's sister....*
- Judges 4:4 *Now **Deborah, a prophetess**, the wife of Lappidoth ...*
- 2 Kings 22:14 *So Hilkiah ... went to **Huldah the prophetess** ...*
- Isaiah 8:3 *So I **approached the prophetess** ...*

And here are ~588 additional individuals - including ~15 after the cross - who prophesied or who were referred to as prophets, but the details of whose prophecies from each individual person are not in God's Word.

- Acts 15:32 ***Judas and Silas**, also being prophets themselves ...*
- Acts 19:1 *... Paul ... came to Ephesus ... 6 ... the Holy Spirit came on them ... speaking with tongues **and prophesying**. 7 ... **about twelve men**.*
- Titus 1:12 *One of themselves, **a prophet of their own**, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons."*
- Numbers 11:25 *Then the Lord came ... and He took of the Spirit who was upon him and placed Him upon the **seventy elders**. And when the Spirit rested upon them, **they prophesied**. But they did not do it again.*
- Judges 6:8 *that the Lord sent a **prophet** to the sons of Israel ...*
- 1 Kings 18:4 *for when Jezebel destroyed the prophets of the Lord, Obadiah took a **hundred prophets** and hid them by fifties in a cave ...*
- 1 Kings 22:6 *... **prophets together, about four hundred men** ...*
- 2 Chronicles 12:15 *... in the records of **Shemaiah the prophet***

18: Is All Divine Revelation in the Bible?

- ❑ *2 Chronicles 15:8 ... the son of Oded the prophet ...*

The following scriptures refer to unspecified numbers of individuals who prophesied, but the details of whose prophecies aren't in God's Word. Note 1 Kings 18:4 is referred to both above and below. 1 Kings 18 above relates to 100 prophets hid by Obadiah; the reference below relates to an untold number of prophets destroyed by Jezebel.

- ❑ *Acts 11:27 ... some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28 One of them named Agabus stood up ...*
- ❑ *Romans 12:6 Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith;*
- ❑ *1 Samuel 10:10 ... a group of prophets ...*
- ❑ *1 Samuel 19:20 Then Saul sent messengers to take David, but when they saw the company of prophets prophesying, with Samuel standing and presiding over them, the Spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul; and they also prophesied. 21 When Saul was informed of this, he sent other messengers, but they also prophesied. So Saul sent messengers again the third time, yet they prophesied. ...*
- ❑ *1 Kings 18:4 for when Jezebel destroyed the prophets of the Lord, Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them by fifties in a cave ...*
- ❑ *1 Kings 22:10 ... all the prophets were prophesying before them.*
- ❑ *2 Kings 2:5 The sons of the prophets who were at Jericho ...*
- ❑ *2 Kings 2:3 Then the sons of the prophets who were at Bethel ...*
- ❑ *1 Samuel 19:24 He [i.e. King Saul] also stripped off his clothes, and he too prophesied before Samuel ... "Is Saul also among the prophets?"*

18:16 Given general descriptions such as sons of prophets at Bethel and Jericho, is it reasonable to think there were other prophets living at different times and in different locations who are not identified in the Bible? And who did not have any prophecies given to them recorded in the Bible?

18:17 Don't the above scriptures clearly show not all prophetic words that God gave during Biblical times - divine revelations - are in the Bible?

18:18 Moreover, don't the above scriptures put a major hole in the argument that any prophecies received from God today are automatically invalid because all divine revelation is in God's word? If not, why not?

On a bit of a side note, I heard a leading Cessationist comment that if person writes down a personal word from God, doing so results in them writing scripture.

18:19 If this Cessationist view were indeed valid, does that mean:

- all prophetic words which were given in Biblical times and which were written down are all in the Bible; and
- if even one prophetic word given by God in Biblical times was written down but is not in the Bible, the Bible is incomplete?

Tongues and Interpretation of Tongues

Cessationists believe the 9 Holy Spirit gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 ended with the early church. Two of the 9 gifts are tongues and interpretation of tongues.

18:20 On the basis a tongue and its corresponding interpretation can give the equivalent of a prophecy, word of knowledge or word of wisdom, does the fact that no details of even one interpretation of a tongue are found in God's Word show once again that not all of God's divine revelations are in the Bible? If not, why not?

Are Additional Revelations from God Still Possible

In my view, the evidence in the Bible and my experiences clearly show the 9 Holy Spirit gifts did not end with the early church. But apart from that, consider this.

18:21 God doesn't change. Prophets were vital in the Old and New Testament. Would it be more or less consistent of God to continue using prophets today to reveal important information impacting the lives of people?

- ❑ *Amos 3:7 Surely the Lord God does nothing Unless He reveals His secret counsel To His servants the prophets.*
- ❑ *Luke 24:25 And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!"*
- ❑ *Revelation 1:3 Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.*

18:22 Holy Spirit is inside us when we're born again to guide, teach, convict and lead us. Is this a form of divine revelation? If it is, and if all divine revelation is in the Bible, wouldn't that mean one or more details of every discussion between God and humans would also be in the Bible? If not, why not?

18:23 If some of these discussions between God and human beings in Biblical terms are not a form of divine revelation that warrants being in the Bible, doesn't that mean similar discussions between God and people today are valid and appropriate? If not, why not?

Alignment, not Contradiction

We can receive prophetic words from false prophets, true prophets and from individuals who are not prophets, but who have been given a prophetic word via the Holy Spirit gift of prophecy. One way that God helps us know if such words are of God or not, is through His Word. If a prophetic word does not align with the Bible, or contradicts the Bible, we know for sure it is not of God.

- ❑ *1 Thessalonians 5:21 But **examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good;***
- ❑ *Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so **that you may prove what the will of God is,** that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

18:24 In terms of prophecies given today, if the message is aligned with God's Word or does not contradict God's Word, then it might be from God. But even then, it might not be. Isn't that why God's Word tells us to identify

18: Is All Divine Revelation in the Bible?

what spirit any prophetic word is coming from - to know whether it's from Holy Spirit, a demonic spirit, or the speaker's own spirit/soul?

- ❑ *1 John 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*

But Today's Prophets aren't 100% Accurate

Prophecies in the Bible are typically viewed as 100% accurate, and because 'prophets' today usually aren't 100% accurate, Cessationists often use this as evidence that modern-day prophets aren't of God. Deuteronomy 18:22 is a scripture often used to support this Cessationist point of view.

- ❑ *Deuteronomy 18:22 When the prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, and the thing does not happen or come true, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken ...*

As believers, we can 'hear' multiple voices. We have our own thoughts, thoughts from other people, thoughts from the enemy, as well as messages from God that can come in various ways including but not limited to dreams, visions, a still quiet voice, an audible voice, or through angels. Differentiating which voice we're hearing can be difficult. This can result in prophecies that aren't of God, but from another source.

18:25 That being said, is the accuracy of today's prophets and prophecies a separate issue from whether or not the gifts including prophecy ceased? And does it also help explain why God's Word tells us to test all things?

- ❑ *1 Thessalonians 5:21 But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good;*

18:26 We also need to remember God changes His mind. And could that explain why some prophecies in recent years don't appear to have come true?

- ❑ *Exodus 32:14 So the Lord changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people.*
- ❑ *Jonah 3:10 When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it.*

18:27 As discussed more fully in Chapter 23, God often has conditions on what He will do. Doesn't this suggest some prophecies are conditional? That in order for some prophecies to be fulfilled, it may depend on us?

- ❑ *2 Chronicles 7:13 **If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send a plague among My people, 14 and My people who are called by My name humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.***

18:28 Another consideration is that God's ways are not our ways. Take for instance, the many prophets that prophesied President Trump would be re-elected in 2020. After election night, many said the prophets got it

wrong. But were they? Did President Trump lose, or did he win and the election was stolen? Did we humans put our timelines as to when we thought the prophecy should be proven true ... or false? Time will tell. In the meantime, consider Isaiah who prophesied the forthcoming Messiah which did not happen for several hundred years.

And finally, consider when God used a deceiving spirit.

- *1 Kings 22:20 And the Lord said, 'Who will entice Ahab to go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?' And one spirit said this, while another said that. 21 Then a spirit came forward and stood before the Lord, and said, 'I will entice him.' 22 And the Lord said to him, 'How?' And he said, 'I will go out and be a deceiving spirit in the mouths of all his prophets.' Then He said, 'You shall entice him, and you will also prevail. Go and do so.' 23 Now then, behold, **the Lord has put a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all these prophets** of yours; and the Lord has declared disaster against you."*

18:29 Doesn't this example of God putting a lying spirit - a demon - into a prophet show once again how unwise it can be to put God in a box, how God uses different ways to accomplish His goals, and how vital it is to test all prophetic words, and to seek Holy Spirit on all things?

I have seen different teachings of what a false prophet represents. I haven't studied issues of prophecy and false prophets in great detail, but two comments resonated with me in my limited research. One comment is that false prophets have evil or self-serving intentions. The second is that just because a person's prophecy does not materialize in the way or time frame expected, or may ultimately turn out to be wrong, does not automatically make the person a false prophet. If it does, then I guess every teacher of God's Word who makes a mistake is a false teacher too.

Another Type/Level of Prophecy

Considerable focus is given in the Cessationist vs Continuationist divide on the issue of prophecy. But consider the gift - '*word of knowledge*'. Per my testimonies on psoriasis and the Sikh security guard, words of knowledge were very impactful.

18:30 Should such words of knowledge from God be considered divine revelation? I say yes. Do one or more examples warrant being in the Bible? Again I say yes. Do all words of knowledge that were given in Biblical times warrant being in the Bible? I say no. Does the same situation apply to prophecy? I say yes. What sayeth youeth?

In regards to the hundreds if not thousands of prophecies from prophets identified in the Bible but the specifics of which aren't actually recorded in the Bible, some believers view them as another kind or type of prophecy, or as being of a different level of value/importance. In other words, there are divine revelations that are necessary for the overall Body of Christ and were included in God's Word, and some divine revelations that are not for everybody, or which would bring no additional value.

18: Is All Divine Revelation in the Bible?

18:31 If these explanations aren't acceptable, what's your explanation?

Consider two of Jesus's prophecies related to a donkey and a room for Passover.

- ❑ *Matthew 21:2 saying to them, "**Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied there ...***
- ❑ *Mark 14:13 ... **a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him; ... 15 And he himself will show you a large upper room ...***

18:32 Are these two prophecies of Jesus, while significant in the events of Jesus's life, on the same level as the prophecy of Jesus being born of a virgin, or the prophecies that Jesus would be resurrected? Are they examples of different levels, values, or scope of prophetic words?

AN ISSUE OF COMFORT?

When it comes to issues related to prophecy, words of knowledge, healing and other Holy Spirit gifts, I wonder if some believers don't want to get involved in such gifts out of discomfort or even fear - fear of being wrong, fear of looking foolish, fear of the unknown, fear of being criticized and judged by one's denomination that doesn't believe in the gifts, fear of having to leave one's church, and/or fear of being shunned by family, friends, church leaders, and co-workers?

18:33 When it comes to the notion that all divine revelations are not found in the Bible, how many believers will not even consider this possibility, but will dismiss it out of hand without considering the merits? In such cases, is selfishness, pride, fear, and/or loyalty to current beliefs greater than a commitment to seeking and obeying the truths found in God's Word?

18:34 I also wonder how many believers who are used to relying only on the Bible, are apprehensive about changing to where they personally hear from Holy Spirit in addition to relying on what the scriptures have to say? And thus tend to shy away from such blessings? After all, could hearing from God require a degree of uncertainty? A greater/different kind of faith? But having said that, isn't faith to be central in our Christian walk?

- ❑ *Hebrews 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please Him ...*

CLOSING POINT TO PONDER

18:35 God doesn't change in terms of His character, but constantly changes in the ways He does things. Thus, if God gave some words and prophetic messages to individuals in Biblical times, God could conceivably have changed His ways and chosen to no longer speak to people after the book of Revelation was written. However, wouldn't that be inconsistent:

1. with the reality that Holy Spirit and Jesus live in believers;
2. with the warning in Matthew 7:23 that Jesus will tell some to depart if they don't know Him; and
3. with the notion of God wanting a personal relationship with each of us here on earth, a relationship that will continue on into heaven?

Charismatic & Pentecostal Misbehaviors

INTRODUCTION

ONE more reason why many Cessationists believe the gifts ended is due to inappropriate behaviors of some Charismatic and Pentecostal leaders. An extension of this issue is that other Charismatic and Pentecostal leaders are not adequately dealing with those who are misbehaving. Chapter 19 briefly addresses these issues. For convenience sake, I refer to Charismatics and Pentecostals as Charismatics.

Misbehaviors

From my research, the three most common types of inappropriate behaviors cited by Cessationists are sexual indiscretions, exploiting others financially, and engaging in teachings and activities that are not Biblical. In many cases, I think God would agree with the concerns. Moreover, there are probably many more inappropriate things that have gone on, or are currently going on but hidden out of sight. So many of these things make one shudder. But let me ask a few questions.

- 19:1 How many inappropriate behaviors are going on in non-Charismatic circles that are hidden away to protect pastors, churches, and the donation box? Even little things, such as how many expenses are charged to the church when they are personal? Or major things such as sexual harassment and spiritual abuse which we now know are not limited to Charismatic circles, but rather plagues virtually every denomination?
- 19:2 What are non-Charismatic leaders doing to address the ungodly judgments, criticisms and mocking of Continuationists that are made by Cessationists or by other non-Charismatic leaders? And why aren't non-Charismatic leaders speaking out against critics of Charismatics who base their criticisms on small samples of inappropriate behaviors or incorrect teachings of Charismatics to make blanket statements - often using mocking words and gestures - about hundreds of millions of Charismatics?
- 19:3 Further, when we see one believer mocking another, be it a Cessationist doing so to a Continuationist, or any other believer doing so to any other believer, shouldn't this kind of behavior set off alarm bells? Shouldn't all our hearts - assuming we're born again - be filled with concern and words that are filled with love and prayer?
- *Matthew 7:4 Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye?*

19: Charismatic & Pentecostal Misbehaviors

If you think I'm off base, consider Smith Wigglesworth. George Stormont was a close friend of Mr. Wigglesworth and wrote a book *"Wigglesworth, A Man Who Walked with God"*. The book reveals God did many miracles through Mr. Wigglesworth. He sought to live a holy life. He would not allow newspapers in his home because they didn't contain the truth. He was a man of passionate prayer. He had great compassion for the hurting and the unsaved. He shared the Gospel with words and power for many decades. He didn't like being viewed as having any special gifts. All glory was to go to God. However, Mr. Wigglesworth is also known for unusual behaviors, one of which was having punched some people when praying for them to be healed and/or set free.

19:4 Why do we only see the perceived negative behaviors of individuals such as Mr. Wigglesworth being mentioned by the Cessationist movement while the amazing things done through him and other Charismatics are basically ignored? Is it because the hearts and loyalties of critics are first and foremost to their beliefs and comfort zones?

I don't know if everybody got healed after such behaviors, but the indication is they were. If not, wouldn't Mr. Wigglesworth likely have been imprisoned? A core issue is whether or not God told him to do those things. From my vantage point, I can't comprehend God telling Mr. Wigglesworth to punch somebody, but then again, I don't *'get'* God killing two believers - Ananias and Sapphira - after the cross, causing worms to eat Herod or inflicting plagues on the Egyptians including *'innocent ones'*. It's often a challenge to know what is of God and what may be the sinful nature of a human being that is being influenced by the demonic world.

19:5 If Mr. Wigglesworth's inappropriate behavior is reason to believe the gifts have ended, wouldn't that mean shortcomings of some Cessationist leaders (lack of love, kindness, patience) is reason to believe that love, kindness and patience are also invalid now? If not, why the double standard?

19:6 If we saw inappropriate behaviors by someone today, I wonder what percentage of believers would respond by mocking or criticizing, and what percentage would seek revelation from God as to how to pray for the person, and then actually pray for them?

19:7 If we attack someone publicly - verbally or in writing - when God hasn't directly called us to do so, are we doing the devil's work, an issue Derek Prince raised in his book *'Experiencing God's Power'*?

CLOSING POINT TO PONDER

19:8 When individuals say they had a crazy encounter with God, shouldn't we be slow to criticize? After all, imagine if you were explaining how God stopped the Mississippi River from flowing, how you walked through this great river on dry ground, and then God continued its flow after you reached the other side. I imagine many Christians would be inclined to say you were a leaking rowboat without both your oars in the water. And yet, God parted the Red Sea along with many other unusual things. Is that perhaps why God's Word tells us to pray without ceasing - to speak to God and to hear from Him - all day long? That it's not wise to rely heavily on our thoughts or the thoughts of others, but to continually seek Holy Spirit for revelation and guidance?

Summary of Cessationist Arguments

INTRODUCTION

THE Cessationist/Continuationist disagreement is centered around whether or not the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the 9 Holy Spirit gifts including tongues and prophecy have ceased. Chapter 20 summarizes key parts of evidence presented in previous chapters of **CEASED?**.

FROM CHAPTER 1 OF CEASED?

Argument 1

Chapter 1 does a bit of a heart check on readers by asking a few questions of Cessationists, Charismatics and Catholics. Chapter 1 touches on the Cessationist view that the 9 Holy Spirit gifts found in 1 Corinthians 12 ended with the original apostles or other groups of early believers. The 'all' in Acts 2:4 shows many more believers than the original apostles were given the gifts of tongues, and potentially other Holy Spirit gifts, right from the get-go.

- ❑ *Acts 1:15 At this time Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of about one hundred and twenty) ...*
- ❑ *Acts 2:1 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place ... 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.*

In questions 1:7 and 1:8 of Chapter 1, **CEASED?** touches on why tongues and the corresponding interpretation of the tongues is a form of prophecy.

20:1 I cannot find the specifics of one interpretation of a tongue in God's Word. Does this indicate some of God's divine revelations aren't actually in the Bible? Or does it mean that God created the gift of interpretation of tongues, but then chose not to give the gift to any believer?

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 14:1 Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy ... 5 Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying.*

20: Summary of Cessationist Arguments

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians in ~ 52-57 AD, 20-25 years after the cross. I asked two questions - 1:9 and 1:10 - on 1 Corinthians 11:4-5 which are copied below.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 11:4 Every **man** who has something on his head while **praying or prophesying** disgraces his head. 5 But every **woman** who has her head uncovered while **praying or prophesying** disgraces her head...*
- 20:2 (1:9) Why would Paul instruct believers to be concerned about head coverings of Corinthian believers if prophesying wasn't available to the 'ordinary' believer at Corinth, or for that matter, any of the hundreds of thousands of ordinary believers living at that time? And given Paul was advising the Corinthians on how to pray and prophesy properly, doesn't that suggest they were already prophesying, just not quite correctly?
- 20:3 (1:10) If women were to wear head coverings when they prophesied, doesn't this mean women were expected to prophesy? In addition, doesn't it open the door to the notion that many dozens, hundreds, or even tens of thousands of female believers living at that time could potentially have been given the gift of prophecy? Or at least prophesied? If not, why not?

FROM CHAPTER 13 OF CEASED?

Argument 2

A 2nd reason why Cessationists believe the Holy Spirit gifts ended is their view that the gifts were given to a limited number of early believers. Once they died, the gifts ceased. Chapter 13 of **CEASED?** shows there were many hundreds of thousands of believers existing when Paul visited Ephesus in ~52-55AD and even more believers when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians a few years later. On several occasions, Paul encouraged all believers - not just a select few - to seek the 9 Holy Spirit gifts.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 12:31 **But earnestly desire the greater gifts** ...*
- ❑ *1 Corinthians 14:1 Pursue love, **yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts**, ...*
- ❑ *1 Corinthians 14:5 Now I **wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy** ...*
- ❑ *1 Corinthians 14:39 Therefore, my brethren, **desire earnestly to prophesy** ...*

- 20:4 If these gifts didn't apply to all believers at that time, why would the Corinthians be treated differently other believers living then ... or now?
- 20:5 If signs and wonders were limited to a select few individuals for a short period of time, why would Paul write these scriptures the way he did? Wouldn't it be reasonable, and responsible, for Paul to have made it clear there were limitations? That the gifts were for a select few, and for a very, very short period of time that - for all intents and purposes - was basically over? And for that matter, if the gifts ended with the earliest of believers, what is the benefit of Paul even mentioning the gifts in 1 Corinthians 12?
- 20:6 Ephesians was written after 1 Corinthians. Similar to the issue above, why would Paul write about the 5 offices/positions at a time when there were hundreds of thousands of believers if two - apostles and prophets - had already effectively ended which is the claim of leading Cessationists?
 - ❑ *Ephesians 4:11 And He gave some as **apostles**, some as **prophets**, some as **evangelists**, some as **pastors** and **teachers** ...*

FROM CHAPTER 14 OF CEASED?

Argument 3

A 3rd reason Cessationists believe the 9 Holy Spirit gifts have ceased is that signs and wonders were already declining in the latter chapters of Acts.

Signs and wonders were mentioned frequently from Acts 2 through to Acts 21. Chapters 22 to 26 are focused on Paul’s legal issues. Acts 27 reviews Paul’s sailing adventure which included 2 prophecies that were fulfilled. Acts concludes in Chapter 28 with Paul’s arrival on Malta where he is bitten by a viper but not harmed. The father of the island’s chief officer, Publius, was healed as were many others.

20:7 Is the lack of mention of the 9 gifts in Chapters 21-26 - where Paul was imprisoned - a surprising outcome given the focus was on providing a fairly detailed account of Paul’s legal issues?

20:8 Paul spent 2 years imprisoned in Caesarea (Acts 24:26-27) during which Felix spoke to Paul often. Two verses provide the entire commentary on these two years in prison. On the other hand, 163 of the 165 verses from Acts 21:27 through Acts 26:32 provide considerable detail on Paul’s legal issues that cover a few months at most. Doesn’t this short period of time make these 5+ chapters an unreliable indicator as to whether or not the 9 Holy Spirit gifts were declining at the end of Acts?

20:9 In terms of Chapters 22-26, does the fact there was no mention of signs and wonders mean the 9 gifts weren’t actually happening through a) Paul nor b) any of the original apostles/disciples? Or is it more reasonable to conclude the 9 gifts were continuing, but that there was simply no mention?

Chapter 14 also analyzes the frequency of mention of Holy Spirit gifts by comparing them to the number of chapters involved and time frames involved.

Figure 14:4 Summary of Frequency of Occurrence

Description of Analysis	Acts 2-21	Acts 22-26	Acts 27-28	Acts 22-28
I: Average occurrences per chapter if count all chapters	$24/20 = 1.2$	$0/5 = 0$	$5/2 = 2.5$	$5/7 = .7$
II: Average occurrences per chapter if count chapters where gifts are mentioned	$24/13 = 1.8$	$0/0 = 0$	$5/2 = 2.5$	$5/2 = 2.5$
III: Average # of occurrences per year based on years covered in chapters	A: $24/20 = 1.2$	B: $0/.5=0$	C: $5/3.0 = 1.7$ D: ** $5/1=5.0$	E: $5/3.5 = 1.4$ F: ** $5/1=5.0$

Data for I: and II: are taken from Figures 14:2 and 14:3.

** D: and F: are based on only 1 year. The 2 years in Acts 28:30 are excluded.

20: Summary of Cessationist Arguments

Figure 14:4 would show a decline in the frequency of gifts in the latter chapters of Acts if we combined all of Chapters 22-28 together. However, if we remove the 5+ chapters (22-26) which were focused on Paul's legal issues, we see the frequency of occurrence actually increasing in the last 2 chapters of Acts as it draws to a close.

20:10 If you think it is more appropriate to include all 7 chapters - Acts 22-28 - instead of just the last 2 chapters of Acts, what is your rationale?

20:11 A separate analysis shows the average frequency of mention of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts in the last 2 chapters of Acts is equal to, or greater than, the average frequency of mention in any 2 consecutive chapters in all of Acts. Doesn't this also show that the frequency of occurrence was not decreasing? And if anything, the frequency of occurrence was increasing?

20:12 Doesn't this information show the 9 Holy Spirit gifts had not declined, and were not on their way to ceasing? If not, what does the evidence show?

Argument 4

Chapter 14 of **CEASED?** also discusses the 4th Cessationist argument for the 9 Holy Spirit gifts ceasing - the minimal mention of the gifts in the 21 New Testament books after Acts (27 total New Testament books excluding the 4 Gospels, Acts and Revelation) means the gifts were declining and all but ceased.

The Cessationist argument inherently assumes there is a direct correlation between the frequency of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts being mentioned, and their actual rate of occurrence. This Cessationist argument contends that signs and wonders were regularly occurring up to the time Paul traveled to Ephesus and other locations in Acts 19-21, but declined noticeably thereafter. Based on this argument, the New Testament books written before Paul went to Ephesus should make frequent mention of signs and wonders. Conversely, books written after Paul's trip to Ephesus should have minimal mention of the 9 gifts in operation. So how often is there mention of specific events involving the 9 gifts in the 4 books written before Paul went to Ephesus - James, Galatians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians? Not once.

20:13 Doesn't this result invalidate the Cessationist assumption that frequency of occurrence will be validated by a corresponding frequency of mention?

In terms of the books written after Paul's travels in Acts 19-21, the Cessationist argument contends that since we see no mention in these books, that is proof that signs and wonders were declining and on their way to cessation. The first part of the argument has truth. These 17 books provide few specific details on signs and wonders. However, more than 60 times in the 17 books, general references are made to signs and wonders, or to associated issues such as the office of prophet.

20:14 Given the 4 books written before Paul's travels in Acts 19-21 make no mention of specific occurrences of the gifts, and given these 4 books were written when the gifts were in full operation, how can one conclude the lack of specific examples of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts in the 17 books written after Paul's travels in Acts 19-21 mean they were declining or had ended?

While the 4 Gospels and Acts record historical events, and made frequent mention of signs and wonders, we find the 21 books have a different focus - which as per Figure 14:1 - is on a wide variety of themes.

CEASED? 2ND EDITION

- 20:15 Isn't the absence of examples of signs and wonders a realistic result in these books when one considers their focus is different?
- 20:16 When the author of Hebrews - the last book written by Paul ~35 years after the cross - talks about signs and wonders, doesn't that further indicate signs and wonders were expected to continue?

Chapter 14 also raised the issue of whether the Cessationist belief held by many believers makes the lack of signs and wonders a self-fulfilling outcome. I copy questions 14:33 and 14:34 from that discussion.

- 20:17 (14:33) North American denominations including but not limited to the Reformed, 7th Day Adventist, Mennonite and Baptist churches have typically taught the 9 Holy Spirit gifts have ceased. However, given a belief system that the 9 Holy Spirit gifts have ceased, isn't it understandable that believers in these denominations wouldn't seek or expect such gifts? And if they don't seek the gifts, isn't it reasonable to expect that the gifts don't occur? In other words, is it a situation of "*we have not because we ask not*"?
- ❑ *James 4:2 You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. **You do not have because you do not ask.***
 - ❑ *Matthew 21:22 And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.*
 - ❑ *1 John 5:14 This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, **if we ask anything according to His will,** He hears us.*
- 20:18 (14:34) And thus, isn't the Cessationist belief system prone to be self-fulfilling for believers who don't believe in the 9 Holy Spirit gifts? And is it even more likely to be self-fulfilling for those who view such activities as being heretical, or who criticize other believers involved in these gifts?

FROM CHAPTER 15 OF CEASED?

Argument 5

Cessationists often argue there were two primary purposes for signs and wonders in the New Testament - proving Jesus was the Messiah, and to launch the gospel. Once the gospel was launched through the apostles, there was no more need for signs and wonders. And thus, Cessationists often use this 5th argument as a reason to believe the 9 Holy Spirit gifts have ceased.

Chapter 15 outlines several other reasons for signs and wonders including:

1. spreading the gospel, not just launching it;
2. making it easier to share the gospel;
3. confirming God's Word;
4. glorifying God;
5. providing signs for believers and unbelievers;
6. demonstrating the power of the Name of Jesus;
7. demonstrating and using authority over demons;
8. showing God's compassion;
9. giving people a warning message; and
10. providing forewarnings.

20: Summary of Cessationist Arguments

20:19 Don't all the above reasons still have merit today? And thus, wouldn't signs and wonders be of immense help in advancing God's kingdom today?

FROM CHAPTER 16 OF CEASED?

Argument 6

As per the summary of Chapter 13, many Cessationists believe signs and wonders ended when a group of early disciples died. Cessationists do not agree on who was actually "*in the group*". The four most common groups cited are as follows:

1. Group 1: believers Baptized in the Holy Spirit at the 4 locations in Acts 1:8;
2. Group 2: believers (original apostles + others) Baptized in the Holy Spirit at Pentecost;
3. Group 3: believers Baptized in the Holy Spirit at Pentecost + those upon whom these individuals laid hands; and
4. Group 4: original apostles, or else the original apostles + Paul.

Considerations: Group 1 - Believers Baptized in Holy Spirit at 4 locations per Acts 1:8

Many Cessationists believe signs and wonders were not needed once the Holy Spirit had been poured out at the 4 locations as per Acts 1:8.

- *Acts 1:8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in **Jerusalem**, and in all **Judea** and **Samaria**, and even to the **remotest part of the earth**.*

<u>Scriptures</u>	<u>Who's there</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u># Believers</u>
Acts 2	Jews	Jerusalem	~120
Acts 8	Samaritans	Samaria*	Unknown
Acts 10	God-fearers	Caesarea**	Cornelius, family & friends
Acts 19	Gentiles	Ephesus***	12

Acts 15 shows Paul took the gospel to the Thessalonians '*in power and in the Holy Spirit*', a trip that occurred prior to his trip to Ephesus in Acts 19.

20:20 When Paul met the 12 disciples at Ephesus, his first priority was to ensure they were Baptized in the Holy Spirit. At Thessalonica, Paul took the gospel '*in power and in the Holy Spirit*'. The Thessalonians became imitators of Paul. Doesn't that indicate Paul likely taught the Thessalonians about the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and took steps to ensure they were Baptized in the Holy Spirit? If not, why would Paul not do at Thessalonica what was a priority for him to do at Ephesus?

20:21 Thessalonica was further away from Israel than Ephesus. On the theory an outpouring - a Baptism of the Holy Spirit - occurred at Thessalonica, doesn't that invalidate the argument Ephesus was the remotest part on earth to receive an outpouring?

20:22 Rome was further away from Israel than Ephesus. There were many other cities, towns and/or inhabited regions further away from Israel than Rome when Paul met the 12 disciples at Ephesus. Ephesus was not the remotest part of the earth when Jesus told His disciples they would be witnesses to the remotest part of the earth. As a result, doesn't this

invalidate the argument that we should take the locations in Acts 1:8 literally, and instead validate the opposing argument that we should take the locations symbolically? If not, why not?

20:23 In addition, isn't the argument that the 9 Holy Spirit gifts were limited to those who were Baptized in the Holy Spirit at these 4 locations further invalidated given that:

- i. the Bible identifies two groups that the Good News was for - the Jews and the Gentiles - not four locations;
- ii. Peter and the other apostles were ecstatic when the first Gentiles - Cornelius, family and friends - were Baptized in the Holy Spirit, and they realized God had given the gift of eternal life to both the Gentiles and Jews, but no such excitement was recorded when groups in Samaria, Caesarea or Ephesus were Baptized in the Holy Spirit; and
- iii. no mention was made of a prophecy being fulfilled in part, or in full when individuals were Baptized at the 3 locations after the events of Pentecost at Jerusalem?

Contradicting this Cessationist view is the view that the 4 locations in Acts 1:8 - Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the remotest part of the earth - are more than physical locations where the gospel was first taken. Like so many other scriptures, there is a double meaning wherein these actual locations are also symbolic of much bigger geographic areas. One symbolic view of these geographic areas is as follows:

Jerusalem:	Take the gospel to the town or city where we live;
Judea:	Take the gospel beyond our town or city into the rest of our state or province, and those states and provinces nearby;
Samaria:	Take the gospel to the rest of our country; and
Ephesus:	Take the gospel to the rest of the world including countries that are furthest away.

Group 2 - Original Apostles + those gathered at Pentecost

20:24 Isn't this second group invalid because Paul, Cornelius, family and friends, and the 12 believers at Ephesus all spoke in tongues and/or prophesied, but were not at Pentecost?

Group 3 - Original Apostles + others at Pentecost + those on whom hands were laid

20:25 Isn't the argument for this group invalidated by the fact no one laid hands:

- i. on the non-apostles gathered at Pentecost who spoke in tongues;
- ii. nor on Cornelius, family and friends when they were Baptized in the Holy Spirit and started to speak in tongues?

Group 4 - Original Apostles Only

20:26 Isn't the argument for this fourth group invalidated given:

- i. several individuals besides the original 11, Matthias and Paul, were labeled as apostles including James (Jesus's brother), Barnabas, and possibly Timothy, Sylvanus, Andronicus, Junia, the 70, Judas, Silas, Epaphroditus and Titus;

20: Summary of Cessationist Arguments

- ii. Holy Spirit gifts occurred through individuals other than apostles including ~108 of the ~120 at Pentecost, men and women prophesying at Corinth, Stephen, Cornelius, family and friends, the 12 disciples at Ephesus, Agabus and prophets who went to Antioch, Philip's 4 daughters who prophesied, and believers at Galatia;
- iii. Signs and wonders are signs of all believers, not a select few; and
- iv. at the time Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, there were hundreds of thousands if not millions of believers who Paul encouraged to pursue gifts, notably prophecy and tongues, and especially if there was a corresponding interpretation of the tongue?

20:27 Given many individuals performed signs and wonders after Pentecost, but who were not identified as apostles, isn't it invalid to claim that the 9 Holy Spirit gifts of 1 Corinthians 12 (tongues, prophecy etc.) ended with the death of the original apostles?

20:28 If the signs and wonders such as tongues and prophecy were to end when the various individuals in these groups were Baptized in the Holy Spirit, doesn't the fact that Paul tells believers in 1 Corinthians to pursue gifts, especially prophecy, negate that argument?

Related to the above is the Cessationist view that, after the cross, only true apostles were used by God for signs and wonders. True apostles, according to Cessationists, are identified using three criteria:

1. witnessed with their own eyes the physical, resurrected Christ;
2. was personally/directly appointed by Christ; and
3. was able to work miracles such as tongues, healings and prophecy.

20:29 Aren't these 3 criteria invalid given:

- i. it is questionable if Paul actually saw the physical, resurrected Jesus;
- ii. no scriptures show Matthias, Barnabas and James, the brother of Jesus (and possibly many others who were likely apostles) were appointed as apostles by the physical, resurrected Jesus directly;
- iii. many other believers performed miracles besides the apostles?

Chapter 16 also notes that Jesus was an Apostle and a Sent One, and that He sends 100% of believers just as Father God sent Him. Some believers in the early church were apostles, some were teachers etc. How likely is it that 0.0% of believers today are called to be apostles, but many are called to be teachers or evangelists?

Group 5 - 3,000 in Acts 2?

20:30 Chapter 10 of **CEASED?** also raises the issue of why Peter's "*Repent and be baptized*" in Acts 2:38 refers to Baptism in the Holy Spirit and not water baptism. If the 3,000 who accepted Jesus that day were being encouraged by Peter to get Baptized in the Holy Spirit, doesn't that show both (i) the Baptism in the Holy Spirit and (ii) the 9 Holy Spirit gifts that are linked to this Baptism are for all believers - then and now? If not, why not?

FROM CHAPTER 17 OF CEASED?

Argument 7

A summary of gifts from Father God, Jesus and Holy Spirit is found on page 21 of **CEASED?**. Chapter 17 focuses on the question:

20:31 If the 9 Holy Spirit gifts and roles such as prophets and apostles have all ceased, and these functions and gifts are all listed and intermingled with other gifts and functions in God's Word, then why haven't all the other gifts and functions such as teaching, pastoring, serving and giving also ceased? Do we get to pick and choose what has continued, and what hasn't?

FROM CHAPTER 18 OF CEASED?

More on Argument 1

Chapter 18 of **CEASED?** deals with the Cessationist view that all necessary divine revelation is contained in the Bible - the Sufficiency of Scripture - and there is no need (nor ability) to hear from God on a one-on-one basis today. A few considerations. For one, **if** the 9 Holy Spirit gifts are valid today, this argument would be flawed as the gifts involve hearing from God. Second, as Sufficiency of Scripture claims everything we need from God is in this Bible, then enough information is in the Bible to show saints how to do many things including casting out demons, speaking in tongues, healing the sick and raising the dead. But since information in the Bible is not adequate, doesn't that reveal a further flaw? Further, how did millions of believers over the centuries live Christian lives when they didn't have access to Bibles? Same for all the believers today who don't have Bibles.

Another result of Sufficiency of Scripture effectively holds that all prophecies in Biblical times are in the Bible. **CEASED?**, however, identifies hundreds of individuals who prophesied, but the details of whose prophecies are not in the Bible. The combination of a tongue and the corresponding interpretation of tongues is similar to a gift of prophecy, word of knowledge, or word of wisdom in that they are also a form of divine revelation. However, there is not a single case where the details of a supernatural interpretation of a tongue are given in God's Word. There are also questionable assumptions inherent in the Cessationist argument:

1. every person who prophesied in biblical times is mentioned in the Bible;
2. every single prophecy given by God is contained in the Bible.

FROM CHAPTER 19 OF CEASED?

Argument 8

Some Cessationists tend to believe the gifts ended because of the misbehaviors of some Charismatics. No question, the lives of a limited number of Charismatics appear to be heavily rooted in sin. Some appear to be under demonic influence at times, with manifestations eerily similar to the kundalini spirit. Focus often appears to be on money and fame. Fake healings have occurred and are probably still occurring. Teachings on uncomfortable truths in God's Word are pushed to the side. These and other concerns are valid. But we should also remember God had many people in the Bible do some unusual things. And in every denomination, there are sin-filled people and leaders with sins hidden away to avoid harming reputations, and to keep the tithes and offerings flowing.

20: Summary of Cessationist Arguments

20:32 If sinful behaviors, thoughts and words of some Charismatics are reason to invalidate the corresponding parts of God's Word for all believers, in this case the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and 9 Holy Spirit gifts, how much of God's Word would remain valid today if we also considered the sinful behaviors and words of leaders in all denominations?

CLOSING POINTS TO PONDER

20:33 Acts 6 shows the leaders looking after the widows needed to be filled with the Holy Spirit. This filling results from being Baptized in the Holy Spirit. If these leaders needed it then, don't we need it today?

20:34 If you're Catholic, consider the suite of 9 Holy Spirit gifts weren't core teachings of the mainline Catholic church from when it was first founded throughout the many centuries to the 1960's. Since the 1960's, over 100 million Charismatic Catholics agree the 9 Holy Spirit gifts haven't ceased. Let me ask - How can the Roman Catholic church be God's true church if it excluded such fundamental parts of the Bible for ~1,900 years, and does not include the 9 Holy Spirit gifts as a core teaching for all Catholics today?

Chapters 24-27 of **CEASED?** give some insight into these Catholic issues. Before those chapters, Chapters 21-23 provide some insights into the Christian walk from a Charismatic perspective. But before getting to those 3 chapters, a personal appeal.

Personal Appeal

I wonder how many Christians believe the Baptism in the Holy Spirit and the 9 Holy Spirit gifts have ceased:

- ❖ because of a lack of healing in their lives or someone they love or loved; or
- ❖ because of experiences with financial fleecers, fake healings and interactions with people who claimed to operate in the Holy Spirit gifts, but whose words and actions were far from it.

If this is you, I am so sorry. But please, don't let the shortcomings of other people cause you to look at God's Word in a way that is inappropriate.

As mentioned earlier, I have also wondered if some of us don't want to get involved in the gifts because it is out of our comfort zone. If so, I get it. When I was first asked to pray for another person, I was very uncomfortable. I felt like a bumbling idiot. Finding individuals to mentor us in the gifts is critical, but can be a challenge. But seek help out and be discerning as you do so. And, if necessary, travel in person or connect online with believers and churches elsewhere where operating in the 9 gifts is a normal, regular part of their day-to-day lives.

20:35 Based on the evidence presented in **CEASED?**, is the current sidelining of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the 9 Holy Spirit gifts by hundreds of millions of believers causing not only them to be losing out on a multitude of blessings, but also the multitudes of believers and non-believers alike who would benefit from the delivery of gifts such as physical healings?

The Gift(s) of Tongues

INTRODUCTION

BY this point, I hope readers realize Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the 9 Holy Spirit gifts haven't ceased. In the Cessationist vs Continuationist debate, the Holy Spirit gifts of tongues, healings and prophecy are the gifts most commonly discussed. I'll leave prophecy to those more qualified and experienced than myself. I will, however, share some comments on healing in Chapter 22, while this chapter will deal with some aspects of tongues and interpretation of tongues. I will continue to make heavy use of scripture, but will have a larger than normal emphasis on personal experience and observations.

Chapter 21 deals with a variety of issues but is primarily focused on the issue of whether or not tongues involves a personal prayer language, also commonly referred to as a heavenly language. Cessationists frequently view such tongues as gibberish or demonic. While some people who speak in tongues may be speaking in a demonic tongue, tongues spoken by most Charismatics are a gift from God, one of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts. I have no comprehensive survey results to back up my claim. It's my opinion based on experience, the Word of God, and what many highly-regarded teachers say.

Primary topics addressed in Chapter 21 include:

- i. Cessationist view of tongues (below);
- ii. some basics about tongues (page 290);
- iii. false tongues (page 296);
- iv. personal prayer language (page 296);
- v. 10 benefits of praying in a personal prayer language (page 298);
- vi. who can have a personal prayer language (page 303);
- vii. 7 unique scenarios involving different kinds of tongues (page 304);
- viii. praying in the Spirit (page 305);
- ix. how to start praying in tongues (page 306); and
- x. tongues and the Roman Catholic church (page 307).

CESSATIONIST VIEW OF TONGUES

My understanding of the Cessationist view of tongues, in general, is as follows:

- ❖ tongues, as per the other 8 gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, have ceased;

21: Tongues

- ❖ true tongues were only spoken in earthly languages;
- ❖ the person didn't know the earthly language he/she was speaking;
- ❖ if no person was present who knew the earthly language being spoken, an interpretation of tongues occurred;
- ❖ tongues were a sign for unbelievers; and
- ❖ there were never any personal prayer languages way back then, or today.

4 Questions to Start

If your view corresponds somewhat close to that just described, let me ask a few questions to get the ball rolling. To start, consider 1 Corinthians 14:2.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 14:2 For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; **for no one understands**, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries.*

21:1 When speaking in a tongue, the person speaking does not understand what he or she is saying. It's a mystery to them. However, if all tongues are in an earthly language, why would 1 Corinthians 14:2 say that 'no one understands'. If no person can understand what's being said, how can tongues always be in a known earthly language? Is there more to the story?

Now consider Peter who shared the gospel with Cornelius, family and friends. Holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening and they started speaking in tongues.

- ❑ *Acts 10:44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the **Holy Spirit fell upon all** those who were listening to the message. 45 All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because **the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also**. 46 **For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God**. Then Peter answered, 47 "Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?" 48 And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days.*

21:2 As soon as Peter saw/heard them speaking in tongues, he knew they had received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. In addition, given Peter responded by immediately having them water baptized, doesn't this mean Peter also realized Cornelius, family and friends were also born again? And thus, didn't their speaking in tongues serve as a sign to Peter? And doesn't that mean tongues can be a sign for believers, not just unbelievers? Which is interesting because that seems to contradict 1 Corinthians 14:22.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 14:22 So then **tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers**; but prophecy is for a sign, not to unbelievers but to those who believe.*

21:3 For a tongue to meet the Cessationist criteria, every one of Cornelius, family and friends must have spoken in an earthly language they did not personally know. For Peter to know that every person was speaking in an earthly language they didn't personally know, wouldn't Peter have needed to know all the languages each person did know? If so, how would this be possible given Peter had just met them in a group setting?

21:4 One could argue Peter found out afterward that each person had spoken in an earthly language they didn't know. However, isn't that argument negated by Peter's witnessing the tongues, and then **immediately** deciding to have them all water baptized, something Peter would only have done if he believed they had been born again - which enabled them to be Baptized in the Holy Spirit and gain access to Holy Spirit gifts such as tongues?

Given the above, if you have been a staunch opponent of tongues being relevant today, is there perhaps more to the story such as the existence of a heavenly language for each believer?

SOME BASICS ABOUT TONGUES - MY PERSPECTIVE

What is a Tongue?

A tongue is a supernatural enablement allowing a believer to speak in a language not known to the person speaking. There are 3 broad types or groups of tongues.

1: Earthly Language

A tongue can be in an earthly language as at Pentecost.

- ❑ Acts 2:6 *And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language. 7 They were amazed and astonished, saying, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 **And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born?***

2: Languages Only God Knows

Consider 1 Corinthians 14:2 again and notice it states a tongue is spoken to God, not human beings, and no human being can understand what is being said.

- ❑ 1 Corinthians 14:2 *For **one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands**, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries.*

21:5 If no one can understand but God, doesn't that mean those tongues weren't spoken in an earthly language? If not, what does it mean?

21:6 If speaking in tongues involves words only God can understand, is the term 'personal prayer language' perhaps a reasonable one?

3: Tongues of Angels

Paul also indicates that he might have spoken in languages of angels.

- ❑ 1 Corinthians 13:1 *If I speak with the **tongues** of men and **of angels**, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.*

21:7 Does 1 Corinthians 13:1 again indicate that tongues can sometimes be in a language other than an earthly language - a heavenly language as it were?

What Happens to our Body, Soul and Spirit when Speaking in a Tongue

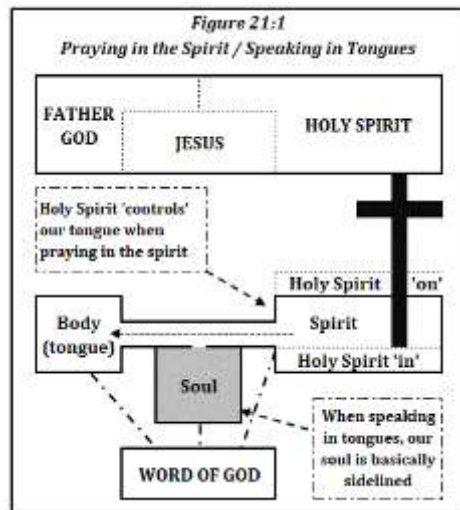
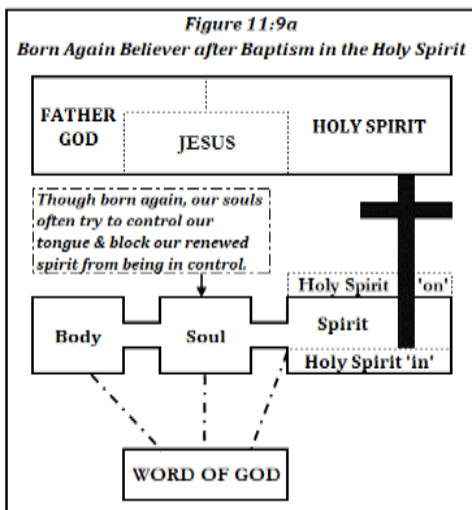
Figure 11:9a on the next page is a copy of Figure 11:9 found near the end of Chapter 11 of **CEASED?**. When we're born again and Baptized in the Holy Spirit,

21: Tongues

Holy Spirit is both in [en] us and upon [epi] us. When born again, our spirit is made right with God. On the other hand, our souls are far from perfect and can still be heavily influenced by our flesh, the world, and the kingdom of darkness. What our bodies end up doing, and our tongues end up speaking, can still be largely determined by our mind, a key part of our soul. Consider two scriptures:

- ❑ 1 Corinthians 14:2 For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands, but **in his spirit he speaks mysteries**.
- ❑ 1 Corinthians 14:14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but **my mind is unfruitful**.

As per Figure 21.1 below, when we speak in tongues, our mind/soul is largely bypassed. Holy Spirit which is intimately connected to our spirit, gives us the language and words to speak - i.e. a tongue. Our spirit communicates directly with our mouth while our soul/mind is largely on the sidelines. In so doing, we speak mysteries our mind doesn't understand or may think are unfruitful.



When we pray with our minds, such prayers are often referred to as soulish prayers. When speaking in tongues, we pray "in the Spirit". Through our spirit, Holy Spirit gives us the words to pray when we don't know how to pray. He intercedes for us.

- ❑ Romans 8:26 In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; **for we do not know how to pray as we should**, but the **Spirit Himself intercedes** for us with groanings too deep for words;

Furthermore, given Holy Spirit is in [en] us after we're born again, and Holy Spirit and our spirit are one, wouldn't that seem a reasonable outcome?

- ❑ 1 Corinthians 6:17 But the **one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him**.

A New York Times article "A Neuroscientific Look at Speaking in Tongues" by Benedict Carey on November 7, 2006, includes some rather interesting comments.

“The passionate, sometimes rhythmic, language-like patter that pours forth from religious people who “speak in tongues” reflects a state of mental possession, many of them say. Now they have some neuroscience to back them up.

Researchers at the University of Pennsylvania took brain images of five women while they spoke in tongues and found that their frontal lobes - the thinking, willful part of the brain through which people control what they do - were relatively quiet, as were the language centers. The regions involved in maintaining self-consciousness were active. The women were not in blind trances, and it was unclear which region was driving the behavior.”

Contrary to what may be a common perception, studies suggest that people who speak in tongues rarely suffer from mental problems. A recent study of nearly 1,000 evangelical Christians in England found that those who engaged in the practice were more emotionally stable than those who did not. Researchers have identified at least two forms of the practice, one ecstatic and frenzied, the other subdued and nearly silent.

The new findings contrasted sharply with images taken of other spiritually inspired mental states like meditation, which is often a highly focused mental exercise, activating the frontal lobes.

Speaking in tongues involves Holy Spirit guiding us and effectively taking our mind and fleshly thinking out of the picture in terms of what we are praying. Which for me, is clearly very beneficial.

Tongues = Praying and Singing in the Spirit

Speaking in tongues engages our spirit. As mentioned, scriptures describe tongues as praying ‘*in the Spirit*’.

- ❑ *Ephesians 6:18 With all prayer and petition **pray at all times in the Spirit** and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,*
- ❑ *Jude 1:20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, **praying in the Holy Spirit***

We can not only speak in tongues; we can also sing in tongues.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 14:15 What is the outcome then? I will **pray with the spirit** and I **will pray with the mind also**; I **will sing with the spirit** and I **will sing with the mind also**.*

Tongues at other Outpourings of Holy Spirit

After Pentecost, there were 2 other outpourings of the Holy Spirit where tongues were immediately spoken - when Peter was speaking to Cornelius, family and friends, and when Paul was ministering to the 12 believers at Ephesus.

- ❑ *Acts 10:1 ... a man at Caesarea named Cornelius ... 44 ... the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening ... 46 For they were hearing them **speaking with tongues** and exalting God ...*

21: Tongues

- *Acts 19:1 ... Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus ... 6 When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they **spoke in tongues** and **prophesied**. 7 There were about twelve men in all.*
- 21:8 There is no indication in either of these situations as to whether it was earthly or heavenly languages being spoken by these two groups of believers. Some Cessationists argue that these outpourings of the Holy Spirit were mirror images of Pentecost, and thus only earthly languages were involved. However, the two outpourings after Pentecost were different. No one at Pentecost prophesied whereas believers at Ephesus not only spoke in tongues, they also prophesied. In addition, while Pentecost had major noise and signs in the skies, there is also no evidence of these or other supernatural signs in the other two post-Pentecost events. Given these differences, couldn't the nature of the languages also be different?
- 21:9 Interestingly, there is also no apparent supernatural interpretation of tongues at any of those outpourings. Some Cessationists argue that a tongue must always have an interpretation. If that were so:
- i. would the lack of interpretation of the tongues given by the disciples at Ephesus and the tongues given by Cornelius, family and friends, mean these tongues were not valid? And if they weren't valid, wouldn't that mean the Bible is in error; or
 - ii. does the lack of interpretations show some tongues don't need an interpretation; or
 - iii. does the lack of interpretations show interpretations occurred but weren't recorded in the Bible?
- 21:10 The tongues spoken at Pentecost were in earthly languages not known by any of the individuals speaking, but which were known by other persons who were present. For those who were present and knew one or more of the languages being spoken, their understanding of what was being said was not a supernatural interpretation. Doesn't that again suggest tongues from God don't always require a supernatural gift of interpretation? Doesn't that further indicate interpretations are not always needed when one speaks in a private prayer language?

Are Tongues the Least Valuable Gift

Some Cessationists suggest the gift of tongues was the least valuable gift because it is the last of the 9 gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 and 12:28.

- *1 Corinthians 12:8 For to one is given the **word of wisdom** through the Spirit, and to another the **word of knowledge** according to the same Spirit; 9 to another **faith** by the same Spirit, and to another **gifts of healing** by the one Spirit, 10 and to another the effecting of **miracles**, and to another **prophecy**, and to another the **distinguishing of spirits**, to another various kinds of **tongues**, and to another the **interpretation of tongues**.*
- *1 Corinthians 12:28 And God has appointed in the church, first **apostles**, second **prophets**, third **teachers**, then **miracles**, then gifts of **healings**, helps, administrations, various **kinds of tongues**.*

CEASED? 2ND EDITION

21:11 Tongues and/or interpretation of tongues are indeed mentioned last. However, only 3 of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 are also mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:28 (*miracles, healings, tongues*). The gift of tongues is one of the 3 Holy Spirit gifts mentioned; 6 other gifts aren't mentioned. As a result, doesn't the combination of these two scriptures suggest tongues is not the least valuable, but perhaps one of the 3 most valuable Holy Spirit gifts? If not, why not?

1 Corinthians 14 also reveals that Paul preferred - in a church environment - to speak a few words with his mind than 10,000 words in a tongue.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 14:18 I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all; 19 **however, in the church** I desire to speak **five words with my mind** so that I may instruct others also, rather than **ten thousand words in a tongue.***

21:12 In a church - a public environment - Paul would sooner speak 5 words with his mind (*i.e. an earthly language he and others in attendance knew*) than a whole lot more words (*i.e. 10,000 words*) in tongues, a language his mind and the minds of others in attendance did not understand. Doesn't that suggest Paul did speak many words in tongues, but was not inclined to do so in the church or other public places, but in other settings such as when he was spending time alone with God?

In terms of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts, Paul encouraged believers to seek gifts especially prophesy.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 14:1 Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.*

4 verses later, Paul appears to say prophecy is clearly of more value than a tongue.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 14:5 Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and **greater is one who prophesies** than **one who speaks in tongues** ...*

However, Paul goes on to add the caveat 'unless he interprets'.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 14:5 Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, **unless** he **interprets**, so that the church may receive edifying.*

21:13 Doesn't 1 Corinthians 14:5 suggest:

- i. tongues that are interpreted are close to, if not equal to, the value of prophecies; and
- ii. the combination of tongues and interpretation of tongues are two of the more special gifts? If not, why not?

Paul also wrote in 1 Corinthians that he spoke in tongues more than anyone.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 14:18 I thank God, **I speak in tongues more than you all:***

21: Tongues

- 21:14 When Paul compared the amount of tongues he spoke to the amount of tongues spoken by others, doesn't this mean that others at Corinth also spoke in tongues? If not, what is the point of making a comparison if the other believers didn't speak in tongues at all? If they didn't speak in tongues at all, why wouldn't Paul simply say something like "*I wish you all spoke in tongues just as I do*"?
- 21:15 I find it interesting that while Paul spoke in tongues more than others, he never made mention of his interpreting any of his tongues or any tongues of others, nor did he mention that anyone else interpreted any of his tongues or tongues of others. Does that mean Paul received interpretations automatically, or does it possibly reveal that the tongues Paul was speaking were personal between him and God, and other believers didn't need to know what was said?
- 21:16 Paul was hungry for God and, like Jesus, probably spent considerable time alone with God. If Paul had a personal prayer language, could this partly explain why Paul believed that he spoke in tongues more than anyone?
- 21:17 When we receive a supernatural gift from God, isn't it an incredibly special gift regardless of what it is? And highly likely to be more valuable than any earthly gift or possession we can ever receive? And thus, shouldn't we be incredibly thankful to be able to receive a gift such as tongues?

Two Somewhat Perplexing Scriptures

It's interesting when Paul says that if someone speaks in a tongue, they are to pray that they will be able to interpret the tongue, or they need to know an interpreter is present before they speak the tongue.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 14:13 Therefore let one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret.*
 - ❑ *1 Corinthians 14:28 but if there is no interpreter, he must keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God.*
- 21:18 Holy Spirit gives the believer the tongue to speak. Isn't it reasonable to expect Holy Spirit would only give someone a tongue if that believer or another believer would be given the interpretation? And how exactly would you find out in advance if somebody had the interpretation? Do you ask the group before you give the tongue (*which I've never personally witnessed*)? Do you ask God if someone will be given the interpretation before you give the tongue (*again, I've never seen this*)? Or is this a situation where we trust God such that when He tells us to speak, we obey, and speak out in faith?
- 21:19 If we do speak a tongue but there is no interpretation given afterward, does that automatically mean we were out of line giving the tongue?

If it's a tongue from God to be spoken, the answer to Question 21:19 is no. My limited experience is that God always gives an interpretation in a public setting, but sometimes the person initially given the interpretation did not share due to shyness, doubt, fear of judgment and/or being wrong. But in such cases, God then gives the interpretation to another person, or to the person who initially spoke the tongue.

FALSE TONGUES

Are there false tongues? Absolutely. The enemy is a master counterfeiter. People of other faiths speak in tongues. These tongues are not of God, but of demonic origin. I saw a YouTube video where an individual was teaching people how to speak in tongues. His approach involved encouraging those watching him to simply repeat a series of sounds he made. There was no mention of needing to be born again, or to be Baptized in the Holy Spirit. There was no discussion of tongues being a Holy Spirit gift, something Holy Spirit gives as He chooses to give. And thus, I suspect this man was not being influenced by Holy Spirit, but by a demon. I wouldn't be surprised if people who did what this man said to do would soon be speaking in tongues. And in doing so, they were most likely speaking a false, demonic tongue.

21:20 Some Cessationists argue any instances of false tongues means all tongues are false. If that is true and all tongues are false because some tongues are false, does that mean because some individuals teach false things about Jesus and Christianity, that all teachings of Jesus and Christianity are false? If not, why the double standard?

PERSONAL PRAYER LANGUAGE 'TONGUES FOR PERSONAL USE'

Do tongues include a personal prayer language? Consider 1 Corinthians 14:4.

☐ *1 Corinthians 14:4 **One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself;** but one who prophesies edifies the church.*

The English word 'edify' is derived from the Greek word 'oikodomeo' G3618 and means in part 'to promote growth in Christian wisdom, affection, grace, virtue, holiness, blessedness and/or to grow in wisdom and piety (reverence for God)'.

21:21 There is no mention of an interpretation of the tongue in verse 4, but yet a person still benefits when they speak in a tongue. Does that indicate there may be something more going on with tongues than simply speaking in an earthly language one doesn't know?

21:22 Given a tongue edifies/builds up the person speaking the tongue, doesn't that indicate tongues aren't always just for the good/benefit of others, but can also be beneficial for the person speaking the tongue?

In Chapter 2, **CEASED?** discussed the issue of who receives the spiritual gifts (*prophecy, healings, tongues etc.*) as listed in 1 Corinthians 12. Is it:

1. the person used by Holy Spirit to give or deliver the prophecy, healing, tongue etc.; or
2. the person receiving the prophetic word, healing or tongue.

21:23 When Paul encouraged the believers in Corinth to pursue the gifts, is it possible that one reason Paul did so was because the gifts could also be for their personal growth/benefit? If not, why not?

☐ *1 Corinthians 14:1 Pursue love, **yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts,** but especially that you may prophesy.*

Kinds of Tongues

- 21:24 When a believer has spoken in tongues involving 2 different earthly languages he or she doesn't know, would you describe each of these tongues as being:
- i. two different kinds or types of tongues: or
 - ii. one kind or type of tongue, but which were a bit unique?
- 21:25 If we say they are the same kind or type of tongue, how do we deal with 1 Corinthians 12:28 which states there are various kinds of tongues?
- ❑ *1 Corinthians 12:28 And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, **various kinds of tongues**.*
- 21:26 Would tongues involving heavenly languages represent another kind or type of tongue?

New Tongues

- Mark 16:17 states that followers of Jesus will speak with new tongues.
- ❑ *Mark 16:17 These signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, **they will speak with new tongues**; 18 ... they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.*
- 21:27 If one believer has already spoken in a tongue in earthly language ABC, would a second believer speaking in a tongue based on language ABC constitute speaking in a 'new tongue'? To expand on this in today's setting, once a tongue has been spoken by someone in every one of the ~7,000 existing earthly languages, how could there be any new tongues left to be spoken if earthly languages were the only languages of tongues?
- 21:28 Would God's creation of a unique, personal prayer language for each believer mean there is an 'unlimited' number of new tongues? And wouldn't that make all the new tongues mentioned in Mark 16:17 relevant for Biblical times as well as for today?
- 21:29 Based on the NASB translation, the word tongues is mentioned 23 times in the New Testament. Interpretation of tongues is referred to eight times. The word language as it refers to tongues and an earthly language is used once - in Acts 28. Would the one-time reference to earthly language be consistent with the thought that tongues include multitudes of personal, non-earthly, prayer languages that only God can understand?

The topic of tongues is controversial, and can get a bit confusing. Rather than trying to figure everything out, sometimes we just need to speak from our hearts. "God, I trust you. Lead me into the truth and let me use these gifts as you want me to. But I ask this Lord ... can You please make things really clear for me!"

Summary - Personal Prayer Language

Is a personal prayer language legitimate? Consider some comments made so far in Chapter 21.

1. In the natural, Peter could not have known what earthly language(s) were known by every person in the group of Cornelius, family and friends at the moment Peter realized they were speaking in tongues, and decided to immediately have them water baptized.
2. There is no mention that the tongues spoken by those at Cornelius's home, or by the 12 disciples at Ephesus, were in heavenly or earthly languages.
3. Paul spoke in tongues more than anyone else in Corinth, but there is no mention of Paul being personally involved in any aspect of an interpretation of tongues.
4. In fact, there are no details of any interpretation of a tongue anywhere in the Bible.
5. Paul spoke in tongues outside the church.
6. Paul encouraged speaking in tongues.
7. When we speak in heavenly tongues, we speak to God, not mankind.

If you're still not sure of the notion of a personal prayer language, seek God. If you're sincere in seeking the truth and all that He has for you, I suspect He'll answer.

10 BENEFITS OF PRAYING IN A PERSONAL PRAYER LANGUAGE

Before getting into the 10 benefits, let me clarify two points.

1. This discussion on benefits does not include the benefits of tongues and corresponding interpretation of tongues that are intended for other believers or non-believers.
2. Tongues related to speaking in a personal prayer language, like tongues and interpretation of tongues, is available after we're born again and have been Baptized in the Holy Spirit. The teaching that we must speak in a private prayer language, or must have been Baptized in the Holy Spirit in order to be saved, is false. To prove that point, consider the original apostles who were born again on resurrection Sunday evening but were not Baptized in the Holy Spirit and did not speak in tongues until Pentecost, 47 days later. Speaking in a personal prayer language can serve as a confirmation of being saved as well as having been Baptized in the Holy Spirit, but tongues are not a requirement to be saved.

In terms of the benefits of speaking in a personal prayer language, a search of the internet and books reveals there are many dozens of benefits. A few of the primary benefits I'm personally familiar with are summarized below.

1: In line with God's Will

- *Matthew 6:10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.*

21: Tongues

Since Holy Spirit gives us the words to pray in our personal prayer language, we can take comfort that our prayers are in line with God's will. The reality is sometimes we don't know what to pray. Let me requote one paragraph from Benedict Carey's article referred to starting on the bottom of page 291.

*Researchers at the University of Pennsylvania took brain images of five women while they spoke in tongues and found that **their frontal lobes - the thinking, willful part of the brain through which people control what they do - were relatively quiet, as were the language centers.** The regions involved in maintaining self-consciousness were active. The women were not in blind trances, and it was unclear which region was driving the behavior."*

In brief, we let Holy Spirit guide our prayers which is beneficial, especially when we don't know how to pray. If you're a new believer, an example of such a time is when our child or friend is making a decision that, in our way of thinking, causes us concern. However, rather than praying in our earthly language and praying what we think is right - our soulish view (which could be wrong) - we can ask Holy Spirit for guidance, and/or we pray in tongues. Either way helps ensure we pray according to God's will, according to what God wants.

- ❑ *Romans 8:26 In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; **for we do not know how to pray as we should**, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words;*

21:30 To clarify, is praying in our personal prayer language recommended in part because we often don't know how best to pray using our minds in a given situation, but Holy Spirit does?

2: Control when to Start and Stop, and Quietly or Loud

Starting and stopping of speaking in our personal prayer language is almost always at our total discretion. I say almost always because there have been times where I felt I really had no choice. In such cases, I wasn't always sure why or for who, but I just knew I had to pray. Yes, I had free will and I could have chosen not to pray, but the prompting was so strong that not praying would be akin to disobeying God. After a while, I sensed God was telling me it was ok to stop. In most cases, I had no clue what was going on. Sometimes I asked what it was about. Typically, I don't.

I've also been in gatherings where I felt prayer was needed. I began to pray in tongues - in my personal language - with my tongue moving somewhat, but in silence (*hopefully*). And often times, I had no idea what I was praying for specifically.

3: Quieting our Minds; Peace to our Souls

When speaking in our personal prayer language, our mind is largely still. We can speak in tongues when doing every day things such as driving and household chores, just as we can pray in our earthly language while doing such things. As we do this, our mind is relatively quiet with respect to thinking about what or how to pray. This is helpful when experiencing tormenting and/or ungodly thoughts because praying in the Spirit essentially pushes the stop button in the spin cycle of unproductive

thoughts. One result of this is peace. As our mind quiets, we're better able to enter into a time with God, and to hear from Him. Speaking in tongues is also great when our minds are active and we can't sleep. For myself, speaking in tongues settles my mind and usually enables me to go back to sleep quite quickly.

Having said the above - if we are not careful - praying in tongues when we are dealing with an issue can easily become robotic in nature and far from *'fervent prayers that availeth much'*. But please know there are various intensities and degrees of focus we can have when praying in the Spirit just as there are varying levels of intensity and focus when we pray in our earthly language(s). We can be very passionate and hungry for Holy Spirit to speak God's will through us over a given situation or issue, or to give us an answer. As an example, when Lori and I seek God for insight on how much we should give, we may begin by praying in the Spirit until we hear from God. If we both get the same answer, we know we heard from God and not from our flesh.

4: Part of the Process of Renewing our Minds

Paul tells us we're to renew our minds. Given that praying in our personal prayer language can help us from thinking ungodly thoughts, it is one of the tools that can help us stop our old ways of thinking, and better enable us to start building new ways of thinking, a renewing of our minds.

- ❑ *Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

5: Health to our Bodies

In an article by Mark Virkler, "*Health Benefits of Speaking in Tongues*", he writes:

"He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself" (1 Corinthians 14:4). Dr. Carl Peterson, M.D. conducted a study at ORU in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Being a brain specialist, he was doing research on the relationship between the brain and praying or speaking in tongues. He found that as we pray in the Spirit or worship in the Spirit (our heavenly language), the brain releases 2 chemical secretions that are directed into our immune systems giving a 35 to 40 percent boost to the immune system. This promotes healing within our bodies. Amazingly, this secretion is triggered from a part of the brain that has no other apparent activity in humans and is only activated by our Spirit-led prayer and worship!

21:31 As mentioned before, each of our 3 parts - spirit, soul and body - is extremely complicated and intertwined with the other. Does this evidence of the benefits of speaking in our personal prayer language not only show the benefits of this blessing, but once more show God's creative genius?

6: Pray without Ceasing

God wants us to seek Him first and to walk with Him throughout our waking hours. We talk, listen (*hopefully more than we talk*) and are with Him throughout our day. Praying in our personal prayer language helps make that happen. With

tongues, we don't have to worry about what to pray. We simply make ourselves available, and Holy Spirit gives us the words to pray.

- ❑ *Matthew 6:33 But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*
- ❑ *1 Thessalonians 5:16 Rejoice always; 17 pray without ceasing;*

7: Edification

1 Corinthians tells us speaking in our personal prayer language edifies ourselves.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 14:4 One **who speaks in a tongue edifies himself**; but one who prophesies edifies the church.*

This edification is reiterated in Jude 1:20.

- ❑ *Jude 1:20 But you, beloved, **building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit**,*

As a reminder, per above, the English word 'edify' is derived from the Greek word 'oikodomeo' [G3618] which means in part to 'promote growth in Christian wisdom, affection, grace, virtue, holiness and blessedness'.

8: Spiritual Power

On June 2, 2012 Robert Morris gave a very interesting sermon called 'The Pure Language' which is available on gatewaypeople.com. A key part of the message dealt with the power that may be associated with speaking in tongues. Here's my abbreviated understanding of this issue.

When Adam and Eve were created, God gave them a language so they could communicate with God and with each other.

- ❑ *Genesis 11:1 Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words.*

Inhabitants at Babylon built a city and tower towards heaven to make a name for themselves in order to avoid being scattered over the earth.

- ❑ *Genesis 11:4 They said, "Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us **make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad** over the face of the whole earth."*

God stated that with one language, this first language from heaven, 'nothing they purpose to do will be impossible for them.'

- ❑ *Genesis 11:6 The Lord said, "Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now **nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them**."*

'Nothing will be impossible for them' means quite a bit was possible. God responded by confusing their language, creating other languages, and then scattering people all over the earth to stop their ungodly construction and stubborn independence.

- *Genesis 11:7 Come, let Us go down and there **confuse their language**, so that they will not understand one another's speech." 8 So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city. 9 Therefore its name was called Babel, because there **the Lord confused the language of the whole earth**; and **from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth**.*

21:32 It's fairly clear a key reason for God confusing the language was to prevent the people from doing anything they purposed to do. Does that suggest there was a degree of unusual power associated with this first language?

21:33 The power of the spoken word is evident from the beginning of God's creative genius in Genesis. Believers are called to go and share the Good News in words and power. Baptism of the Holy Spirit gives power to believers to be witnesses for Christ. This power manifests itself in different ways including the 9 Holy Spirit gifts, one of which is tongues. Keeping that in mind, and considering our personal prayer language involves Holy Spirit giving us the words to speak, is there perhaps more spiritual power associated with speaking in our personal prayer language than we may recognize?

9: Armor of God

God's Word tells us to put on the 6 components of the armor of God: i) belt of truth, ii) breastplate of righteousness, iii) feet covered in peace, iv) shield of faith, v) helmet of salvation, and vi) God's Word, the sword of the Spirit.

- *Ephesians 6:13 Therefore, take up **the full armor of God**, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14 Stand firm therefore, having **girded your loins with truth**, and having put on the **breastplate of righteousness**, 15 and having **shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace**; 16 in addition to all, taking up the **shield of faith** with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 And take the **helmet of salvation**, and **the sword of the Spirit**, which is the word of God.*

But look at the next verse - verse 18 - where we're told to pray.

- *Ephesians 6:18 With all prayer and petition **pray** at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,*

Prayer is powerful and adding prayer to our list of armor is certainly understandable. But if we look at verse 18 closer, it goes on to say we're to pray '**at all times**'. In its entirety, we should '**pray at all times in the Spirit**' which - to me - is speaking in our personal prayer language.

21:34 If speaking in our personal prayer language is part of our armor, does that lend further evidence to the notion that Holy Spirit gifts - in this case tongues - can be for our personal benefit? Is this another reason why Paul said we should earnestly seek spiritual gifts?

A quick story on my introduction to the armor of God. Early on in my church days, I heard a teaching on the various pieces, and the wrap up message was to put the armor on every day. I didn't have a clue as to how to do it, so I would just declare 'I put on the helmet of salvation, the breast plate of righteousness etc. etc.' Oh, the need for teachers and mentors who live the Word.

10: Does/Doesn't Enemy Understand?

Since praying in our personal prayer language is between a person and God, I don't believe the enemy can understand much if any of what is being said - unless God wants him to know. To the extent God wants the enemy to know what we're saying/singing in tongues, I suspect our tongues would have significant benefits in the area of spiritual warfare.

As an example, in the first sentence of the third paragraph of Mr. Carey's article on page 292 of **CEASED?**, the article stated "*studies suggest that people who speak in tongues rarely suffer from mental problems*". This is pure speculation on my part, but I wonder if such results occur in part because, in addition to our mind being sidelined/silenced by speaking in tongues, the enemy is also sidelined/silenced. In other words, the enemy is effectively prevented from giving us tormenting, negative, destructive and/or sinful thoughts while we're speaking in tongues.

I also wonder if some of the other words given to us by Holy Spirit when praying in tongues impact the demonic realm in other ways including hindering/preventing the enemy from attacking us for a time even when we're not speaking in tongues.

21:35 Are these multi-faceted benefits of speaking in tongues perhaps why Paul also cautioned anyone from stopping others from speaking in tongues? Because in doing so, we could be depriving others of the benefits and blessings they need? And would it again help explain why Paul spoke in his personal prayer language more than others?

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 14:39 Therefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and **do not forbid to speak in tongues.***
- ❑ *1 Corinthians 14:18 I thank God, **I speak in tongues more than you all:***

WHO CAN HAVE A PERSONAL PRAYER LANGUAGE, SPEAK IN TONGUES OR INTERPRET TONGUES?

Paul writes that not everyone will speak in tongues.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 12:29 **All are not apostles**, are they? **All are not prophets**, are they? **All are not teachers**, are they? **All are not workers of miracles**, are they? 30 **All do not have gifts of healings**, do they? **All do not speak with tongues. do they?** **All do not interpret**, do they?*

21:36 Is one reason why some believers will not speak in tongues because they will not consider being baptized in the Holy Spirit - today's equivalent of the 2½ tribes that did not cross the Jordan - and thus do not have access to this gift?

21:37 The answer to the above question is certainly yes in some cases, but in other cases where a person wants to speak in tongues, could it also be that

CEASED? 2ND EDITION

God has chosen to either delay giving the gift, and/or will be giving some of these individuals other Holy Spirit gifts?

In terms of a private prayer language, this blessing is between God and each person. No one else is involved. Per the above, there are many benefits to a personal prayer language including ensuring that we pray in alignment with God's will.

- 21:38 Approximately 9 years ago, I was baptized in the Holy Spirit and immediately started speaking in my personal prayer language. I've never given a public tongue that was interpreted, nor have I ever had an interpretation to give that I know of. Could it be that while not everybody will be involved in the Holy Spirit gifts of '*tongues and interpretation of tongues*', that many/most believers can nonetheless receive a personal prayer language if they want? Especially since it's a personal gift facilitating communication with God?
- 21:39 If the tongues spoken by Cornelius, family and friends, and by the 12 disciples at Ephesus were in their personal prayer language, would that explain why there was no interpretation of tongues, and why neither Peter nor Paul pursued interpretations with these individuals?
- 21:40 If we want to have a personal prayer language, but don't have it at present, what harm can it do if we keep on asking Holy Spirit for this blessing?
- ❑ *Matthew 7:11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!*
 - ❑ *Luke 11:13 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"*

Starting to Speak in Tongues Out of the Blue

God is sovereign. He may give us a personal prayer language immediately after we're Baptized in the Holy Spirit as He did for me, or after He has been asked time and time again. I have a good friend who was Baptized in the Holy Spirit, but did not speak in a personal prayer language for several years. Then, one day while worshipping, started to speak in a heavenly language without asking. Holy Spirit simply gave the gift out of the blue.

7 UNIQUE SCENARIOS INVOLVING TONGUES

As mentioned earlier, there are 3 potential types or groups of tongues:

- i. earthly language;
- ii. languages only God knows; and
- iii. tongues of angels.

In my experience, these three types materialize in seven different situations. Three situations occur in private where the believer talks or sings in a personal prayer language. Believers can ask Holy Spirit for an interpretation of the tongue which Holy Spirit may, or may not, give.

1. praying for oneself;
2. intercessory prayer for others; and
3. singing in the Spirit as part of praise and worship.

The other 4 situations occur in more public settings such as when 2 or more believers gather in a home, online or in traditional bricks-and-mortar church.

4. praying in an earthly language not known by the believer speaking, but one or more other individuals who are present do understand;
5. praying in a heavenly language where an interpretation is to be given by the believer speaking, or by one or more other believers who are present;
6. corporate (group) prayer where all (virtually all) in attendance pray in the Spirit in their personal prayer language. Interpretations may occur in part, or may not occur at all; and
7. corporate (group) singing in the Spirit in each believer's personal prayer language as part of corporate praise and worship. Again, interpretations may occur in part, or not at all.

I have witnessed each of the above situations except #4, and been directly involved in all but #4 and #5. The last two scenarios may seem strange to anyone not familiar or comfortable with tongues. That's a key reason why the Bible gives guidelines on speaking in tongues in public.

Some believers teach speaking in a personal prayer language is a different gift than the 9 Holy Spirits that are mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12. That may be the case, but I personally lean towards the view that personal tongues are one of the '*various kinds of tongues*' referred to in 1 Corinthians 12:10. I also believe when we speak in our personal language, we can often understand what we spoke which is tantamount to receiving a gift of interpretation of tongues. We may get this interpretation while we are still speaking in tongues, after we stop and ask for an interpretation, or after we stop and God just gives it to us without even asking for it. Whatever label you want to put on it, I'm just awfully glad God gave it to me.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 12:10 and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another **various kinds of tongues**, and to another the interpretation of tongues.*

PRAYING IN THE SPIRIT

Let me briefly return to the issue of praying in the Spirit.

- ❑ *Ephesians 6:18 With all prayer and petition pray at all times **in [en G1722] the Spirit**, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,*
- ❑ *Jude 1:20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying **in [en G1722] the Holy Spirit**,*

Three commonly held views on what praying in the Spirit means are as follows:

1. speak in one's personal prayer/heavenly language;
2. speak in one's earthly language, guided by one's spirit and soul; and
3. speak in one's earthly language, but inspired by Holy Spirit what to pray.

My understanding is that Cessationists typically see the first and maybe the second alternative as praying in the Spirit. Charismatics and Pentecostals see the third alternative as praying in the Spirit, with the second alternative a possibility. A couple of considerations.

1. In both Ephesians 16:8 and Jude 1:20, praying in the Spirit refers to Holy Spirit. The English word 'in' is derived from the Greek word 'en', the same Greek word used to describe Holy Spirit coming in a newly born-again follower of Jesus.
 2. Jude 1:20 also states praying in the Spirit builds ourselves up, a notion also discussed in 1 Corinthians 14:4 where speaking in our personal prayer language edifies ourselves.
- ❑ *1 Corinthians 14:4 One **who speaks in a tongue edifies himself**; but one who prophesies edifies the church.*
- 21:41 Given Ephesians 16:8 and Jude 1:20 both show Holy Spirit is involved when praying in the Spirit, is it understandable why many believers believe praying in the Spirit involves a believer's soul being quiet, and Holy Spirit taking charge?
- 21:42 If a believer has not yet received the gift of a personal prayer language and prays exclusively in his/her earthly language, that person can (and should) still seek and be led by Holy Spirit in his/her prayers. As a result, if indeed Holy Spirit is speaking to the person while praying in their earthly language, wouldn't this still represent a form of praying in the Spirit or, if not, something close to it?

When I gather with other believers who are comfortable with everybody praying or singing in their personal prayer language, we do so. Holy Spirit leads each person independently. Other times, we pray only in English when someone is present who is uncomfortable with tongues.

One final issue on this topic. This is purely a third-hand comment and I share with you simply to advise that this situation exists, and for you to explore as and when you see fit. I have no personal experience as yet upon which I can draw upon as I share. The issue involves many believers who can 'see in the spirit' wherein they can 'see' not only demonic and angelic beings on a routine basis, but a whole lot more of the spiritual world. In conjunction with or in response to what they 'see in the spirit', they 'pray in the spirit' in their earthly or heavenly language. There is certainly no shortage of opportunities to grow and learn in God's kingdom!

HOW TO START PRAYING IN OUR PERSONAL PRAYER LANGUAGE

My suggestion for you if you want to speak in tongues is fairly straightforward.

1. Ask Jesus to Baptize you in the Holy Spirit. Here's an example prayer from page 183 in Chapter 10 for those who want it, but are a bit unsure.
"Jesus, if the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is true and available today, and if You are the one who gives it, I ask You to give me this Baptism. Shield me

21: Tongues

from any schemes of the enemy, and provide help so that I use this gift the way You want it used, and for Your glory, not mine. Thank You Jesus. Amen."

2. Believe, in faith, that you have been Baptized in the Holy Spirit.
3. Ask Holy Spirit to give you the gift of tongues and to keep you from anything that is not of God.
4. Try to shut your mind off from thinking about anything except God. Think of some of the things He has done for you. Open your mouth and thank Him. Praise Him. After some time, stop speaking, and start to make a sound just like a new baby does when trying to learn how to speak their new language - which you are. Over time, your vocabulary will increase. And, down the road, you might even get what may seem like another new language or two.

TONGUES AND THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Charismatic movement within the Catholic church started in the 1960's, and has been recognized since the early 1970's by the mainline Roman Catholic church. However, my understanding is that to date, the Roman Catholic church has no formal position on whether or not tongues includes earthly languages only, or earthly languages plus heavenly languages including personal prayer languages.

- 21:43 If any followers of Christ would know whether or not tongues included personal prayer languages, wouldn't it be the original apostles?
- 21:44 Given the Roman Catholic church places heavy emphasis on the writings of early church fathers, some of whom were discipled by the original apostles, isn't it reasonable to expect those early church fathers should have known whether or not tongues included personal prayer languages?
- 21:45 Given the Roman Catholic church claims it is the one true church with origins from before the cross (i.e. with Peter) - before the first gift of tongues was given - and has teachings of early church fathers who were discipled by the original apostles who would have been familiar with all aspects of tongues, shouldn't the Roman Catholic church have absolute clarity on all aspects of tongues? If not, why not?
- 21:46 Since the Catholic church does not have clarity on all aspects of tongues, isn't that reason to wonder about other key claims of the Catholic church?

CLOSING POINT TO PONDER

Hundreds of millions of Christians believe tongues, interpretation of tongues and speaking in a private prayer language are all supernatural blessings from God. If you believe a personal prayer language is gibberish and any form of tongue today is of the devil, that's your prerogative. However, if you teach that position, I encourage you to ensure you have clear scriptural evidence that clearly refutes the evidence herein. I don't think it would be wise for anyone to mock and undermine something that is a wonderful gift from God. And if you want the gift of a personal prayer language, talk to God. After all, you are His child.

- 21:47 For those Christians who doubt we can actually hear from God today, is speaking in tongues evidence we can? And that there is perhaps much more power and intimacy available if and when we seek God on a one-to-one basis in addition to seeking God and His truths in His amazing Word?

Are Believers to Live in Divine Health?

INTRODUCTION

HEALING is a very controversial topic with many dimensions. **CEASED?** will only touch on a few. Chapter 1 of **CEASED?** briefly discussed whether or not God still puts afflictions on people today. Chapter 22 raises questions related to a few other healing issues, questions for both Continuationists and Cessationists to ponder.

We'll soon see scriptures that show signs and wonders including healings should be the norm in the lives of believers. The reality, however, is not everyone is healed. Sometimes, the kindest, nicest, most godly, sincerest believers and/or our most loved ones seemingly die too young. Their death may seem so unfair, and made all the more difficult when we don't understand the why. Many others live with extensive physical or mental issues and have not been healed even after extensive prayer. If this is something you're currently dealing with, I am so sorry for the pain and/or difficulties you're dealing with. And if you have anxiety at the mere thought of reading about miraculous healings, consider skipping Chapter 22 for now. But so you know, I don't expect 100% of people will be healed. Vast majority healed - yes. 100% healed - no. I think there is much more to the story when it comes to healing.

One issue I encourage you to ponder and research is:

"Are there any conditions to healing just as there to be saved, and just as there are conditions for some prophecies as mentioned in Chapter 18?"

- ❑ *2 Chronicles 7:13 **If** I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or **if** I command the locust to devour the land, or **if** I send a plague among My people, 14 **and** My people who are called by My name **humble themselves**, and **pray** and **seek My face**, and **turn from their wicked ways**, **then** I will **hear from heaven**, and I will **forgive their sin** and will **heal their land**.*

Pray for the Sick, or Heal Them

A contentious issue in the area of healing is whether we are i) to pray for God to heal, or ii) to directly 'heal' the sick ourselves in the name of Jesus and using the authority given to us. Consider the following scriptures.

- ❑ *Matthew 10:8 **Heal the sick**, raise the dead ...*
- ❑ *Luke 10:9 and **heal those in it who are sick**, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'*
- ❑ *James 5:14 Is anyone ... sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to **pray over him**, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord;*

22: Divine Health

22:1 Doesn't "heal the sick" sound somewhat like a command, and not a request? That we are to heal the sick, not to just pray for the sick - apart from a church gathering where we can ask elders to anoint and pray for the sick?

In the New Testament, we see individuals did not pray to God asking Him to heal the person. Instead, believers spoke directly to the health issue or demon. And they did so with authority. In so doing, the person was healed or the demon(s) cast out.

- ❑ Acts 3:6 But Peter said, "I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: **In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene - walk!**" 7 ... he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened.
- ❑ Acts 9:34 Peter said to him, "**Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; get up and make your bed.**" Immediately he got up.
- ❑ Acts 28:8 And it happened that the father of Publius was lying in bed afflicted with recurrent fever and dysentery; and Paul went in to see him and after he had prayed, he laid his hands on him and **healed him.**
- ❑ Acts 16:16 ... a slave-girl having a spirit of divination ... 17 Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out ..." 18 ... But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, "**I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!**" And it came out at that very moment.

In order for such commands to have any clout or impact, they require appropriate authority. When I was told I had the authority to heal, my initial response was something akin to 'Me - authority to heal?' After seeing scriptures that showed authority has been given to all believers, I still had trouble believing it. If this is you, I encourage you to research it fully. Because once you understand the authority that born-again believers have been given, your life will be changed. **CEASED?** touches on the issue of authority more fully in Chapter 23.

And no. I don't think a believer does the healing. God does. We humans are simply vessels God uses to deliver the healings.

ARE ALL TO BE HEALED & LIVE IN DIVINE HEALTH

Defining Divine Health

To those readers who believe born-again Christians are to live in divine health, let's begin by addressing the term 'divine health'. When I think of phrases such as divine revelation or divine health, the word 'divine' brings to mind words such as godly, perfect, pure, truth, clean, holy and even permanency. When I think of people who might have lived the closest to divine health - excluding Jesus - the first 2 individuals that come to mind are Adam and Eve.

22:2 When we use the term 'divine health', was the health Adam and Eve enjoyed before the fall the level of health we should expect born-again believers to have today? Or should it be closer to the 900+ years Adam and others lived after the fall, but before the flood?

22:3 If the health/lifespan of Adam is not to be our benchmark, what are the parameters of divine health that ordinary believers can relate to? Abraham who lived to ~175? 120 as per Moses and Genesis 6:3? 70-80 years per

Psalm 90? Does divine health mean no sickness or disease? If so, how do we deal with situations involving prominent advocates of divine health who sometimes suffer from very challenging diseases and who, unfortunately, sometimes die from a sickness or disease seemingly before their time?

22:4 If our expectations of health and lifespan are less than what Adam and Eve had before the fall, should a term other than divine health be used to describe the physical health available to believers because of what Jesus did - by whose wounds we were healed?

- ❑ *1 Peter 2:24 and He bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; **for by His wounds you were healed.***

During times of teaching and prayer, I've heard the phrase 'by His stripes you are healed' thousands of times. Teachings I've received tend to leave it at that. But is there more to the story? Consider the following.

1. The Greek word underlying the word 'healed' is 'iaomai' [G2390] which means to 'cure, heal, make whole'. Almost all translations translate iaomai in 1 Peter 24 as 'healed'. Both iaomai and another Greek word 'therapeuo' [G2323] are frequently used in reference to physical healing.
2. 'By his wounds you were healed' identifies a solution. But what is the problem? When I read Chapter 2 of 1 Peter, I see sin as the core issue being addressed, not sickness. Even the first part of verse 24 refers to sin.
3. The Greek word underlying the word 'wounds' is 'molops' [G3468] which means '... a wound that trickles with blood'. Molops is singular, not plural, suggesting one wound, not multiple wounds. Is verse 24 suggesting Jesus's back was effectively one big wound? Or is verse 24 referring to a broader issue such as Jesus paid a price that not only makes healing to our bodies and souls possible, but paid a price with His wound - His mangled body, shed blood and death - that redeems us from our sins. In other words, since sins affect not only our spirit, but also potentially our souls and bodies - did Jesus's wound pave the way for us to be made whole in spirit, soul and body?

Scriptures Supporting 'Divine Health'

Besides 1 Peter 2:24, two other scriptures supporting the notion that all Christians should live in 'divine health' are Psalm 103:3 and Isaiah 53:4-5.

- ❑ *Psalm 103:3 Who **pardons all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases;***
- ❑ *Isaiah 53:4 Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. 5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And **by His scourging we are healed.***

Divine health and sins are often lumped together because just as Jesus took 'all' our sin - 'pardoned all our iniquities' as per Psalm 103:3 - He also took 'all our sicknesses and diseases'. In other words, just as sickness was a consequence of sin starting at the time of the Fall of Man, divine health is the consequence of being saved and cleansed of our sin.

22: Divine Health

22:5 When I see words such as 'all', 'none' or 'forever' - I take them with reservation, or wonder about what context these words were used. Absolute guarantees are relatively rare. In the case of Psalm 103:3 for instance and the word 'all, while Jesus took our sicknesses, does that mean we are all to be healed, or does it mean that Jesus made it possible for all to be healed but doesn't guarantee all will be healed?

When we're born again, we're cleansed. Our sins are washed away and we're justified. We're a new creation, and as the old saying goes, "I am justified just as if I'd never sinned in the first place". Our spirits, once separated from God, are born again and come alive as we enter into an intimate relationship with God. God's Word also says that Jesus came to destroy the works of the enemy. With respect to the issue of healing, Continuationists frequently think some of the 'works to be destroyed' are situations where the enemy contributed to people getting sicknesses or diseases.

☐ *1 John 3:8 ... for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to **destroy the works of the devil**.*

There are many other scriptures on healing, but for now, let me briefly address believers who believe it is God's will that all believers are to live in divine health.

22:6 If sickness and disease are to be viewed in the same light as our sins, why are most believers not healed in their bodies and souls immediately upon being born again? Is it perhaps because while we are a new creation, the part of us that is truly new is limited to just our spirit?

22:7 Why are many people not healed after much prayer, even by those who have been involved in or witnessed thousands of other healing miracles?

22:8 While sins are instantly forgiven and our spirits instantly made right when born again (*an event*), are we more accurate in viewing healing of our souls and bodies as something that can be instant, but can also be more of a process that occurs in different ways and at different speeds for each person? And sometimes, not at all?

22:9 If every person was guaranteed to be healed of every physical issue when they were prayed for, would any faith actually be required when we pray for their healing? And if we don't have faith and demonstrate our faith through our works - through stepping out and taking risks in our prayers for healing - are we able to actually please God?

☐ *Hebrews 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please Him ...*

Is It God's Will for All to be Healed

A key argument by Continuationists believing we should all live in divine health is the view that it's God's will that all believers should be healed. Matthew 8:2-3 are two of the verses often cited in support of this belief.

☐ *Matthew 8:2 And a leper came to Him and bowed down before Him, and said, "**Lord, if You are willing**, You can make me clean." 3 Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, "**I am willing**, be cleansed." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.*

22:10 Because Jesus was willing to heal the leper, does that mean God will also heal others? Absolutely! Without a doubt. Many Charismatics and Pentecostals go on to argue that it is God's will to heal not just some, but all of us. But can we assume that just because God is willing to do something for one person (heal the leper), He is willing to do so for all? If we say yes, then shouldn't we extend this logic to everything that God does? In other words, if God is willing to do anything for one person, are we to believe God is willing to do that exact same thing for every other person?

If so, doesn't that mean we should expect those who do not fully tithe, are deceitful with our monies, or mishandle church finances will receive the same treatment as Ananias and Sapphira? How do we view Stephen and Paul who were both savagely stoned, but Paul got himself up and was able to walk away while Stephen died a brutal death? And how do we deal with the following three scriptures that seem to show God does not treat or bless every believer/person the same? That God may have mercy on one and not another? That while Peter's death was one way, the deaths of others may not be the same? And that even though we may work and/or serve many more hours than another, God may give us the same 'wages' as the other?

- ❑ *Romans 9:18 So then He has **mercy on whom He desires**, and **He hardens whom He desires**.*
- ❑ *John 21:19 Now He said this, indicating by what kind of death he would glorify God ... 21 "So Peter, upon seeing him, said to Jesus, "Lord, and what about this man?" 22 Jesus said to him, "**If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!**"*
- ❑ *Matthew 20:1 "For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers ... 2 ... a denarius for the day ... 3 ... third hour ... 5 ... sixth and the ninth hour.... 6 ... eleventh hour ... 12 ... you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day's work ... 15 **Is it not lawful for me to do what I want with what is my own? Or is your eye envious because I am generous?**"*

Another argument supporting the view that it is God's will for all to be healed is the related issue that it is God's will for all to be saved.

- ❑ *1 Timothy 2:4 who wants **all people to be saved** ...*

22:11 Yes, God wants all to be saved. But not everybody is saved. Per Chapter 4, God has criteria of repentance, belief in Jesus, and confession to be saved. If God wanted, He could take steps to ensure every person is saved. He could give every person a 'road to Damascus' experience and keep giving ongoing experiences until every person finally says "Ok, I want you as my Lord and Savior." But God doesn't. With respect to healing, do we have a situation where God's loving heart is that He would like all to be healed, but there may be hindrances or reasons why not all will be healed?

Jesus Healed Everyone - Or did He

A key consideration for those who believe in divine health is that Jesus healed everyone He prayed for. This indeed appears to be true, but did He heal everyone who was sick? Consider what happened in Nazareth, Bethesda, and Capernaum. At Nazareth, Jesus only healed a few people.

- ❑ *Mark 6:3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?" **And they took offense at Him.** 4 Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his own relatives and in his own household." 5 And **He could do no miracle there except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them.** 6 And **He wondered at their unbelief ...***

22:12 Does Jesus's experience at Nazareth indicate Jesus refused to heal, or was it a case where people remained sick because they didn't believe in Jesus, and therefore didn't ask Jesus for healing?

At Bethesda, Jesus healed one person, but it's not clear if He healed others. The most common view is He did not, even though many others needed healing.

- ❑ *John 5:5 A man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. 6 When Jesus saw him lying there ... He said to him, "Do you wish to get well?" 7 The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me." 8 Jesus said to him, "Get up, pick up your pallet and walk." 9 **Immediately the man became well, and picked up his pallet and began to walk.** ... 13 But the man who was healed did not know who it was, **for Jesus had slipped away while there was a crowd in that place.***

Now consider Capernaum which was early in Jesus's earthly ministry.

- ❑ *Mark 1:34 **And He healed many who were ill with various diseases,** and cast out many demons; and He was not permitting the demons to speak, because they knew who He was. 35 ... Jesus got up, ... was praying there. 36 Simon and his companions searched for Him; 37 they found Him, and said to Him, "**Everyone is looking for You.**"*

22:13 Given Jesus had healed many who were ill, is it reasonable to expect some of the group 'looking' for Jesus were afflicted and seeking healing?

However, instead of staying and healing all of the sick who were looking for Him, Jesus moved on so that He could preach - because that's what He came for.

- ❑ *Mark 1:38 He said to them, "Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby, so that I **may preach there** also; for **that is what I came for.**" 39 And He went into their synagogues ... preaching and **casting out the demons.***

22:14 Jesus's primary focus during His earthly ministry was dealing with eternal - not earthly - matters. Apart from that, however, do the three situations at Nazareth, Bethesda and Capernaum indicate that while Jesus can heal all, some people may not get healed for other reasons? Such as unbelief that existed in Nazareth? Or as in not right now, but in God's timing?

- 22:15 Doesn't Jesus make it clear that our priority focus is to be on eternal matters, and that signs and wonders are secondary? But in order to get others to look at eternal matters today, aren't signs and wonders very helpful in getting people's attention so they will look at eternal matters? After all, weren't signs and wonders helpful to getting people's attention:
- i. by God in the Old Testament; and
 - ii. by Father God, Jesus, Holy Spirit and believers in the New Testament both prior to the cross as well as after?

❑ *Deuteronomy 4:34 Or **has a god** ventured to go to **take for himself a nation from within another nation by trials, by signs and wonders**, by war, by a mighty hand, by an outstretched arm, and by great terrors, just as the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? 35 You **were shown these things so that you might know that the Lord, He is God**; there is no other besides Him. 36 Out of the heavens **He let you hear His voice to discipline you**; and **on earth He let you see His great fire**, and you heard His words from the midst of the fire.*

- 22:16 In order to have a focus on eternal matters, don't all believers need to know how to share the gospel? And then to do so? Wouldn't an instantaneous healing miracle - the gospel demonstrated in power - get people's attention today and make them more receptive to hearing the gospel explained in words?

Jesus gives more insight into why He did what He did during His earthly ministry.

- ❑ *John 8:28 So Jesus said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and **I do nothing on My own initiative**, but I speak these things **as the Father taught Me**. 29 And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him."*
- ❑ *John 12:49 For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak. 50 **I know that His commandment is eternal life**; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me.*
- ❑ *John 5:19 Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner**."*

- 22:17 Jesus was willing to heal the leper in Matthew 8:2-3. The leper and everybody else who Jesus prayed for got healed. Amazing. But is this 100% success rate because Jesus only prayed for individuals who Father God told Jesus to pray for? And if so, if God doesn't tell us to pray for somebody, what does that mean? That question can lead to considerable thought and discussion. I hope it does. But let me continue on.

- 22:18 Jesus had a limited amount of time on earth. He had to keep the big picture in mind which perhaps explains why Jesus didn't take the time to heal everybody. However, given most believers today aren't limited by a 3½

22: Divine Health

year time frame, and there are hundreds of millions of us, don't we collectively have enough time to pray for each person that is sick? Is this perhaps one reason why we will collectively - if not individually - do greater works than Jesus?

- ❑ *John 14:12 ... he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and **greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father.***

Did the Disciples Heal Everybody

The Bible has many more examples of people getting healed than not. We don't know the extent to which people weren't healed, but we get a few glimpses. For one, Paul left Trophimus sick, and it's unclear if Trophimus was healed at a later date.

- ❑ *2 Timothy 4:20 ... but Trophimus I left sick at Miletus.*

Paul encouraged Timothy to take wine for his stomach and ailments. We're not sure why. Some wonder if it was due to a lack of clean water to drink, or if the wine was used to help Timothy relax when he had trouble dealing with emotional issues.

- ❑ *1 Timothy 5:23 No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.*

Some believe Paul's thorn was physical; others believe it was a demonic influence. Regardless of the cause, the reality is the issue remained.

- ❑ *2 Corinthians 12:7 ... there was given me **a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me - to keep me from exalting myself!***

There are many teachings on why people don't get healed. Sin, inadequate or misplaced faith, unforgiveness, curses, generational sins and not understanding God's grace or our authority are some of the reasons cited by teachers experienced with miraculous healings. Other teachers believe the only hindrances to healing are those we *think* are hindrances.

22:19 If terms of these issues, let me ask. If you think our sins can prevent healings today, wasn't almost every person who was healed in the New Testament - both before and after the cross - a sinner at the moment they were healed? And if so, how did they get healed then, and we don't today?

Two Examples of People Not Getting Healed

In terms of specific examples where people didn't get healed, consider these two.

At a healing training session in Vancouver, a believer shared how she had struggled to understand why her born-again sister was not healed. Much prayer had occurred and yet the cancer prevailed, and she died. The surviving sister cried out to God wanting to know why. After a lengthy time, God finally said to her something akin to: "You were not privy to all the conversations your sister had with me".

22:20 Is it possible her sister - despite whatever words came from her mouth - didn't want to be healed, but was ready to go home to be with Jesus?

Now consider Lois Evans who was a Jesus-loving woman who died of cancer. She received prayers from around the world. At her funeral in early 2020,

*her son Jonathan gave a wonderful eulogy that I encourage you to find online. Part of his eulogy revealed God's message to Jonathan:
"... Just because I didn't answer your prayer your way doesn't mean that I haven't already answered your prayer anyway. Because victory was already given to your mom ... There was always only two answers to your prayers - either she was going to be healed or she was going to be healed. Either she was going to live or she was going to live ..."*

We worship a mighty God whose ways are way beyond our ways. We might be wise to avoid putting God in a box we think we can define, or control.

A FEW OTHER ISSUES ON HEALING

Is There One Formula to Healing

- 22:21 Some believers believe laying on of hands and anointing of oil is almost essential for healing to occur. I analyzed all the healing scriptures to examine those issues, and found these two items occurred relatively infrequently. In other words, they are not required unless of God guides us to use oil and lay on hands. During my search, I also looked for the one true healing formula, the one true sequence of steps. I didn't find it.
- i. Is this possibly because God wants us to come to Him in all things, and without a *'one and only method'*, we are more inclined to do so?
 - ii. And really, can we ever go wrong by going to God with a grateful heart and asking Holy Spirit what to pray for and to do? After all, when in communion with Holy Spirit, God can respond in milliseconds. It's not like we need hours to talk.
 - iii. A friend of mine believes that what God reveals, He heals. As a result, he seeks Holy Spirit for revelation before he prays for a person, and when he prays, his words are few.
 - iv. When we seek Holy Spirit on what to do, I see us serving similar to how a FedEx driver who is authorized to deliver packages - in this case Holy Spirit gifts including gifts of healing - and we should only deliver package(s) to the specified recipient(s). In other words, we only deliver a gift of healing to who God tells us to deliver the gift. And thus, if we ask God about healing a person but don't receive any delivery instructions, we may thus be inclined to stop and do nothing. Two things: However, two things. First, isn't it still beneficial to offer to pray for the person without addressing what appears to be an obvious physical need, and to try to encourage and show love to the person? I suggest yes, because every person wants to know they are seen and cared about. And often times - when we step out in faith and take risks - God shows up and crazy good things happen. Second, doesn't God command us to heal the sick? And if we deliberately avoid stepping out and healing the sick unless we hear from Holy Spirit, what does that say about our obedience? Faith?

22: Divine Health

22:22 Other believers take an authoritative approach. Key scriptures include:

- ❑ *Matthew 10:8 **Heal the sick, raise the dead ...***
- ❑ *Acts 3:6 But Peter said, "I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene - walk!"*

Using an authoritative-based approach, believers typically command pain and diseases to go, blood be made right, bones to heal, come into alignment etc. Most healings I have seen are a result of this approach.

22:23 I have other friends who are prone to long, drawn-out prayers. On some occasions, it seems like they are giving a sermon. In any event, I have seen people get healed under this approach as well. And I have also seen others not get healed under this approach - and the other approaches as well.

Is There One Holy Spirit Gift of Healing

1 Corinthians 12 lists the 9 Holy Spirit gifts, one of which is the gifts of healing. The Holy Spirit gift of healing is the only gift where the word 'gifts' is tied to it. Plus, it is plural - 'gifts' of healing. Which makes many of us wonder. Is each instance of healing a gift? Or are there many ways of being healed? Or both? Consider my psoriasis from page 31. I received my physical healing after receiving a word of knowledge - another Holy Spirit gift - about bitterness in my heart. We prayed for a man who had a bullet near his spine who was experiencing intense pain. He received a creative healing - the Holy Spirit gift of miracles - when he felt the bullet move enough for the pain to go. People have advised they received healing- or others they know - received healing because they had an unusual degree of faith - the Holy Spirit gift of faith. Others were healed by reading healing scriptures out loud - sometimes for months. And others were healed by modern medicine. Are these different ways of getting healed all the more reason why we should seek Him first in all we do?

Healing Central to the Lives of Today's Believers

Since Jesus healed everybody He prayed for, since Jesus is our role model, and since believers are commanded to heal the sick, miracle healings should be common.

- ❑ *Matthew 10:8 **Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give.***
- ❑ *Luke 9:1 And He called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons and to **heal diseases.***

This view is supported by the fact supernatural signs will identify us as believers.

- ❑ *Mark 16:17 **These signs will accompany those who have believed ... 18 ... they will **lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.*****
- ❑ *1 Thessalonians 1:5 for **our gospel did not come to you in word only, but **also in power** ...***

22:24 What's your take on the above scriptures?

- i. Do they apply to believers living today? If not, why not?
- ii. Do they suggest that healing miracles should be commonplace in the lives of believers today? If not, what do they suggest?

Empirical Evidence

I've frequently heard comments such as *"There is no evidence of healing miracles. Any documentation of instantaneous miracles is fake, and almost all healings are staged, psychosomatic or imagined"*. After telling people I have seen such healings, I have been told through words and/or facial expressions that they don't believe me.

- 22:25 If a person publicly claims that almost all instantaneous healings are fake:
- i. doesn't this person have the responsibility to personally validate their claims, or can they make blanket assessments and broadcast their opinion far and wide based on a few bad apples; and
 - ii. without proper validation of their claims, wouldn't they potentially be the ones who are guilty of spreading fake news?

Some Healings I've Witnessed

Without question, some/many claims of healing are fake. But I have personally seen dozens of instantaneous physical healing miracles. I saw my wife Lori get radically healed. Years after a man hurt his legs when jumping from a building while evading police, he was instantly healed in prayer. He jumped around like a kid in a candy store. Our nurse had her fractured foot healed immediately - much to our doctor's surprise. A teenage girl had her fractured arm instantly healed. I've witnessed healings over time such as a teenager who had an irreversible heart condition surgery. Just before his surgery, the doctor ran another test. The medical technician at the British Columbia Children's Hospital reading the echocardiogram was confused by the change in the young man's condition and wrote "procedure done?" on the lab report, of copy of which is in our hands. No surgery was required. The answer by the way is yes; the procedure was done - by God.

If you're interested in seeing documented evidence of healing, consider going to ministries where healings are occurring and check things out yourself. Dr. Henry Wright's book *'A More Excellent Way'* is another good source with over 100 pages providing testimonies of healing miracles from dozens and dozens of people. Many other ministries have online testimonies.

A Priority on Healing Our Soul Issues First?

I want to briefly return to the topic of soul issues touched on in Chapter 3 of **CEASED?**. In his book *"A More Excellent Way"*, Dr. Wright gives insight into many of the relationships between the soul and body, and why so many of our diseases - some of which are deemed incurable - arise due to deep and long-held issues in our souls. I shared this quote from page 67 of Dr. Wright's book.

"In this ministry, we deal with many autoimmune diseases: lupus, Crohn's, diabetes (type 1), rheumatoid arthritis and MS, to name a few. All autoimmune diseases have a spiritual root of self-hatred, self-bitterness and guilt."

I also referred to a 2015 secular article entitled *"E-Motion: Trapped Emotional Energy is Linked to Disease"* by Dr. Mercola which states *"... even the Conservative Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has stated that 85 percent of all diseases appear to have an emotional element."*

22: Divine Health

- 22:26 Given that soul issues can significantly impact our bodies, let me ask:
- i. Wouldn't we be wise to take a moment to ask Holy Spirit if there is a root cause for the sickness/disease that we should pray for instead of just plowing ahead and commanding the apparent physical sickness or disease to go?
 - ii. For many of us, is the reason we may not be healed of a physical issue because God wants to deal with the related soul issue first?

Consider people in two different camps. Those who struggle with negative emotional issues and traits, and those who primarily live in the fruit of the Spirit.

Negative Emotions

Anger, rage, hate, vengefulness
Sorrow, negative outlook, sadness
Worry, fear, anxiety, guilt, shame
Impatience
Hardness, abusive
Sin, immorality
Distrust, doubt
Pride
Excess consumption

Fruit of the Spirit

Love
Joy
Peace
Patience
Kindness
Goodness
Faithfulness
Gentleness
Self-control

- ❑ *Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control ...*

22:27 Given the impacts soul issues can have on bodies, consider the long-term impacts on our body if we live primarily in the negative per above. And if we have deep soul issues that are impacting your life and body, wouldn't we want another believer to seek Holy Spirit to help us get free of negative stuff, and thereby gain permanent healing in both our soul and our body?

- ❑ *3 John 1:2 Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers.*

Does Seeing A Doctor Indicate a Lack of Faith

This is a controversial topic. Consider this. Luke walked with Paul. His position as a doctor was recognized in God's Word. Jesus even said the sick need a doctor.

- ❑ *Luke 5:31 And Jesus answered and said to them, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick.*

God gives us many blessings, and I believe God can heal us miraculously, over time, and with or without doctors and medical treatments. Does it sometimes make our walk confusing? Oh yeah. It does. Which is all the more reason why we need to spend time alone with God in our secret place.

Our Expectations

Each Christian has to decide if supernatural manifestations of the power of God such as healing of people, are to be commonplace in their own life - or not.

CEASED? 2ND EDITION

- 22:28 If such events are to be commonplace, but currently are not evident in our own life, not in the lives of other believers around us, and/or not in the lives of those we heavily influence - don't we have an issue that needs to be addressed? Or can we simply look the other way, and ignore it?
- 22:29 The Bible tells us to heal the sick. Given we're commanded to heal the sick, given the Bible indicates a very high percentage of people 'prayed for' in the Bible are healed, and given God's Word would not misrepresent what happened, then going forward:
- i. shouldn't our standard be to expect the vast majority of people we minister to will get healed? If not, why not?
 - ii. if we criticize others for not going to hospitals and not healing everybody, are we ignoring the log in our eyes, and using perceived shortcomings of others to deflect away from our responsibilities?

Some Charismatics and Pentecostals claim every person should get healed and if not, it's the fault of the person praying or the person being prayed for. There is probably truth to that in some cases, but I disagree with such blanket claims. I believe some people will not be healed no matter what. And we may never know why the person was not healed. Other people may get healed partially, or over time.

- 22:30 When we pray, is it reasonable to have a mindset that expects a person prayed for will get healed, but that there is a chance they may not? In other words, should our attitude towards healing be somewhat consistent with expecting our car to start even though we know sometimes it won't? Or expecting that we will have our job tomorrow even though we know we may lose it? If not, why not?

The Cessationist camp believes the healing gifts of the Holy Spirit have ceased, and that true instantaneous healing miracles are rare. If this is you, Chapter 22 of **CEASED?** may seem irrelevant. And if this is the case, I encourage you to consider the arguments again in Chapters 13 through 20.

In contrast to the Cessationist camp, Continuationists believe the Holy Spirit gifts such as healing are to be a regular part of the Christian life. Only one perspective is true. If the truth was known by all, hundreds of millions of believers and non-believers would be impacted. May we all get the truth - before Jesus returns.

- *John 8:32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."*

Part of My Journey in Seeing God Heal Others

Over my 11 years as a born-again believer, I have heard dozens of views and nuances on how healing should be done. I have been fortunate to see God heal many people. I have also prayed for dozens of people and no one appears to get healed.

As an example, I was at a small community serving as a volunteer chaplain after a flood, and several people got instantly healed. I remember going out to my truck one night and bawling at the goodness of God. Lori didn't join me on this chaplaincy trip as she was quite sick. I came home early to be with her. We prayed for her, but nothing. Two days later - after a day of prayer, praise and worship - I felt led to leave Lori alone with God. And while I was snoring logs, God healed her.

22: Divine Health

In the coming weeks and months, nobody was getting healed through me, but many others were getting healed through Lori and friends.

Such divergence of experiences and views can be fertile ground for confusion, uncertainty and doublemindedness. One thing I learned in my journey is that while the results that I or others experience are important, they are not my standard, my expectation nor, my benchmark of what should happen. God's Word is my standard and main guide. The healing words spoken by Jesus and Peter when healing people were not sermons on the Mount. Their words were few, direct and authoritative. Jesus tells us to heal the sick. He tells us to be obedient, and shows we should expect healing - even if the results show nothing time after time after time.

CLOSING POINTS TO PONDER

- 22:31 God tells His followers to do many supernatural things including casting out demons and healing the sick. If these kinds of events aren't a regular part of our life, and the lives of those we influence, aren't we/they missing out? And are we/they potentially disobeying God?
- 22:32 Doesn't the possibility of many more believers sharing the gospel in words and power, just as the believers did in 1 Thessalonians 1, give reason to celebrate, to get excited about what God will do through His children?
- 22:33 After all, don't we all want to demonstrate the Kingdom of God not just in words, but also in power and love?
- ❑ *1 Thessalonians 1:5 for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but **also in power** ...*
 - ❑ *Luke 9:2 And He sent them out to **proclaim the kingdom of God** and to **perform healing**.*
 - ❑ *1 Corinthians 13:2 **If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.***

As frequently stated in **CEASED?**, when we're born again, we begin an intimate relationship with God through our spirit being connected with Holy Spirit. Or more precisely, we are one spirit with Him. We also know God is love. And thus, when we seek Him and our desire to heal people is sincerely out of love for God and the person, don't be surprised if God heals them - purely out of His love for them.

Our Journey Through Lori's Breast Cancer

My wife Lori was diagnosed with stage 4 breast cancer in November 2020. While difficult at times, it was an amazing journey where God did so much not only in terms of physically healing Lori - but in terms of revealing and healing issues in both our souls. As Lori says, one should never let a good trial go to waste, and God sure showed up during our trial. Lori will share her journey at a later time, but for now, let me just say that if you or someone you know is struggling with cancer (or other major health issue), please know our hearts are with you. And if you have lost someone to cancer or another difficult illness or tragedy, we're so sorry. We've been there more than once. We pray God gives you comfort and peace. And try to keep your eyes on Jesus and your heart open to Him.

Today's Christian Walk

INTRODUCTION

THERE are so many diverse aspects to the Christian walk. Much has been written by much more experienced believers than I on how to live the Christian life. I leave you to seek them out. However, I have a few comments on the following issues:

1. seeking God in our secret place (page 324);
2. living active, supernatural-filled lives (page 324);
3. binding and loosing on earth or in heaven (page 325);
4. spiritual warfare (page 328);
5. spiritual authority (page 334); and
6. prosperity, poverty or abundant gospel (page 341).

FIGURE 23:1 FRAMEWORK

During the early days of my Christian walk, I often found myself getting overwhelmed trying to figure everything out. My nature is to try to put things in boxes, and then try to figure out how the boxes can fit together. I like diagrams and lists. I like to be organized. One night when I was wrestling with how to organize all the different topics and issues related to Christianity, I tried to put an Excel diagram together as per Figure 23:1 on the next page. Everything needs to be based on God's Word, or otherwise aligned with God's Word, which is why I put God's Word in the center. I then tried to position important topics in some kind of simple, clear, logical order. I tried different approaches, but in the end, I *'failed'*. Our Christian walk involves so many issues with so many moving pieces that are so interwoven that I couldn't come close to putting a complete and proper diagram together. Three things it did help me understand a bit better are i) why God's Word tells us we need to trust God, ii) why we benefit from being led by Holy Spirit, and iii) why good discipleship is so valuable.

If you're a new Christian, don't try to understand the layout of Figure 23:1. Simply view it as a diagram that lists some of the key issues that will impact your walk and/or the lives of those you may be trying to disciple. Over time, these terms and issues as well as many more, will become second nature to you.

Figure 23:1

Cross and Resurrection	Salvation Born Again	Para, Meta, En, Epi	Spirit, Soul & Body	Sanctification, Glorification	Position, Authority, Identity In Christ	Holy Spirit
Enemy and Spiritual Warfare	Hearing from God	Being Led by Holy Spirit	Heart and Flesh	Fruits of the Spirit	Renewing of Mind	Old & New Covenants
Occult	Water Baptism	God's Word			Great Exchange	Reliability of Bible
False Teachings & Religions	Baptism in the Holy Spirit				Living in the Supernatural	Creation Science
Financial	Other Baptisms				Spiritual Gifts from Father, Jesus & Holy Spirit	False Teachings Religions
Health	Spouse	Family	Other Relationships	Greek and Hebrew	God's Promises	Heaven, Hades, Hell
Father God	Prayer	Praise & Worship	Great Commission	Discipleship	End Times	Jesus

SEEKING GOD IN OUR PERSONAL, SECRET PLACE

My view of myself and my 'performance' in my early Christian walk is probably best described as feeling like I was usually falling short, and was a failure. Perhaps that's why, of all the scriptures and counsel given to me, the one aspect that will help me most is - like Clara Williams in the movie War Room - spending time alone with God and in His Word in our secret, private place where only God and I are present. I'm very much a work in progress in this area, but know it makes a huge difference. Some believers may mock this as 'too spiritual' but how can we go wrong? Isn't time alone with God the most important part of being a Christian?

- ❑ *Matthew 6:33 But **seek first His kingdom** and **His righteousness**, and all these things will be added to you.*
- ❑ *Matthew 6:6 But you, **when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret**, and **your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you**.*

Further to this issue of spending time alone with God, how can we abide in Jesus if we don't spend time talking to Jesus - and more importantly - listening to Him?

- ❑ *John 15:4 Remain in Me, and I in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself but must remain in the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in Me.*

LIVING ACTIVE, SUPERNATURAL-FILLED LIVES

If we look around at what goes on around us, the world is fascinated by the supernatural. Consider the prevalence of witchcraft, psychics, mediums, voodoo, tarot cards, horoscopes/astrology, idols, seances, curses and good luck charms. They - along with false religions - are but a few of the activities involving the kingdom of darkness.

In the case of us born-again Christians, we can't help but be involved in the supernatural. When we're born again, Holy Spirit comes in [en] us, an incredible supernatural experience in itself.

- ❑ *Romans 8:9 However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed **the Spirit of God dwells in [en] you**. But **if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him**.*

However, the supernatural does not end with us passively receiving Holy Spirit when we're born again. Many scriptures show the children of God are to be actively involved in the supernatural beyond reading His Word which is also supernatural.

- ❑ *John 14:12 ... **he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do** also; and **greater works than these he will do**; because I go to the Father.*
- ❑ *1 Corinthians 14:1 ... **yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts** ...*
- ❑ *Mark 16:17 These **signs will accompany those who have believed**: ... **cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues**; 18 ... they **will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover**.*

23:1 With Holy Spirit in [en] us and leading us, the supernatural is necessarily a major part of our life. Jesus told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they were Baptized in the Holy Spirit. If we don't seek this Baptism as well, aren't we disobeying God? And potentially missing out on something special?

23:2 When God heals a person, the person who was healed cannot deny the power of God. Apart from the tangible presence of God, is there an evangelistic 'tool' better than the power of God healing an unbeliever in their soul or body, or giving a word of knowledge that shocks the person? If so, what is it? And if there isn't a better tool than the tangible presence or power of God, shouldn't we pursue such gifts with vigor? If not, why not?

BINDING AND LOOSING ON EARTH OR HEAVEN

An often-cited scripture in support of miraculous healings is Matthew 16:19.

- ❑ *Matthew 16:19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and **whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.***

Since heaven has no sickness or disease, the i) binding a sickness or disease that is tormenting a person here on earth and then the ii) loosing healing over the person changes the situation so they would experience what is in heaven - health. Heaven invades earth; God's kingdom has come.

- ❑ *Luke 10:9 and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, 'The **kingdom of God has come near to you.**'*

Many believers disagree on the issue of binding and loosing, and a key reason behind much of the disagreement is directional.

Heaven to Earth, or Earth to Heaven

The NASB translation of Matthew 16:19 considers ***what has previously been*** bound and loosed in heaven (past tense) ***can now be*** bound and loosed on earth (present tense). Other translations give a different perspective. ESV effectively states ***what is being*** bound and loosed on earth (present tense) ***will also be*** bound and loosed in heaven (present/future tense).

- ❑ *Matthew 16:19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth **shall have been bound** in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth **shall have been loosed in heaven.** (NASB)*
- ❑ *Matthew 16:19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth **shall be bound in heaven,** and whatever you loose on earth **shall be loosed in heaven.** (ESV)*

23:3 Returning to the issue of healing, the ESV version suggests that if we bind sickness on earth, we will bind sickness in heaven. Furthermore, if we loose healing on earth, we will loose healing in heaven. But isn't heaven already free of sickness? And thus, why would we need to bind sickness in heaven if sickness isn't there, and why would we try to loose healing into heaven if there is no need for healing in heaven?

23:4 Further, why would we want to bind anything on earth and take it to heaven?

Clearly, it matters where we're 'starting from' and which direction we are 'going'.

23:5 Heaven is eternal; the earth is temporary. Heaven is filled with holiness, joy

and peace; the earth is filled with sin, emotional pain, and strife. Heaven has no sickness or disease; the earth is filled with sickness and disease. Which direction is more likely?

- i. Whatever is on temporary earth, we take action so it goes from earth to heaven permanently; or
 - ii. whatever is in eternal heaven, we take action so it comes from heaven to temporary earth.
- ❑ *2 Corinthians 4:18 while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

Consider the first half of the Lord's prayer, or as some prefer to call it - the believers' prayer - since Jesus didn't need forgiveness of sins:

- ❑ *Matthew 6:9 Pray then like this: "Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be your name. 10 **Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.***
- 23:6 Doesn't the phrase 'Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven' suggest the direction is from heaven to earth, and not earth to heaven? And doesn't Revelation 1:27's "nothing unclean ... will enter it" again suggest the direction is heaven to earth, and not earth to heaven?
- ❑ *Revelation 21:25 In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; 26 and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; 27 and **nothing unclean**, and no one who practices abomination and lying, **shall ever come into it**, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

Church Discipline Only

Binding and loosing are also referred to later in Matthew in Matthew 18:18.

- ❑ *Matthew 18:18 Truly I say to you, **whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.***

One Cessationist view of binding and loosing is that it doesn't relate to healing and sickness, but to church discipline which is addressed just prior to Matthew 18:18.

- ❑ *Matthew 18:15 "**If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.** 16 But **if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you**, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. 17 **if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.***

Church discipline may indeed be relevant, but what about the other issues addressed between Matthew 16:19 when binding and loosing is first mentioned, and Matthew 18:18 when binding and loosing is mentioned a second time? Consider the following items that are found between Matthew 16:19 and Matthew 18:18.

23: Today's Christian Walk

- ❑ *Matthew 16:24 ... If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must **deny himself and take up his cross** and follow me.*
 - ❑ *Matthew 17:1 Six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up on a high mountain 2 **And He was transfigured before them** ...*
 - ❑ *Matthew 17:18 And **Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured at once.***
 - ❑ *Matthew 17:19 Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not drive it out?" 20 And He said to them, "**Because of the littleness of your faith** ...*
 - ❑ *Matthew 17:26 When Peter said, "From strangers," Jesus said to him, "Then the sons are exempt. 27 However, so that we do not offend them, go to the sea and throw in a hook, and **take the first fish that comes up; and when you open its mouth, you will find a shekel. Take that and give it to them for you and Me.**"*
 - ❑ *Matthew 18:1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus and said, "**Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?**"*
 - ❑ *Matthew 18:8 "**If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you ...***
 - ❑ *Matthew 18:12 "What do you think? **If any man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go and search for the one that is straying?**"*
- 23:7 If church discipline is relevant to binding and loosing, aren't the other issues sandwiched between Matthew 16:19 and Matthew 18:18 also relevant to the issue of binding and loosing? If not, why not?
- 23:8 And given these other issues are also relevant, doesn't that mean binding and loosing is relevant to healing of sickness and disease? If not, why not?

Some clarity

I struggled for a long time in understanding what is meant by binding and loosing. The Amplified version helped me considerably.

- ❑ *Matthew 18:18 I assure you and most solemnly say to you, whatever you bind [forbid, declare to be improper and unlawful on earth shall have [already] been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose [permit, declare lawful] on earth shall have [already] been loosed in heaven. (AMP)*

Using sickness as an example, I view binding and loosing as taking action against the sickness by using the authority given to me as a child of God. When I feel led to pray according to binding and loosing, I first forbid (*bind, stop that which is not of God*) the sickness from remaining in the person. Second, I declare healing to replace the sickness - the loosing/releasing of God's goodness. In terms of words, I lean towards this kind of statement:

"Father God, I thank you for the gifts of healing that are available for us. And now, In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, I forbid this sickness (disease, virus, infection, etc.) of _____ from staying in _____'s body just as this sickness

is forbidden in heaven. I tell this sickness and all pain in this body to go now. I release the healing of heaven into _____'s body, and ask Father God that You restore every cell in _____'s body that has been harmed by this sickness, or by treatments associated with it. In the mighty name of my Lord and the Lord of this world - Jesus Christ of Nazareth - I pray. Amen."

SPIRITUAL WARFARE IN THE LIVES OF BELIEVERS

Satan hates God's creations and will do whatever he can to cause damage.

- ❑ *John 10:10 The **thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy ...***

Two of the reasons Jesus came to earth were a) to destroy the works of the enemy, and b) to bring abundant life.

- ❑ *1 John 3:8 ... The Son of God appeared for this purpose, **to destroy the works of the devil.***
- ❑ *John 10:10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; **I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.***

Jesus accomplished what He came to do. But does that mean the battle is over?

- ❑ *Ephesians 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.*

Ephesians was written in ~60-62AD, ~30 years after the cross. At that time, there were many hundreds of thousands of believers. God's Word tells believers to cast out demons. In fact, casting out demons should be a sign that we're a believer.

- ❑ *Matthew 10:8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, **cast out demons ...***
 - ❑ *Mark 16:17 These **signs will accompany those who have believed:** in My name they will **cast out demons**, they will speak with new tongues;*
- 23:9 Does the fact that believers are to cast out demons (even though Jesus had already come to destroy the works of the devil), suggest that while Jesus did His part, the battle against the devil still goes on, and that we're to play a part by enforcing the victory? If not, what are scriptures such as Ephesians 6:12 and Mark 16:17 calling believers to be doing today?

Beginning of Jesus's Earthly Ministry

After John the Baptist baptized Jesus in water, Holy Spirit came upon [epi] Jesus.

- ❑ *Matthew 3:16 After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the **Spirit of God** descending as a dove and **lighting on Him.***

Jesus then went to the desert. After fasting 40 days, He was tempted by the devil.

- ❑ *Matthew 4:1 Then was Jesus led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 And **after He had fasted forty days** and forty nights, He then became hungry. 3 And the **tempter came and said to Him,** "If You*

23: Today's Christian Walk

are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."

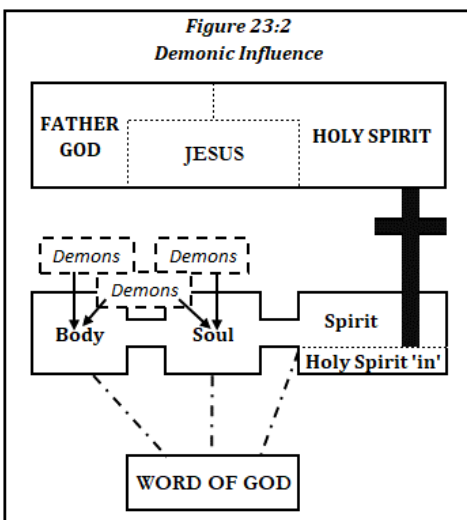
- 23:10 Jesus's 40-day fast was part of the equipping God gave Jesus to prepare Him for His earthly ministry. After the disciples were born again on resurrection Sunday evening, isn't it interesting they also went through an additional 40-day equipping period between resurrection Sunday and Jesus's ascension when He taught the disciples about matters related to the kingdom of God?

After His fast, Jesus's first activity was dealing with satan. After satan was done tempting Jesus, satan left. But satan didn't leave permanently. Per Luke 4:13, satan left Jesus alone until there was an opportune time to attack Jesus. One of those times was attacking Jesus indirectly through another person - Judas.

- ❑ *Luke 4:13 When the **devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until an opportune time.***
 - ❑ *Luke 22:3 And Satan entered into Judas who was called Iscariot ...*
- 23:11 Is this an indicator that when we begin our Christian journey, we can also expect to encounter the enemy? And although satan's demons may leave us alone for a period of time, they will attack when we're vulnerable - such as when we're sad, sick, or have lost hope?
- 23:12 Is this also perhaps why Paul tells us that his and our real battle is not against other human beings, but against satan and his army of demons? And doesn't that mean we need to be equipped on how to deal with the enemy?
- ❑ *Ephesians 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.*

Spirit, Soul and Body

Many Christians believe that once a person is born again, they are free of demonic influence.



I suggest this is 1/3 correct as I believe our spirits are free of direct demonic influence, but our souls and bodies are not. Let me explain using Figure 23:2.

When we're first saved, our spirits are 'born again' and are made right with God. Our spirits are tightly linked to Holy Spirit. In fact, we are one with God in our spirit.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 6:17 But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him.*

As a result of this ‘*intertwining*’ of our spirit and Holy Spirit, I believe our spirits are ‘*off-limits*’ to the enemy. Other Christians believe that - as soon as we’re born again - the enemy is also off-limits to our soul and body because any demons in us must have been cast out the moment we were born again. The reasoning is that because a newly born-again believer is a new creation, the old has passed away and new things have come. In the words, the old - including any demonic oppression/possession - must have gone and been replaced by the new.

- ❑ *2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ, this person is a new creation; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*

23:13 If we believe that being a new creation means all the old has passed away including demonic oppression or possession, wouldn’t that mean that all the sicknesses and diseases in our bodies, all the hurts in our souls including the impacts of traumas, and all the stinkin thinkin in our minds must also have gone? And since there is extremely widespread evidence that total healings in our bodies and souls typically do not occur when we’re first born again, and since we still seem to have a fair amount of stinkin thinkin still taking place in Christians, doesn’t that negate the views that all demons are cast out and that we’re not automatically set free of demonic influence when born again? If not, why not?

23:14 Is the fact that demons are able to torment our souls and bodies further supported by the fact that God’s Word tells us - His children - that we need to put on our armor of God (*Ephesians 6:10-18*) and that our battle is not against flesh and blood but against the enemy (*Ephesians 6:12 above*)?

23:15 Given we can expect to wrestle with the enemy, doesn’t it make sense that such battles with the enemy are waged through our souls and bodies? If not in our souls and bodies, then where does the battle take place?

23:16 On the basis a major battleground is in our soul - especially our minds - is this another key reason why it’s so important to focus on heavenly things and to renew our minds through things of God, such as studying His Word?

- ❑ *Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind**, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*

- ❑ *Colossians 3:1 Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 **Set your mind on the things above**, not on the things that are on earth.*

If you don’t think satan can influence a person’s thoughts and mind, consider King David. David was a man of God, and a man who heard from God. Consider that God gave him the details of the blueprints of the temple and its contents that he in turn gave to Solomon.

- ❑ *Chronicles 28:11 Then David gave to his son Solomon the plan of the porch of the temple, its buildings, its storehouses, its upper rooms, its inner rooms, and the room for the atoning cover; 12 ... plan ... for the courtyards ... surrounding rooms ... storehouses ... 14 ... golden utensils ... silver utensils ... golden lampstands ... golden lamps ... 16 ... tables of the showbread ... 17 ...*

23: Today's Christian Walk

forks, ... basins ... pitchers ... golden bowls ... 18 ... altar of incense ... model of the chariot ... cherubim ... 19 "All this," said David, "the Lord made me understand in writing by His hand upon me, all the details of this pattern."

In my way of thinking, that process must have taken some time for David to listen to God and document all that was involved. It also clearly shows that David spoke to and heard from God. And yet David was still influenced by Satan to take a census.

- ❑ *Satan rose up against Israel and caused David to take a census of the people of Israel. [NLT]*

New Believers

When I was first born again, I was fairly clueless. Some of my early struggles arose because my mind faced an ongoing barrage of tormenting, negative and tempting thoughts. My mind was like a clothes dryer with a crazy cocktail mix of ungodly thoughts going around and around - and around and around. I didn't know why this was going on, nor did I know how to shut these thoughts off. Later on, I realized so many of these tormenting, negative and tempting thoughts were of the enemy. And when I was taught how to deal with the enemy, my life changed considerably for the better.

23:17 Given the enemy is out to kill, steal and destroy, isn't it likely the enemy will try to attack new believers and lead them astray from God and the truths in His Word? If not, why not?

23:18 And based on a high probability that the enemy will attack new believers, isn't that a key reason why mature believers and leaders need to equip all new believers on the basics of self-deliverance soon after they are born again, and to also lead them through deliverance? If we don't, aren't we likely to subjecting new believers to unnecessary pain through the schemes of the enemy?

- ❑ *Hosea 4:6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge ...*
- ❑ *2 Corinthians 2:11 so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes.*

The How To's

The spiritual world is very complex. Speak to someone who was formerly involved in witchcraft and the occult, and you start to get an appreciation of the evil nature, capabilities and impacts that Satan and his army of demons still have. Terms such as '*rulers of the darkness*', '*principalities and spiritual wickedness in high places*' are not idle words describing some fairy tale.

Various individuals and groups specialize in setting people free from demonic forces in a ministry of deliverance. Approaches vary, but a central part of these ministries is helping individuals understand a) their identity in Christ, and b) the authority they have as a born-again follower of Christ. And while these ministries specialize in this area, we need to remember that all believers are commanded to learn how to cast out demons. And while they specialize in this area, every ministry must always find ways to share the gospel and show the love of Christ in words and actions.

Some churches incorporate spiritual warfare and deliverance as a fundamental part of discipling new believers. By contrast, many other believers and churches ignore the issue of spiritual warfare. Terms such as deliverance and demons are taboo which - to me - is unfortunate. I am far from an expert in this area, but let me share some of the advice given to me over the years.

1. There isn't only one way to cast out demons (deliverance).
2. If we live in ways that open doors for the demonic world to come in, deliverance is not a one-time thing. It will be an ongoing part of our life.
3. The cross, Jesus and His Name, His shed blood and His resurrection are all so powerful. We must never forget them nor the authority given to us.
4. Asking for the Fire of God and for revelations from Holy Spirit are key.
5. Pray protective prayers before ministry sessions & cleansing prayers after.
6. Apart from some time spent on education and on dealing with specific issues, never let the enemy become the focal point of our attention unless God calls us to do so for a season. We must keep our eyes on Jesus.
7. The spiritual world has a complex legal framework. As alluded to in satan's talks with God about Job, things in our lives can give the enemy rights to do some things but not others. When I was first exposed to teachings on the courts of heaven by Elizabeth Nixon and Robert Henderson, it was an eye-opener and very helpful. I'm not saying I agree with everything taught by Elizabeth, Robert and others who teach on this issue, but it's absolutely an issue worth studying. There is a surprising number of references to courts and legalities in the Bible.
8. Demons have assigned roles and often work in gangs. For example, a spirit focused on loneliness will work with spirits of depression and suicide to try to slide a person down into a pit where suicide becomes a viable option.
9. Be careful what spiritual forces you go against. It's one thing to cast out a lower demon from yourself or another person you're ministering to; it's another thing to go against higher powers and principalities that are over our cities, regions and nations. If God has not clearly called you into such battles, and you decide to engage, beware.
10. Sin is one of the doorways enabling the enemy to torment and oppress believers. Confession of sins is key to freeing ourselves from tormenting accusations and thoughts of the enemy. Dealing with root causes to sins or other issues and bringing them into the light helps closes the door on the enemy. Unforgiveness is often a big issue keeping doors open for the enemy for many believers, and which needs to be dealt with. If someone won't deal with unforgiveness against people or God, I won't do deliverance.
11. If a demon is cast out and the sin that opened the door for the demon to oppress us in the first place remains active, our house is not clean as the sin has not been swept out and the door has not been closed to the enemy. Our house is not *'full of God'* unless we sweep our house clean, and we take steps to keep our house clean. If we don't, we potentially face the problem of not just one demon, but *'seven'* stronger demons coming against us, and we can have a bigger battle against demonic forces after deliverance than before.

□ *Matthew 12:43 "Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes*

23: Today's Christian Walk

*through waterless places seeking rest, and does not find it. 44 Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came'; and when it comes, **it finds it unoccupied**, swept, and put in order. 45 Then it goes and takes along with it **seven other spirits more wicked than itself**, and they go in and live there; and the **last state of that man becomes worse than the first**. ...*

12. This issue of potentially leaving a person worse off after deliverance than before deliverance is one reason why I get nervous when I see individuals casting out demons of new believers without discipling them first. Leading a new believer through deliverance right after they're born again is an important thing to do, but without some basic training and education on self-deliverance, the person delivered from the demonic force(s) may experience even more serious demonic attacks in the future. And in so doing, the door to their new faith can be blown open for the enemy to come in and torment their souls and bodies, to create doubts, and to limit the new believer's life. The ripple effect can be significant as others can be impacted negatively as well. As a result, before going through deliverance, a believer must be taught the basics of self-deliverance - how to deal with demonic attacks when they're alone.
13. The issues in #9 and #10 are also why - in my view - believers should rarely cast demons out of non-believers. One exception is if the person is so demon-possessed, he/she can't function. But if the person is functioning, the odds of them being worse off after deliverance than before are high. As a result, I wouldn't do it. If a non-believer is led through deliverance, however, they need to be immediately disciplined in the gospel and on the basics of fending off future demonic attacks - and then prayed for.

Example prayer

On April 5, 2020, Jimmy Evans of Gateway (www.gatewaypeople.com) spoke on fear. In his message, he gave an example prayer he uses when the spirit of fear tries to attack him. I share it to help illustrate the authority believers have, and how we can begin to use some of this authority for our benefit in the area of self-deliverance.

"Spirit of fear, I break all agreement with you. And I expose you. I will not let you come into my life and hide inside of me and torment me anymore. You're not me. You're a demon from hell. And I bind you by the authority of the name of Jesus, and the blood of Jesus, and I command you to leave me now in Jesus's name. Amen."

- 23:19 In terms of spiritual warfare and casting out demons, my research often showed individuals critiquing others when they don't appear to have been involved in casting out demons themselves. Isn't that like a parent who never played the sport, but willingly and frequently gives advice to the coach who actually played the sport?

I ask the above question from personal experience. I played a few sports in my day. When coaching my children's teams, the most challenging parents were typically the ones who never played the sport, or never played any team sports. They were often clueless. And if you're wondering, I have forgiven those parents.

Two last questions on spiritual warfare.

23:20 As mentioned, many believers think Christians can't be impacted by demons. But let me ask. Wouldn't satan want to hinder the lives of believers and efforts to share the Good News by promoting that very idea - that satan and his army of demons can't influence believers today? After all, why bother to even think of fighting an enemy that doesn't exist?

23:21 I've heard it said: *"If we're not battling the enemy in our own lives to some extent, is that a sign we're not much of a threat to satan's kingdom?"* Is there merit to that statement?

SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY GIVEN TO BELIEVERS

For this section, please note the issue of authority is primarily in reference to carrying out the Great Commission which includes casting out demons and delivering supernatural gifts such as healing.

The words power and authority are often used interchangeably, but are two different things.

- *Luke 9:1 And He called the twelve together, and gave them **power [dunamis G1411]** and authority [**exousia G1849**] over all the demons and to heal diseases.*

The word 'power' is derived from the Greek word 'dunamis' [G1411] which Thayer defines in part as '*power residing in a thing by virtue of its nature, power for performing miracles, power consisting in or resting upon armies, forces, hosts*'.

Previous chapters discussed Baptism of the Holy Spirit wherein Holy Spirit comes upon [epi] a believer to give access to dunamis power to witness. God's power manifests in diverse ways including, but not limited to, the 9 Holy Spirit gifts.

The English word 'authority' is based on the Greek word 'exousia' [G1849] which Thayer defines in part as '*the power of rule or government (the power of him whose will and commands must be submitted to by others and obeyed)*'.

Lori explained the difference between power and authority to me using a police officer analogy. Police officers have responsibilities that are critically important. Officers have clearly defined purposes and roles. To do their job, they are given authority which gives them the right and responsibility to do certain things. They are also equipped to do the job. One part of their equipping is giving officers power in various ways including use of force training and provision of items including guns, batons and handcuffs. Police officers are given both authority and power to enable them to do their job. Their power is limited by the authority to apply the rules of law found in their criminal codes. In other words, authority rules over power in a law-abiding world. If a police officer is told to stand down by a superior officer, the officer obeys, even if the officer still has his/her power in the form of a gun, baton and handcuffs available. In a world where properly approved and properly applied law is not respected, corrupt power becomes the authority, something we have seen over and over again in this world.

CEASED? has talked fairly extensively about the power portion of the Christian walk; now it's time to review the authority portion.

Original Authority - Adam and Eve

After Adam and Eve were formed by God, God gave them instructions to be fruitful and to multiply so that people would fill and subdue the earth.

- *Genesis 1:27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 God blessed **them**; and God said to **them**, "**Be fruitful** and multiply, and fill the earth, and **subdue** it; and **rule** over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."*

23:22 Doesn't this suggest both Adam and Eve had authority, and that God wanted human beings - both male and female - to play a pivotal role in God's management of earth? If not, what do these verses mean?

Authority in Jesus's Earthly Ministry

During Jesus's earthly ministry, ordinary people recognized God had given Jesus authority. For instance, consider the Centurion whose servant was paralyzed.

- *Matthew 8:5 And when Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, imploring Him, 6 and saying, "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, fearfully tormented." 7 Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him." 8 But the centurion said, "Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under my roof, **but just say the word, and my servant will be healed.** 9 **For I also am a man under authority [exousia] ...***

Crowds acknowledged Jesus's authority after they saw the paralytic healed, a miracle supporting Jesus's claim that He had the authority to forgive sins.

- *Matthew 9:6 But so that you may know that the Son of Man **has authority [exousia] on earth to forgive sins**" - then He said to the paralytic, "Get up, pick up your bed and go home." 7 And he got up and went home. 8 But when the **crowds saw this**, they were awestruck, and glorified God, who had **given such authority [exousia] to men.***

As the miracles at the hands of Jesus became more and more extensive, the Jewish leaders recognized Jesus must have had authority as they asked Him to identify what authority He was under, and who gave the authority to Him.

- *Matthew 21:23 When He entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to Him while He was teaching, and said, "**By what authority [exousia] are You doing these things, and who gave You this authority [exousia]?**"*

23:23 Don't the questions posed by the Jewish leaders indicate they believed there must have been a higher spiritual authority that enabled Jesus to perform such miracles?

23:24 The Jewish leaders knew the verbiage within the scriptures, but didn't realize God gave this authority to Jesus. But weren't there only two supernatural alternatives - God and Satan? And given that, doesn't the response of the scripturally learned Jewish leaders show how blinded we can be if we're more loyal to our beliefs than to seeking God's truths?

Authority Delegated during Jesus's Ministry

During His ministry which was before the cross, Jesus delegated authority to His twelve disciples and 70 others. Jesus told them to heal and cast out demons.

- ❑ *Luke 9:1 And He called the twelve together, and gave them **power [dunamis]** and **authority [exousia]** over all the demons and to heal diseases.*
- ❑ *Luke 10:1 Now after this the **Lord appointed seventy others ... 9 and heal those** in it who are sick, and say to them, "The kingdom of God has come near to you...17 The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name." ... 19 Behold, **I have given you authority [exousia]** to **tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power [dunamis] of the enemy ...***

23:25 When Jesus sent out these 82 disciples, was it a foreshadowing of Jesus sending out all disciples to fulfill the Great Commission? And to go out with proper authority?

Authority Jesus had after His Ascension

After Jesus ascended, Father God seated Jesus at His right hand.

- ❑ *Ephesians 1:20 which He brought about in Christ, when He **raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,***

The phrase 'right hand' is derived from the Greek word 'dexios' [G1188] which is defined as 'the right, the right hand or metaphorically, a place of honor or authority'.

Father God gave Jesus authority over all things, not some things.

- ❑ *Ephesians 1:21 **far above all rule and authority [exousia]** and power [dunamis] and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And He **put all things** in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head **over all things** to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.*

Believers - Where are We

After we're born again, we're raised and seated with Jesus in heavenly places.

- ❑ *Ephesians 2:5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and **raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,***

23:26 As per Ephesians 1:20-21, Jesus is in heavenly places 'far above all rule and authority and power and dominion'. Since we're seated with Jesus Christ in the heavenly places, aren't we properly positioned to receive a great deal of authority as well?

23:27 And like law enforcement officers who have varying types and levels of authority depending on the requirements, is it reasonable to believe the spiritual authority given to individual believers can vary depending on the calling and the type of work God has called each person to do - above and beyond what every believer is called to do - share the Good News, heal the sick, raise the dead, cast out demons and cleanse lepers?

23: Today's Christian Walk

Sent Ones / Messengers / Ambassadors

After Jesus tells His disciples that He has been given all authority, His next message is to 'Go therefore and make disciples'.

- ❑ *Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them ... **"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples ...***

Not only does Jesus tell believers to go, Jesus tells us that just as Father God sent Jesus, Jesus is sending us. We are His 'sent ones', His 'Ambassadors'.

- ❑ *John 20:21 So Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you; **as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.**"*
- ❑ *2 Corinthians 5:20 Therefore, **we are ambassadors for Christ ...***

The word 'ambassador' is derived from the Greek word 'Presbeuo' [G4243]. Presbeuo means older according to age, or to serve as ambassador. Merriam Webster defines an ambassador as:

'an official envoy especially: a diplomatic agent of the highest rank accredited to a foreign government or sovereign as the resident representative of his or her own government or sovereign or appointed for a special and often temporary diplomatic assignment'.

As Ambassadors for Christ, we represent Jesus. Jesus did all kinds of supernatural things. Incredibly, we who believe in Him will do even greater things than Jesus did.

- ❑ *John 21:25 And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which **if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written.***
- ❑ *John 14:12 Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and **greater works than these he will do;** because I go to the Father.*

Police officers are given responsibilities and authority to carry out their duties. Health food inspectors are given responsibilities and authority to carry out their duties. Same for those in fire departments, finance, manufacturing etc.

23:28 When Jesus states He is sending believers, both today and yesterday, just as Father God sent Him, that we are ambassadors for Christ, that we will do more miracles than Jesus did, doesn't this mean Jesus would give believers both the appropriate authority (seated in heavenly places alongside Christ) and access to power (Baptism in the Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit gifts) to fulfill what we are called to do as His sent ones, His ambassadors?

- ❑ *John 20:21 So Jesus said ... **as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.**"*
- ❑ *Matthew 10:8 **Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons.** Freely you received, freely give.*

Authority for Believers Then and Now

Some believers may be uncomfortable thinking such authority, with its privileges and responsibilities, is for believers today. After all, receiving authority from Almighty God is pretty far out there in the natural. If we go back to Chapter 6, recall that the group gathered on resurrection Sunday evening included 10 of the original apostles, the 2 disciples Jesus met on the road to Emmaus plus *those that were with them*. Evidence was provided showing *those that were with them* included at least 5 women, 4 of whom - Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Joanna and Salome - were mentioned by name. This group of male and female disciples is the same group Jesus told: *"... as the Father has sent Me, I also send you"*.

23:29 This group of *sent ones* is larger than the original apostles. Doesn't this indicate all believers, including all born-again believers living today, have been given authority to go out and share the Good News? If not, why not?

Also consider that many people were given power when they were Baptized in the Holy Spirit including the ~120 at Pentecost, the new believers in Samaria, Cornelius, family and friends, and the 12 disciples at Ephesus.

23:30 Why would Jesus Baptize these believers in the Holy Spirit to give them power if He wasn't going to give them the associated authority to use the power? Wouldn't doing so be comparable to giving a group of police officers guns, handcuffs and batons, but then telling them to sit at their desks and do nothing but talk about the problems in the world outside?

Authority over the Enemy

Dealing with the enemy is a given. To do so, Jesus gave his disciples authority over demons.

- ❑ *Mark 3:14 And He **appointed twelve**, so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out to preach, 15 and **to have authority to cast out the demons**.*

Today, Jesus wants His followers to not only preach the gospel, but to take action on many fronts including casting out demons.

- ❑ *Matthew 10:8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, **cast out demons**. Freely you received, freely give.*
- ❑ *Mark 16:15 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel ... 17 These signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they **will cast out demons** ..."*

23:31 Doesn't the command to cast out demons mean we have the authority to do exactly that? And that while the enemy still has power, our authority supersedes his power provided we know how to use it?

Who Am I, and Where Am I

John and Moira Hill have blessed Lori and I in many ways through teachings, counsel, and prayer. John disciplined me almost every Tuesday evening for well over a year. One evening, John asked me: *"Who are you, and where are you?"* He smiled, but I was ready for him. I responded with something deep like: *"Can I have another*

23: Today's Christian Walk

cup of tea please.” The simple answer to John's question is that, when we're born again, we're a blood-bought child seated in heavenly places who has been given spiritual authority. Lori taught me a simple way to remember the answers: “*Sheep say BAH*”.

B: I am a **B**lood **B**ought Child of the Most-High God.

- ❑ *Acts 20:28 Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which **He purchased with His own blood.***

A: I have been given **A**uthority.

- ❑ *Luke 10:19 Behold, I have **given you authority** to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you.*

H: Just as police officers handcuff the guilty, we can **H**andcuff any lies and other thoughts that would take us into a broken, tormented mindset by giving them to Jesus - by ‘handcuffing’ these ungodly thoughts to Jesus. Then by asking Jesus to replace these ungodly thoughts with godly ones, we help renew our minds.

- ❑ *2 Corinthians 10:5 We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are **taking every thought captive** to the obedience of Christ,*
- ❑ *Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind**, so that you may prove what the will of God is ...*

In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth

As discussed in Chapter 15 beginning on page 242, there is incredible authority in the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazarene.

- ❑ *Acts 3:6 But Peter said, “I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: **In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene** - walk!”*
- ❑ *Acts 3:16 And on the basis of faith in His name, it is **the name of Jesus** which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all.*
- ❑ *Acts 4:1 As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to them... 7 When they had placed them in the center, they began to inquire, “**By what power, or in what name, have you done this?**”*

Peter didn't have money, but he had the authorization to use Jesus's Name. He also had access to power as a result of being Baptized in the Holy Spirit. The result was Holy Spirit used Peter to distribute the gift of healing to this paralytic man.

The power of the Name of Jesus is also well illustrated in Matthew 7.

- ❑ *Matthew 7:21 “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. 22 Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not **prophecy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your***

name perform many miracles? 23 *And then I will declare to them, **'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'***

The name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth has such power that even non-believers can do miracles by relying on His name. Some individuals who do such miracles believe they are Christians, but aren't. They will get a terrible shock when they hear the words "*depart from me*". When it's too late, they will realize they weren't born again, and they aren't headed to heaven, but to hell. Tragic.

When it comes to issues such as baptizing another believer in water, we baptize the person in the name of the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit.

- *Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, **'All authority has been given to Me** in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and **make disciples** of all the nations, **baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit**.*

23:32 Water baptizing a believer '*in the name of ...*' is to baptize using the authority we've been given. It's part of being God's ambassador. Being an ambassador for a country is a big honor. As ambassadors for Christ, don't we have a far bigger honor with all our rights and responsibilities, including our right and responsibility to water baptize other believers?

In Acts 2:38, Peter tells his listeners they need to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. He didn't say they needed to be baptized in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

- *Acts 2:38 Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you **be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ** for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

In my review of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit in Chapter 10, I presented evidence showing why Acts 2:38 is not referring to water baptism, but instead to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. In this case, an expanded version of the highlighted middle portion of Acts 2:38 might then read along the lines of '*... **ask Jesus to baptize you in the Holy Spirit by the authority given to Jesus** ...*'.

23:33 Consider for a minute that Acts 2:38 does refer to Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Given Jesus has been delegated all authority, and given Jesus is the one who baptizes believers in the Holy Spirit, would this explain why only the name of Jesus was mentioned in Acts 2:38, and not all three of The Father, Jesus and Holy Spirit?

One Final Issue on Authority

After Adam and Eve were created, God commanded them to multiply and subdue the earth.

- *Genesis 1:28 God blessed them; and God said to them, "**Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over** the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."*

23: Today's Christian Walk

Adam and Eve sinned, and the enemy took on a significant role on earth. He offered Jesus the earth, an offer that Jesus didn't dispute was Satan's to give.

- ❑ *Matthew 4:8 Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; 9 and he said to Him, "All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me."*

Jesus said no to Satan. Jesus didn't come to worship Satan. Instead, He came to destroy Satan's works.

- ❑ *1 John 3:8 the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.*

Jesus was sent to earth by Father God. After the cross, Jesus declared that He had been given all - as in all - authority. Now, Jesus Christ sends us into the world.

- ❑ *Matthew 28:1 Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave... 18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.*
- ❑ *John 20:21 So Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you."*

23:34 Do the above scriptures show that authority over our earth was passed from Adam and Eve to the enemy, then to Jesus Christ? And after the cross, to believers? If today's believers don't have this authority, who does have it? And if believers do have authority, what portion of the authority given to Jesus, if any, do believers have?

Authority through Relationship

God is active in believer's lives. He can do anything He wants. He doesn't need human beings to do anything. However, He chooses to co-labor with us - the sinful, limited creatures that we are. When it comes to authority, many teachers believe the degree of authority is often related to:

1. the closeness of our personal relationship with God; and
2. how we use the authority we've already been given.

Humbly using authority for God's glory and the benefit of God's kingdom and other people as opposed to our benefit and glory, for instance, will lead to ever-increasing authority. But having said that, we always need to remember God is God, and He can do whatever He wants. And sometimes, He doesn't want us to do anything other than to sit still, and be with Him, for a minute, hour, day or season. But then, at some point, we need to go and be His voice, arms and legs to the world.

PROSPERITY, POVERTY OR ABUNDANT GOSPEL

Cessationists have expressed considerable concern about the Charismatic movement over money. And rightly so in cases where a major focus is on money, or where money is given to ministries as payment for miracles of healing. Many

ministries are involved in healing people and funds are needed. No question. Their needs are legitimate. But in other cases, instead of the ministry being there first and foremost to help people, it seems some of those involved in a healing ministry are running more of a business where healing is a service sold to make money.

Other cases of concern include what I witnessed at a church where people were screaming “Give and you will receive ten-fold back”. I recall wondering if God was an ATM or a rigged casino. Even though I wasn’t saved at the time, and constantly looking to make lots more money, I was shocked. Money is not a small issue for many believers, and has a larger hold in many of our hearts than it should. In my case, money was an idol for a long, long time.

- ❑ *Matthew 19:16 And someone came to Him and said, “Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?” ... 20 The young man said to Him, “All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?” 21 Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” 22 But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property.*

23:35 How about you? If God clearly and directly asked you to give up all your material wealth and existing sources of income, what would your response be? Where would your heart be? The first word that comes to my mind as I write this is ‘gulp!’.

Teachers of Prosperity Gospel

Leaders in God’s kingdom have a responsibility to properly equip the saints.

- ❑ *Ephesians 4:11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors **and teachers**, 12 **for the equipping of the saints for the work of service**, to the building up of the body of Christ;*
- ❑ *James 3:1 Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment. 2 For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.*

So, let me ask those who teach or promote the prosperity gospel.

- 23:36 Of the individuals you’re equipping and leading, how many (or what %) of those who are unrelated and unaffiliated with you, have accumulated as much or more wealth than you?
- 23:37 On your website, how pronounced is your ‘Give’ button relative to other menu items?
- 23:38 If you routinely have an offering and tell people they will be blessed if they give, what percentage of the time do you:
- i. ask God who He wants those blessed offerings to be given to; and/or
 - ii. encourage people to give to a ministry which neither you nor any of your family members have an affiliation or financial connection?

Those Against the Prosperity Gospel

If you teach and speak against the prosperity gospel, I share your views in many ways. I shudder to think of the damage to people's lives and to the kingdom of God by those who deceive and fleece people financially. But let me ask you two questions.

23:39 How would you answer questions 20:36, 20:37 and 20:38?

23:40 How many Christians would gladly exchange their wealth and income for yours?

Poverty Gospel

I know a pastor who believes a friend of his was very godly because this friend lived with virtually no worldly possessions apart from a few clothes and his Bible. Based on this and many other comments, this pastor effectively promotes a poverty gospel. If you believe Christians are to live with no excess - *a just enough gospel(?)* - let me ask a couple of things.

23:41 Wouldn't this just enough gospel mean believers who get by on less than we do, or own less than we do, are automatically godlier? If not, why not?

23:42 Wouldn't this just enough gospel mean that when we have excess, we shouldn't consider giving any excess to another person out of concern it may make them less godly?

23:43 If we're the one lacking, should we avoid seeking assistance and even refuse assistance offered by others in order to remain as godly as possible?

23:44 This pastor's friend often lived in the home of another believer. Isn't there something inconsistent with the view that he was godlier because he had less than others (*including the believer who owned the home*), even though he was willing to receive the generosity of the homeowner who would be classified as less godly for owning a home?

23:45 Wealth can be used for evil, but it can also be used for good. Without excess, how do we look after widows and orphans, send missionaries, or do all we're commanded to do?

- *James 1:27 Pure and unblemished religion [as it is expressed in outward acts] in the sight of our God and Father is this: **to visit and look after** the fatherless and the widows in their distress, and to keep oneself uncontaminated by the [secular] world. (AMP)*

Abundance Gospel - Helping the Poor

Many Cessationists comment on the number of Charismatics in places like Africa who have been led astray and taken advantage of by proponents of the prosperity gospel. That is true to some degree. But is there more to the story? Here's some of what I experienced.

When I studied in Egypt in the 1970's, I saw extreme poverty. I have also seen extreme poverty in Canada, USA and Mexico. Years ago, I was part of a team that built a 2-room house of ~400 square feet outside Ensenada, Mexico. Electricity was hooked up, but there was no running water. We built an outdoor toilet; no more walking up the hill adjacent to where they lived. Our team bought bunk beds and bedding, a kitchen table and chairs, a stove and refrigerator, kitchen hardware -

the basics. I'll never forget seeing the mother standing outside looking at her new home getting built. Tears were rolling down her face in absolute joy, as she anxiously waited for her new dream home to be completed. We were able to bless her because we had excess to travel and buy things for her, her husband and children. If we had a poverty mindset, how could we have blessed her?

- ❑ *John 10:10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they **may have life, and have it abundantly.***

Jesus came to do many things. Abundance is one of many blessings He provides, and I find it hard to believe God wants to give us abundance in things such as a, b, c, d ... z but never an abundance of finances. Prosperity is a relative thing. In the west, prosperity typically means things and lifestyles that are excessive. But elsewhere, for so many, prosperity is having basics such as clean water, reasonable sewage management, enough food, access to medical services, a good bike to ride, and a warm, dry home with a bed. I think God wants people to have these basics.

23:46 I wonder if a core question for those who teach the excessive prosperity gospel, either locally or abroad, is this: is our heart one of giving to give, or giving to get?

That Darn Word 'If'

We humans like the blessings of God. It's mind-boggling that Jesus is our friend.

- ❑ *John 15:14 **You are My friends ...***

I've heard many messages on the blessings of God. And oftentimes, the messages forget to point out that the word 'if' was involved. In the case of being a friend of Jesus, for instance, the 'if' - the condition by which we are His friend - is 'if' we do what Jesus commands.

- ❑ *John 15:14 You are My friends **if you do what I command you.***

I've heard it said many times that God will give us the desires of our hearts. True, but isn't there a condition that we're to first trust in the Lord, to do good, to cultivate faithfulness, and to delight ourselves in God?

- ❑ *Psalm 37:3 **Trust in the Lord and do good; Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness. 4 Delight yourself in the Lord; And He will give you the desires of your heart.***

There are many ifs, conditions or requirements in the Bible both before and after the cross. A few examples are as follows.

- ❑ *Exodus 19:5 Now then, **if you will** indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples ...*
- ❑ *Deuteronomy 11:26 ... **if you listen** ... 28 ... **if you do not listen** to the commandments of the Lord your God ...*
- ❑ *1 Chronicles 22:13 ... **will prosper, if you** ... observe and fulfill ... [AMP]*
- ❑ *Malachi 2:2 **If you do not listen, and if you do not take it to heart** ...*
- ❑ *Isaiah 48:18 "**If only you had paid attention** to My commandments! ...*

23: Today's Christian Walk

- ❑ *Luke 6:37 "**Do not judge**, and you will not be judged; and **do not condemn**, and you will not be condemned; **pardon**, and you will be pardoned. 38 **Give**, and it will be given to you ...*
- ❑ *John 9:31 ... **but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will**, He hears him.*
- ❑ *James 4:3 **You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives**, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.*
- ❑ *1 Thessalonians 5:18 **in everything give thanks**; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

23:47 When it comes to finances, shouldn't we consider Psalm 37:3-4 above, and first get our walk right with Christ before we begin to think of any financial blessings God will give us? And - if we're truly finding delight in the Lord - won't the desires of our heart be first and foremost to have more of Him?

Testimony: Pastor's Gift Blessed 10-Fold

A friend of mine and I were meeting with a pastor. Before we parted, the pastor felt he was supposed to give all the money in his pocket to my friend. My friend is retired and doing fine financially. He didn't need the money but agreed as he believed he needed to take the gift in order for The Lord to bless the pastor for being obedient. My friend and I didn't know at the time that the pastor was short rent for the upcoming month. Within 24 hours, a woman showed up at the pastor's door with a check for more than 10 times what the pastor had given my friend, and just enough to pay the rent.

23:48 Is that situation part of a faulty prosperity gospel, or an example of God not only blessing them financially in the short term, but also building the faith and testimonies of two of His children who were being obedient?

Teachings About Money

Further to the above testimony, consider the scriptures following the rich man who struggled to leave his riches. Jesus states for those who left house, family and farms for Jesus's sake (a form of IF), God will bless them a hundred-fold in this age, and the next.

- ❑ *Mark 10:23 And Jesus, looking around, said to His disciples, "How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!" ... 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." ... 28 Peter began to say to Him, "Behold, we have left everything and followed You." 29 Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has **left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms**, for **My sake and for the gospel's sake**, 30 but that he **will receive a hundred times** as much **now** in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, **along with persecutions; and in the age to come**, eternal life.*

23:49 Doesn't the 100-fold blessing in verse 30 suggest - for those seeking God - we can expect blessings which may include financial ones? If not, why not?

23:50 If we're blessed financially, we can bless others. We can do things to help advance the kingdom of God that we couldn't otherwise do. However,

along with blessings, aren't we also forewarned to expect persecution not only when we stand up for the gospel, but from other believers who criticize us for having excess, even when the excess(es) are a blessing from God? I know this one well; I was one of those critics for a long time.

- ❑ *Matthew 5:10 Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

Some of the best Biblical teachings on tithing and giving that I found are Robert Morris's books, *'The Blessed Life'* and *'Beyond Blessed'*. If you're a Cessationist whose immediate reaction is along the lines *'There is zero chance I'm reading teachings of any of those high-profile Charismatics'*, you might be surprised. Robert's books aren't hype. They're biblical, with personal testimonies that align with scripture.

One last note on money. I do find it interesting God tells us to test Him on money.

- ❑ *Malachi 3:10 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and **test Me now** in this," says the Lord of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows.*

GOD & CHRISTIANITY ARE NOT A SINGLE FORMULA

CEASED? contains considerable information on a variety of topics. If you're a new Christian, I hope that you don't think Christianity is primarily about knowing a bunch of information. Yes, Christianity is knowing about Jesus and about a wide variety of issues, but much more importantly - Christianity is knowing Jesus, Father God and Holy Spirit on a personal basis. Similarly, while Jesus is the only Way to Father God and eternal life in heaven, please don't think there is one way for all aspects of Christianity. Please don't think there is only one way to worship, one way to sing, one way to pray, one way to give praise, one way to read the Bible, one way to get healing, one way to cast out demons, one way to enter into that secret place with God, one way to hear from God, or one way to do church together including only one way to dress. On most issues, there isn't one *'proper'* way.

Unfortunately, some Christians think they have the one way on some of the above issues. If there was only way for all aspects of Christianity, consider an analogy the Lord gave me involving meals. If there was only way for each of the many dimensions of our Christian walk, that would be akin to us having only one drink, one type of salad, one type of soup, one kind of meat, one type of bread, one sauce, one spice, one oil, one sweetener, one vegetable, one fruit, and one dessert - with each item prepared and served in the same way and at the same temperature - for every meal from when we're a young child to when we pass away. We don't get to customize our meals to cater to the uniqueness by which God created us. We all eat and drink the exact same meal for breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks. We eat the same meal Sunday through Saturday, and for every special event including birthday parties, Thanksgiving, Christmas, weddings and funerals. The same food is served in your home, in every other person's home, and in every restaurant, hotel and resort, and in every town, city, state, province and country. When we put on our

23: Today's Christian Walk

buying and cooking hats, things are pretty easy and simple including making decisions on what to do with leftovers. But when we put on our eating hat ... different adjectives come to my mind. Boring is at the top of the list.

No question, some things in our Christian walks are intended to be the same or similar on a daily basis. But our lives are intended to be a daily experience with God. Daily experiences that are to be lived as God wants us to live. And the only way we can do so is - when we wake - to give each day to God and basically say. *"God, thank You for all that You have given me and done for me including this bed and last night's sleep. As we go forward today God, please tell me what is on Your heart right now."*

I hope each of you have many days in the months and years ahead where - if you ask God what is on His heart - God surprises the heck out of you.

CLOSING POINTS TO PONDER

- 23:51 The Christian walk is not a cake-walk. We're told to work out our salvation. Wouldn't it be so simple if we could just take a God pill that enables us to automatically trust God, seek God first, totally die to self, communicate with God throughout the day, allow Holy Spirit to lead us in all things, share the Good News, and always heal the sick, cleanse lepers, raise the dead and cast out demons ... and in all that we accomplish, give all glory to God with humility, praise and thanks?
- ❑ *Philippians 2:12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your salvation** with fear and trembling;*
 - ❑ *Matthew 6:33 But **seek first His kingdom and His righteousness**, and all these things will be added to you.*
 - ❑ *1 Thessalonians 5:16 **Rejoice always**; 17 **pray without ceasing**;*
 - ❑ *Proverbs 3:5 **Trust in the Lord with all your heart** And **do not lean on your own understanding**. 6 **In all your ways acknowledge Him** ...*
 - ❑ *Romans 8:14 For all who are being **led by the Spirit of God**, these are sons of God.*
 - ❑ *Matthew 10:8 **Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons**. Freely you received, freely give.*
 - ❑ *Psalms 100:4 **Enter His gates with thanksgiving** And **His courts with praise**. **Give thanks to Him, bless His name**.*

It's much easier to talk or read about the Christian life than to walk it out. If I have implied in any way that I've got it all figured out, rest assured I haven't. I often feel my Christian walk is on the same treadmill as when I try to figure out what to think when I ask Lori how she's doing and she responds with 'fine'. God continues to reveal things in my heart, some of which are rather humbling to admit and face. I struggle in putting God first to start my day, and yet my life right now is so much easier than situations faced by so many others. Lori and I are empty nesters. We don't have the demands of raising children. We work part-time and have considerable discretionary time. And yet, walking the Christian life remains a struggle at times.

If you struggle in your walk and thoughts, you're not alone. But please also know, if you feel alone in your journey, you're not. There is a body of believers ready to

help. Reach out to them. And with the recent explosion in online equipping and services, access is virtually anywhere on earth. Just make sure the Bible, worship and prayer are a priority in any teaching and mentoring given to you.

If you're a Roman Catholic, I also ask you to please consider these scriptures.

- ❑ *Ephesians 2:6 and raised us up with Him, and **seated us with Him in the heavenly places** in Christ Jesus,*
- ❑ *John 10:27 **My sheep hear My voice**, and I know them, and they follow Me;*
- ❑ *Romans 8:14 For all who are being **led by the Spirit of God**, these are sons of God.*

23:52 All believers are seated with Christ in heavenly places. We've been given authority to go as Christ's ambassadors to do many things including healing the sick and casting out demons. Shouldn't we just obey God and do what He says to do which is to follow Him, to seek His kingdom first, and to be led by Holy Spirit?

23:53 Finally, satan, his demons and the antichrist - whoever or whatever that is - are masters of deception. If we don't know Jesus's voice, how will we know what is truth and what is not?

God's Power and The Nail Gun

A few years ago, Lori and I attended a church service at the invite of some friends. The pastor was giving an analogy involving the power of God. He started by holding up a nail gun and tried to use it to manually pound a 3-inch nail into a board laying on top of the 4-foot-high lectern. Pounding the nail didn't go well. That, he said, is our life without the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. He then connected the nail gun to the air compressor. Yes, we sat there ... wondering. He held the nail gun next to the 2x4 on the lectern ... and fired ... two nails I believe. Both nails went into the wood, through the wood, and into the lectern. Before he spoke a word, we all got the message. Being connected to the air compressor is akin to being connected to Holy Spirit's power. Point very well made.

When operating in the 9 Holy Spirit gifts and the power of God, great things can happen. However, we may not always do things right. We're human after all. The pastor also illustrated that possibility. You see, seated in the first row of chairs in the sanctuary a few feet away from the slightly elevated stage where the pastor shot the nail gun was ... the pastor's wife. When he shot the nails into the piece of wood, the nail gun was actually pointed directly at her as demonstrated by two nails protruding through the bottom of the lectern and directly pointing ... at his wife. The pastor had been caught up in his teaching, and wasn't aware someone was in the path of the nails beyond the lectern. Fortunately, communication is a valued commodity within his family as he was made acutely aware of his faux pas soon afterwards. I never heard how many or what kind of flower and/or chocolates entered their home.

It just goes to show that when you truly have the gift of teaching, you can sometimes make memorable teaching points without even trying. God is so good - eh.

CEASED? now changes gears and looks at some areas of Catholicism that many believers claim have significant deviations from what the Bible teaches. But do they?

5 of 7 Catholic Sacraments, Traditions

INTRODUCTION

PROTESTANT Cessationists have criticized Protestant Continuationists for not speaking to Catholic Charismatics about various Roman Catholic teachings. Previous chapters addressed concerns on some Catholic teachings, a list of which is found at the end of **CEASED?**'s Table of Contents. Chapters 24 to 28 conclude this review starting with Chapter 24 which addresses sacraments - with a primary focus on water baptism and confirmation - and traditions (page 354).

WATER BAPTISM AND CONFIRMATION

From the website link: www.catholic.org/prayers/sacrament.php, I copied the following on February 4, 2020. Formatting is mine. I added bracketed numbers (1), (2) etc. to facilitate linking my comments to the comments from this website.

... The liturgical life of the Catholic Church revolves around the Eucharistic sacrifice and the sacraments. There are seven sacraments in the Church: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Matrimony, and Holy Orders. The purpose of the sacraments is to make people holy, to build up the body of Christ, and finally, to give worship to God; but being signs, they also have a teaching function. ... The Church Thus Teaches: There are seven sacraments. They were instituted by Christ and given to the Church to administer. They are necessary for salvation (1) ... and alteration of them is reserved to the Holy See (2) ...

Baptism

Baptism, the first and fundamental sacrament and the gate to the other sacraments (3), is the purifying and sanctifying sacrament of rebirth. It is the means by which its recipients are incorporated into the church (4) in a sacramental bond of unity.

Confirmation

By a signing with the gift of the Spirit, confirmation enriches the baptized with the Holy Spirit, binding them more perfectly to the Church, (5) and strengthening them in their witness to Christ by word and deed (6) and in their work to bring to its fullness the Body of Christ. Confirmation is conferred through

anointing with chrism and the laying on of hands. (7)

The above comments represent a minuscule subset of Roman Catholic teachings on the topics of water baptism and Baptism in the Holy Spirit. However, I do believe they reveal some key issues.

Changes to Sacraments

24:1 Consider point (2). Neither God nor the Bible change. If the sacraments are from God, if the Roman Catholic church has the true teachings, if the Roman Catholic church is the one true church that effectively started before the cross with Peter designated as its first head - and if God does not change - why would Roman Catholic sacraments ever change? And thus, why the need for the change clause '*alteration of them is reserved to the Holy See*'?

Salvation and Water Baptism

The 7 Catholic Sacraments are water baptism, confirmation (*which is centered around Baptism of the Holy Spirit*), communion, penance, anointing of the sick, matrimony, and Holy Orders. Chapters 4, 6, 8 and 10 of **CEASED?** discussed issues related to salvation and being born again, and showed why none of the sacraments as per point (1) are required to be born again (*i.e. be saved*). Consider the following.

- ❖ The apostles and others gathered on resurrection Sunday evening were born again that night. Holy Spirit was breathed into them. While I believe they were water baptized at some point after that night, there is no specific mention that the original apostles or any of the other disciples with them resurrection Sunday evening were actually water baptized.
- ❖ Individuals including Cornelius, family and friends, as well as the 12 disciples at Ephesus were baptized in water after they were born again and already had Holy Spirit in [en] them.
- ❖ Paul never once taught water baptism is required to be born again.
- ❖ Other than possibly Acts 2:38 which Chapter 10 in **CEASED?** shows most likely refers to Baptism in the Holy Spirit, Peter never stated a person needed water baptism to be born again.
- ❖ Philip the evangelist, was not an original apostle, but water baptized the eunuch in a body of water, and not with a few drops of water.
- ❖ Ananias, who was not an original apostle, baptized Saul/Paul in water.

24:2 Per point (4), water baptism: "*... is the means by which its recipients are incorporated into the church in a sacramental bond of unity*". When a person is water baptized, the Bible does not say anything about water baptism incorporating a person into a church organization. However, the Bible does teach that when a person is born again, Holy Spirit automatically baptizes the new believer into the Body of Christ. Let me ask:

- i. do we get water baptized to bind ourselves more perfectly to a church, or out of obedience to God's Word and for blessings God has? and
- ii. what is to be our primary relationship here on earth - a church organization which has a limited life span - or God who is our Creator and Savior, and who we will be with in Heaven forever?

24: 5 Catholic Sacraments, Traditions

In other teachings, the Roman Catholic church teaches water baptism is only to be done by priests. However, God's Word says all believers are part of the royal priesthood. Each believer is a priest, albeit with different roles in the priesthood.

- ❑ *1 Peter 2:5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a **holy priesthood**, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ ... 9 But **you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession** ...*
- 24:3 Given 1 Peter 2:5-9 indicates all believers are priests, doesn't that mean all believers have the right and responsibility to baptize believers? And wouldn't that be consistent with Jesus's command that all believers are to make disciples, and to baptize them? Something non-apostles Ananias did for Paul, and Philip did for the eunuch?
 - ❑ *Matthew 28:19 Go therefore and **make disciples** of all the nations, **baptizing them** in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,*
- 24:4 Per point (3), water baptism is the gate to the other 6 sacraments. Starting on page 55 in **CEASED?**, significant evidence is given that shows water baptism is clearly not required for salvation.
 - i. Given such an error, how good a gate is water baptism for Confirmation and the other 5 sacraments?
 - ii. Do the issues surrounding water baptism raise concerns about the remaining 6 sacraments accessed through this gate?
 - iii. Isn't Jesus the gate we should focus on?
 - ❑ *John 10:9 I am **the door**; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. (NASB)*
 - ❑ *John 10:9 Yes, I am **the gate**. Those who come in through me will be saved. They will come and go freely and will find good pastures. (NLT)*

Confirmation

- 24:5 Starting on page 151, **CEASED?** provided information showing why Confirmation is centered around the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. I asked readers a question then and do so again. How do you now answer 8:43?
'8:43 ... if you're Roman Catholic, how confident are you that Catholic teachings on Confirmation/Baptism of the Holy Spirit are consistent with the Bible: (1) extremely (2) quite a bit (3) so so (4) no idea?
- 24:6 Jesus's last instructions to His disciples before He ascended was for them to wait to be Baptized in the Holy Spirit. Why is such an important commandment from Jesus not specifically and clearly spelled out in the Catholic Catechism in very close alignment with God's Word?

Information on Confirmation on pages 348 and 349 is provided here once again.
*By a signing with the gift of the Spirit, **confirmation enriches the baptized with the Holy Spirit, binding them more perfectly to the Church, (5) and strengthening them in their witness to Christ by word and deed (6) and in their work to bring to its fullness the Body of Christ. Confirmation is conferred through anointing with chrism and the laying on of hands. (7)***

Point (5) states that confirmation binds a person more perfectly to the Church. There certainly can be an emotional impact when one is powerfully touched by God as a result of Jesus Baptizing us in the Holy Spirit. However, the Bible doesn't say Baptism of the Holy Spirit is designed to bind us more perfectly to a church organization. The Bible is clear the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is intended, first and foremost, to give believers power to be witnesses for Jesus. There's no question being Baptized in the Holy Spirit will most likely bring believers closer to God and to other believers as well, but those are secondary issues.

Point (6) refers to witnessing in word and deed. If deeds corresponded to the power associated with the 9 Holy Spirit gifts, that would be great.

24:7 However, given the main Roman Catholic church doesn't incorporate the 9 Holy Spirit gifts as a central part of their teachings on Confirmation, isn't there a major gap between the deeds part of Roman Catholic teaching on Confirmation, and the 9 Holy Spirit gifts which are the central means by which God's power is manifested in our witnessing?

Point (7) refers to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit occurring when a Catholic Bishop performs this baptism by laying on off hands and using chrism. No chrism is ever used in biblical Baptisms of the Holy Spirit. And while hands can be laid on a person as part of getting Baptized in the Holy Spirit, this is not always done as we see at Pentecost and again at Cornelius's house. We can ask for this Baptism ourselves, with or without a 'junior' or 'senior' believer present.

In terms of other aspects related to Roman Catholic teaching on Baptism of the Holy Spirit:

- ❖ Catholic teaching states a person can only be Confirmed if the person has previously been water baptized properly. In my read of God's Word, a 'proper' water baptism requires:
 - the person doing the baptizing to be born again;
 - the person being water baptized to be born again; and
 - the baptism to involve full immersion in water, as per Philip's baptism of the eunuch.
- ❖ Water baptism is not required before we can receive the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Individuals such as the ~120 at Pentecost and Cornelius, family and friends were all Baptized in the Holy Spirit before they were water baptized.
- ❖ Roman Catholic teaching states Confirmation seals a person with the Holy Spirit. The Bible teaches we're sealed with the Holy Spirit, not when we're Baptized in the Holy Spirit where Holy Spirit comes upon [epi] us, but when we're born again and Holy Spirit comes in [en] us.
- ❖ Roman Catholic teachings hold that Confirmation yields 7 gifts - wisdom, understanding, knowledge, fortitude or courage, counsel, piety or love, and fear of the Lord. The Bible does not attribute any of these 7 gifts to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

In terms of more general comments related to Baptism of the Holy Spirit:

- ❖ I found Catholic teachings do not clearly distinguish between the in [en]

24: 5 Catholic Sacraments, Traditions

and the upon [epi] experiences of the Holy Spirit. They are intermixed along with other issues.

- ❖ I found notable differences in teachings between the mainline Catholic church and the Charismatic part of the Roman Catholic church on the 9 Holy Spirit gifts and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. What is clear is that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the 9 Holy Spirit gifts that flow from this Baptism aren't a key focus of the mainline Roman Catholic church. This directly contradicts Jesus's last command in Acts 1:8.
- ❖ I found the Catholic church has no official position on whether or not tongues can incorporate a personal prayer language, one of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts available to believers after being Baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Other Sacraments

Immediately following question 4:71 in Chapter 4 of **CEASED?**, the need to confess sins to a priest is largely based on John 20.

- *John 20:21 So Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, **I also send you.**" 22 And when He had said this, **He breathed on them** and said to them, "**Receive the Holy Spirit.** 23 **If you forgive** the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained."*

When Jesus appeared to the apostles on resurrection Sunday evening, He stated He was sending them. He breathed on them. He told them to receive the Holy Spirit. And then Jesus told them to forgive. Catholic teachings contend this responsibility and authority to forgive was only given to the original apostles and their successors - Roman Catholic priests - through the sacrament of Holy Orders. Priests grant forgiveness to a person, not because the person committed serious sins against the priest himself, but for serious sins committed against any other person or against God. Such forgiveness is part of the sacrament of penance, confession or reconciliation.

If indeed Jesus only breathed on the apostles and only told the apostles to forgive, the above argument may - may - have some merit. However, Chapter 6 of **CEASED?** (*just after question 6:13*) provides evidence there were ~120 people in attendance on resurrection Sunday evening - the apostles, the 2 believers Jesus met on the road to Emmaus, and the group described as '*those who were with them*'. Moreover, evidence is provided showing both men and women were in attendance.

24:8 If Jesus was sending all of the ~120, breathed on all of the ~120, and told all of the ~120 (*some of whom were women*) to forgive, wouldn't that change the picture entirely? Wouldn't that mean Jesus was telling all believers to forgive, not just male apostles? And wouldn't that mean the function of forgiveness done by Catholic priests today is misguided?

If we study the Lord's prayer for guidance, we see it isn't an issue of person A (*a priest*) forgiving person B for sins person B committed against one or more third-parties - persons C, D, E etc. Jesus told His disciples they were to forgive anyone who sinned against them. In other words, the Lord's prayer is very clear that

CEASED? 2ND EDITION

persons C, D and E are called to forgive person B. And of course, for B to repent and confess his/her sins to another believer so B can be healed.

- ❑ *Matthew 6:12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.*
- ❑ *James 5:16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed.*

24:9 Given the above, why would John 20:23 be any different? I can't find any scriptures clearly stating otherwise - that Jesus only told the apostles to forgive and not the entire group of ~120. I can't find any scriptures stating Jesus told the apostles He was giving them the authority to forgive sins on His behalf, or on behalf of another person. I don't see any scriptures enabling a priest to forgive me for a sin I committed against you. You may not want to forgive me now. Given that, isn't the forgiveness in John 20:23:

- i. about each of us forgiving all those who sinned against us; and
- ii. not about apostles / priests forgiving the person who committed sins (*person B*) on behalf of the person sinned against (*you, me or persons C, D, E*), or on behalf of God?

24:10 And doesn't that show sacraments of Holy Orders and penance are flawed?

24:11 After 1,900 years since the New Testament books were written, Catholic teachings have many issues on the sacraments of water baptism, confirmation, and Holy Orders. Issues with Holy Orders brings into question the sacrament of penance. And if we go back to Chapter 4 of **CEASED?**, we see there are many issues related to the Catholic view on the sacrament of communion. Given all the above, how solid is the house of Catholic teachings given the many gaps raised on these 5 sacraments?

TRADITIONS

Background

Traditions have been a topic of much debate. Let me throw my 2 cents (2.8 cents CAD) into the pot. My abbreviated understanding of Roman Catholic teachings on traditions is as follows:

1. traditions were a gift from Jesus to the original apostles, and for all future generations;
2. traditions are key to Jesus being amongst us in the same way He was with the Apostles;
3. traditions are not in opposition to God's Word; God's Word and traditions complement and confirm one another;
4. there are capital "T" traditions which are the official teachings handed down from the original apostles. Lower case "t" traditions are customs and of less significance; and
5. traditions are to be adhered to as they help draw a person closer to God.

Traditions certainly have their place. Biblical traditions relevant today should be continued.

- ❑ *2 Thessalonians 2:15 So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the*

24: 5 Catholic Sacraments, Traditions

traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.

24:12 However, for traditions which aren't Biblical, don't the following verses suggest we need to be very careful as to what traditions are followed?

- ❑ *Matthew 15:3 And He answered and said to them, "**Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?** ... 6 ... **And by this you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition.***

2 Groups of Traditions

In the first decades after the cross, the first Christians had none, then only a limited amount of the New Testament to read. Somewhere in the 4-6 decades after the cross, the entire New Testament was written. Making copies of these early writings was time-consuming, and far slower than the technologies available today. Only a few people could read. Oral teaching was key. When it comes to traditions relevant to the New Covenant, few details are in the Bible. The Catholic church teaches, however, that these traditions were recorded by some early church fathers.

A key issue in my mind is how do the traditions carried out in ~30 AD when Jesus went to the cross, compare to the traditions followed in both Roman Catholic and non-Catholic churches today.

24:13 To that end, is it prudent to group traditions and their components into 1 of 2 groups:

- i. current traditions that were in place when Jesus went to the cross, and which remain unchanged today; or
- ii. current traditions and portions of current traditions that weren't in place when Jesus went to the cross, but which were added or changed over time?

24:14 Given a yes to the above 2 groupings, wouldn't it be most prudent to only engage in traditions fitting into the first group? If not, why not?

24:15 Breaking Catholic traditions into 2 groups may seem difficult, but should it be?

- i. Shouldn't the first group be extremely easy for Roman Catholics to identify by simply looking at the writings of those early church fathers who were disciples by the original apostles? If not, why not?
- ii. And if we can't identify what traditions or parts of traditions were occurring according to those early church fathers who were disciples by the original apostles, how do we know which traditions today are truly of God, and which aren't?

Traditions and Scriptures

God is also clear about not messing around with His Word.

- ❑ *Deuteronomy 4:2 You **shall not add to the word** which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.*
- ❑ *Deuteronomy 12:32 **Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do:***

you shall not add to nor take away from it.

- **Galatians 1:8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! 9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!**

24:16 The Catholic church teaches a combination of scriptures plus traditions handed down by the apostles represents the full teaching of Christ. The above scriptures are clear that we are not to add to or change the gospels, or any part of His Word. In other words, God's word is supreme. Doesn't that contradict claims of the Catholic church in terms of how traditions are to be viewed? And potentially bring curses on teachers including priests?

24:17 If today's capital 'T' traditions are viewed on par with the Bible, isn't it reasonable to expect Holy Spirit would have inspired the details of these traditions to be written and canonized just as the New Testament was canonized? If not, why not?

Catholic Inventions

Francis Chan is a widely respected, though sometimes controversial, Protestant teacher who is currently viewed as 'friendly' towards the Roman Catholic church. I make this comment, not to suggest he agrees with everything about the Roman Catholic church, but to make it clear he is not a Catholic opposer. He doesn't have an axe to grind as it were. One of Francis's websites - www.juststopandthink.com - has a list of 45 Roman Catholic 'inventions' available at the link:

www.juststopandthink.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/catholic-inventions.pdf

The list is from the book "Roman Catholicism" written by Loraine Boettner and published in 1962. I copied the inventions from Francis's website on February 15, 2020, then reproduced part of the list below in two sections. The year when the invention materialized is identified in brackets after the description.

A: Historical Events No Longer Applicable

One invention in Mr. Boettner's book that does not apply today involves the Bible.

30. Bible forbidden to laymen, placed on the Index of Forbidden books by the council of Toulouse (1229 AD)

B: Aspects Valid Today

Some creations in Mr. Boettner's book that still apply today include:

1. Prayers for the dead (300)
2. Making the sign of the cross (300)
4. Veneration of angels and dead saints, and use of images (375)
5. The Mass, as a daily celebration (394)
6. Beginning of the exaltation of Mary, term "Mother of God" first applied to her by the Council of Ephesus (431)
7. Priests began to dress differently from laymen (500)

24: 5 Catholic Sacraments, Traditions

9. The doctrine of Purgatory, established by Gregory I (593)
 10. Latin Language, used in prayer and worship, imposed by Gregory I (600)
 11. Prayers directed to Mary, dead saints and angels, about (600)
 13. Kissing of the Pope's foot, began with Pope Constantine (709)
 15. Worship of the cross, images, and relics, authorized (786)
 16. Holy water mixed with a pinch of salt and blessed by a priest (850)
 17. Worship of St. Joseph (890)
 19. Baptism of bells, instituted by Pope John XIII (965)
 20. Canonization of dead saints, first by Pope John XV (995)
 22. The Mass, developed gradually as a sacrifice, attendance made obligatory in 11th century
 23. Celibacy of the priesthood, decreed by Pope Gregory VII (1079)
 24. The Rosary, mechanical praying with beads, invented by Peter the Hermit (1090)
 28. Auricular (out loud) Confession of sins to a priest instead of to God, instituted by Pope Innocent III, in Lateral council (1215)
 29. Adoration of the wafer (Host), decreed by Pope Honorius III (1220)
 34. The doctrine of Seven Sacraments affirmed (1439)
 35. The Ave Maria (Hail Mary) (part of last ½ finished 50 years later) (1508)
 37. Tradition declared as equal authority with the Bible/Council of Trent (1545)
 40. Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, proclaimed by Pope Pius IX (1854)
 44. Assumption of the Virgin Mary (bodily ascension into heaven shortly after her death), proclaimed by Pope Pius XII (1950)
 45. Mary proclaimed Mother of the Church, by Pope Paul VI (1965)
- 24:18 The timeline of these events is certainly interesting as it shows the evolution of Catholic teachings such as how Mary went from being one of a ~120-person prayer group in Acts 1:14 in ~30AD to now being exalted as the Mother of God, and a host of other divine type titles. However, the long and short of it - at least to me - is this. What traditions were being followed when Jesus went to the cross that closely resemble the 45 items? I ask this because if these traditions weren't clearly followed at the time of the cross, how can they be viewed as anywhere close to being equal with God's Word?
- 24:19 On the basis the above items came into existence after the cross, doesn't their addition to what are considered God's teachings go directly against the teachings of Deuteronomy 4:2, Deuteronomy 12:32 and Galatians 1:8-9 shown just before question 24:16? If not, why not?
- 24:20 For traditions or portions of traditions which were either added or which are different from the traditions in place when Jesus went to the cross - on what basis can we be 100% confident that such things are of God?
- 24:21 If you're not 100% confident such items listed are of God, wouldn't it be prudent to avoid such activities, and go by what the Bible teaches?
- 24:22 On the basis the Catholic church places traditions on par with the Bible as per item #37, an issue arises as to what should rule if the tradition

disagrees with the Bible. To me, the Bible should rule as there is no doubt it is God’s Word which - in the original Greek and Hebrew - is without error. In the case of a conflict between the Bible and a tradition, the tradition must be in error. But is that what the Roman Catholic church teaches? My understanding is that Catholic traditions usually rank ahead of God’s Word. If that is the case even once, isn’t that quite troublesome?

Is it About God, or Others

Figure 24:1 lists 10 of the many practices and activities currently going on in the Roman Catholic church. Before looking at the 10 items, let me ask.

24:23 Should any church, Roman Catholic or not, have any traditions where God isn’t the primary beneficiary of attention and the recipient of all glory?

- 1 Corinthians 10:31 *Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, **do all to the glory of God.***
- 1 Timothy 1:17 *Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the **only God, be honor and glory forever and ever.** Amen.*
- Matthew 6:33 *But **seek first His kingdom** and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*
- Matthew 6:9 *“Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. 10 ‘Your kingdom come. **Your will be done.** On earth as it is in heaven. 11 ‘Give us this day our daily bread. 12 ‘And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 ‘And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For **Yours is the kingdom** and the power **and the glory forever.** Amen.*

Figure 24:1 Ten Activities and Practices Occurring in Roman Catholic church

Item	Source		Primary focus on God or others?	
	Bible	Catholic Church	God	Others
1. Praying Lord’s Prayer	x		x	
2. Praying rosary/praying to Mary in general		x		x
3. Seeking 15 promises of rosary		x		x
4. Seeking 7 graces				
5. Praying to deceased saints		x		x
6. Kissing Pope’s hand, feet of statues		x		x
7. Creation of and attention given to graven images of saints		x		x
8. Preserving bones, blood, other parts of deceased saints for display after the cross		x		x
9. Unique robes & hats worn by Popes & priests		x		x
10. Titles such as ‘His Holiness’ or ‘Mother Superior’		x		x

24: 5 Catholic Sacraments, Traditions

- 24:24 Apart from #1, how do any items from #2 through #10 bring all glory to God? And if they don't bring all glory to God, shouldn't they be discontinued? If not, why not?
- 24:25 If you're a Roman Catholic, is there merit to studying the Bible for yourself to determine the parts of Catholic capital 'T' and small 't' traditions that are confirmed by the Bible and still relevant today? And is there merit to rejecting all traditions, and parts of traditions, not confirmed by the Bible?

Reliability of Source Documents for Today's Catholics

Based on my research, the Roman Catholic church claims teachings and information on traditions not found in the Bible are nonetheless of God for two key reasons:

1. the roots of the Roman Catholic church go back to the cross and the original apostles - notably Peter the first pope - which makes it the one true church; and
2. teachings of early church fathers, some of whom were disciples by the original apostles, wrote down the key information on the capital 'T' traditions that aren't found in the Bible.

CEASED? has shown, or will show in subsequent chapters, several issues which - from my perspective - show extremely serious gaps in Roman Catholic teaching. Major issues involve the Ten Commandments, graven images and idolatry, salvation and the in [en] experience. Other major issues are seen in 5 of the 7 sacraments - water baptism, confirmation (Baptism of the Holy Spirit), communion, holy orders and penance.

24:26 The above deficiencies in core Roman Catholic teachings can be identified because we can compare Roman Catholic teachings to the Bible, to God's Word which is without error. **IF** the writings of early church fathers are consistent with current Roman Catholic teachings, and **SINCE** many core Catholic teachings have major errors:

- i. wouldn't that mean some writings of the early church fathers are also in error; and
- ii. if so, how confident can we be that other writings of early church fathers not verifiable by the Bible - but which are relied on by the Catholic church - aren't also in error?

24:27 On the other hand, if writings of the early church fathers aren't in error but Catholic teachings are in error, doesn't that mean there must be differences between the teachings of early church fathers and current Catholic teachings? And if so:

- i. why do Catholic teachings differ from these reliable early teachings; and
- ii. how could such errors exist given the millions of Catholic priests and scholars who have studied Catholic teachings over the centuries?

24:28 Per the section above on inventions, Mr. Boettner's book revealed that

tradition was declared as having equal authority with the Bible by the Council of Trent in 1545. More than 1,500 years after Christ died, the Roman Catholic Church determines that traditions now rank equal to the Bible. How can that massive of a change be God's doing? God does not change, but we're supposed to believe that for 1,500 years, it was God's will that traditions were not equal to God's Word, but thereafter, they were equal?

24:29 When the New Testament was being written, God's Word provides evidence that false teachings and inadequate interpretations were taking place. What's to say these early church fathers had the correct interpretations? If there isn't 100% reliability of the accuracy on the writings of early church fathers or 100% reliability on how the Roman Catholic church interprets these writings, how can anyone put traditions on par with God's Word which - in the original Greek and Hebrew - is 100% without error?

24:30 The end result is this. When we look at current Roman Catholic traditions or the traditions of any Protestant denomination that are not supported by the Bible, how can one be 100% confident these traditions:

- i. have not changed from what they were like in the early church;
- ii. are of God and not a creation of mankind or an organization; and
- iii. haven't to some degree been influenced by satan, who after all, is a master counterfeiter, the central figure in our spiritual battles, and one who loves to undermine and take away from God's Word.

□ *Ephesians 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.*

CLOSING POINTS TO PONDER

24:31 God's Word is without error. If we're engaged in anything that potentially goes against His Word, against God's commands and instructions, aren't we playing with fire?

24:32 So many of us humans like to be comfortable. We like familiarity. For Catholics and Protestants alike, I wonder what is the extent to which the comfort we gain from traditions in our faith influences us to partake in the same traditions day after day, week after week, without seeking God and seeing what He wants to do each time we come together. For me, the comfort and familiarity of the routines and traditions of church were a very big factor causing me to simply go with the flow. And to go along with whatever the traditions were of the church I was attending, and usually too often without testing or questioning much if anything. But more and more and certainly during the Covid season, God is wanting me to seek Him and to be led by Him, even on what to do on Sunday mornings. How about you?

Peter and Mary

INTRODUCTION

PETER, successor Popes and Mary have central roles in the Roman Catholic church. Chapter 25 addresses if such attention for Peter and Mary is biblical (page 369).

PETER - APOSTLE ONLY or APOSTLE, ROCK AND POPE?

Many Protestants have reservations about Roman Catholic teachings relating to Peter being the first Pope, the earthly head of the church. Most Protestants don't agree that Peter, Pope Francis or any person who has held the position of Pope, was or is the head of the earthly church. We view Jesus as being the head of the earthly church, and no single human being has ever been delegated the position of head of the God's earthly church. So who is right? Let's see what the Bible has to say.

The Rock

The cornerstone scripture suggesting Peter was the first Pope is Matthew 16:18.

- ❑ *Matthew 16:13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" 14 And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." 15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are **you, Simon Barjona**, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 18 I also **say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.***

In the Greek, the word Peter means 'stone or rock'. As a result, Roman Catholic teaching links Peter to the phrase 'upon this rock'. Catholic teaching holds that changing Peter's name from Cephas to Peter occurred because Jesus was declaring Peter was to be the earthly head of the church - the first pope. He was the rock that Jesus could rely on. Some Protestants also believe Peter is the rock, but don't believe that label translates to Peter or any other person being designated as the head of the earthly church. Jesus was and remains the head of our earthly church.

Joseph Raymond notes in his 2006 article "*Simon, Cephas, Petros, Petra*", that Peter's name before first meeting Christ was not Cephas, but Simon, the son of John.

Simon is the English version of the Hebrew name Shimon which is derived from the Hebrew word Sh'ma. Sh'ma means 'to listen, or hear and obey'. Right after meeting Simon at the beginning of Jesus's earthly ministry, Jesus tells Simon that his name is to be changed to Cephas which means ... stone or rock.

- ❑ *John 1:42 ... Jesus looked at him and said, "**You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas**" (which is translated Peter).*
- 25:1 In Matthew 16:18 when Jesus told Peter his name was again changed, this time to Peter, there was no change in the meaning underlying Peter's name. So why the change from Cephas to Peter? Was it as simple as Greek was more widely spoken at the time, and changing Peter's name from Aramaic to Greek would help Peter share the gospel?
- 25:2 Even if there is a simple explanation to Peter's name change in Matthew 16:18 from Cephas to Peter, the issue nonetheless goes back to John 1 when the first change in Peter's name was made from Simon to Cephas. Why the change? Was it a prophetic statement that Peter was indeed the rock upon which God's church would be built? And if the change to Peter was so important, why do translations - including the CPDV - have several scriptures from Acts to Jude referring to Peter as Cephas, and not Peter?

What do the Other Gospels Say

If Peter is the rock upon which Christ's church would be built, that's an incredibly unique position that comes with much responsibility. Let's see what the gospels of Mark, Luke and John say about the matter.

- ❑ **Mark 8:27** *Jesus went out, along with His disciples, to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way He questioned His disciples, saying to them, "Who do people say that I am?" 28 They told Him, saying, "John the Baptist; and others say Elijah; but others, one of the prophets." 29 And He continued by questioning them, "**But who do you say that I am?**" Peter answered and said to Him, "**You are the Christ.**" 30 **And He warned them to tell no one about Him.***
- ❑ **Luke 9:18** *... while He was praying alone, the disciples were with Him, and He questioned them, saying, "Who do the people say that I am?" 19 They answered and said, "John the Baptist, and others say Elijah; but others, that one of the prophets of old has risen again." 20 And He said to them, "**But who do you say that I am?**" **And Peter answered and said, "The Christ of God."** 21 **But He warned them and instructed them not to tell this to anyone.***
- ❑ **John:** Nil

In regards to the issue "Who do you say that I am?", we find the following.

- ❖ In the book of John, nothing is said at all. No mention is made about the discussion of Peter's name change, the rock or that Jesus was the Christ.
- ❖ Both Mark and Luke describe Peter stating Jesus is Christ. However, neither of these books mention Peter's name change from Cephas to Peter, nor do they refer to the rock upon which the church would be built.

- 25:3 Issues of significant importance are almost always mentioned in more than

25: Peter and Mary

one book and/or more than once in the same book. This issue of Peter potentially being the rock - the head of the new church - is mentioned in only one book, and only once in that book. If Peter was the first Pope, wouldn't this significant position amongst all believers warrant mention in more than the book of Matthew? Or at least mentioned more than once in Matthew?

- 25:4 While Paul wrote the most books in the New Testament, Luke wrote the most Greek words. Luke was a thorough researcher and scholar. If Peter was the first Pope and head of the church, isn't it likely Luke would have made this point crystal clear when he wrote Luke 9:20? If not, why would Luke (as well as Mark and John) ignore such a critical appointment?
- 25:5 Further, if such a critical appointment was only to be mentioned once, why wouldn't God make it more definitive in Matthew 16:18 by speaking Greek words that translate to something akin to:
- i. "... and Peter, you will be the rock on whom I will build my church?"; or
 - ii. "... and I also say to you Peter, you will be the head of the church on earth. You and you alone will be delegated special authority from the Father, and you will be My Chief representative as will your successors"?
- 25:6 Having said the above, was the rock in Matthew 16:18 a reference to i) Jesus or to Peter, or to ii) a truth about one of them? For instance, was the revelation in Matthew 16:15 - the critical truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God - the rock on which God's church will be built?
- Matthew 16:15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 Simon Peter answered, "**You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.**"*

Petros and Petra

In the Greek, nouns have gender. The Greek word 'petros' [4074] is masculine while 'petra' [G4073] is feminine. Peter, the man, is referred to using the word *petros*. The rock Jesus said He would build His church on was not *petros* - the Greek word used for Peter - but *petra*.

- Matthew 16:18 I also say to you that you are **Peter [petros]**, and upon this **rock [petra]** I will build My church"*

12 other Scriptures

Much has been written on petros and petra. Let me keep it short by looking at 12 scriptures. The first two involve Paul and Peter.

- 1 Peter 2:8 and A stone of stumbling and a **rock [petra]** of offense ...*
- 1 Corinthians 10:4 and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual **rock [petra]** which followed them; and the **rock [petra]** was Christ.*
- 25:7 Both Peter and Paul use petra when referencing Jesus as the rock. Doesn't this support the notion that Jesus was the rock on which the church would be built, and not Peter? If not, why not?

Here are 10 scriptures referring to Jesus as a stone, cornerstone or foundation.

- ❑ *Matthew 21:42 Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures, "The **stone** which the builders rejected, This became the **chief corner stone**: ...?"*
- ❑ *Mark 12:10 Have you not even read this Scripture: "The **stone** which the builders rejected, This became the **chief corner stone**;*
- ❑ *Luke 20:17 But Jesus looked at them ... "What then is this that is written: "The **stone** which the builders rejected, This became the **chief corner stone**?"*
- ❑ *Acts 4:11 He is the **stone** which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the **chief corner stone**.*
- ❑ *Romans 9:33 just as it is written, "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a **rock of offense**, And he who believes in Him will not be disappointed."*
- ❑ *1 Corinthians 3:11 For no man can lay a **foundation** other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*
- ❑ *Ephesians 2:20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being **the corner stone***
- ❑ *1 Peter 2:6 ... "Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious **corner stone**, And he who believes in Him will not be disappointed."*
- ❑ *1 Peter 2:7 ... "The **stone** which the builders rejected, This became the **very corner stone**."*
- ❑ *2 Timothy 2:19 Nevertheless, the firm **foundation** of God stands ...*

Whereas at least 12 scriptures clearly refer to Jesus as a rock, stone, cornerstone or foundation, there isn't one other scripture identifying Peter as a unique rock, stone, cornerstone or foundation.

25:8 If the rock on which the church would be built was Peter, wouldn't we expect more scriptures referring to Peter as a rock and/or clarifying he - not Jesus - was the rock, the foundation - on which the church was to be built? To put it another way, why does Peter's denial of Jesus warrant mention in all 4 gospels and yet Peter being the rock only warrants mention in 1 gospel?

I also found over 30 Old Testament scriptures where God is referred to as a rock including the following 4 verses.

- ❑ *Psalms 18:2 The **Lord is my rock** ... **My God, my rock** ...*
- ❑ *2 Samuel 22:3 **My God, my rock** ...*
- ❑ *Deuteronomy 32:4 **The Rock!** His work is perfect ...*
- ❑ *Isaiah 26:4 ... For **in God the Lord, we have an everlasting Rock**.*

And when we look at Old Testament events such as Moses striking the rock with his staff resulting in water to flow, was this event a foreshadowing of:

1. Jesus (the rock) encountering the cross (the staff) providing living water; or
 2. Peter (the rock) encountering _____ (the staff) providing _____?
- ❑ *Exodus 17:6 ... you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it ...*

Were the other Apostles Rocks as well

Consider the role that the apostles and prophets played.

- ❑ *Ephesians 2:19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, 20 **having been***

25: Peter and Mary

built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

- 25:9 Doesn't Ephesians 2 show Peter - similar to the other apostles and prophets - was part of the church foundation while Jesus is the cornerstone which is the key rock of any foundation? If not, what do these verses show?

Keys, Binding and Loosing

Another key scripture Catholics cite as reason to believe Peter was the first Pope is the notion that Peter was given the keys to the kingdom of heaven.

- ❑ *Matthew 16:19 I **will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven** ...*

Further in Matthew 16:19, we find these keys relate to binding and loosing - a topic **CEASED?** touched on in Chapter 23 - where believers bring heaven to earth.

- ❑ *Matthew 16:19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and **whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.***

A couple of things. First, Peter was given the keys **OF** the kingdom of heaven, not the keys **TO** the kingdom of heaven. Second, just before Matthew 16:19, we learn Jesus was speaking not only to Peter, but to all His disciples.

- ❑ *Matthew 16:13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, **He was asking His disciples**, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"*

The fact binding and loosing applies to all disciples is confirmed in Matthew 18.

- ❑ *Matthew 18:1 ... **the disciples** came to Jesus ... "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" ... 18 Truly I say to you, **whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.***

- 25:10 Since Matthew 16:13-19 and Matthew 18:1-18 show Jesus telling all the disciples they can bind and loose, doesn't this negate the argument that Peter - and Peter alone - had the only set of keys of the kingdom of heaven and a special status amongst the apostles? And given Jesus was speaking to a group of disciples and not just the original apostles, doesn't this mean all believers - including you and me today - have a copy of the relevant keys of the kingdom of heaven? If not, why not?

Who was the Greatest Apostle

Now consider how the other apostles viewed Peter. After the Last Supper which took place after the discussion in Matthew 16 where Jesus said 'upon this rock I will build my church', the disciples were wondering in Luke 22 who is greatest.

- ❑ *Luke 22:14 When the hour had come, He reclined at the table, and the apostles with Him. 15 And He said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer ... 24 And there arose also a **dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be greatest.***

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- 25:11 Doesn't the fact the disciples were even discussing the issue of who was the greatest suggest there was no clear '*greatest of them all*' and no designated leader as chosen by God?
- 25:12 And doesn't 1 Peter 5 show Peter saw himself an equal, not superior elder?
- *1 Peter 5:1 Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as **your fellow elder and witness** of the sufferings of Christ ...*
- 25:13 If Peter was the first Pope, isn't it reasonable to expect Jesus would have made his appointment crystal clear to the other apostles? And if Peter was their leader, the other apostles would have to accept that reality and admit, perhaps reluctantly, it was Peter who was the greatest of them all?

Peter or Paul

The discussion on who was the greatest took place before Paul arrived on the scene. In terms of whether Peter or Paul '*is the greatest*' (which neither are), it's notable that Paul corrected Peter, but Peter never corrected Paul. It's also notable that Paul referred to Peter as Cephias at least 8 times after the cross.

- *Galatians 2:11 But when Cephias came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.*

Figure 25:1: Frequency of Mention in New Testament

Book	Peter + Cephias	Saul + Paul
Acts Chapters 1-12	60	14 + 0 = 14
Acts Chapters 13-28	0	8 + 143 = 151
James		
Galatians *	3 + 4**	4
1 Thessalonians *		3
2 Thessalonians *		2
1 Corinthians *	4**	9
2 Corinthians *		7
Romans *		1
Ephesians *		2
Philippians *		
Philemon *		3
Colossians *		3
1 Timothy *		1
Titus *		1
1 Peter	1	
2 Timothy *		1
2 Peter	1	1
Hebrews		
Jude, 1, 2, 3 John		
Revelation		
TOTAL	73	203

* Written by Paul

** Peter referred to as Cephias; counts vary by translation.

25: Peter and Mary

Figure 25:1 shows the frequency of mention of Paul and Peter in the 23 New Testament books other than the 4 Gospels. We find Peter is referred to ~75 times in Acts compared to Paul's ~165 times (14+151). We also find Peter is not referred to once after Chapter 12 in Acts, and very little in the other books.

25:14 Is there a bias to the numbers because Paul wrote 13 books and Peter only wrote 2? Absolutely. But is the underlying bias there because Paul's mandate was larger than Peter's since Paul was primarily charged with taking the gospel to the more populous and spiritually uneducated Gentiles, while Peter's mandate was primarily to the Jews?

- ❑ *Galatians 2:7 But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised.*

25:15 In addition, Luke who was the most prolific writer in the New Testament, traveled with Paul, not Peter. Paul's trials are written about at length; Peter's trials after the cross are recorded in a limited way. If there was an earthly head of the church, doesn't the evidence suggest Paul, not Peter?

Personal Status

25:16 Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law which indicates Peter was married. Some believers say this is reason to argue Peter would have been ineligible to be a Pope. However, given the Catholic church only adopted the practice of celibacy for priests in 1079AD (item 23, page 357 in Chapter 24 of **CEASED?**), that may explain why Peter could still have been the first pope. But doesn't the issue of a new celibacy requirement speak to an even larger issue? If celibacy for priests - as well as the other inventions on pages 356 and 357 - are truly of God, what Biblical evidence is there that supports the belief that God waited many centuries after the cross before making many radical changes? In other words, how can Catholics know for sure whether such changes/inventions are from God or from man?

- ❑ *Mark 1:30 Now Simon's mother-in-law was lying sick with a fever; and immediately they spoke to Jesus about her.*

So Who is: 'Upon this Rock I will Build my Church'

- ❑ *Matthew 16:18 I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.*

This issue of whether or not Peter is the rock on which the church would be built is an extremely important issue. To a large extent, the very existence of the Roman Catholic church depends on it. But if Peter is not the rock on which the church is to be built, does the Bible clearly state who is the rock upon which the church will be built? Again, consider verses 13 through 16.

- ❑ *Matthew 16:13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" 14 And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." 15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the*

Son of the living God.”

At the end of the dialogue about who Jesus is, Jesus acknowledges Peter is right, that Jesus is the Messiah. And it is within the context of Jesus’s response that we find the answer: that Jesus, the Christ who is the Son of the living God, is the rock on whom the church will be built.

To Recap Peter Being the First Pope

1. There is one scripture alluding to the notion Peter may - may - be the rock.
2. No other scripture mentions Peter as being the petra, the rock of the church.
3. Peter and Paul both refer to Jesus as the petra, the rock.
4. At least 12 other New Testament scriptures refer specifically to Jesus as rock, cornerstone or foundation.
5. Over 30 Old Testament scriptures refer to God as being a rock.
6. Peter, like the rest of the apostles and prophets, is described as part of the foundation of the church. By contrast, Jesus is the cornerstone which is the key rock in a foundation.
7. The apostles fought amongst themselves as to who was the greatest. Given they even discussed the issue shows Peter was not the leader.
8. Jesus told all His disciples, not just Peter nor the other original 11 apostles, they could bind and loose on earth what has already been bound and loosed in heaven. As a result, all Jesus’s disciples have the keys of the kingdom of heaven, not just Peter and the apostles.
9. Paul is much more prevalent in the New Testament after the cross than Peter. Peter is non-existent in Acts after Acts 12. Paul took the gospel to the much more populous Gentiles. Paul rebuked Peter; Peter never rebuked Paul. Paul wrote ~13 books; Peter wrote 2. Paul’s personal trials are written about at length; Peter’s trials are mentioned in a minor way.
10. Jesus as the rock is consistent with who Jesus is, with what He did, and supported by at least 12 scriptures that reference Jesus as a rock, stone, foundation or cornerstone.

25:17 Who do you say is the rock on which the church will be built - sinful, human Peter who denied Christ or Holy, Almighty Jesus who redeemed not only Peter, but provided the free gift of salvation to all of humanity?

Successors to Peter

In my research, the Biblical evidence for Peter being the first head of the earthly church - the first Pope - is minimal, and dwarfed by evidence suggesting he was not. If you’re Roman Catholic, do you see why so many Protestants disagree that the position of Pope has merit, and why so many disagree Francis is the current earthly head of God’s church? Protestants believe Jesus is the head of the earthly church, with the one true church being the overall body of believers, not an organization. Having said that, some Protestants seem to believe their denomination is the one true Christian church which has “*got it all figured out*”. They don’t. No denomination has ‘*got it all*’ correct.

MARY: MORE THAN JESUS'S EARTHLY MOTHER?

Mary is revered within the Roman Catholic church. I get that. We're all thankful for her being the earthly mother of Jesus. If you're Roman Catholic, and find my research, questions and/or comments about Mary to be offensive, that's not my intent. If you do get offended, I am sorry, but I do request that you try to identify the root cause of the offense. For instance, are you simply tired of fighting unwarranted criticism from Protestants? Is it because my information and comments are false or misleading? Or is it because the information herein has merit, contradicts your beliefs, and thereby poses difficulties for you?

Why go to Mary - Intercessory Prayer

In my research on Mary, the two primary reasons publicly stated by Catholics as to why they go to Mary are a) to honor her and b) to have Mary intercede for them.

In terms of interceding, the reasoning is that - since Mary is both the earthly mother of Jesus and someone who Roman Catholics view as having been sinless (page 37 of **CEASED?** discusses this issue about Mary) and therefore more righteous than any other person who lived on earth besides Jesus - Mary is better able to influence Jesus. And because of her unique degree of influence, a person who comes to Mary can obtain a better result than if they went directly to Jesus.

In terms of honoring Mary as the earthly mother of Jesus Christ, I agree we should honor Mary. But I have a big 'but' in doing so. Let me explain my but. My Mom was a pretty darn good softball player in her youth. I remember playing catch with her when she was in her 50's and thinking - man, she's still got game. If I told you that my Mom was a professional softball player in her youth, that would not honor her. It would not honor her because that claim would be an exaggeration, and as such, it would be a lie. And by making such claims about my Mom, it would also suggest that somehow Mom was not good enough as she was. That would be a huge lie. I'm very proud of my Mom, and she was and is more than good enough. She's great in fact, and I have zero interest in exaggerating anything about her. Unless she gives me some of her baking.

25:18 Lies come in many forms including exaggerations. If Mary is to be honored, isn't it vital that what we say and think about Mary are not exaggerations? If not, why not?

25:19 As a result, when we look at the many titles Catholics place on Mary such as Mother of God, Spouse of the Spirit, Queen of Heaven, Queen of the Apostles, Queen of all Saints, Queen of Peace, Queen of Justice and Ark of the New Covenant since she carried God's presence in her womb, don't we need to ensure that these and the dozens of other titles given to Mary are valid and appropriate, and not exaggerations? And again, if not - why not?

Mary Has a Special Place

Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, tells Mary she is blessed.

- *Luke 1:41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42 And she cried out with a loud voice and said, "**Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!***

Elizabeth acknowledges Mary is the earthly mother of Elizabeth's Lord.

- *Luke 1:43 And how has it happened to me, that the **mother of my Lord** would come to me? 44 For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy. 45 And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by **the Lord**."*

25:20 Elizabeth seemed quite aware of the significance of Jesus. But if Mary was much more than the earthly mother of Jesus, isn't it rather significant that Elizabeth's references are limited to her being the earthly mother of Jesus?

Status & Role of Mary in the Roman Catholic church

Pope Francis's Perspective

In terms of the Roman Catholic church's view of Mary, consider the following that was copied verbatim on October 18, 2019 from the Vatican News website. Formatting is my doing.

(<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2018-12/pope-new-year-s-day-mary-mother-god-let-us-be-amazed.html>)

Pope at Mass: 'let us be amazed'

*Pope Francis says in his homily during the liturgy he celebrated in St Peter's Basilica on New Year's Day that we need to be amazed by Mary, the Mother of God, **allow her to gaze on us, embrace us and take us by the hand.***

By Sr Bernadette Mary Reis, fsp

*Pope Francis took his cue for his homily for the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, from Luke's Gospel of the day which says that all were amazed by what the shepherds had to tell them. We should be **amazed today by the Mother of God**, he said, and **allow Mary to gaze on us, embrace us and take us by the hand.***

Amazed by Mary

***Mary is not only the Mother of God**, Pope Francis began, **she also presents all of us "reborn to the Lord"**, he said. The Church too, needs to be amazed, he continued, "at being the dwelling place of the living God, the Bride of the Lord, **a Mother who gives birth to her children**". **It is Our Lady who "gives the Church the feel of home"**, the Pope said.*

Allow Mary to gaze on us

Whenever Mary gazes on us**, Pope Francis said **"she does not see sinners but children"**. By allowing her to gaze on us, we will see the reflection of God's beauty and heaven. **Her gaze**, he said, **penetrates the darkest corner and rekindles hope.

*"As she gazes upon us, she says: **Take heart, dear children; here I am, your Mother!**"*

It's clear Pope Francis (as well as previous Popes) and the Roman Catholic church in general, see Mary not only as the earthly mother of Jesus, but as the Mother of

25: Peter and Mary

God. She is viewed as the Mother of all believers. She gives Catholics the feel of home. Mary gazes on all children of God. She takes the hands of Catholics and presents individuals as “*reborn to the Lord*”. These kinds of activities, **IF** they are truly of God, should be something to honor and delight in by all believers.

25:21 Do Pope Francis’s comments indicate:

- i. Pope Francis is asking Mary to pray along the lines of an intercessory prayer; or
- ii. Pope Francis expects Mary to behave supernaturally and will deliver the supernatural blessings herself? Blessings such as being able to:
 - a. gaze on the billion+ Roman Catholics at the same time;
 - b. take every Roman Catholic by the hand;
 - c. present all Catholics as reborn to the Lord;
 - d. give birth to her Catholic children;
 - e. give the church the feel of home; and
 - f. gaze in a way that penetrates the darkest corner facing a billion+ Catholics, and rekindles hope to all Catholics.

25:22 To me, it’s clear that Pope Francis expects Mary is able to carry out a multitude of supernatural things, things that only God can deliver. As a result, don’t the Pope’s words indicate he believes Mary is effectively God? Even if he doesn’t use words to that effect?

25:23 If your answer to the above question is “*No, Mary is not viewed as being God*”, then let me ask. Who else but God can do such things? What other saint has in the past or is now been able to perform such things not only for the Pope, but for hundreds of millions of other Roman Catholics – simultaneously no less?

The Pope refers to Mary as the Mother of God. Let me repeat this question from Chapter 1:

1:19 My related question is this. Mary is a creation of God. If God created Mary, how could Mary be the Mother of God? In other words, how can Mary be the Mother of the One who created her? And if she is truly the Mother of God and a child of God, is Mary her own ‘*grandmother*’?

Medjugorje

Now consider a small village called Medjugorje in Bosnia-Herzegovina where, since 1981, claims have been made that Mary has been appearing and giving messages to the world. While any apparitions and the messages from Medjugorje have not been fully approved by the Vatican, steps taken to date indicate the Vatican has effectively approved events at Medjugorje. Consider two messages from Mary that I copied verbatim from www.medjugorje.org on December 28, 2019.

*December 25, 2019 Message to Marija “**Dear children! I am carrying my Son Jesus to you**, for Him to bless you and reveal to you His love, which comes from Heaven. Your heart yearns for peace, of which there is less and less on earth. That is why people are far from God and souls are sick and heading towards spiritual*

death. **I am with you, little children, to lead you** on this way of salvation to which God calls you. **Thank you for having responded to my call.**"

December 25, 2019 Message to Jakov: At the last daily apparition to Jakov Colo on September 12th, 1998, **Our Lady** told him that henceforth he would have one apparition a year, every December 25th, on Christmas Day. This is also how it was this year. The apparition began at 2:25 pm and lasted 9 minutes. **Our Lady came with little Jesus in her arms. Through Jakov**, Our Lady gave the following message: "**Dear children**, today, on this day of grace, in a special way I am calling you to open your hearts and to implore Jesus to strengthen your faith. **Children**, through prayer with the heart, faith and works you will come to know what it means to live a sincere Christian life. Often times, **children**, darkness, pain and crosses overwhelm your hearts. Do not waver in faith and ask 'why' because you think that you are alone and abandoned. Instead, open your hearts, pray and believe firmly and then your heart will feel God's nearness and that God never abandons you - that He is beside you at every moment. Through prayer and faith, God will answer your every 'why' and transform your every pain, darkness and cross into light. Thank you."

25:24 Don't the above comments:

- i. show Mary is not praying to God on behalf of people, but rather show Mary is speaking to believers in a direct, personalized way as if she were on high, and all Roman Catholics are her children?
 - ii. contradict/conflict with God's Word which says:
 - a. believers are children of God;
 - b. children of God are to be led by Holy Spirit, not a person; and
 - c. God's Word and not another saint, is the light to our path?
 - iii. confirm that the Roman Catholic church believes Mary is God? If you still believe the answer is no, consider this. The Bible teaches that all born-again believers are children of God. The Roman Catholic church teaches that Catholics are Mary's children. As a result, doesn't it follow that the Roman Catholic church must also believe Mary is God? Or, to put the issue another way, if Mary isn't viewed as being God, how can she possibly be thought of as the mother of hundreds of millions of Catholics?
- Romans 8:14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.
- Psalm 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.

When I ask for prayer, my friends pray in different ways such as the following.

"Father God, thank You for sending Jesus. Thank You for the cross and for the tearing of the veil so that I can come to You directly. I lift up Don and ask Lord that You ... (pray for specific issue or issues). In addition Lord, I ask that You bless Don with an increased desire to spend time alone with You. Bless him with more hunger for Your Word. Speak to him through Your Word and other ways including other believers. Draw Don closer to You Lord, and reveal

25: Peter and Mary

anything in his heart that isn't right and is hindering his walk with You Lord. It is my hope that Don seeks Your Kingdom first as he begins each day, and that he is led by Holy Spirit throughout each day. Jesus, I ask You baptize Don afresh with power and fire. Bring godly men into his life to guide and mentor him. Father God, I pray all this in the mighty name of Your Son Jesus. Amen."

- 25:25 When considering Mary's comments from Medjugorje, do they resemble words akin to intercessory prayer as per my example above? If you believe Mary's comments are intercessory in nature, how does that reconcile with the fact Mary is speaking to people, not God? Or how do words such as "*I am with you little children to **lead you***", and "*thank you for having responded to **my call***" equate to intercessory prayer?
- 25:26 Who besides God can lead His little children? Or call out to all of them? And thus, if Roman Catholics believe the prayers of Pope Francis or the Medjugorje are true and can be relied upon, how can Catholics not believe Mary is God? And if she is not viewed as being God, how can Catholics be confident these prayers are not idle, feel-good, religious words?
- 25:27 Per question 25:24 iii, when Mary calls believers her children, couldn't Catholics only be viewed as Mary's children if she was God? When logic follows lines of "*because Mary is the earthly mother of Jesus, and because Jesus is God, that makes Mary the Mother of God*", or "*because we're children of God, and because Mary is the Mother of God, that makes Mary our mother*", isn't that kind of logic the same as saying something akin to:
- i. *'because my brother is friends with John Q pro hockey player, I'm also friends with John Q pro hockey player'*; or
 - ii. *'because Jane Doe is my boss, that also makes her the boss of my wife and my children'*?
- 25:28 On this issue of intercession, doesn't Romans 8:34 show that both Holy Spirit and Jesus play the key role in intercession?
- ❑ *Romans 8:34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, but rather, was raised, who is at the right hand of God, **who also intercedes for us**.*
 - ❑ *Romans 8:26 Now in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know what to pray for as we should, but the **Spirit Himself intercedes for us** with groanings too deep for words;*

Let's move on to another major part of Catholicism that clearly reveals more of Mary's roles and profile within the Roman Catholic church - the rosary.

MARY AND THE ROSARY

Website rosarycenter.org provides instructions on how to pray the rosary.

1. Make the Sign of the Cross and say the "Apostles' Creed"
2. Say the "Our Father"
3. Say **three "Hail Marys"** for Faith, Hope, and Charity
4. Say the "Glory Be"
5. Announce the First Mystery and then say the "Our Father"

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6. Say **ten “Hail Marys”** while meditating on the Mystery
7. Say the “Glory Be” (**Optional:** Say the “O My Jesus” prayer requested by Mary at Fatima) (*Note: This prayer is as follows: “O My Jesus, forgive us, save us from the face of hell. Lead all souls to heaven, especially those who are most in need”.*)
8. Announce the Next Mystery; then say the “Our Father” and repeat these steps (6 through 8) as you continue through the remaining Mysteries.
9. Say the closing prayers: the “**Hail Holy Queen**” and “Final Prayer”
10. Make the “Sign of the Cross”.

25:29 I can't find mention of anything resembling the rosary in the Bible. Mr. Boettner's book shows the rosary was started by Peter the Hermit in 1090. If the rosary is not clearly supported in the Bible as per the Lord's Prayer, how can the rosary be viewed as Biblical, and not an addition to God's Word by the Catholic church?

Jesus is mentioned specifically by name or otherwise referred to hundreds of times after Pentecost. Mary isn't mentioned or referred to once after Pentecost. Yet in the core Roman Catholic prayer - the rosary - the situation is reversed. Mary has the dominant position. For each rosary, the name of Jesus is mentioned once - or 4 times if one counts the sign of the cross and the O My Jesus prayer. In comparison, 20 mysteries and 10 hail Marys per mystery results in 200 hail Marys. Add the other 3 and we have 203 hail Marys for each rosary. Based on 100 million Catholics praying the full rosary, that amounts to over 20 billion hail Mary's (20,300,000,000 = 203 * 100,000,000) per day. If one person says the full rosary every day, that equates to 74,095 hail Marys per year (203 * 365 = 74,095) and over 3.7 million hail Marys in 50 years (203*365*50 = 3,704,750). Based on 100 million Catholics faithfully saying the rosary for 50 years, that equates to 370.4 trillion hail Marys (3,704,750 * 100,000,000 = 370,475,000,000,000). The word 'Hail' can be defined as praise, and that's an awful lot of praise going to Mary, not God.

I can't imagine how God would respond to hundreds of millions of prayers that are the same, day after day, that are focused on Mary and not Him. The rosary doesn't seem to reflect what would be said by someone who has a personal relationship with God. To me, the rosary prayer more closely resembles a type of repetitive prayer, a prayer we are to avoid.

❑ *Matthew 6:7 “And when ... praying, do not use thoughtless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard because of their many words.*

25:30 The Catholic church doesn't view praying the rosary as thoughtless repetition. I don't mean to be disrespectful, but if this is your belief, how would you feel if someone you love recited the exact same words to you, day after day, year after year. And included in those words is mention of another person far more often than your name? I know if I said the same words to Lori every day for 5 days in a row, let alone 50 years, she would give me 'the look'. And even more so if I made frequent mention of another person's name. And thus I ask: where did God make it clear in His Word that the rosary and its focus on Mary are His doing? And thus, how is the rosary not the results of centuries of changes within the Catholic church?

15 Promises of the Rosary

Website www.themostholysrosary.com provides insight into 15 promises that Mary commits to give to those who recite the rosary.

The Blessed Virgin Mary promised to Saint Dominic and to all who follow that "Whatever you ask in the Rosary will be granted." She left for all Christians Fifteen Promises to those who recite the Holy Rosary.

Imparted to Saint Dominic and Blessed Alan

1. *Whoever shall faithfully serve me by the recitation of the Rosary, **shall receive signal graces.***
2. *I promise **my special protection** and the **greatest graces** to all those who shall recite the Rosary.*
3. *The Rosary shall be a **powerful armor against hell**, it will **destroy vice decrease sin**, and **defeat heresies.***
4. *The Rosary will **cause virtue** and **good works to flourish**; it will **obtain for souls the abundant mercy of God**; it will **withdraw the hearts of men from the love of the world and its vanities**, and **will lift them to the desire for eternal things.** Oh, that **souls would sanctify themselves** by this means.*
5. *The soul which recommends itself to me by the recitation of the Rosary, **shall not perish.***
6. *Whoever shall recite the Rosary devoutly, applying himself to the consideration of its sacred mysteries **shall never be conquered by misfortune. God will not chastise him** in His justice, **he shall not perish by an unprovided death**; if he be just he shall remain in the grace of God, and become worthy of eternal life.*
7. *Whoever shall have a true devotion for the Rosary **shall not die without the sacraments of the Church.***
8. *Those who are faithful to recite the Rosary shall have during their life and at their death the **light of God and the plentitude of His graces**; at the **moment of death they shall participate in the merits of the saints in paradise.***
9. *I shall **deliver from Purgatory** those who have been devoted to the Rosary.*
10. *The faithful children of the Rosary shall **merit a high degree of glory in Heaven.***
11. *You **shall obtain all you ask of me** by the recitation of the Rosary.*
12. *All those who propagate the Holy Rosary **shall be aided by me in their necessities.***
13. *I have obtained from my Divine Son that all the advocates of the Rosary **shall have for intercessors the entire celestial court during their life and at the hour of death.***
14. *All who recite the Rosary **are my sons and daughters, and brothers and sisters of my only Son Jesus Christ.***
15. *Devotion of my Rosary is **a great sign of predestination.***

25:31 Do the 15 promises of the rosary resemble blessings a person can expect to receive by:

- i. going to Mary and asking Mary to speak to God who will deliver the blessings; or,
- ii. going to Mary and asking Mary who delivers the blessings herself?

25:32 In other words, don't the 15 promises clearly show that praying the rosary is not the same as an intercessory prayer, but a prayer expecting Mary to deliver amazing blessings? If one argues Mary is not delivering these supernatural blessings, re-read promises such as #9 and #12. If Mary isn't delivering on the promises, who is 'I' and 'me'?

25:33 Or consider promise #2. How can a person believe Mary can offer them some of 'her special protection' unless they viewed Mary as God and capable of offering such protection?

25:34 When I look at promises #14 and #15, I am personally very bothered. By referring to Catholics as Mary's sons and daughters, it suggests to me that Mary has a superior position or role than that held by other Catholics. And by referring to Catholics as brothers and sisters of Jesus, it also puts Jesus on the same level as Catholics - inherently inferior to Mary. And by speaking of devotion to the rosary instead of to Jesus, it again serves to elevate Mary instead of Jesus. If you think my concern is unfounded, let me ask: Why isn't all devotion of Catholics given to Jesus, and all glory to God?

25:35 In these 15 promises, God is mentioned twice, Jesus once and neither Father God or Holy Spirit are referred to at all. When you read the promises, accolades and names attributed to Mary, doesn't this show the Roman Catholic church views Mary as God? And doesn't that mean the Catholic Godhead is not a triune God, but a four-member Godhead? And that Mary - not the Father, Jesus or Holy Spirit - is who Roman Catholics are taught to go to first?

25:36 I can't find anything in the Bible justifying that Mary has the **authority** or **ability** to deliver on the 15 promises of the rosary, or that she is able to gaze on us, embrace us, lead us by the hand and present all of us as reborn to the Lord. Again, I ask: how can Mary be expected to deliver on such promises if she isn't viewed as being God?

25:37 If you still believe Mary is not God nor is viewed as being God, I encourage you to read the 15 promises again with this question in mind.

"According to the rosary and its 15 promises, if one is faithful in reciting the rosary and encouraging others to do the same, does one need to do anything else, or seek anyone else, in their Christian walk?"

According to the rosary and the 15 promises, who does a person need most - Mary or Jesus?

25:38 And consider reading the 15 promises with this second question in mind. *"Are the blessings associated with the 15 promises in the rosary more likely to arise from:*

- i. *a personal relationship and time spent alone with Father God, Holy Spirit, Jesus, and God's Word; or*
- ii. *being disciplined in completing a defined set of activities and*

25: Peter and Mary

recitation of specific words of prayer on a daily basis that are focused on Mary?"

- 25:39 Is i. or ii. in 25:38 most likely to lead to the words: "*I never knew you; depart from me.*"
- ❑ *Matthew 7:23 And then I will declare to them, '**I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.**'*
 - ❑ *Luke 13:24 ... **many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able ... 27 ... 'I do not know where you are from; leave Me, all you evildoers.***
- 25:40 Without faith, without trust in God, it's impossible to please God. Don't the 15 promises of the Rosary cause a person to trust in the rosary instead of God? And because our trust is elsewhere, are we therefore unable to please God? And unless we're focused and abiding in Jesus, won't our heavenly fruit be virtually nil?
- ❑ *Hebrews 11:6 And **without faith it is impossible to please Him**, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and **that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.***
 - ❑ *John 15:5 I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for **apart from Me you can do nothing.***

Only God can deliver on the supernatural promises of the rosary. God can deliver on supernatural things either directly or indirectly by delegating authority and/or by giving individuals access to supernatural power. In God's Word, there is nothing that remotely resembles authority or power being given - before or after the cross - that enables any person to deliver on the promises of the rosary. However, God's Word clearly describes and frequently demonstrates that God delegates authority and gives believers' access to ongoing power through the 9 gifts and the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. These considerations lead to 3 possible scenarios involving Mary.

1. Mary is God, is omnipresent (present everywhere at all times), omnipotent (all-powerful), and omniscient (all-knowing), and is therefore able to personally and directly deliver on the 15 promises of the rosary;
 2. God has given wide-ranging powers and authority to Mary that:
 - i. enable her to personally deliver on the 15 promises of the rosary; and
 - ii. far exceed anything associated with Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the 9 Holy Spirit gifts;
 3. The 15 promises of the rosary are not of God, and Mary is not actually able to deliver on them even though it may appear at times that she does.
- 25:41 The Roman Catholic church insists Mary is not God, and thus only options 2 and 3 remain. I cannot find any Biblical evidence that shows Mary was delegated the necessary authority and given the necessary power/ability to be able to personally deliver on the 15 promises of the rosary. Without scriptural support, doesn't that mean all Catholics praying the rosary and expecting Mary to deliver on these promises are basing their prayers entirely on what the Catholic church teaches? And if so, what gives any

person comfort that these devoted Catholics aren't praying to Mary in futility? Moreover, if you're Catholic, can you understand why many Protestants struggle to see any difference between:

- i. Roman Catholics praying the rosary or other prayers to Mary; and
- ii. individuals in other faiths who pray to false gods such as to the goddess Artemis?

□ *Acts 19:26 You see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people, saying that gods made with hands are no gods at all. 27 Not only is there danger that this trade of ours fall into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis be regarded as worthless and that she whom all of Asia and the world worship will even be dethroned from her magnificence." 28 When they heard this and were filled with rage, they began crying out, saying, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"*

25:42 The Roman Catholic church, and thus Catholics faithful to the Catholic church, believe that Mary can deliver on the 15 promises of the rosary. When one reads the rosary and the blessings of the rosary, there is an inherent devotion to Mary and reliance on Mary such that - regardless of semantics - she acts in a very God-like way. Thus I ask: how can Catholics have one belief that Mary can deliver the 15 promises of the rosary and a second belief that Mary is not God? Aren't these two beliefs mutually exclusive, and as such, doesn't one belief have to go? And if one belief has to go, what does that say about the overall reliability of Catholic teachings?

MARY AND THE SUPERNATURAL

There are over one billion individuals classified as Roman Catholics. Based on Mary taking an average of 1 minute per day to hear and process each Catholic's prayer, that means Mary would spend over 1 billion minutes per day with Roman Catholics. There are only 1,440 minutes in a day (60 minutes per hour * 24 hours per day = 1,440). To spend 1 minute on each person, Mary would need to be simultaneously communicating (hearing, interceding) an average of 694,444 individuals at a time - around the clock 24/7 (1 billion / 1,440 = 694,444). And after 1 minute, Mary would have another 694,444 individuals, on average, to deal with.

You may feel the numbers are too high as only a portion of Catholics pray daily. You may feel they're too low as it takes ~15 minutes to recite the rosary once. The numbers of people praying to Mary will vary by time of day and time zone. There are many variables. But whatever number you feel is right, the point remains that many Catholics are praying to Mary at the same time. On Sundays, in areas with heavy concentrations of Roman Catholics in the same time zone, there will be tens of millions of Catholics praying to Mary at the same time. Moreover, these Catholics aren't in one room, but spread around the globe.

25:43 For Mary to simultaneously communicate with millions of people from all over the world requires Mary to have God-like abilities. If not, how do we explain her abilities?

25: Peter and Mary

- 25:44 Does an argument akin to - *In heaven, there is no such thing as time and thus Mary has infinite time to answer such prayers in the future, the answers of which are brought back in time to today* - actually hold water?
- 25:45 If Mary is constantly dealing with prayers from all these people here on earth, how do you think Mary is enjoying her time in Heaven?

Power of God and Mary

Mary gathered with others in prayer in Acts 1:14.

- ❑ *Acts 1:13 When they had entered the city, they went up to the upper room where they were staying; that is, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James. 14 These all with one mind were **continually devoting themselves to prayer**, along with the women, and **Mary the mother of Jesus**, and with His brothers.*
- 25:46 At Pentecost, followers of Christ were ‘all together’ and ‘all filled with the Holy Spirit’. Given Mary was with the group in Acts 1:14, is there any reason to believe Mary wasn’t part of the group at Pentecost? And thus, is there any reason to believe she wasn’t Baptized with the Holy Spirit, just like all of the other ~120 who were present?
- ❑ *Acts 2:1 When the day of Pentecost had come, **they were all together** in one place ... 4 And they were **all filled with the Holy Spirit** and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.*
- 25:47 To start His ministry, Jesus was Baptized in the Holy Spirit where Holy Spirit came upon [epi] Him like a dove. Jesus did many signs and wonders. Paul and other believers were Baptized in the Holy Spirit, and performed many signs and wonders. Yet, not one miracle was said to be done through Mary. If Mary is now able to hear millions of prayers at the same time, isn’t the lack of supernatural involvement in Mary’s earthly life totally inconsistent with the supernatural involvement attributed to Mary today?

Jesus’s View of Who is Blessed

Elizabeth, John the Baptist’s mother, said Mary would be blessed. Luke 11 describes a woman exalting Mary and stating she is blessed. But does Jesus say Mary is to be blessed?

- ❑ *Matthew 12:47 Someone said to Him, “Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You.” 48 But Jesus answered the one who was telling Him and said, “**Who is My mother** and who are My brothers?” 49 And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, “Behold My mother and My brothers! 50 **For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.**”*
- ❑ *Luke 8:19 And **His mother and brothers came to Him**, and they were unable to get to Him because of the crowd. 20 And it was reported to Him, “**Your mother** and Your brothers are standing outside, wishing to see You.” 21 But He answered and said to them, “**My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it.**”*

- ❑ *Luke 11:27 While Jesus was saying these things, one of the women in the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, "**Blessed is the womb that bore You and the breasts at which You nursed.**" 28 But He said, "**On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it.**"*

25:48 Do any of the above scriptures show that Jesus wanted Mary to be held in an exalted position above any other person?

In contrast to how Jesus treated Mary, consider the woman who poured the perfume on Jesus's head. Jesus made sure her actions would be remembered.

- ❑ *Matthew 26:7 a woman came to Him with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume, and she poured it on His head as He reclined at the table ... 13 Truly I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her."*

25:49 I can't find any New Testament scriptures where Jesus or any apostle said or did anything to support the many titles given to Mary today. I also can't find any scriptures which show Mary would continue to be in the lives of living saints for centuries to come after she died. Isn't that inconsistent with the many roles and titles attributed to Mary today?

NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES INVOLVING MARY

As the issue of Mary is a big one, I suggest it's worth examining all New Testament references to Mary. If I missed any, I apologize. I organized the scriptures chronologically. The 6 occasions where Mary spoke are bolded and underlined.

Mary Prior to Conception

- ❑ ***(1 of 20)** Matthew 1:16 Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah 17 So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations. 18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. 19 And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. 20 But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." 22 Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 23 "Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which translated means, "God with us."*

25: Peter and Mary

- **(2 of 20)** Luke 1:26 Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, 27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. 28 And coming in, he said to her, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." 29 But she was very perplexed at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was. 30 The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. 31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; 33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end." 34 Mary said to the angel, "**How can this be, since I am a virgin?**" 35 The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God. 36 And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. 37 For nothing will be impossible with God." 38 And Mary said, "**Behold, the bonds slave of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word.**" And the angel departed from her.

- 25:50 Do either of the above scriptures (1 and 2 of 20) suggest:
- i. Mary was sinless;
 - ii. Mary was more than the earthly mother of Jesus; or
 - iii. Mary would play a key role filled with God-like supernatural abilities after her death?
 - iv. If so, what verse(s) and why?

Conception of Jesus to His Birth

- **(3 of 20)** Matthew 1:24 And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife, 25 but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.
- **(4 of 20)** Luke 1:39 Now at this time Mary arose and went in a hurry to the hill country, to a city of Judah, 40 and entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42 And she cried out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! 43 And how has it happened to me, that the mother of my Lord would come to me? 44 For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy. 45 And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord." 46 And Mary said: "**My soul exalts the Lord** 47 **And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.** 48 **For He has had regard for the humble state of His bonds slave; For behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed.** 49 **For the Mighty One has done great things for me; And holy is His name.** 50 **And His mercy is upon generation after generation Toward**

those who fear Him. 51 **“He has done mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their heart.** 52 **He has brought down rulers from their thrones, And has exalted those who were humble.** 53 **He has filled the hungry with good things; And sent away the rich empty-handed.** 54 **He has given help to Israel His servant, In remembrance of His mercy.** 55 **As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and his descendants forever.”** 56 And Mary stayed with her about three months, and then returned to her home.

- ❑ **(5 of 20)** Luke 2:4 Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, 5 in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. 6 While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth.

25:51 Do any of the above scriptures (3 to 5 of 20) suggest:

- i. Mary was sinless;
- ii. Mary was more than the earthly mother of Jesus; or
- iii. Mary would play a key role filled with God-like supernatural abilities after her death?
- iv. If so, what verse(s) and why?

Matthew 1:25 **(3 of 20)** reminds us of the issue of Mary’s eternal virginity. If you still believe Mary was a virgin forever, I copy the following from page 40 of **CEASED?**

In terms of Mary and Joseph having a sexless marriage, Lori pointed out something rather interesting when comparing the NASB version to the Catholic Public Domain Version.

- ❑ *Matthew 1:24 And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife, 25 **but kept her a virgin until [heos] she gave birth to a Son;** and he called His name Jesus. (NASB)*
- ❑ *Matthew 1:24 Then Joseph, arising from sleep, did just as the Angel of the Lord had instructed him, and he accepted her as his wife. **And he knew her not, yet she bore her son, the firstborn.** And he called his name JESUS. (CPDV: Catholic Public Domain Version)*

The NASB version clearly states Mary and Joseph had physical intimacy, but not until after Jesus was born. The Catholic Public Domain Version states Mary and Joseph never had physical intimacy before or after Mary gave birth to Jesus. In the NASB translation, the English word ‘until’ is derived from the Greek word ‘heos’ [G2193] which Strong’s defines as ‘1. til, until’.

- 3:23 *When the English word ‘until’ was taken out of the Catholic Public Domain Version, this effectively removed the Greek word ‘heos’ from God’s Word. Isn’t changing God’s Word a rather big deal, with potentially major consequences? If the word ‘until’ was put back into the Catholic Bible, it would say “... he knew her not until ...” instead of the current translation “... knew her not ...”. Doesn’t adding the word ‘until’ put a totally different perspective on a sexless Mary and Joseph marriage, a sinless Mary, and the entire Mother of God issue?*

25:52 Omitting the word 'until' effectively involves deleting the Greek word 'heos' from God's Word. Regardless of the issue, taking from God's word at any time is very troublesome. As it relates to Mary, I can't see how this omission from the Catholic Bible is an error or by chance. After all, isn't it a necessary omission in order for the sexless marriage argument to hold up? If the word until is put back into the Catholic Bible, the impacts on the teachings of Mary are substantial. In fact, don't virtually all Catholic teachings on Mary beyond her being the earthly mother of Jesus crumble?

Jesus's Birth to Beginning of Jesus's Earthly Ministry

- ❑ **(6 of 20)** *Luke 2:6 While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.*
- ❑ **(7 of 20)** *Matthew 2:11 After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshiped Him ... 13 Now when they had gone, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up! Take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt ... 14 So Joseph got up and took the Child and His mother while it was still night, and left for Egypt.*
- ❑ **(8 of 20)** *Matthew 2:19 But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, and said, 20 "Get up, take the Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel; for those who sought the Child's life are dead." 21 So Joseph got up, took the Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel.*
- ❑ **(9 of 20)** *Luke 2:18 And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. 19 But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart.*
- ❑ **(10 of 20)** *Luke 2:27 And he came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law, 28 then he took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said ... 33 And His father and mother were amazed at the things which were being said about Him. 34 And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed. 35 and a sword will pierce even your own soul - to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed." 36 And there was a prophetess, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years and had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, 37 and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers. 38 At that very moment she came up and began giving thanks to God, and continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. 39 When they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city of Nazareth.*

- **(11 of 20)** *Luke 2:41 Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. 42 And when He became twelve, they went up there according to the custom of the Feast; 43 and as they were returning, after spending the full number of days, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. But His parents were unaware of it, 44 but supposed Him to be in the caravan, and went a day's journey; and they began looking for Him among their relatives and acquaintances. 45 When they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem looking for Him. 46 Then, after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. 47 And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers. 48 When they saw Him, they were astonished; and His mother said to Him, "**Son, why have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You.**" 49 And He said to them, "Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house?" 50 But they did not understand the statement which He had made to them. 51 And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and He continued in subjection to them; and His mother treasured all these things in her heart.*

25:53 Do any of the above scriptures (6 to 11 of 20) suggest:

- i. Mary was sinless;
- ii. Mary was more than the earthly mother of Jesus; or
- iii. Mary would play a key role filled with God-like supernatural abilities after her death?
- iv. If so, what verse(s) and why?

Jesus's Earthly Ministry to Jesus's Arrest and Sentence

- **(12 of 20)** *John 2:1 On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; 2 and both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. 3 When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "**They have no wine.**" 4 And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come." 5 His mother said to the servants, "**Whatever He says to you, do it.**" ... 12 After this He went down to Capernaum, He and His mother and His brothers and His disciples; and they stayed there a few days.*
- **(13 of 20)** *Matthew 12:46 While He was still speaking to the crowds, behold, His mother and brothers were standing outside, seeking to speak to Him. 47 Someone said to Him, "Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You." 48 But Jesus answered the one who was telling Him and said, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" 49 And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, "Behold My mother and My brothers! 50 For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother."*
- **(14 of 20)** *Matthew 13:54 He came to His hometown and began teaching them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers? 55 Is not this the*

25: Peter and Mary

carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? 56 And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this man get all these things?"

- ❑ **(15 of 20)** *Mark 3:31 Then His mother and His brothers arrived, and standing outside they sent word to Him and called Him. 32 A crowd was sitting around Him, and they said to Him, "Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are outside looking for You." 33 Answering them, He said, "Who are My mother and My brothers?" 34 Looking about at those who were sitting around Him, He said, "Behold My mother and My brothers! 35 For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother."*
- ❑ **(16 of 20)** *Mark 6:2 When the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the synagogue; and the many listeners were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get these things, and what is this wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands? 3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?" And they took offense at Him. 4 Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his own relatives and in his own household."*
- ❑ **(17 of 20)** *Luke 11:27 While Jesus was saying these things, one of the women in the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, "Blessed is the womb that bore You and the breasts at which You nursed." 28 But He said, "On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it."*
- ❑ **(18 of 20)** *John 6:42 They were saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does He now say, 'I have come down out of heaven'?"*

25:54 Do any of the above scriptures (12 to 18 of 20) suggest:

- i. Mary was sinless;
- ii. Mary was more than the earthly mother of Jesus; or
- iii. Mary would play a key role filled with God-like supernatural abilities after her death?
- iv. If so, what verse(s) and why?

Death and Crucifixion of Jesus

- ❑ **(19 of 20)** *John 19:25 Therefore the soldiers did these things. But standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" 27 Then He said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" From that hour the disciple took her into his own household.*

25:55 Do the above verses (19 of 20) suggest:

- i. Mary was sinless;
- ii. Mary was more than the earthly mother of Jesus; or
- iii. Mary would play a key role filled with God-like supernatural abilities after her death?
- iv. If so, what verse(s) and why?

After the Resurrection of Christ

- **(20 of 20)** Acts 1:12 *Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. 13 When they had entered the city, they went up to the upper room where they were staying; that is, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James. 14 These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers. 15 At this time Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of about one hundred and twenty persons was there together), and said,*

25:56 The last specific reference to Mary in the Bible sees her gathered in a prayer meeting along with ~120 other followers of Christ. Does anything in Acts 1:12-15 suggest:

- i. Mary was sinless;
- ii. Mary was more than the earthly mother of Jesus; or
- iii. Mary would play a key role filled with God-like supernatural abilities after her death?
- iv. If so, how?

25:57 If there is nothing in the New Testament clearly showing:

- i. Mary was sinless;
- ii. Mary was more than the earthly mother of Jesus; or
- iii. Mary would play a role filled with supernatural abilities after her death ...

... Then how can we view Mary as sinless, as more than the earthly mother of Jesus, or as anyone who played another significant role in the lives of believers during her earthly life before the cross, after the cross, or in her life in heaven? Where does scripture show that Mary is doing anything today beyond loving her time with Jesus and the other saints in heaven? And perhaps explaining one more time, what Jesus was like as a child.

Mary's Death

25:58 Mary's year of death is typically viewed as being in the 43-49AD time period. If Mary is the Queen of Heaven, the Mother of God etc., wouldn't we expect to see her death mentioned in the Bible since almost every book in the New Testament was written after her death?

25:59 If Mary had a death and ascension different than normal, why don't we read of Mary's death and ascension as we do Enoch and Elijah?

- *Hebrews 11:5 By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death; and he was not found because God took him up; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God.*
- *2 Kings 2:11 As they were going along and talking, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire which separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven.*

25: Peter and Mary

25:60 One possible reason why Mary's death would not be mentioned is if she died after all the books in the New Testament were written. When Jesus was born, Mary is typically viewed as being somewhere around 15 years of age. Jesus asked John to look after His mother. If anybody would have been personally inclined to write about Mary's death, wouldn't it have been John? When John finished writing the last of his 5 books somewhere in the 75-95AD time frame, Mary would have been 90-110 years old if she was still living. Is there evidence of that being the case? Thus, again, if Mary is the Queen of heaven, the Mother of God etc., wouldn't we expect to see her death at least mentioned by John, the person who Jesus asked to look after her?

Prayers Involving Mary in the Bible

The apostles asked Jesus to teach them one thing - how to pray. His response:

- ❑ *Matthew 6:8 So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. 9 "Pray, then, in this way: **Our Father who is in heaven**, Hallowed be Your name. 10 'Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. 11 'Give us this day our daily bread. 12 'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.'*

25:61 Mary is not mentioned in this prayer. Isn't that a significant omission if Mary is the one to whom believers are to go to first today? And inconsistent with the notion of the rosary?

25:62 Would the abundance of prayers to Mary today, and the total lack of prayers to Mary in the Bible, be understandable if praying to Mary was introduced by the Catholic church after the New Testament was written, such as in 600AD as per Mr. Boettner's book?

The only time we read of Mary being involved in prayer is in Acts 1 after the cross.

- ❑ *Acts 1:14 These all with one mind **were continually devoting themselves to prayer**, along with the women, and **Mary the mother of Jesus**, and with His brothers.*

25:63 Does Acts 1:14 indicate Mary had a more significant role in prayer, or in any other way, than any of the ~120 who were gathered with her in prayer?

25:64 And again, is there anything in the New Testament that supports:

- i. Mary is to have a major, supernatural, God-like role after her death;
- ii. the rosary prayer is of God; or
- iii. Mary is able to deliver on the 15 promises of the rosary?

Mary as Mediator

The English word 'mediator' is derived from the Greek word 'mesites' [G3316] which means in part, 'someone who intervenes between two other people, a reconciler, a medium of communication, an arbitrator'. When we ask another believer to pray for us, we aren't asking them to mediate for us. The reason we don't ask them to

mediate is because they can't mediate for us. The Bible is clear that Jesus is the only mediator between God and His daughters and sons.

- *1 Timothy 2:5 For there is one God, and **one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus**.*

25:65 Given Jesus sits at the right hand of Father God, and all authority was given to Jesus, is it that surprising to learn that Jesus is the only mediator between God and God's sons and daughters?

25:66 Given 1 Timothy 2:5 says Jesus is the only mediator between God and men, on what scriptural basis is there to treat Mary or any other deceased saint as our mediator?

25:67 By calling Mary a mediator, isn't that exaggerating who she is and what she can do?

Note: To clarify, living believers pray for us but they don't mediate for us. They intercede for us.

Jesus and Mary after the Gospels

An extremely simplistic but fairly revealing way to consider the relative profile that Jesus and Mary should each have in our lives today is to count the number of references to Jesus and Mary in the New Testament. For the analysis in Figure 25:2, I used the NASB translation. For Jesus, I only counted the number of unique references to 'Jesus' only, 'Jesus Christ' or 'Christ' only. For Mary, I counted the number of unique references to 'Mary', to the 'mother of Jesus' and to 'Jesus's parents'.

Figure 25:2

	Total	4 Gospels	Acts	Other 22 NT Books
Jesus	1,281	702	80	499
Mary	29	28	1	0

After the gospels, there are 579 references to Jesus compared to 1 for Mary. This single reference to Mary occurs in Acts 1 when ~120 people were together in prayer.

- *Acts 1:14 These **all with one mind** were continually devoting themselves to prayer, **along with the women**, and **Mary the mother of Jesus**, and with His brothers. 15 At this time Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of about **one hundred and twenty persons** was there together), and said,*

25:68 If Mary was to play a prominent role in the Body of Christ in the 2,000+ years following the cross, doesn't the fact there is only one reference to Mary after the gospels seem unusually small?

25:69 In this meeting with believers who all had Holy Spirit in [en] them, Mary is praying with both male and female disciples. The only indication she is different is by the reference that she is the mother of Jesus. God's word doesn't say that anyone came to Mary for guidance, comfort, advice or help

25: Peter and Mary

of any kind after the cross. She doesn't play a leadership role. She is not viewed as the Mother of God. If she was more than a regular human being, wouldn't the Bible make her supernatural nature, power, and role evident at some point after Christ's resurrection and ascension? If not, why not?

25:70 If Mary was to play such a central role after the cross, isn't it unusual there is not one book in the New Testament that mentions a single word Mary spoke after the cross?

Other Women after Pentecost

In contrast to Mary not being mentioned after Pentecost, several other women were mentioned - 4 of them by name.

- ❑ *Acts 21:8 On the next day we left and came to Caesarea, and entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him. 9 Now this man had **four virgin daughters** who were prophetesses.*
 - ❑ *Acts 18:24 Now a Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures ... 26 and he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when **Priscilla** and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.*
 - ❑ *Philippians 4:2 I urge **Euodia** and I urge **Syntychē** to live in harmony in the Lord. 3 Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.*
 - ❑ *Romans 16:1 I commend to you our sister **Phoebe**, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea; 2 that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well.*
- 25:71 If Mary was to have a dominant role in the church after the cross, isn't it surprising that other women were shown as playing key roles after the cross, but Mary wasn't? Was it because the call on her life had been fulfilled, and going forward, God was using other women? And if so, is that perhaps because all glory is to go to God?
- ❑ *Timothy 1:17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.*

Other Disciples' View of Mary

In terms of how other disciples saw Mary, consider Stephen when being stoned.

- ❑ *Acts 7:54 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him. 55 But being full of the Holy Spirit, **he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God;** 56 and he said, "**Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.**" 57 But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears and rushed at him with one impulse. 58 When they had driven him out of the city,*

*they began stoning him; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul. 59 They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, "**Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!**" 60 Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "**Lord, do not hold this sin against them!**" Having said this, he fell asleep.*

- 25:72 Stephen never sought or cried out to Mary. If Mary was to be our comforter, why wouldn't Stephen have reached out to her? While Mary is not even mentioned, Lori reminded me that it was Jesus - our true advocate and mediator - who rose from His heavenly, seated position and stood for Stephen when He saw Stephen being stoned. What does that say about who is to be our focus?
- 25:73 If Peter was the earthly head of the church and Mary was to have such a central role in the church until Christ's return, why didn't Peter make this crystal clear when he realized his time on earth was drawing to an end when he wrote 2 Peter in ~67AD?
- ❑ *2 Peter 1:14 knowing that the laying aside of my earthly dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.*
- 25:74 If the case is made that Mary's role as a supernatural being started after Mary died and not before her death, on what scriptural basis can that point of view be substantiated?

OTHER MARY ISSUES TO PONDER

If Mary was the Mother of God

- 25:75 If Mary is/was the supernatural Mother of God, why didn't she know about the birth of Jesus beforehand? And why wouldn't God tell her directly instead of using an angel to deliver the message?
- ❑ *Luke 1:26 ... the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth ... 29 **But she was very perplexed at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was.** 30 The angel said to her, "**Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God.***
- 25:76 If Mary is/was the supernatural Mother of God, why was Mary so earthly minded as evidenced by her questioning how she - a virgin - could give birth to Jesus, and then state she was a servant?
- ❑ *Luke 1:34 Mary said to the angel, "**How can this be, since I am a virgin?**" ... 38 And Mary said, "Behold, **the bondservant of the Lord;** may it be done to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.*
- 25:77 If Mary is/was the supernatural Mother of God, why did Mary point people to Jesus, but Jesus never pointed people to Mary?
- ❑ *John 2:3 When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine." 4 And Jesus said to her, "**Woman,** what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come." 5 His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it."*

25: Peter and Mary

25:78 If Mary is/was the supernatural Mother of God, wouldn't we expect to see Jesus exalting Mary by using a different name than 'woman', the same term Jesus called other earthly women?

Consider Jesus's words to Mary:

- ❑ *John 2:4 And Jesus said to her, "**Woman**, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come."*
- ❑ *John 19:26 When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, "**Woman**, behold, your son!"*

Now consider Jesus's words to other women:

- ❑ *John 4:21 Jesus said to her, "**Woman**, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.*
- ❑ *Luke 13:12 When Jesus saw her, He called her over and said to her, "**Woman**, you are freed from your sickness."*

25:79 If Mary is/was the supernatural Mother of God, why don't Catholics baptize individuals in the name of the Father, Jesus, Mary and Holy Spirit?

- ❑ *Matthew 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the **Father** and the **Son** and the **Holy Spirit**.*

25:80 If Mary is/was the Mother of God, why did Jesus deny Mary's request to talk to Him?

- ❑ *Matthew 12:46 While He was still speaking to the crowds, behold, His mother and brothers were standing outside, seeking to speak to Him. 47 Someone said to Him, "Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You." 48 But Jesus answered the one who was telling Him and said, "**Who is My mother and who are My brothers?**" 49 And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, "Behold My mother and My brothers! 50 **For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.**"*

25:81 Doesn't Matthew 12 put Mary on par with other believers? And even then, isn't she only on par with other believers if she does the will of God?

25:82 If Mary was the supernatural Mother of God and the one who provides comfort and other blessings such as protection, why is the Bible silent on that aspect of Mary but does tell us - in both the Old and New Testaments - that angels will do such things?

- ❑ *Psalms 91:11 For He will give His angels charge concerning you, To guard you in all your ways.*
- ❑ *Hebrews 1:14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?*
- ❑ *Luke 4:10 for it is written, 'He will command His angels concerning You to guard You,'*

25:83 Jesus mentioned He would send a helper/comforter/advocate (Holy Spirit), but never said there would be a supernatural comforter in addition to Holy Spirit, with one exception per question 25:82 - ministering angels.

- i. The person who people go to first for comfort and help shows who they have the most faith or trust in. Isn't Mary, not Holy Spirit, the comforter who the Catholic church teaches that people should go to first, and who many/most Catholics do go to first?
- ii. If Mary was to play the dominant role as a helper and comforter, isn't it surprising this critical role of Mary is not even mentioned in the Bible? But Holy Spirit in these roles is clearly mentioned?

- ❑ *John 16:7 But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, **the Helper** will not come to you; but if I go, I **will send Him** to you.*
- ❑ *Acts 9:31 So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and **in the comfort of the Holy Spirit**, it continued to increase.*

25:84 If Mary was the supernatural Mother of God and the one who provides comfort, why didn't Jesus cry out to Mary instead of Father God when dying on the cross? Or at least call out to both Mary and Father God?

- ❑ *Matthew 27:46 About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"*

25:85 In the early church, Holy Spirit provided God's comfort. Believers prayed directly to God. Doesn't that show Mary was not front and center? And that while Mary was a person blessed to give birth to Jesus, she was otherwise no different than other believers?

Ark of the New Covenant

Another title attributed to Mary is she is the Ark of the New Covenant. In the Old Testament, the Ark housed the presence of God. In a similar way, Mary housed baby Jesus - i.e. God - in her womb. As a result, Mary is seen by the Roman Catholic church as the Ark of the New Covenant.

When a person is born again, both Holy Spirit and Jesus are in and with us.

- ❑ *Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but **Christ lives in [en] me**; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.*
- ❑ *Matthew 28:20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, **I am with [meta] you always**, even to the end of the age.*
- ❑ *John 14:17 that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and **will be in [en] you**.*
- ❑ *John 14:16 I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be **with [meta] you** forever;*

25: Peter and Mary

25:86 Given Jesus and Holy Spirit are both in [en] and with [meta] all born-again believers at this very minute, wouldn't it be more accurate to say that - as of right now, today - each believer alive on earth is an Ark of the New Covenant than it is to say Mary is the Ark of the New Covenant when she's in heaven with Jesus? If not, why not?

Co-Redemptrix

Another title sometimes attributed to Mary is a Co-Redemptrix alongside Christ. In 2019, Pope Francis rightfully said it was foolish to think of Mary as Co-Redemptrix. And yet, the notion of Mary being a Co-Redemptrix remains in some Catholic circles. For those who believe this title has merit, I have four questions.

25:87 When someone is a co-author, co-producer or co-coach, there is an inherent equivalence in their role. Mary never had her body mangled to pay the penalty for the sins of humanity, never shed her blood, never died on the cross, and was not resurrected. She was never referred to as the Messiah or Savior. Besides giving birth and caring for Jesus in His younger years, what specific role did Mary play that warrants calling her our redeemer?

25:88 When Jesus told His disciples to partake of the bread and wine to remember Jesus, why didn't Jesus make it clear that Mary should also be remembered if she was His Co-Redemptrix?

❑ *Luke 22:19 And when He had taken some bread and 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." 20 And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.*

25:89 When Roman Catholics take communion, Jesus is sacrificed in an unbloody manner. If Mary was truly the Co-Redemptrix, why isn't she sacrificed as part of communion alongside Jesus?

25:90 If Mary is to be considered a Co-Redemptrix due to her close relationship with Jesus, isn't there an even stronger case to be made that both Father God and Holy Spirit should be Co-Redemptrix ahead of Mary? If not, why not? (And no, I do not believe they are. I only say this to make a point.)

Mary the Creation

Dr. Scott Hahn is a Catholic scholar who converted to Roman Catholicism in 1986. Dr. Hahn gave the first annual Rosary Shrine Lecture (16 March 2018) at Holy Rosary Shrine in Belsize Park, London. His remarks are found on YouTube at the link: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dn1tWuIoZsg. Starting at ~11 minutes, Dr. Hahn states the following about Mary:

*"She is in fact the **masterpiece of Christ**, the **redemptive artist**. What do I mean? Well, all of us are works in progress. Christ is the artist of my redemption and yours. And we entrust ourselves to Him. But if **we wanted to figure out how perfect His redemptive work was, we wouldn't see the perfection on any of us. But we would see it, as I mentioned before, in her.** And so, if you go to an art exhibit, a*

gallery, where you have an exhibition of a **famous painter**, all of his work. And if this artist happened to show up, **he wouldn't feel threatened or slighted in the least if instead of staring at him, you were looking at all of his works and spending the most time appreciating his masterpiece.** Just like every artist wants to really devote his talent and his time and energy to one great work, so the **Blessed Virgin Mary does not detract from the work of Christ.** She refracts the light of the world more perfectly than anyone. So the model disciple that we can all imitate, the Mother of God that we can see, as the one who bore Jesus to the world, and the masterpiece of Jesus Christ, the artist of our redemption.”

Mary had an important and no doubt difficult role in being the earthly mother to Jesus. Mary was obedient and was willing to suffer the social consequences of being pregnant while not being married. Wonderful. However, Mary was not perfect.

1. Mary questioned God and expressed doubt when told she would be pregnant with Jesus.
 - ❑ *Luke 1:30 The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. 31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus ... 34 **Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?”**”*

2. Mary asked Jesus to deal with the wine at the wedding, a less than ideal time as Jesus’s hour had not yet come.
 - ❑ *John 2:3 When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, “They have no wine.” 4 And Jesus said to her, “**Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come.**”*

3. Mary left Jerusalem without 12-year-old Jesus before returning to find Him 3 days later.
 - ❑ *Luke 2:43 and as they were returning, after spending the full number of days, the **boy Jesus stayed behind** in Jerusalem. But His **parents were unaware** of it, 44 but supposed Him to be in the caravan, and **went a day’s journey**; and they began looking for Him among their relatives and acquaintances. 45 When they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem looking for Him. 46 Then, **after three days they found Him** in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. 47 And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers. 48 When they saw Him, they were astonished; and His mother said to Him, “Son, why have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You.” 49 And He said to them, “**Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father’s house?**” 50 **But they did not understand** the statement which He had made to them.*

- 25:91 Mary, the Catholic Mother of God, didn’t understand what Jesus was saying. Isn’t that surprising if Mary is truly the Mother of God, not just the earthly mother of Jesus?

25: Peter and Mary

After Mary was born again resurrection Sunday evening (Chapter 6), one scripture refers to Mary's Christian walk - she was praying with ~120 others.

- *Acts 1:14 These all with one mind **were continually devoting themselves to prayer**, along with the women, and **Mary the mother of Jesus**, and with His brothers. 15 At this time Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of **about one hundred and twenty persons** was there together), and said,*

25:92 Prayer is a cornerstone of Christianity. In terms of modeling that aspect, Mary being in that prayer meeting is great. But ~120 others were also praying. In terms of Mary being the perfect role model of a disciple - a masterpiece in Dr. Hahn's words - is there anything in the above scriptures or any other New Testament scriptures that identifies Mary as being a better disciple than any of the other ~120 who were gathered? If so, what?

25:93 Followers of Christ are commanded to do many things. Various signs will indicate one is a believer. However, there is no mention of Mary doing any of the following:

1. sharing the gospel;
2. giving financially;
3. helping widows or orphans;
4. casting out demons;
5. healing the sick;
6. cleansing the lepers;
7. raising the dead;
8. forgiving and loving her enemies;
9. taking communion to remember what Jesus did; or
10. making disciples and baptizing them in water.

25:94 In terms of role models, Paul shared the gospel with incredible commitment and zeal, was beaten and imprisoned, stoned and left for dead, and was eventually martyred. Isn't he more of a role model than Mary? If we look at what the Bible teaches, how can we consider Mary the masterpiece of a disciple? The role model that we are to follow?

Romans 1:25 reveals one of my concerns for Catholics who agree with Dr. Hahn.

- *Romans 1:25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen*

25:95 Jesus is the creator; Mary is the creation. Dr. Hahn indicated Jesus would not mind us spending more time with His masterpiece which means less time is spent with Jesus. Doesn't that directly contradict the warning in Romans 1:25? One may argue that Mary is not a creature as per Romans 1:25, but isn't that playing with semantics? Isn't the principle the key? According to the Bible, I think Jesus would mind a great deal if we took our focus off Him and put undue attention on any of His creations. God is to be front and center, not in the background or off to the sidelines.

- 25:96 Dr. Hahn's teachings and other Catholic teachings say the Catholic faith does not worship Mary or anyone else other than God. It reminds me of Hamlet where Shakespeare writes: "*The lady doth protest too much methinks*". Claims are also commonly made that none of the prayers and activities involving Mary or deceased saints, statues and shrines, traditions etc. take away from Jesus. My question is: How can they not take away from Jesus? Without much effort, I found 85 references in the Bible telling us to seek God, but not one scripture stating we're to set our eyes on Mary or any other deceased saint. Doesn't that alone give reason to question the wisdom of going to Mary?
- 25:97 When you think of Dr. Hahn's and other teachings, what do you believe?
- i. Does the focus on Mary, on other deceased saints and the many traditions involving priests a) take away from, b) have no effect on, or c) increase one's focus on Father God, Jesus and Holy Spirit?
 - ii. By going to Mary and other deceased saints first, aren't God's creations being given attention and glory meant for our Creator?
 - iii. In other words, do these activities give all glory to God as required by the Bible?
- 25:98 Consider a married couple. Instead of spending time with his wife, the husband spent most of his time communicating with her mother who would in turn communicate with her daughter/his wife. What would that relationship look like? I think there might be a permanent dip in the couch from all his nights sleeping there ... alone.

Capital "M" Mother of God, or small 'm' mother of God.

As mentioned before, Catholic teachings state the Catholic church believes Mary is a creation of God, and that she is the earthly, small 'm' mother of Jesus. However, since Jesus is God, Mary also warrants being viewed as the capital 'M' Mother of God.

- 25:99 I see how the logic is created, but even if I were to buy into the logic (which I don't), why capitalize the 'M' in mother? By capitalizing the 'M', doesn't doing so effectively give Mary a divine status? If not, then why doesn't the Roman Catholic church always - as in always - keep the 'm' small and say something like *'Mary, the earthly mother of God Jesus'* to clarify she is not God, but Jesus was? Why take the chance of influencing others to think Mary is God or God-like when she isn't?

As mentioned in Chapter 1, when I was pondering this issue of Mary being the Mother of God, Holy Spirit reminded me of Matthew 22.

- ☐ *Matthew 22:41 ... the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question: 42 "What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?" They said to Him, "The son of David." 43 He said to them, "Then how does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying, 44 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Until I put Your enemies beneath Your feet"'? 45 **If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his son?**" 46 No one was able to answer Him a word, nor did anyone dare from that day on to ask Him another question.*

25: Peter and Mary

Dr. Hahn and others view Mary as a masterpiece creation of God. We all have our views on what is a masterpiece but let me go back one more time to the question I asked in Chapter 1.

1:19 My related question is this. Mary is a creation of God. If God created Mary, how could Mary be the Mother of God? In other words, how can Mary be the Mother of the One who created her?

25:100 As a result, isn't calling Mary the capital 'M' Mother of God a major misrepresentation and exaggeration of who Mary was and is today - which is the mother of earthly Jesus?

At the end of the day, each Roman Catholic must personally decide if he or she believes Mary:

1. is God;
2. is not God but has been delegated appropriate authority and given power that enables her to effectively function in a God-like role such that she can deliver on the various things attributed to her including the 15 promises of the rosary; or
3. was human like the rest of us, is currently in heaven with other saints, and is not able to deliver on the various blessings and promises attributed to Mary by Roman Catholic teachings.

25:101 If you're Roman Catholic and believe Mary is not God, and you have no concrete Biblical evidence that shows Mary was delegated authority and given power to be able to deliver on all the promises in the rosary and elsewhere, then isn't Mary simply a human per point 3 above? And don't the various titles given to Mary represent major exaggerations of who Mary was, and is today? And don't those exaggerations, associated accolades, and statues of Mary:

- i. dishonor Mary in a massive way: and
- ii. serve to elevate Mary and reduce Jesus in a major way?

Types and Shadows of Mary

Catholic teachings leading to many of the titles given to Mary are primarily driven by types and shadows in the Old Testament. Types and shadows are a person, event or thing in the Old Testament that foreshadows something significant that would happen later on and be recorded in the New Testament. The bronze serpent made by Moses, for instance, was a foreshadowing of Jesus's death on the cross.

- *Numbers 21:6 The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died ... 8 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a standard; and it shall come about, that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, he will live." 9 And Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on the standard; and it came about, that if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived.*

25:102 There was considerable foreshadowing in the Old Testament that support titles given to Jesus such as God, Savior and Messiah. One key difference between Mary and Jesus, however, is that - unlike Jesus - I don't see any scriptures in the New Testament that **specifically** and clearly confirm Mary's many titles in the Roman Catholic faith beyond Mary being a virgin who was blessed when she became the earthly mother of Jesus. Isn't that difference between Jesus and Mary an extremely massive issue?

25:103 And isn't it significant that while Paul proved Jesus was the Christ by looking at Old Testament scriptures, Paul was absolutely silent on Mary?

- ❑ *Acts 18:28 for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.*

The Great Exchange and Mary

Chapter 6 of **CEASED?** discusses some, but not all, of the many blessings received when we're born again. Some blessings are in Figure 6:1, the Great Exchange, on pages 106-108. Figure 6:1 is reproduced on the next page but has been amended to exclude scriptural references. Figure 25:3 is my attempt at creating a comparable summary for Mary based on the New Testament scriptures referencing her (pages 380-386). I didn't include potential references to Mary claimed by Catholic scholars in the Old Testament. If they aren't clearly confirmed in the New Testament such that a layperson can see them, I fail to see the value of including them.

25:104 When we consider Figure 6:1 and Figure 25:3 and everything else about Mary and Jesus, what New Testament scriptures give reason to take our eyes off Jesus and put them on Mary?

25:105 If the argument supporting Mary's elevated status is that we need to view Mary as she is seen and foreshadowed in the Old Testament, how valid or reliable are the foreshadowings in the Old Testament if they aren't confirmed in the New Testament?

To illustrate the difference between Mary and Jesus, consider Isaiah 53:7 - Jesus the lamb.

- ❑ *Isaiah 53:7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth.*

25:106 The New Testament refers to Jesus as the lamb 30 times. Not one New Testament verse confirms, clearly states or specifically connects Mary to Old Testament types and shadows such that Mary should unquestionably be viewed as the capital 'M' Mother of God, Spouse of the Spirit, Queen of Heaven, Queen of all Saints, Second Eve, Ark of the New Covenant, Mother of the Church etc. Not one. If these titles were valid, isn't it awfully surprising not to see any of these clearly confirmed?

Figure 25:3 Our Exchange with Mary

What happened to Mary?	What happened for us?
1. Gave birth/ looked after Jesus ❖ Matthew 1:23 ❖ Luke 2:7	Blessed to have our Savior born and cared for as a child
2. With Jesus when crucified ❖ John 19:27	Unknown, if any
3. Prayed with a group of ~120 ❖ Acts 1:14	Unknown, if any
4. No mention after Pentecost	Unknown, if any

Figure 6:1 The Great Exchange with Jesus

(without scripture references)

What happened to Jesus?	What happened for us?
1. Enslaved in human flesh; earthly living challenges	Blessings in heavenly places
2. Tempted by devil	Works of devil destroyed for us Ability to resist/be free from sinning
3. Sold for price of a slave	Bought with blood of Jesus
4. Surrendered	Given spiritual authority
5. Captured due to sins of world	Delivered from sins of the world
6. Despised, shamed, tormented, mocked	God's glory, love, peace
7. Rejected by many Jews; abandoned by disciples	Acceptance/fellowship with God
8. Fulfilled law / made a curse	Free of the law; saved by grace
9. Did not sin; took on our sins	Freed from the penalty of our sins; forgiven, made righteous
10. Took our sorrows and griefs	Gladness and joy
11. Body was mangled	By His stripe(s), healed us
12. Forsaken/separated from God	Adopted as a child of God Christ in us Holy Spirit in us; leads us
13. Died thankless, cruel death	Eternal life/gift of salvation
14. Died to tear the veil	Direct access to God any time
15. Died in total poverty; nothing of earthly value left	Abundant life Heir of God/Joint heir with Jesus Citizen of heaven

To Recap Mary So Far

When we consider all the New Testament verses involving Mary, we find:

- ❖ The New Testament has many verses confirming Jesus is the Lamb, Messiah, Savior etc.
- ❖ No New Testament scripture **specifically** and **clearly** confirms Mary as having any form of elevated role beyond being the earthly mother of Jesus.

- ❖ God did not communicate with Mary directly but through an angel, an angel she feared.
- ❖ No person treated or spoke about Mary in a special way after the cross.
- ❖ No one came to Mary for prayer, guidance, a miracle such as a healing or a prophetic word, or help of any kind before, during, or after Jesus's earthly ministry. When Jesus turned water into wine at the wedding, Mary noticed the problem and initiated action. But no one came to her asking for help on the lack of wine.
- ❖ After the gospels, there is 1 reference to Mary and ~579 references to Jesus.
- ❖ Mary's spoken words are identified in 6 different situations. None of them indicate Mary is anything beyond an ordinary woman used by God wonderfully and importantly.
- ❖ Mary didn't die on the cross for us, shed no blood for us, and wasn't resurrected for us.
- ❖ The Bible does not say to remember Mary in any unique way, including communion, other than she had a very unique role.

25:107 Isn't there a rather big chasm between what the Bible teaches about Mary, and how Mary is viewed by the Roman Catholic church?

MARY: EXCESS PRAISE OR ANOTHER GOD, ANOTHER GODHEAD?

When did Exalting of Mary Begin

Starting on page 356 of **CEASED?**, I included several items referred to as inventions of the Catholic church. Here's a partial list of items referencing Mary.

6. Beginning of the exaltation of Mary, the term "Mother of God" first applied to her by the Council of Ephesus (431 AD)
11. Prayers directed to Mary, dead saints and angels, about (600)
24. The Rosary, mechanical praying with beads, invented by Peter the Hermit (1090)
35. The Ave Maria (Hail Mary) (part of last ½ finished 50 years later) (1508)
40. Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, proclaimed by Pope Pius IX (1854)
44. Assumption of the Virgin Mary (bodily ascension into heaven shortly after her death), proclaimed by Pope Pius XII (1950)
45. Mary proclaimed Mother of the Church, by Pope Paul VI (1965)

25:108 Don't the above pieces of information show a progression of the role of Mary? Don't they explain how Mary could evolve from a person who was part of a ~120-person prayer group in Acts 1:14-15 to the exalted, God-like person she is portrayed to be within the Roman Catholic church today? And thus, doesn't all the information on Mary provide more reasons to be concerned about the reliability of other Roman Catholic church teachings that aren't supported by the Bible?

25: Peter and Mary

25:109 Furthermore, if you're Roman Catholic, can you see why Protestants such as myself see Mary as blessed because she is the earthly mother of Jesus, but that virtually all the other titles bestowed on Mary are an exaggeration, and do not honor Mary but dishonor her?

25:110 When we consider Mary:

- i. does one's view come back to what is one's authority - the Bible or Roman Catholic church teachings? and
 - ii. if your ultimate authority is Roman Catholic church teachings, are you 100% convinced Jesus will agree with you when you come face to face with Him when you die or when He returns?
- ❑ *John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

Another Jesus. Another God. Another Godhead?

Individuals of the Mormon and JW faiths have a different Jesus and a different god than the Jesus and God of the Bible. These faiths claim they have the true Bible, and the true teachings. They ignore evidence of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Codex Sinaiticus that show the underlying Hebrew and Greek has not changed in any material way, and that the Protestant Bible hasn't been changed. They ignore other evidence such as Ivan Panin's work, and they fail to provide evidence showing their Bible is the only true Bible. The main reason for ignoring evidence is their blinding loyalty to their beliefs, beliefs typically gained from their parents. To that end, I wonder what % of current beliefs of Protestants and Catholics are based primarily on what we have been told with little serious, independent study and validation.

The majority of people in the world believe in a god or gods that are not true. Do we have that issue in regards to Roman Catholic teachings on Mary? If we examine the 15 promises of the rosary on page 375, who but God could deliver on these incredible promises? The same website showing the 15 promises of the rosary - www.themostholysrosary.com - also reveals Mary grants seven graces for those who meditate on her tears and sorrows. I copied this on June 3, 2020. Formatting is mine.

*The Blessed Virgin **Mary grants seven graces** to the souls who **honor her daily** by **saying seven Hail Mary's** and **meditating on her tears and dolors (sorrows)**. The devotion was passed on by St. Bridget.*

HERE ARE THE SEVEN GRACES:

1. **I will grant peace** to their families.
2. **They will be enlightened** about the divine mysteries.
3. **I will console them** in their pains and **I will accompany them in their work**.
4. **I will give them** as much as they ask for as long as it does not oppose the adorable will of my divine Son or the sanctification of their souls.
5. **I will defend them in their spiritual battles** with the infernal enemy and **I will protect them** at every instant of their lives.
6. I will **visibly help them at the moment of their death**, they will see the face of their Mother.
7. **I have obtained from my divine Son, that those who propagate this**

devotion to my tears and dolors, will be taken directly from this earthly life to eternal happiness since all their sins will be forgiven and my Son and I will be their eternal consolation and joy.

SEVEN SORROWS

1. *The prophecy of Simeon. (St. Luke 2:34, 35)*
2. *The **flight into Egypt.** (St. Matthew 2:13, 14)*
3. *The **loss of the Child Jesus in the temple.** (St. Luke 2: 43-45)*
4. *The meeting of Jesus and Mary on the Way of the Cross.*
5. *The Crucifixion.*
6. *The taking down of the Body of Jesus from the Cross.*
7. *The burial of Jesus.*

25:111 Mary, not God, is front and center in the 15 promises of the rosary and the 7 graces. Mary gives major supernatural blessings to those who serve and honor her, who meditate on her sorrows, and who are devoted to her and the rosary. If that isn't evidence of Mary being viewed as God, what is it?

25:112 Why aren't Catholics celebrating Jesus and all God has done for us instead of spending time on Mary's tears and sorrows? Why is Mary still crying over the fact that Joseph, herself and Jesus had to flee to Egypt? Why is Mary still in sorrow after more than 2,000 years - more than 730,000 days - since she and Joseph left 12-year-old Jesus behind for 3 days in Jerusalem? Jesus wasn't fazed back then. No one in the New Testament - including Peter and Paul - was meditating on Mary's sorrows. So why are Roman Catholics dwelling on her sorrows today? And getting blessed for doing so?

25:113 If Mary is to be our role model and dwelling on sorrows forever is an example of how we're to live our lives, then shouldn't every parent be weeping their entire life over mistakes made in parenting our children?

- ❑ *Romans 15:13 Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

25:114 Isn't this daily looking back and focusing on Mary a form of spiritual hijacking and/or bondage by keeping the eyes of Roman Catholics on Mary, and off of Jesus?

Personal Relationship

God created human beings for relationship with Him. After creating Adam and Eve, God walked and talked with them in the garden. God also spoke directly or indirectly through angels to many others including Noah, Abraham, Moses, Elijah, David, Daniel, Mary, Joseph and Saul/Paul.

Sin separated humans from God, but God provided a solution - Jesus's shed blood, death and resurrection. When Jesus died on the cross, the veil in the temple separating God from the ordinary person was torn. We can now have direct access to God. When John rested his head on Jesus's chest, it foreshadowed the Christian walk. Jesus, the Prince of Peace, is right here for each one of us to *'lay our heads on*

His shoulder'.

From the moment we're born again, we can have an intimate relationship with God where Holy Spirit comes in [en] us. Jesus is with and in us. God is to be front and center in our lives. We are to seek God with no one in between. We're to glorify God, and only God, in all we say and do.

A commonly used visual representation of a believer's relationship with God is to think of a glass jar. When God is front and center, this relationship jar is filled with living water. Other people are to be in our lives, but God is to be our first priority followed by family, then others. When people or things in our lives are put ahead of God - Father God, Jesus and Holy Spirit - they effectively steal God's space by displacing some of the living water in our God relationship jar, akin to what happens if we drop stones into a jar of regular water. In other words, God gets pushed out of our relationship with Him when other people and things take some of God's rightful place in our lives.

25:115 Mary, deceased saints, graven images, priests and the Pope have major roles in the lives of Catholics. Aren't they displacing the presence of God in '*God relationship jars*'?

BUT MARY HAS BLESSED ME

There are 2 spiritual kingdoms on earth, God's and satan's. All false religions are part of satan's kingdom. In spite of people pursuing false gods, our one and true God can and does send rain and blessings to both those who are in His kingdom, and those who are in satan's kingdom.

- *Matthew 5:44 But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes **His sun to rise on the evil and the good**, and **sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.***

Individuals from false religions speak highly of their god(s) or goddesses, and of the benefits they receive. Members of false religions make claims of being blessed by their god(s). And they may be. After all, satan and his demons have supernatural powers including speaking to people such as he did with the prophets of Baal. These evil spirits can give words/information such as insights into things of the world. Evil spirits can impact bodies as evidenced by various people in the Bible suffering from afflictions and who were healed when demons were cast out. Consider Job who satan afflicted with boils. If satan simply left Job and ended the affliction, wouldn't this have brought an '*instant, miraculous healing*'?

25:116 satan is the father of lies. He is evil and hates people. He distracts people from the truth in many ways including making a sin-filled life look desirable. Whatever it takes to keep people from the truth of Jesus and His Word, satan will do it. We should recognize not all '*blessings*' on earth are from God. Think of people who are rich or famous, living the good life but are on the road to hell. Don't you think satan may help some get richer, more famous and live an even '*better*' life by giving them thoughts or information they couldn't know in the natural? And wouldn't satan and his

demons try to influence them to believe lies such as they don't need God, or they have already found the true god - when they haven't?

- ❑ *2 Corinthians 11:14 No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.*

When individuals attribute blessings to Mary, such blessings could be from God. However, could they also be from satan and his demons? Consider my experience.

My Experience with a Psychic

I loved my father a great deal. Soon after he died, I went to see a psychic. Even though I was not born again, I knew in my knower I shouldn't go. But I did. Before entering the psychic's house, I had been told to list questions about anyone I wanted to get information. I wrote down some questions about my dad and my cousin who had also passed away. The psychic knew nothing in advance. After pleasantries, I sat down. She started by describing two spirits that appeared behind me. Her description of their physical appearances closely resembled my dad and my cousin. Information shared by the psychic was private to Dad and I, or to my cousin and I. No one else could have known. I was shocked. The psychic was an extremely nice lady who said she loved to help people. I felt comforted. A couple of days later, however, I just knew what I witnessed was not of God. Later on, when I understood spiritual warfare and the demonic realm a bit better, I gained an entirely different perspective. The two spirits were demons and this precious woman was simply a pawn in the hands of the demonic world. What looked and felt so good was simply a sinister plan of the enemy, evil that was disguised and manifesting in 'goodness'.

At His own initiative, God caused deceased saints Samuel, Moses and Elijah to appear with a very specific purpose.

- ❑ *1 Samuel 28:13 The king said to her, "Do not be afraid; but what do you see?" And the woman said to Saul, "I see a divine being coming up out of the earth." 14 He said to her, "What is his form?" And she said, "An old man is coming up, and he is wrapped with a robe." And Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and did homage.*
- ❑ *Matthew 17:1 Six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves. 2 And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. 3 And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him.*

When Roman Catholics see manifestations of Mary such as at Medjugorje or Lady Fatima in 1917, such manifestations are either from God or from satan. The Bible doesn't say believers will see manifestations of loved ones or any deceased saints. Nor does God's Word say we will have contact with deceased saints including Mary. This may happen as God can do anything. However, when God did send messages through one of His creations, He typically sent angels.

- ❑ *Psalms 91:11 For He will give His angels charge concerning you, To guard you in all your ways. 12 They will bear you up ... That you do not strike your*

foot against a stone.

- ❑ *Hebrews 1:14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?*

God's Word also forewarns us that while we're to cast out demons, we're also not to turn to individuals utilizing demons for their benefit.

- ❑ *Leviticus 19:31 Do not turn to mediums or spiritists; do not seek them out to be defiled by them. I am the Lord your God.*
- ❑ *Deuteronomy 18:10 There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer. 11 or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. 12 For whoever does these things is detestable to the Lord; and because of these detestable things the Lord your God will drive them out before you.*
- ❑ *2 Kings 21:6 He made his son pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft and used divination, and dealt with mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the sight of the Lord provoking Him to anger.*

25:117 Our eyes are to be on Jesus, our mediator, friend, Lord, and Savior. We're to spend time alone with Him in our secret place, to read His Word, and to give all glory to God. Who do manifestations of Mary and other deceased saints tend to draw people closer to first:

- i. to Mary and other deceased individuals; or
- ii. to Jesus?

25:118 Would satan want such manifestations to occur if they would help draw people's attention away from Jesus?

25:119 If one contends these manifestations are truly of God, on what Biblical grounds are such claims justifiable?

If you're Roman Catholic, I understand my suggestions that manifestations of Mary/Marian/Fatima are demonic in nature will be very upsetting to many. But please consider the evidence. Do your own search for Bible scriptures that show these apparitions and ongoing manifestations of Mary are of God. And if these supernatural manifestations aren't of God, doesn't that mean they have to be from the kingdom of darkness? That's not something I say lightly because I recognize Mary has a special place in Roman Catholic hearts. She has a place in my heart too, but only as the earthly mother of Jesus. If you think she is more than that, I encourage you to go back and read all the New Testament scriptures on Mary starting on page 380 of **CEASED?**.

It may be helpful to remember the majority of people in this world don't believe in the Jesus of the Bible. So many of these people are wonderful, loving and kind people. They are devoted to their god(s) and/or goddess(es). But they are deceived. It breaks my heart to talk to them and hear them speak of their faith, and see their passion and devotion to it, when I know they are deceived and their beliefs are wrong. Their god(s) and/or their goddess(es) are false - even though followers may

claim they hear from their god/goddess. This is all from satan's kingdom. It is all demonic. And because of that, shouldn't we speak honestly, with respect and love - to them about the truths of Jesus and His Word, even if doing so might offend them?

CLOSING POINTS TO PONDER

When I first started dating Lori, I wasn't born again. Lori kept talking about having a personal relationship with Jesus. I didn't understand what she meant. Over time, I observed Lori and others talking about their experiences with God. Sometimes He spoke to them through His word. Sometimes a still small voice. Sometimes things would happen in their lives that could only be attributed to God. Over time, I realized God is not a far-off distant being. He is here with [para, meta], in [en], and sometimes upon [epi] His children. When we get to heaven, God's presence will be manifested in ways we can't imagine.

25:120 God wants a relationship with each one of us. Is it more likely that:

- i. God waits until we get to heaven before He has a close, personal, 2-way relationship with us; or
- ii. God wants a close, personal, 2-way relationship with us forever including the rest of our lives here on earth and continuing on into heaven, with no one in between?

25:121 And if God hasn't spoken directly, outside His Word, to anybody since the Bible was written, doesn't that mean He hasn't spoken to a person in over 1,900 years? And if so, how can we sheep know His voice?

- ❑ *John 10:27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; 28 and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.*
- ❑ *Job 33:14 "Indeed God speaks once, Or twice, yet no one notices it.*
- ❑ *Jeremiah 33:3 'Call to Me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know.'*

25:122 The name of Jesus is above all other names. When Protestants such as myself share the Good News and disciple believers, we want the name of Jesus to be exalted at all times. If you're Roman Catholic, can you see why so many non-Catholics like myself struggle with how Mary is exalted as she is, when there's no basis in the New Testament to do so? There are types and shadows in the Old Testament that you can try to argue are a foreshadowing, but without clear confirmation in the New Testament, how valid can these types and shadows be? There may be human logic, church history, church tradition or church teachings that seem to support the views and practices involving Mary, but if they aren't supported clearly by God's Word - again I ask - how reliable can they be?

25:123 If one looks at Mary through the lens of her being a regular human who was wonderfully used by God and nothing more, is there anything in the New Testament that would contradict that view? If so, what is it and why?

Graven Images

Different Ten Commandments

Saints

INTRODUCTION

THERE are several sources of disagreement between Roman Catholics and Protestants. Honoring deceased saints with statues and shrines, differing Ten Commandments, and praying to deceased saints are the three primary topics of disagreement covered in Chapter 26.

1. graven images of deceased saints (page 407);
2. different Ten Commandments (page 409); and
3. praying to deceased saints (page 417).

GRAVEN IMAGES

The Roman Catholic church bought the Crystal Cathedral in 2012, completed a \$72 million restoration, and re-opened it in July 2019. Featuring some 11,000 glass panes, it is apparently a beautiful building. The church has a 1,000-pound crucifix, a hand-painted mosaic of Lady of Guadalupe, and portraits of several deceased saints in the entryway. Relics from Korean, Vietnamese, Mexican and American martyrs as well as Pope John Paul II are encased in an altar. A 2-acre, outdoor shrine is being built in honor of Lady of La Vang. Is all this attention given to deceased saints appropriate? To start, consider that the Bible says all glory is to go to God.

- ❑ *Ephesians 3:20 Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, 21 **to Him be the glory** in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.*

As we saw earlier, King Herod took glory due to God and paid a heavy price.

- ❑ *Acts 12:23 And immediately an angel of the Lord struck **him because he did not give God the glory**, and he was **eaten by worms** and died.*

Three apostles - Paul, Barnabas and Peter - responded quickly and decisively to any glory and accolades that people tried to give them.

- ❑ *Acts 14:12 And they began calling Barnabas, Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. 13 The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds. 14 But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, **they tore their robes and rushed out into the crowd, crying out 15 and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you** and preach the gospel to you that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them.*
- ❑ *Acts 10:25 When Peter entered, Cornelius met him, and fell at his feet and worshiped him. 26 But Peter raised him up, saying, "**Stand up; I too am just a man.**"*

26:1 If Peter, Paul and Barnabas were alive today and saw pictures, shrines, statues or other physical artifacts of them, or in any way dedicated to them, would they want such items:

- i. destroyed; or
- ii. maintained, embellished and increased in number and/or size?

26:2 If Peter, Paul and Barnabas were attending renovation meetings on the portraits, mosaic and the 2-acre shrine in honor of Lady of La Vang for the Crystal Cathedral, would their reaction be i. or ii.?

- i. *"NO! Nothing of the kind is to be built!"*
- ii. *"Awesome, and we must make sure such items are in every village, town and city in the world!"*

26:3 If the likes of Peter, Paul and Barnabas would not support such items, should church leaders today be adding to the collection of millions of pictures, images, statues and other physical images currently in the Roman Catholic church - or destroying the existing ones?

26:4 If statues, shrines and artifacts were wanted by God, why doesn't His Word mention such items should be made to honor the likes of Adam, Eve, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Joseph, David and Solomon from the Old Testament, and Jesus, Mary, Peter, John, John the Baptist, or Paul from the New Testament? God's Word gives no direction to make any statues, shrines or artifacts of any person. In fact, doesn't it say the opposite? So how do we justify all the graven images in the Roman Catholic church today?

If you disagree, consider that when God did want memorials and tributes to be made, they were usually created to serve as reminders of events. Consider Moses and Joshua who played such prominent roles in the Old Testament.

- ❑ *Exodus 16:32 Then Moses said, "This is the word which the Lord commands, 'Let an **omer of it** be kept throughout your generations, that they may see the bread with which I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.'" [AMP]*

26: Ten Commandments, Images, Saints

- *Joshua 4:5 and Joshua said to them ... each of you take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Israel, 6 so that this may be a sign among you; when your children ask later, **‘What do these stones mean to you?’** 7 then you shall say to them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord; when it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. So these stones shall become a memorial for Israel forever.” [AMP]*

In my research, I found some Roman Catholic apologists who acknowledged that God said no graven images were to be made. However, I also usually found they move past this commandment by pointing to the cherubim created for the Ark of the Covenant, to the bronze serpent, and to the statues in Solomon’s temple as justification that graven images can be created and actively used today.

- 26:5 While God gave instructions in the Old Testament for a few images to be made, isn’t it significant God never gave instructions to make graven images of any person?
- 26:6 Do exceptions when God created images for specific purposes give the Catholic church a blanket approval to make millions of graven images of deceased saints? If yes, how?

DIFFERENT TEN COMMANDMENTS

One factor contributing to the controversy is found in the Ten Commandments where the Roman Catholic church has a different list of commandments than do Protestant churches.

Roman Catholic

- 1: No other Gods before Me;
no graven images, likenesses;
do not bow down to, nor worship**
- 2: Do not take Lord’s name in vain
3: Keep the Sabbath
4: Honor Father and Mother
5: Do not kill
6: Do not commit adultery
7: Do not steal
8: Do not bear false witness
- 9: Do not covet neighbor’s wife
10: Do not covet neighbor’s goods**

Protestant

- 1: No other Gods before Me
2: No graven images, likenesses;
do not bow down to, nor worship**
- 3: Do not take Lord’s name in vain
4: Keep the Sabbath
5: Honor Father and Mother
6: Do not kill
7: Do not commit adultery
8: Do not steal
9: Do not bear false witness

Protestants and Roman Catholics both agree verse 3 is the 1st Commandment. We are not to have any other gods in our lives.

- *Exodus 20:1 Then God spoke all these words, saying, 2 “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 3 “You*

shall have **no other gods** before Me.

The Roman Catholic church views 'no carved images and likenesses' in Exodus 20:4-6 as part of the 1st Commandment. Protestants view these verses as representing a separate commandment.

- ❑ Exodus 20:4 "**You shall not make** for yourself **an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath** or in the water under the earth. 5 You **shall not worship them** or serve them ... (NASB)
- ❑ Exodus 20:4 "You shall not make for yourself a **carved image** ... (ESV)
- ❑ Exodus 20:4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any **graven image** ... (KJV)

The next point of disagreement is that the Roman Catholic church splits the issue of coveting in Exodus 20:17 into 2 Commandments - #9 and #10 - while Protestant churches view Exodus 20:17 as only one commandment, the 10th Commandment.

- ❑ Exodus 20:17 "**You shall not covet** your **neighbor's house**; you shall not covet your **neighbor's wife** or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

Deuteronomy 5 also lists the Ten Commandments. Verse 21 deals with coveting and has one different item - field. It also lists the items in a slightly different order.

- ❑ Deuteronomy 5:21 'You shall not covet your **neighbor's wife**, and you shall not desire your **neighbor's house, his field or his male servant or his female servant, his ox or his donkey or anything** that belongs to your neighbor.'

Exodus 20:17

- 1: House
- 2: Neighbor's Wife
- 3: Male Servant
- 4: Female Servant
- 5: Ox
- 6: Donkey
- 7: Anything that is neighbor's

Deuteronomy 5:21

- 1: Neighbor's Wife
- 2: House
- 3: Field**
- 4: Male Servant
- 5: Female Servant
- 6: Ox
- 7: Donkey
- 8: Anything that is neighbor's

- 26:7 Does the order of the items and groups of people suggest a priority? If, for instance, the neighbor's wife was worthy of its own commandment, shouldn't we expect to see 'neighbor's wife' listed first in both Exodus and Deuteronomy?
- 26:8 Given house is the first item in Exodus 20 and neighbor's wife is the first item in Deuteronomy 5, why wouldn't the 9th commandment be about coveting a neighbor's house as opposed to coveting a neighbor's wife?
- 26:9 Does the commandment 'do not covet a neighbor's wife' mean God is less worried about women coveting a neighbor's husband than He is about men coveting a neighbor's wife?
- 26:10 Is coveting a neighbor's husband, parents, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece, or cousin part of the Catholic 9th or 10th Commandment, and why?

26: Ten Commandments, Images, Saints

- 26:11 If the answer to the last two questions is the 9th Commandment which deals with not coveting another person while the 10th Commandment deals with not coveting things, why doesn't Deuteronomy 5 list male servant and female servant immediately after neighbor's wife instead of after house and field? In other words, why are people and things intermixed in both Deuteronomy 5 and Exodus 20?
- 26:12 The Roman Catholic church teaches a key reason to have the 9th Commandment of *'not coveting a wife'* is to emphasize we aren't to engage in sexual sin. No question, but isn't the issue of sexual immorality already covered with the Commandment that we're not to commit adultery, a commandment Jesus took to a new level in the New Testament?
- ❑ *Matthew 5:28 but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*
- 26:13 Doesn't the intermixing of the items and the different items in the two lists in Exodus and Deuteronomy support the notion of one commandment - do not covet - than it does to have two commandments on coveting? If not, why not?
- 26:14 Consider Romans 7:7-8 and 13:9. Don't these scriptures show that coveting is a single principle telling us not to covet anyone, or anything?
- ❑ *Romans 7:7 What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; **for I would not have known about coveting** if the Law had not said, "**You shall not covet.**" 8 But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in **me coveting of every kind**; for apart from the Law sin is dead.*
 - ❑ *Romans 13:9 For this, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, **You shall not covet,**" ...*
- 26:15 If you were sitting on a translation committee for a new version of the Bible discussing the Ten Commandments, would you recommend:
- 'A': combining Exodus 20:3-4 into one commandment and splitting Exodus 20:7 into two coveting commandments; or
- 'B': treating Exodus 20:3, 20:4 and 20:17 as three separate commandments?
- | <u>'A'</u> | <u>'B'</u> |
|---|---|
| 1: No other Gods before Me;
no graven images, likenesses;
do not bow down to, nor worship | 1: No other Gods before Me
2: No graven images, likenesses;
do not bow down to, nor worship |
| 9: Do not covet neighbor's wife
10: Do not covet neighbor's goods | 10: Do not covet |

If you choose 'A', what is your Biblical justification?

About Making Images and Likenesses

Images and likenesses, in my view, are a big deal. At the beginning of this section, I referred to the changes to the Crystal Cathedral. Recall Exodus 20:4 which states we're not to make an idol or any likeness of things in heaven or on earth.

- ❑ *Exodus 20:4 "You **shall not make** for yourself **an idol, or any likeness** of what is in **heaven above or on the earth** beneath or in the water under the earth. (NASB)*
- ❑ *Exodus 20:4 "You shall not make for yourself **a carved image**, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. (ESV)*

Isaiah reaffirms this command of God where no praise is to go to graven images.

- ❑ *Isaiah 42:8 I am the Lord, that is My name; **I will not give My glory to another, Nor My praise to graven images.***

The English word praise is derived from the Hebrew word 'tehillah' (H8416] which Thayer defines in part as 'praise, song or hymn of praise, adoration, thanksgiving, act of general or public praise, renown or fame'.

26:16 When we look at a statue, spend time mulling on a statue and the person it represents, speak or pray to a statue and/or the person it represents, or give thanks to the person the statue represents, aren't we giving praise? If not, why not, and what 'is' going on?

Many Protestants read scriptures such as Exodus 20:4 and Isaiah 42:8 and think any statues, shrines or other artifacts of deceased saints or God Himself violates the 2nd commandment. Many of us see all of them as objects of idolatry.

Catholic teachings disagree, and thus the Roman Catholic church has created and displays millions of statues, shrines and artifacts of individuals in the Vatican and the ~220,000 parishes around the world. As previously mentioned, a key reason cited in Catholic teachings that try to justify such items starts with the fact God had His followers make cherubim statues for the Holy of Holies for the Ark of the Covenant, various items in the temple built by Solomon, and the bronze serpent.

- ❑ *Exodus 25:18 You shall **make two cherubim** of hammered gold at the two ends of the mercy seat.*
- ❑ *1 Kings 6:35 He carved on it **cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers**; and he overlaid them with gold evenly applied on the engraved work.*
- ❑ *Numbers 21:8 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Make a **fiery serpent** [of bronze] and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten will live when he looks at it."*

The argument continues by stating that since God caused such images to be made, that gives Roman Catholics the right to make images as well.

26:17 The 5th or 6th Commandment says do not kill. However, God killed two believers, Ananias and Sapphira, for not giving all the proceeds from the sale of land. If we use the same logic in regards to justifying the creation of human images, does it hold that since God killed these people for their

26: Ten Commandments, Images, Saints

- sins, we are justified today in killing people who sin? If this extension of logic isn't valid, how is the above logic on graven images valid?
- 26:18 If one still believes we can justify the creation and display of graven images based on what God did, then shouldn't we also be guided by what God actually desired to be made? Such as the omer created through Moses and the altar created through Joshua? And since none of the images, statues or artifacts that God commissioned were of a person or even God Himself, how can Catholics or any believer for that matter justify making and paying attention to graven images of people? Or of God Himself?
- 26:19 The images such as those for the Holy of Holies were made according to specific directions from God. Has God given specific, detailed directions in His Word to the Roman Catholic church for every one of the statues, shrines and artifacts of deceased saints within the Roman Catholic church and the homes of Roman Catholics? And if God hasn't given specific instructions to the Roman Catholic church on their creations, what gives Catholic leaders and lay people confidence that their creations are of God?

Without the death, shed blood and resurrection of Jesus, all believers in current and previous generations would be unclean. All of our deeds would be like a filthy or polluted garment, a filthy rag. It is only because of God's grace and mercy, and what Jesus did for us that we are made clean.

- ❑ *Isaiah 64:6 For all of us have become like one who is **unclean**, And all our righteous deeds are like a **filthy garment** ... (NASB)*
 - ❑ *Isaiah 64:6 For we all have become like one who is [ceremonially] unclean [**like a leper**], And all our deeds of righteousness are like **filthy rags** ... (AMP)*
 - ❑ *Isaiah 64:6 We have all become like one who is **unclean**, and all our righteous deeds are like a **polluted garment** ... (ESV)*
- 26:20 Why exalt any person who, in their own merits and strength, is not clean? Why not give all glory and attention to the One who made you, me and every other believer clean?
- 26:21 If one argues that having items such as statues, images and shrines help draw us closer to Christ in some way, then why didn't God cause this to happen for Biblical men and women such as Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Elijah, Elisha, David, Daniel, John the Baptist or Stephen - the first apostle martyred? And why didn't God make this crystal clear that we are to continue to do so going forward?
- 26:22 The papal ferula is the pastoral staff (akin to a rod or walking stick) used by Popes. At the top, there is a small sculpture of Jesus hanging on a cross. Bishops use crosiers, sticks with a top that is curved and features one or more of a variety of objects. There is no mention in the Bible of a single apostle, including Peter, having a papal ferula, crosier or other such objects. If the early apostles did not use these religious objects, what Biblical basis is there for any leader to use them today?

26:23 Items in the temple were limited, were used for specific purposes that enabled priests to approach God in order to gain temporary atonement for sin. These items were before the cross. Given Jesus is the living sacrifice, and believers are the temple where Holy Spirit resides, hasn't the situation changed from a distant, religious service for a somewhat distant God, to an intimate, personal relationship with God? Isn't the Holy of Holies effectively in each born-again follower of Jesus?

Carved Images

Exodus 20:4 in the NASB translation says we're not to make 'idols'. KJV uses the phrase 'graven image'. The ESV uses the phrase 'carved image'.

- ❑ Exodus 20:4 "You shall not make for **yourself an idol** ... (NASB)
- ❑ Exodus 20:4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any **graven image** ... (KJV)
- ❑ Exodus 20:4 "You shall not make for yourself a **carved image** ... (ESV)

The English words 'idol', 'carved image', and 'graven image' are derived from the Greek word 'pesel' [H6459] which means 'an idol, image or carved image'. Pesel is derived from the Greek word 'pasal' [G6458] which means 'to cut, hew, quarry'. When making a 3-dimensional object such as a statue or shrine, we could find ways to argue today's images are not cut, hewed, quarried or carved. Whatever way we seek to deal with this issue, the reality is they are objects created to be a central part of the Catholic faith, objects that are influencing hundreds of millions of people.

26:24 God never had a statue or shrine made of a person. The Bible does not say believers are to make physical images of any person including Jesus. When a physical image of a person such as Jesus on the papal ferula or a statue of a deceased saint is made, how are Catholic leaders and lay Catholics 100% confident that the making and/or subsequent speaking to or otherwise spending time with such objects isn't an act of disobedience, an act of idolatry, and thus ... an act of sin? And if so, what is the Biblical basis for that confidence?

If you still think graven images are ok, consider Leviticus 26.

- ❑ Leviticus 26:1 You **shall not make for yourselves idols, nor shall you set up for yourselves an image or a sacred pillar, nor shall you place a figured stone in your land to bow down to it; for I am the Lord your God.**

Now consider Deuteronomy 4. When God spoke to His people at Horeb, He gathered them so they would learn to fear God. That's rather attention-getting isn't it? Per verse 12, God only spoke. God did not show His form. The reason God didn't show His form was because if He did show His form, per verses 15 through 19, the people would act corruptly and make graven images.

- ❑ Deuteronomy 4:10 Remember the day you stood before the Lord your God at Horeb, when the Lord said to me, 'Assemble the people to Me, that I may let them hear My words so they **may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth**, and that they may teach their children.' 11 You came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire to the

26: Ten Commandments, Images, Saints

*very heart of the heavens: darkness, cloud and thick gloom. 12 Then the Lord spoke to you from the midst of the fire; **you heard the sound of words, but you saw no form - only a voice.** 13 So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, that is, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone. 14 The Lord commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that you might perform them in the land where you are going over to possess it. 15 “So watch yourselves carefully, **since you did not see any form on the day the Lord spoke to you at Horeb** from the midst of the fire, 16 **so that you do not act corruptly and make a graven image** for yourselves in **the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female,** 17 **the likeness of any animal that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged bird** that flies in the sky, 18 **the likeness of anything that creeps** on the ground, **the likeness of any fish** that is in the water below the earth. 19 **And beware not to lift up your eyes to heaven and see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven,** and be drawn away and **worship them and serve them,** those which the Lord your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven. 20 But the Lord has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, from Egypt, to be a people for His own possession, as today.*

- 26:25 Don't Leviticus 26:1 and Deuteronomy 4 make it pretty darn clear:
- i. God took steps to ensure His people didn't make graven images; and
 - ii. given God doesn't change, doesn't that mean believers are not to make graven images of anything including statues and shrines today? Or am I missing something?

Pictures of Family

Another argument given in support for the existence of Catholic graven images is that because Catholics have pictures and memorabilia of friends and family, Catholics are justified in having stained glass or other forms of graven images of deceased saints, or even God Himself.

- 26:26 Isn't there a significant difference between a picture of a friend or family member, and a picture, statue, or shrine of a deceased person we never knew, and who had no direct involvement with our family?
- 26:27 For those who believe we should treat family pictures the same way we treat graven images, don't we have two basic choices:
- i. take what we believe is right for family pictures and use that to determine what to do with graven images of saints and God; or
 - ii. study what the Bible says about graven images, then use that to help determine what to do for family pictures?
- 26:28 If family pictures is used as justification for the creation of graven images, doesn't that put human reasoning above God's commands?
- 26:29 If the link between family pictures and graven images is that direct, shouldn't the direction be from the Bible to our lives, instead of our lives to the Bible? In other words, is it appropriate to justify actions in our

Christian walk based on what happens in our personal lives or on the personal lives of others? Or should we take what God's Word says, and then apply what God's Word says to our personal lives?

- 26:30 If we try to justify graven images based on the fact we already have pictures and memorabilia of friends and family, I wonder to what extent this view is a heart issue of looking for ways to justify doing what we do and/or justify keeping what we have, as opposed to honoring and obeying God's command not to create such images. And if that is the case, aren't they effectively being used to justify sin?

For what it's worth, I believe graven images are not ok, while pictures of family and friends are very much ok. Pictures of entertainment or sports stars on our walls at home are not ok.

Worshipping Images

God told Moses to create a bronze serpent so that anyone bitten by a serpent could simply look at the bronze serpent and be healed. Later on, however, Hezekiah destroyed the statue because the people were burning incense to it. In other words, they were worshipping it.

- ❑ *Numbers 21:9 And **Moses made a bronze serpent** and set it on the standard; and it came about, that if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived.*
- ❑ *2 Kings 18:4 He removed the high places and broke down the sacred pillars and cut down the Asherah. He also **broke in pieces the bronze serpent** that Moses had made, for until those days the sons of Israel **burned incense to it**; and it was called Nehushtan. [NASB]*
- ❑ *2 Kings 8:14 ... the people of Israel had made **offerings** to it ... [ESV]*

From a starting point of looking at the bronze serpent, a foreshadowing of what Jesus would do on the cross, God's people moved from looking ... to worshipping the serpent by making offerings to it. The words in many Catholic teachings are clear that Catholics are not to worship people, statues or images, and rightfully so. However, how many Catholics have gone from looking to worshipping?

- ❑ *Exodus 20:5 You shall not **worship** them or **serve** them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, (NASB)*
- ❑ *Exodus 20:5 You shall **not bow down** to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, (ESV)*

The English word worship in verse 5 is derived from the Hebrew word 'shachah' [H7812] which Strong's defines in part as to '... bow down ... do reverence ... to stoop ... to worship.'

- 26:31 Many Popes have kneeled before statues of Mary and paid special homage. Many Catholics have kissed the feet of statues of deceased saints which has led to the feet on some of these statues to be worn down over time.

26: Ten Commandments, Images, Saints

Catholics bow down to the Pope.

- i. Aren't these and other acts of adoration and reverence to living and deceased saints a form of worship? If not, why not? And what are they if not acts of worship?
- ii. Are these actions somewhat similar to what was going on in 2 Kings which led to Hezekiah removing the high places, breaking down the sacred pillars and destroying the bronze serpent? And thus, I wonder if God wants Catholics to keep or destroy graven images of any person today. What's your personal vote?

PRAYING TO DECEASED SAINTS

Deceased and Living in One Body

A Roman Catholic argument says Catholics who died and are in heaven are not only aware of what is happening on earth, they can hear audible prayers of living Catholics. Some teachings contend these deceased saints can also hear our thoughts. Moreover, deceased Catholics also want to pray for living Catholics.

The logic behind this perspective is that since all followers of Christ are in one body, and the body is to be united with no divisions, then both deceased and living saints remain in the same Body of Christ today. And as such, deceased and living saints can communicate and help each other.

- ❑ *Romans 12:5 So we, who are many, **are one body in Christ**, and individually members one of another.*
- ❑ *1 Corinthians 12:25 so that there may **be no division in the body**, but that the members may have the same care for one another.*

What's Required

When we pray here on earth, we can think thoughts, pray very quietly, or we can speak out loud. Either way, God hears us. And how can He not? He is God, and Holy Spirit is in [en] us when we're truly born again. When we speak out loud, other people, angels and demonic forces can hear us, but only if they are in our presence or we're talking to another person(s) via some form of technology. Satan and/or one or more of his demons can get a good read on our thoughts not only because they can give us thoughts and see how we respond to them, they can also watch us, listen to us and thereby learn our views, and see our reactions to conversations and events in our lives. However, I can't find any Bible verse indicating deceased saints have any such abilities to give thoughts, observe, or know thoughts of living saints.

26:32 When a person asks another living saint for prayer, there is direct contact either through face-to-face discussion or other means such as telephone, texting, emails, videos or via assorted apps. Isn't it a rather big assumption to believe that deceased saints, even though they are still part of the Body of Christ, can continue to hear prayers of living saints? And know the prayers we're thinking about, or are speaking very quietly? For deceased saints to hear us living saints and know the prayers we're thinking:

- i. wouldn't their heavenly being (spirit and soul at least) need to be

here on earth, and very close to us to hear our words, or if not, wouldn't they need a supernatural ability to hear us if they remain in heaven while we're here on earth; and

- ii. wouldn't they need to have received a supernatural ability to:
 - a. know the prayers we think of but don't speak out loud; and
 - b. know who we are when we pray to them given most deceased individuals have no clue who any of us are; and
 - c. hear not only from one person, but from hundreds, thousands or even millions of people at the same time; and
 - d. simultaneously communicate all these prayers to God?
- iii. If not why not?

26:33 Consider one believer in Los Angeles and another in Brisbane. If two living saints are praying at the same time to the same deceased saint, how can the deceased saint hear both prayers at the same time - unless the deceased saint had God's omnipresent ability to be in more than one place at a time? Where is that found in the Bible?

26:34 I wonder if Holy Spirit ever wonders: *"I'm right here - in [en] and with [meta] you. Why not talk to me? And if you're not aware, I know the prayers you're going to say to Mary and other deceased saints before you say them?"*

26:35 When we ask living saints to pray for us, they will often acknowledge they're doing so. If deceased saints can hear our prayers and know the prayers in our thoughts, then:

- i. shouldn't we be able to hear the saints in heaven speaking to us, and confirming they're praying for us? If not, why is it only a one-way communication?
- ii. I've seen arguments that we can hear deceased saints. Apparitions/visions of deceased saints are cited as examples of deceased saints speaking to us. Consider two things. First, compared to the many trillions of communications flowing annually from living saints to deceased saints, doesn't a very small number of apparitions from deceased saints seem radically disproportionate? Secondly, what's to say such apparitions/visions are not demonic?

❑ *2 Corinthians 11:14 ... for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.*

26:36 There is no indication that any living saints prayed to dead saints after the cross. If praying to deceased saints was Biblical and of much benefit to followers of the resurrected Jesus, wouldn't it be reasonable to expect the Bible to show examples of living saints praying to deceased saints such as:

- i. Stephen while he was being martyred as per Acts 7;
- ii. apostles who were in jail and/or otherwise facing tough times; or
- iii. other believers who personally knew highly regarded disciples such as Stephen or the apostles before they died?

We don't find any examples of such prayers in the Bible.

26: Ten Commandments, Images, Saints

More on this Two-Way Relationship

Consider the last part of 1 Corinthians 12:25.

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 12:25 so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members **may have the same care for one another.***

26:37 If living saints have an ongoing relationship with deceased saints, how do we give the same care to someone in heaven as we do to living neighbors? Do we give money, look after a sick child, or cut their lawn? Do saints in heaven need anything from us? Isn't God meeting their needs?

26:38 Isn't there a dramatic difference between having a relationship with a person living on earth who speaks back to us, and a 'relationship' with another person who has died, is in heaven and we never hear from?

26:39 In Philippians 1, doesn't Paul indicate there is going to be a major difference between our life here on earth and in heaven?

- ❑ *Philippians 1:21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. 22 But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. 23 But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; 24 yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.*

26:40 Paul loved his fellow believers. Is there anything in the New Testament suggesting Paul would continue to pray for, watch over, or keep in contact with the saints after he died? Is there any indication living saints could contact him after he died? Is there one example of another believer in the New Testament who said after the cross they would keep in contact with living saints after they died? If so, I can't find it.

Enhancing our Relationship with Jesus

26:41 Before we ask others to pray for us, should we pray to God first?

- ❑ *Matthew 6:33 But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*
- ❑ *Hebrews 4:16 Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

26:42 Believers are to pray for another. But if we're thinking about asking someone to pray for us, wouldn't it be wise to see if Holy Spirit wants us to ask them before doing so?

- ❑ *Romans 8:14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.*
- ❑ *Matthew 6:9 "Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven ...*

26:43 When we pray to deceased saints instead of directly to Father God, or to Jesus or Holy Spirit who are both in [en] us when we're born again, how do such prayers enhance our personal closeness with God?

26:44 Do such prayers inherently show a lack of trust and faith in God by not going directly to God? And, if so, wouldn't our lack of faith serve to

- displease God instead of please Him?
- ❑ Hebrews 11:6 And **without faith it is impossible to please Him**, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

Heavenly Life for Deceased Saints

Lori's mom, Joy, used to say, "If I am aware of all the problems my family is having, it won't be heaven."

26:45 According to what people who have visited heaven have reported, heaven is an amazing place of worship, joy, peace, fun, enjoyment, rewarding work, grandeur and holiness. Tears, worries, sadness, and all the negative stuff of our earthly lives will be gone. If that is the case, wouldn't many of these prayers to deceased saints from humans living on earth today bring pain and sorrow to these deceased saints, and therefore take away from their enjoyment of heaven? If not, why not?

- ❑ Revelation 21:4 and He will **wipe away every tear from their eyes**; and there will no longer be any death; there **will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain**; the first things have passed away."

Lifting our prayers up

Another piece of the Roman Catholic view justifying praying to deceased saints in heaven is that they believe these deceased saints lift our prayers up to God.

- ❑ Revelation 5:7 And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. 8 When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, **each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints**.

26:46 The bowls the 24 elders hold up contain the prayers of the saints. It begs the question of what do these bowls, 24 elders and prayers actually mean.

- i. Did the 24 elders hear and supernaturally place each prayer in a bowl?
 - ii. Are the prayers placed supernaturally in the bowls and the 24 elders deliver them to God, similar to how a FedEx driver delivers a package from one party to another but knows nothing about the contents of the package, nor has any right to know?
 - iii. Are only the 24 elders involved in this process but no other believers? And if so, don't Catholics need to know the names of these 24 elders so they can pray primarily to the deceased saints who do the actual lifting up of prayers?
 - iv. And if the lifting of prayers is not limited to just 24 elders, but to some other saints (yet not all saints), how does a Catholic know which saints are involved and should be prayed to?
 - v. Or - are the bowls and 24 elders symbolic just as the 7 horns and 7 eyes of the Lamb are viewed by many believers to be symbolic?
- ❑ Revelation 5:6 And I saw ... a Lamb ... having seven horns and seven eyes,

26: Ten Commandments, Images, Saints

Saints in Heaven are more Righteous

Another Catholic argument for praying to deceased saints is based on James 5:16.

- ❑ *James 5:16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. **The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.***

26:47 The Catholic argument states that people in heaven are more righteous than followers of Christ here on earth, and thus their prayers have more impact or clout with God. But aren't followers of Christ all blood-bought children of God washed clean by Jesus's shed blood through His one-time sacrifice on the cross? Aren't we clean in God's eyes now?

26:48 But - if deceased saints have more influence - let me ask again. Why don't we see the early church praying to deceased saints, or see God's Word encouraging us to do so? And how do we deal with the fact that God is no respecter or persons?

- ❑ *Romans 2:11 For God shows no partiality [no arbitrary favoritism; with Him one person is not more important than another]. [AMP]*

Praying to the Deceased in the Old Testament

Consider Deuteronomy 18 and Isaiah 8.

- ❑ *Deuteronomy 18:10 There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, 11 or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or **one who calls up the dead.** 12 For **whoever does these things is detestable to the Lord;** and because of these detestable things the Lord your God will drive them out before you.*

- ❑ *Isaiah 8:19 Someone may say to you, "Let's ask the mediums and those who **consult the spirits of the dead.** With their whisperings and mutterings, they will tell us what to do." **But shouldn't people ask God for guidance? Should the living seek guidance from the dead?** 20 **Look to God's instructions and teachings! People who contradict his word are completely in the dark.** (NLT)*

26:49 God doesn't change. If we do things that contradict His word, we are in the dark. And given God called it detestable in the Old Testament for anyone who called up the dead, wouldn't it still be detestable to try to speak to a deceased person today? If not, why not?

Exalting Any Person

The Bible refers to saints frequently. Paul often writes to the saints.

- ❑ *Acts 9:13 But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to **Your saints at Jerusalem:***
- ❑ *Acts 9:32 ... he came down also to the **saints who lived at Lydda.***
- ❑ *Acts 9:41 ... **and calling the saints and widows,** he presented her alive.*
- ❑ *Acts 26:10... **not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons ...***
- ❑ *Romans 8:27 and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the*

- Spirit is, because He **intercedes for the saints** according to the will of God.*
- Romans 12:13 contributing to the **needs of the saints** ...*
 - Romans 15:25 but now, I am going to Jerusalem **serving the saints.***
 - Romans 15:26 ... contribution for the poor among the **saints in Jerusalem.***
 - 1 Corinthians 1:2 ... at Corinth ... **saints by calling** ...*
 - 2 Corinthians 1:1 ... **with all the saints who are throughout Achaia:***
 - Ephesians 1:1 ... To **the saints who are at Ephesus** ...*
 - Ephesians 4:12 for **the equipping of the saints** for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;*

26:50 Per the above:

- i. aren't all believers to be regarded as saints, and not a select few?
- ii. If only a few are saints as decided by the Catholic church, wouldn't that mean some of Paul's teachings which were addressed to the saints - such as Romans, 1st and 2nd Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians - were limited to the select few saints he addressed his writings to, which excludes virtually everybody alive today including you and me?

26:51 The only criteria I can find in God's Word that defines whether or not a person is a saint is that the person must be born again. I can't find evidence in the Bible supporting the Roman Catholic process and criteria used to determine whether or not a person is a saint? Can you?

26:52 When I raised this issue with a Catholic acquaintance, he admitted all believers are saints. Then he smiled and went on to say the Roman Catholic church has a few "*super saints*". If you're Roman Catholic, do you think Peter and Paul would want to be thought of today as super saints? Didn't Paul say he was the least of all saints? And isn't the notion of a "*super saint*" contrary to scriptures that state all glory is to go to God? And that God is no respecter of persons?

I visited a church where pastors had titles such as the Holy John Doe and the Most Holy James Doe. I was dumbfounded. All of us are sinners. The only reason any of us are righteous is because of what Jesus did for us. As we live more holy and righteous day-to-day lives, it is only because of the transforming work God does in our hearts. We all sin, and as a result, isn't it inappropriate to give any person a title of Holy such as the title of the Pope's '*His Holiness*' or the title off '*Mother Superior*' given to some nuns, when no pope, priest, pastor, nun, deacon, elder, prophet, apostle, teacher, evangelist or leader is holier or superior in comparison to any other believer including the person sitting in the back pew? We need to show all people respect, but does any person in '*authority*' deserve more respect or a holier designation than a person who cooks or cleans the washrooms? Titles are useful to help identify functions and roles, but to imply one believer is holier than or superior to another is not only a major assumption, it is inconsistent with what the Body of Christ is all about.

26: Ten Commandments, Images, Saints

Attention on Ungodly Things

In 2019, a statue of Moloch - the Canaanite deity that demanded the sacrifice of infants and small children - was placed in front of the Roman Colosseum to welcome visitors to an exhibition dedicated to an ancient rival of Rome, the city of Carthage. The colosseum is under the Vatican's control.

- 26:53 Given the Roman Catholic church's view against abortion - which is great - don't you find it extremely disturbing and confusing that the Catholic church would have anything remotely to do with things such as Moloch?
- 26:54 If Exodus 20:4 - do not make a graven image or likeness - was the 2nd commandment in Roman Catholic teachings, would there be fewer statues, pictures, shrines and other artifacts? And rejection of hideous statues such as the statue of Moloch?
- 26:55 Various businesses and Catholic ministries sell things such as bobbleheads of the Pope and deceased saints. What do you think Paul and Peter would say if they saw bobbleheads of them being sold? I wonder what Peter, Paul and Barnabas would say if they toured the 54 museums at the Vatican consisting of 1,400 rooms, chapels and galleries spread over 4.5 km and studied the 70,000+ pieces of art? Or what would Peter say if he knew people were spending time looking at what many Catholics and other Christians believe is his burial site in Rome?
- 26:56 In the latter stages of writing **CEASED?**, a 5.7 earthquake broke off the trumpet from a Mormon statue in Salt Lake City. A second 5.3 earthquake broke off the tip of a spire on a Catholic church in Croatia. A foreshadowing of God destroying idols?

It's about a Personal Relationship

Christianity is about having a personal relationship with God, both here on earth and continuing into heaven. God created us, not for a long-distance relationship, but for a close and intimate relationship. To illustrate, consider person A who is married to B. Would B want A to speak to B directly, or to B's picture in the living room while B sits outside in the front yard watching the paint on the fence peel off? In some cases, such as when my wife Lori travels, I do look at her picture and I give thanks. (And no, I'm not thanking her for being away ... although ... I do have full control of the thermostat and fridge.) In our relationship with God, God is never away traveling. He is always here, as in right here. As per Chapter 6, when a person is born again and becomes a follower of Christ, both Jesus and Holy Spirit come in [en] that person.

- 26:57 If we're truly born again and God is in us, is it more likely God:
- i. wants us to communicate directly with Him; or
 - ii. wants us to look at a statue, idol or painting, and pray to that item or to another deceased saint who will speak to God on our behalf?
- 26:58 And if a person is not communicating with God directly - both speaking to and hearing from God through His word and other means - is there reason for that person:
- i. to change things so they have two-way communications with God; and/or

- ii. to be concerned they may not know Jesus, and if not, are not saved?
If not, why not?
- ❑ *Matthew 7:23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; leave Me, you who practice lawlessness.'*
- ❑ *Luke 13:24 ... many ... will seek to enter and will not be able ... 27 And yet He will say, 'I do not know where you are from; leave Me, all you evildoers.'*

Necromancers

Finally, if the above information isn't enough, consider these three scriptures.

- ❑ *Leviticus 19:31 "Do not turn to mediums or necromancers; do not seek them out, and so make yourselves unclean by them: I am the Lord your God. (ESV)*
- ❑ *Ecclesiastes 9:5 For the living know that they will die; but the dead do not know anything, nor do they have a reward any longer, for their memory is forgotten. (ESV)*
- ❑ *Isaiah 8:19 When they say to you, "Consult the mediums and the spiritists who whisper and mutter," should a people not consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living?*

Overall

26:59 Nowhere in the Bible are we told to create images, statues and shrines of any person, be it Father God, Jesus, Holy Spirit or any individuals in the Old or New Testament. Nowhere does the Bible tell us to pray to deceased persons, to bow down to statues of deceased persons, or to pay ongoing homage towards deceased saints. All of those issues are tantamount to idolatry. God's Word tells us to seek the living God, not an image and likeness. We are to pray to God, not a deceased person or object. Thus, if you're Roman Catholic, do you see why graven images, different Ten commandments and praying to deceased saints are major stumbling blocks preventing many non-Catholics from coming alongside a Roman Catholic and/or the Roman Catholic church?

Having said this, if Holy Spirit tells a Catholic and a Protestant to minister together, they need to obey. But they must both know they're hearing from God and not another voice. And they need to avoid ministering together if the reason for doing so is pressure from one's family, one's church or other people, or enhancing one's personal profile or bank account.

Ultimate Authority

The issue of images and likeness brings us back to what is our ultimate authority - God and His Word - or the teachings and traditions of an organization. Catholic beliefs on graven images are based on Catholic teachings and traditions. In my view, they contradict God's Word, and as a result, agreement on this and many other issues is simply not feasible.

26:60 When we die or Jesus returns, we will each come face to face with God. Will God deal with us based on church teachings and traditions, or His Word?

CLOSING POINTS TO PONDER

Graven Images

- 26:61 No scripture in the New Testament says believers are to create images, statues, likenesses etc. of God or any person. Why would we make them and/or incorporate them into our lives today, especially when Almighty God is in [en] us after we're born again?
- 26:62 Peter, Paul and Barnabas all rejected any glory that people tried to give them. Wouldn't they scream and shout against the statues, images and artifacts of deceased saints created for the Crystal Cathedral, and for all the 220,000 parishes? And to the creation and sale of bobbleheads by businesses and ministries? If not, why not. What has changed?
- 26:63 God didn't show His face to the people at Horeb because if He did, God knew they would make graven images and worship them. Isn't that a pretty clear message for us that we shouldn't have graven images either?
- ❑ *Leviticus 26:1 You shall **not make** for yourselves **idols, nor** shall you **set up** for yourselves an **image or a sacred pillar**, nor shall you **place a figured stone** in your land **to bow down** to it; **for I am** the **Lord your God**.*
- 26:64 And if there is any doubt, doesn't Deuteronomy 4:16 which says not to make "the likeness of male or female" eliminate all doubt?
- ❑ *Deuteronomy 4:10 Remember the day you stood before the Lord your God at Horeb ... may **learn to fear Me** all the days they live on the earth ... 12... you heard the sound of words, but **you saw no form - only a voice**. ... 15 ... since you did not see any form on the day the Lord spoke to you at Horeb from the midst of the fire, 16 **so that you do not act corruptly and make a graven image for yourselves in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female**, 17 the likeness of **any animal** that is on the earth, the likeness of **any winged bird** that flies in the sky, 18 the likeness of **anything that creeps** on the ground, the likeness of **any fish** that is in the water below the earth. 19 And **beware not** to lift up your eyes to heaven and **see the sun** and the **moon** and the **stars**, all the host of heaven, and be drawn away and **worship them** and serve them ...*

Different Ten Commandments

- 26:65 God's Word is so rich and so complex. His Ten Commandments were a monumental gift to mankind. Each of us needs to make a choice on whether the Roman Catholic or Protestant Ten Commandments is the proper list, and why. What's your personal view?

Praying to Deceased Saints

- 26:66 God is 'with' [para, meta] and 'in' [en] believers, and for many, also 'upon' [epi] them. God died for us out of His incredible love for mankind. His Great Exchange per Figure 6:1 shows some - but by no means all - of the many blessings and gifts He makes available to us. God did so because He wants relationship. If we don't go to Him directly, how much of a personal relationship can we have with God? How well can we know Him?

Has a New ‘Temple Veil’ been Created?

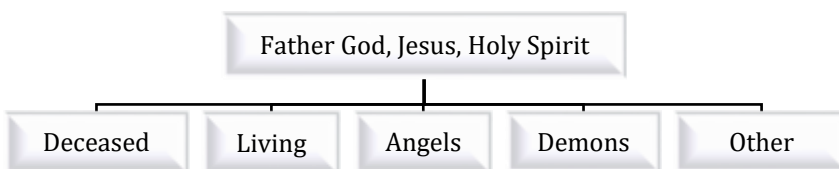
INTRODUCTION

PRIOR to Jesus’s death on the cross, the Jewish temple had a thick curtain - a veil - that separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the temple. One priest went into the Holy of Holies once each year, and that was for the temporary atonement (forgiving, pardoning) of sins. When Jesus died on the cross, the veil was torn from top to bottom. There was no longer a barrier between God and people who wanted a relationship with Him. They could come directly to God 24/7. Chapter 27 addresses the issue of whether or not the Roman Catholic church has created a new veil between God and Catholics.

Organizational Perspectives

Figure 27:1 provides a simplistic organization chart of God’s creations which consists of people, angels, demons and other creations such as the earth, moon, sun, birds, animals and plants.

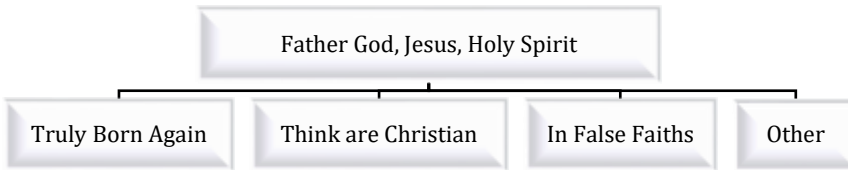
Figure 27:1 God and His Creations



If we look at one component - people living today - we have a sub-organization chart as per Figure 27:2 with God at the top, under whom are 4 basic groups:

1. true born-again Christians;
2. individuals who think of themselves as Christians but who aren’t actually born again and don’t have a personal relationship with the Jesus of the Bible;
3. individuals in false religions; and
4. individuals with other ‘*non-religious*’ beliefs such as atheism, although there is reason to even consider atheism as a religion.

Figure 27:2 God and People

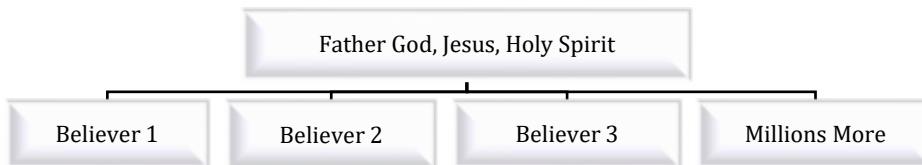


I grieve for individuals in the latter 2 groups who will get a surprise when they come face to face with Jesus. Individuals who may get the biggest surprise, however, are in group 2 - those who think they're Christian, but who aren't.

- ❑ *Matthew 7:23 And then I will declare to them, '**I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.**'*

If we further limit the organization chart to truly born-again followers of Christ as per Figure 27:3, there are two levels in the entire chart. God and His children.

Figure 27:3 God and His Children



As mentioned in the Introduction, when Jesus died on the cross, the veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom. There was no longer a barrier between God and those who wanted a relationship with Him. We are blessed as sons and daughters of God, because we can enter God's presence directly at **any time** of day, on **any** and **every day**, and **any number of times** per day.

- ❑ *Matthew 27:51 And behold, **the veil of the temple was torn in two** from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split.*
- ❑ *Psalms 100:4 **Enter His gates with thanksgiving** And **His courts with praise**. Give thanks to Him, bless His name.*
- ❑ *Hebrews 4:16 Therefore **let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace**, so **that we may receive mercy and find grace** to help in time of need.*

Intercessory prayer

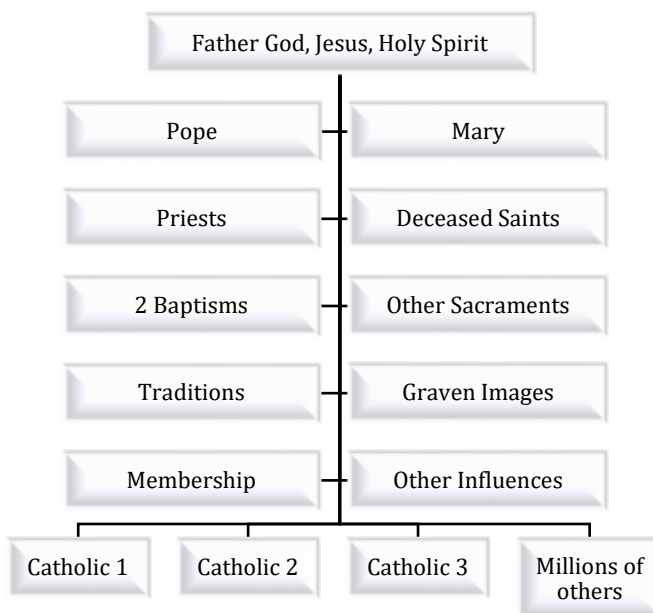
When other believers pray for me or mentor me, they are never between myself and God. They come alongside me. Holy Spirit is with [meta] and in [en] every believer as is Jesus. God is right here with us. Our walk with God is to be very intimate. Each of us is a child of God. God wants to speak to us directly, just like He did with Adam and Eve, and with many other individuals in the Bible. We're all part of the Body of Christ with no person above or below another.

If you're Catholic, and read **CEASED?** so far, I congratulate you. Reading material

that contradicts our beliefs is not easy. Chapter 27 is no different. My question is:

27:1 Has the Roman Catholic church effectively inserted itself between God and individual Catholics by means of the substantial roles and profile held by priests, popes, Mary, other deceased saints, and by various traditions and teachings? And in so doing, has the Roman Catholic church created a new veil to replace the veil Jesus tore ~2,000 years ago?

Figure 27:4 A New Veil Between Roman Catholics and God?



Question 27:1 may seem far-fetched, but if any person, activity, or thing comes between ourselves and Jesus, our personal relationship with Jesus is going to be hindered. Our relationship just won't be as close or personal, similar to how putting someone or something between us and our spouse, parents, siblings, children and friends would also hinder those relationships. Let me briefly expand on each of the items listed in Figure 27:4.

1: Pope Per Chapter 25 of **CEASED?**, the evidence supporting Peter as the rock upon whom Jesus will build the church is minimal. The evidence showing Jesus is the rock is extensive. Jesus is the head of the church here on earth. Followers are to look to Jesus, and to be led by Holy Spirit in all things including giving us revelations from God's Word. All believers have the keys of heaven. All believers can bind and loose. Titles such as '*His Holiness*' attribute an elevated status or profile to the Pope, something Paul and Peter would have found totally unacceptable. Items such as special indulgences further elevate the Pope's personal value to Catholics. And thus, when Jesus is replaced as the earthly head of the church by the Pope, aren't the Pope and the Roman Catholic church being inserted - to some extent - between believers and Jesus?

2: Mary **CEASED?** provides extensive evidence showing why many Protestants believe Mary is treated by the Catholic church as if she is God. Mary is believed to be capable of handling millions of prayers at the same time. She gives supernatural blessings of 7 graces (*page 401*) and 15 promises of the rosary (*page 375*), but only to those Catholics who honor Mary, who are devoted to her, who day in and day out say the rosary including 203 Hail Marys (*page 374*), and who meditate daily on Mary's sorrows. Only God can deliver such blessings. Nothing in the Bible says Mary has been given the authority or the ability to do such things. As a born-again believer living on earth after the cross, she was given the same child of God authority as was given to other believers. No more and no less. When we're born again, Holy Spirit - not Mary - is in [en] us to guide and comfort us. The Bible tells us we're to seek God first; Catholics - in my research - are often taught to go to Mary first. Graven images such as statues of Mary are widespread in violation of God's commandments. Given this and more, isn't Mary and/or the Catholic church being inserted - to some extent - between believers and Jesus?

If you still believe Mary does not have God-like abilities, consider the following 'Prayer for Protection in Time of Pandemic' provided by the Supreme Chaplain, Archbishop William Lori, Knights of Columbus Supreme Council. Knights of Columbus is a global, fraternal organization of Catholic men. This prayer was taken from a YouTube video (<https://youtu.be/vD5Z1D1zwVQ>) dated April 9, 2020 in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Formatting is mine.

*"Oh **Mary, you** always brighten our path as a sign of salvation and of hope. We **entrust ourselves to you, Health of the Sick.** Who, at the Cross, took part in Jesus' pain while remaining steadfast in faith. O loving Mother, **you know what we need, and we are confident you will provide for us** as at Cana in Galilee. Intercede for us with your Son Jesus, the Divine Physician, for those who have fallen ill, for those who are vulnerable, and for those who have died. Intercede also for those charged with protecting the health and safety of others and for those who are tending to the sick and seeking a cure.*

***Help us, O Mother of Divine Love, to conform to the will** of the Father and to do as we are told by Jesus, who took upon himself our sufferings and carried our sorrows, so as to lead us, through the Cross, to the glory of the Resurrection. Amen. **Under thy protection we seek refuge.** O Holy Mother of God. In our needs, despise not our petitions but **deliver us always from all dangers.** O **glorious** and blessed Virgin. Amen."*

Only God can help a person conform to the will of the Father. Only God can protect and deliver Catholics from all dangers. If Mary is believed capable of doing such things, how can she not be effectively viewed as God?

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3: Priests On resurrection Sunday evening, Jesus told the apostles + the 2 disciples who Jesus met on the road to Emmaus + *'those who were with them'*, to forgive those who sinned against them. No priest or any other human can forgive us of our sins committed against a 3rd party, or forgive the sins of a 3rd party who sinned against us. The person sinned against must do the forgiving. Ananias, a non-apostle, baptized Paul in water. Philip, a non-apostle, baptized the eunuch in water. All believers are to make disciples and to baptize them in water, not just priests. All believers are encouraged to be Baptized in the Holy Spirit, a baptism Jesus gives and not a priest or Bishop. All believers can take communion - on their own if they desire - to remember what Jesus did. A priest is not required. The New Testament does not indicate anything resembling purgatory is part of gaining eternal life in heaven. When teachings state priests are the only ones who can baptize a person in water, only priests can forgive mortal sins, only Bishops or their delegates can confirm a person so they can be Baptized in the Holy Spirit, only priests can lead communion, aren't the priests and the Roman Catholic church again being inserted - to some extent - between believers and Jesus?

When a person is on their deathbed and a priest or lay Eucharist minister issues last rites, communion is given. However, given any believer can lead communion, aren't priests, these lay eucharist ministers and the Catholic church again being inserted - to some extent - between believers and Jesus?

When leaders have titles stating or inferring a greater holiness or superiority, don't such titles elevate leaders and insert the leaders plus the Catholic church - to some extent - between lay Catholics and God?

4: Deceased Saints At one time, deceased saints were part of the Body of Christ living on earth. They are now in heaven with Jesus and other saints. There is no scriptural basis to believe living Christians can or should try to speak with deceased saints. Deceased saints are no more righteous than living saints. Every saint is redeemed and cleansed by the death of Jesus, His shed blood and His resurrection. When believers pray to deceased saints to intervene for them, aren't these living saints trusting the deceased saints' relationships with Jesus more than their own personal relationship with Jesus? And thus, aren't these deceased saints and the Catholic church again being inserted - to some extent - between believers and Jesus?

If you say no, consider Figures 27:5 and Figures 27:6. Figure 27:5 tries to illustrate the type of two-way, intimate relationship believers can have with Jesus and Holy Spirit as a result of both Jesus and Holy Spirit being in us. They are right here. Figure 27:6 tries to illustrate the kind

of relationship a believer has when we pray to Mary or another deceased saint and expecting their communications and relationship with Jesus to bring us additional benefits not otherwise available to us.

Figure 27:5
Two-way Communications

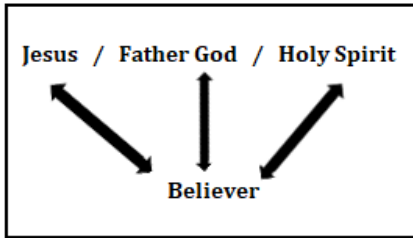
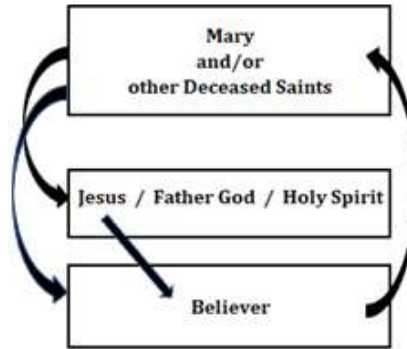


Figure 27:6
Praying to Deceased Saints



Which relationship do you think God wants with His children? If you are comfortable with the process of 27:6, isn't it confusing that believers would go to Mary when Jesus and Holy Spirit are already in [en] the believer, and know the person's prayer request before they say it?

The Bible is clear that all believers are saints. The only requirement to be a saint is to be born-again. The Catholic church says otherwise. When it says it can determine who is and who isn't a saint, isn't the Catholic church inserting itself - to some extent - between believers and Jesus?

5: Two Baptisms Water baptism is not required to be born again. Don't Roman Catholic teachings that water baptism is required to be born again, and that water baptism must be done by a priest, again insert priests and the Roman Catholic church - to some extent - between believers and Jesus?

Baptism of the Holy Spirit is separate from water baptism and isn't required to be born again. Don't Roman Catholic teachings that state one cannot be Baptized in the Holy Spirit (confirmed) unless one has been properly water baptized by a priest (not true), and that a Bishop or delegate gives this Baptism in the Holy Spirit (when Jesus is the one who does it) using chrism (which isn't biblical), again insert the Roman Catholic church - to some extent - between believers and Jesus?

Don't comments that water baptism *'is the means by which its recipients are incorporated into the church'* and that Baptism of the Holy Spirit/Confirmation *'enriches the baptized with the Holy Spirit, binding them more perfectly to the Church'* collectively indicate these two baptisms as conducted by priests and Bishops serve to connect the

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believer first and foremost to the Roman Catholic church? And thus, don't these comments confirm that these baptisms again insert the Roman Catholic church and church leadership - to some extent - between believers and Jesus?

6: Other Sacraments A key part of Catholic teachings involves the 7 Sacraments, 2 of which are water baptism and Confirmation (Baptism of the Holy Spirit). Two others, Holy Orders and Penance, result in Catholics confessing mortal sins to priests. However, the scriptures used to support this forgiveness of mortal sins by Catholic priests alone, actually refer to all believers wherein all of us believers are to forgive anyone who sins against us - the same message that was given in the Lord's Prayer. A 5th sacrament, communion, is only to be led by Roman Catholic priests, which isn't what God intended. Any believer can take communion to remember who Christ is, and what Jesus did on the cross. Don't these sacraments once again insert the Roman Catholic church and its priests - to some extent - between believers and Jesus?

7: Traditions Catholic teachings are partially based on the writings of early church fathers. They are also partly based on decisions of various magisteriums over the centuries that led to new as well as revised traditions. Don't these various Catholicized traditions again insert the Roman Catholic church and its priests - to some extent - between believers and Jesus?

8: Graven Images The Bible is clear we're not to make graven images. God never once commanded statues or shrines or any facsimiles to be made of any person. When Catholics kneel in front of statues of deceased saints, kiss the feet or hands of such statues, pray to the person(s) represented by such statues, haven't these statues and the Catholic church that created them been inserted - to some extent - between believers and Jesus?

9: Member of Roman Catholic Church When a person is born again, Holy Spirit comes in [en] the person. Holy Spirit automatically baptizes the individual into the Body of Christ, the church of God. Roman Catholic teachings are clear that a person must be a member of the Roman Catholic church to be saved, and to leave the Catholic church is the equivalent of committing a mortal sin. To get forgiveness for that mortal sin, one has to confess the sin to a Catholic priest. But given one has left the Catholic church, how likely is that? Doesn't that hook - the message that leaving the Roman Catholic church means one is going to hell - inherently instill a fear that, if you leave, you will never get to heaven? Isn't that messaging similar to what cults do to reinforce allegiance to their organizations? And don't these messages once again insert the Roman Catholic church - to some extent - between the believer and Jesus?

- 10: Other Influences Consider God's Word which is so rich, alive and active. It is amazing. It is truth. The Bible is God's love letter to mankind. Consider three items:
- i. In ~2008, Lori spent a weekend at a retreat managed by a Catholic nun. She was well educated, and clearly loved Jesus. God's presence was all over her. She told Lori that she was not allowed to have her own Bible until 1979.
 - ii. The Council of Toulouse in 1229A.D, stated: *"We prohibit laymen possessing copies of the Old and New Testament ... We forbid them most severely to have them in the popular vernacular."*
 - iii. In the 16th century, the Council of Trent placed the Bible on its list of prohibited books. People could not read the Bible without a license from a bishop. The Council warned: *"If any one shall dare to read or keep in his possession that book, without such a license, he shall not receive absolution (from the punishment of sins) till he has given it up to his ordinary (bishop)."*

When the Catholic church inhibited access to God's Word in the past, didn't that create a dependence on the Catholic church? Didn't these actions serve to insert the Catholic church between the believer and Jesus? Don't masses in Latin - which still go on to some extent today, but which was the norm for all masses for ~400 years from ~1550 until the mid 1960's - also serve to insert the Roman Catholic church between the lay Catholic in the pew and Jesus who is the Word? If you say no, let me ask. What percentage of people in the pews knew what was being said in Latin? Or is being said in Latin today? And what percentage were totally dependent on the church for what to believe? And are today?

In addition to the 10 items mentioned in Figure 27:4, the Holy Spirit's indwelling (*the in [en] experience when we're born again*), power (*the upon [epi] when we're Baptized in the Holy Spirit*), and His 9 gifts also warrant consideration.

- 11: Holy Spirit Indwelling, Power, and 9 Gifts Per Chapter 6 of **CEASED?**, Holy Spirit comes in [en] us when we're born again. Jesus is also in us. Almighty God is in us. God had a deep, personal, intimate relationship with Adam and Eve where He talked to them, and they talked to Him. In the same way, God wants an intimate relationship with each one of us, a relationship involving two-way, one-on-one communications with no one in between. The Catholic church talks and teaches about Holy Spirit in many ways, but the notion of having a direct, intimate relationship with God involving ongoing two-way communication throughout each day does not appear to be the cornerstone of Catholic teachings. Instead of focusing our spiritual intimacy on God, a great deal of such intimacy is reserved for Mary.

Jesus baptizes believers in the Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit then gives one or more of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts as He chooses. The gifts are often for the benefit of others, but they can also be for our own benefit. Whether

we're the recipient or the delivery vehicle, these gifts will impact us personally. Operating in these gifts results in a closer intimacy between God and believers, not only because of the results we witness, but because they involve a direct connection between God and the person operating in the gift. Nobody is in between. It is always beneficial, exciting and fun to be used by God, and to see God's power in action in different ways. And when we see brothers and sisters being used through these gifts to heal or give a word of knowledge to another person, it's so cool, and reminds us of how powerful and loving our God truly is. These gifts draw a person closer to God. A church can facilitate, and equip the saints in the use of these gifts, but the church is not to be the prime beneficiary of these gifts.

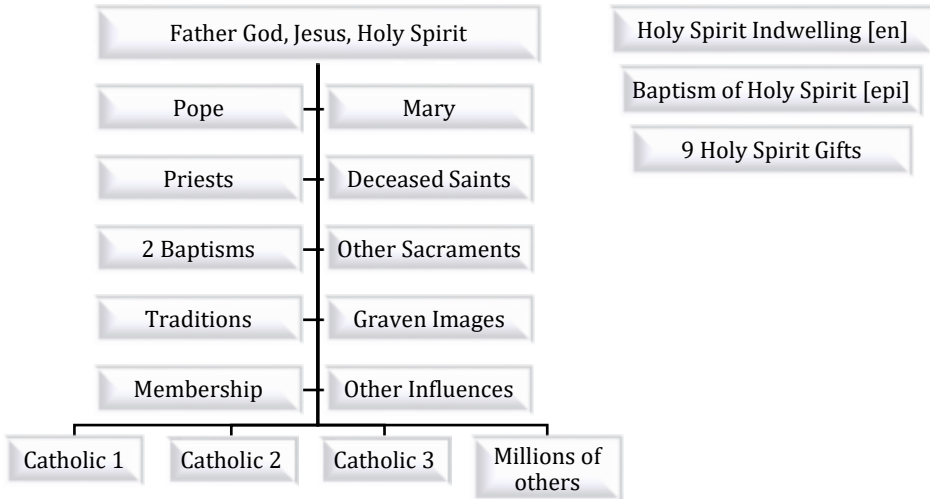
As seen in **CEASED?**, the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the 9 Holy Spirit gifts have never stopped since Pentecost, almost 2,000 years ago. John and Peter traveled to Samaria to ensure the new believers were Baptized in the Holy Spirit. Paul's first priority for the 12 disciples at Ephesus was to ensure they were Baptized in the Holy Spirit. Paul encouraged the pursuit of the Holy Spirit gifts, especially prophecy but also tongues. And yet, today, the vast majority of Catholics aren't taught properly on Baptism of the Holy Spirit, nor are they equipped on using the 9 Holy Spirit gifts. And yet while these fundamental elements of the Christian walk are not taught, Catholics are taught and strongly encouraged to engage in daily activities such as the rosary and the 7 graces, things which are clearly not taught as in the Bible.

Apart from an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the 1960's which led to the birth of the Charismatic movement within the Roman Catholic church, the Holy Spirit gifts largely lay dormant within the Catholic church for ~ 17 to 20 centuries depending on one's view as to when the Catholic church started. Whenever it started, didn't this sidelining of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts from the main Catholic church for many centuries prevent the flow of valuable blessings from God associated with these gifts, blessings that create a closeness between believers and God with no one in between? As a result, doesn't this sidelining of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts for the vast majority of Roman Catholics today again serve to insert the Roman Catholic church and its priests - to some extent - between believers and Jesus?

- 27:2 When we consider the items above, hasn't the Catholic church through its leaders and priests combined with Mary at the center of the Catholic faith, effectively interjected itself between believers and God to an extremely large extent? And pushed Jesus to the background behind Mary and the church? And thus, hasn't the Roman Catholic church effectively created a new veil separating believers from God, where ordinary Catholics aren't to go directly to God, but to someone or something else?

Figure 27:7 includes Figure 27:4 as well as the indwelling of Holy Spirit, the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the 9 Holy Spirit gifts which are sitting idle on the sidelines for hundreds of millions of Roman Catholics. Isn't it unfortunate to see the associated teachings and gifts available, but effectively unutilized?

Figure 27:7 A New Veil Between Roman Catholics and God?



Heaven on Earth

27:3 If you're Catholic, do the inserted 10 items help you walk in nearness to Jesus in a somewhat similar way you see yourself walking with Jesus in heaven? Or does your walk today involve a considerable emphasis on Mary, a pope, one or more priests, and the Catholic church, a walk that will switch to Jesus only after you get to heaven?

Still Not Sure?

27:4 If you still don't believe the Roman Catholic church has effectively inserted itself between people and God, consider this development during the COVID-19 crisis. In a mass that was live-streamed on March 20, 2020, Pope Francis taught that Catholics who can't make a personal confession to a priest can confess their sins directly to God. They should tell God the truth and ask for forgiveness with all their heart.

- i. If Catholics didn't already know they could go to God directly, and had not been instructed to do so as a normal part of their relationship with God, doesn't this confirm that the veil which was torn and removed by Jesus, has been replaced?
- ii. If Catholics don't believe they can go to God directly at any time to deal with sin issues, but need to come to the church, isn't that yet another major indicator that the Roman Catholic church has inserted itself between the individual Catholic and God? If not, why not?

27:5 Francis said once the pandemic recedes, Catholics need to go to confession.

- i. Isn't Pope Francis effectively saying going directly to God for confession

is second best, and that it isn't enough?

- ii. Don't Francis's statements show he believes Jesus's one-time sacrifice on the cross was not enough? That more needs to be done, and '*the more to be done*' can only be done through Catholic priests?

27:6 One final item. The Vatican has minted a mother earth coin. This is a total falsehood. There is no such person or thing such as "*mother earth*". God is the creator of the earth. Isn't the creation of this coin enough reason by for tremendous concern?

CLOSING POINTS TO PONDER

God is a jealous God. He doesn't want anyone or anything to come ahead of Him.

- ☐ *Exodus 20:5 You shall not worship them nor serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous (impassioned) God [**demanding what is rightfully and uniquely mine**] ... (AMP)*

Picture a Mom and Dad on the front deck. They have two groups of children.

Group 1:

The parents are actively involved in the lives of this group of children. The parents talk with each child almost every day, and usually many times a day. Sometimes the parents talk a lot, and sometimes they listen a lot. Sometimes they say virtually nothing. The parents have an incredible Family Book that provides not only information on family history, but tremendous information on how their children can live more meaningful lives today, and what to expect when they die. Their children study this book, and love to share new revelations they find. These children are not perfect by any means, but their hearts continue to improve - slowly but surely. Children typically help each other out. The children often disagree, and often need some guidance and help to get their relationships restored. Sacrificing their time and other parts of their lives for the benefit of others is the norm for most of the children. However, no one is more important than their parents. When in doubt, children know to go to their parents first. And if the children mess up, they know they need to come clean with their parents, and to seek forgiveness from whomever they wronged. In turn, they need to forgive those who wronged them.

The parents aren't pushovers. They don't tolerate certain things, and the boundaries between right and wrong are very clear. Their love for their children is unfathomable. And they have many treasures and blessings for their children. Some are for today, but their biggest inheritances are down the road at a time that is unknown to the children.

The children love to introduce their parents to their friends and neighbors. The children are excited to join their friends and neighbors in talking and spending time with their parents. The children are not jealous of any blessings given to their friends and neighbors by their parents. In fact, they are thankful for these blessings, and take special joy when they see their friends and neighbors spending time with their parents in a group, or one-on-one.

Group 2:

The parents have another group of children who have chosen a more distant relationship. These children do many good things for others, and know the

importance of apologizing, seeking forgiveness and forgiving others. This second group of children also genuinely cares for each other, and for their friends and neighbors. They do a lot of good in their community, and in the world.

The parents watch this second group of children come and go. They hear their children talking, crying in tough times and laughing in great times, anguishing over difficult decisions, struggling with health issues, grieving over the loss of loved ones, and sometimes fighting each other. But their children seldom come to them directly for help. Instead, they go to other children, friends and neighbors whose love, wisdom and abilities are far less. Many times, comments to their parents are given indirectly through other children. When the children do speak directly to their parents, they do so in one-way conversations using words that aren't personal, but are taken from a list of standard messages. Often, the very same words are spoken day after day. Many gather together one day of the week often out of a sense of duty.

The parents see the neighbors interact with their children - sometimes in good ways and sometimes in not so good ways. An influential male child tells the other children not to introduce their friends and neighbors to their parents.

Most children don't seek a two-way relationship with their parents, yet they expect their parents to deliver major blessings. One of the children has been elevated to where most children, friends and neighbors go to her and not the parents, because they believe she has tremendous influence with the parents, and can do virtually everything her parents can do, things which no other child can do. It's quite unfortunate, because she can't actually do them. Some children are given titles inferring they are better or somehow superior than other children, and even their friends and neighbors. They *'know best'* and tell the remaining children what to believe. These *'leaders'* have created a customized Family Book with various changes that suit the leaders' beliefs and preferences. These leaders have changed some family traditions and instituted several new traditions they feel are appropriate. Misalignment with their parents' views is often tolerated, and sometimes encouraged. The parents sit and watch their children live their lives from a distance. Sadly, their children don't even know their parents on a one-to-one basis.

27:7 I don't mean to be sarcastic with the above story, but doesn't the group 2 scenario resemble the type of relationship that much of the mainline Catholic church and some Protestant denominations have fostered by replacing a personal, 2-way relationship with God (group 1) with religious activities, and by inserting the church and leaders between laypeople and God (group 2)? And if so, is there reason to think about Matthew 7:23?

□ *Matthew 7:23 ... 'I never knew you; depart from Me ...*

27:8 Which children will receive the most blessings from the parents?

27:9 Two final questions to ponder.

- i. If a person doesn't go to God directly but instead goes indirectly through a priest, statue, Mary or another deceased saint, how can Jesus possibly be their Lord
- ii. When we are born again, Holy Spirit and Jesus come in us. Does that effectively mean the Holy of Holies in the ancient temple is now in us?

Protestants & Roman Catholics Together?

INTRODUCTION

PREVIOUS chapters addressed some issues that can make it a challenge for both non-Catholics and Roman Catholics to evangelize and worship alongside each other. Chapter 28 concludes this review by addressing a few topics including:

1. should Catholics worship and evangelize alongside Protestants (page 438);
2. should Protestants worship and evangelize alongside Catholics (page 440);
3. God's warning to teachers (page 448);
4. teachings with limited scriptural support (page 449); and
5. should Protestants '*come home*' to the Roman Catholic church (page 450).

As you go through Chapter 28, please know my heart is to reveal what God's Word says. I have tried to be objective and fair. If I made mistakes or failed in my goals, I apologize. What matters first and foremost is God's Word and His truths, not my opinions or views, or those of any other person or organization.

SHOULD ROMAN CATHOLICS WORSHIP AND EVANGELIZE ALONGSIDE PROTESTANTS?

Discussions around the 11 items in Figure 27:7, in my view, show the Roman Catholic church has effectively inserted itself between Catholics and God. As a result of these and many other issues not addressed in **CEASED?**, I don't believe the major decision facing Roman Catholics is whether or not to worship and evangelize alongside Protestants. I see more important decisions such as the following:

- 28:1 Is the Catholic church teaching you the truth about God and His Word?
- 28:2 Has the Catholic church created a new veil between yourself and God?
- 28:3 To what extent is your decision to remain in the Catholic church based on a desire not to disappoint family members, or a fear of being shunned, or a residual fear of not getting into heaven due to leaving the church?
- 28:4 Is the Roman Catholic church enhancing your personal relationship with Father God, Jesus and Holy Spirit, and ensuring They are 1st in your life, or is Mary and the Catholic church 1st and 2nd, with God in 3rd spot? And if God isn't 1st, aren't changes necessary - now? As in right now?
- *Colossians 1:18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.*

28: Protestants and Catholics Together?

A big part of your decision will boil down to what is your authority - God's Word or Roman Catholic teachings and traditions, only part of which are supported by God's Word.

Fear or Peace

A frequent comment from Roman Catholics is they aren't sure if they're saved or not. Isn't that surprising given the most frequent command in God's Word is we're not to fear? Instead, when we're born again, we should experience God's peace.

- ❑ *Philippians 4:6 **Be anxious for nothing**, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving **let your requests be made known to God.** 7 And **the peace of God**, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*
- ❑ *Romans 8:15 For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"*
- ❑ *2 Timothy 1:7 **for God gave us a spirit not of fear** but of power and love and self-control. (ESV)*

28:5 If you're Roman Catholic, and have fears about your eternal salvation, would peace for you come from knowing:

- i. Jesus paid the penalty for **ALL** your sins through His one-time death on the cross and His associated shed blood and resurrection;
- ii. when you're born again, Holy Spirit and Jesus come in you and your spirit is one with Holy Spirit, you're adopted as a child of God, you're a joint-heir, you're seated in heavenly places, you're clothed with Christ, you're one in Christ, you're one of Christ's sent ones/ambassadors ... and you're part of the royal priesthood;
- iii. when born again, you enter into a Great Exchange per Figure 6:1 that makes you right with God and allows you to be in His presence 24/7 with Holy Spirit leading the way;
- iv. fear is from the enemy and when you're born again - as per Jimmy Evans's prayer on page 333 - you have authority over the demonic spirit of fear and can deal with it.

28:6 Does your fear exist because you believe you should or need to be doing one or more things repeatedly to make you right with God? Things that are not in the Bible, but which appear to be created by the Catholic church such as:

- i. daily seeking Mary and praying the rosary; and
- ii. expecting to receive the 15 promises of the rosary and the 7 graces associated with Mary's sorrows; and
- iii. weekly going to mass and taking communion, and regularly confessing sins to priests.

28:7 And even if you do all that you think is needed, is there still fear your efforts won't be enough, and all you can hope for is that you might eventually get out of purgatory? But even then, that still might not be enough?

CEASED? 2ND EDITION

The Bible is clear that Jesus has paid the penalty for all your sins on the cross. I encourage you to study the New Testament and try to find scriptural evidence that shows you are to pray to Mary, you are to recite the rosary, you are to expect that Mary can and will deliver on the 7 graces and the 15 promises of the rosary, and that you may/will go to purgatory upon your death but might/should/will get out of there eventually. Seek Biblical evidence that clearly backs Catholic teachings and counteracts the Biblical evidence that **CEASED?** provides concerning water baptism, confirmation and confessing to priests. I'm not guaranteeing I'm 100% right on all matters addressed herein which is why readers need to decide for themselves what is true, and what is not true. My plea is for you to study the Bible for yourself. After all, it is your eternal destiny at stake. And as you study God's Word, please remember that it was Jesus who died for you, not Mary or a pope, priest, or the Roman Catholic church.

SHOULD PROTESTANTS WORSHIP AND EVANGELIZE ALONGSIDE CATHOLICS?

When I first wrote **CEASED?** and was completing this **2ND EDITION**, I thought it was quite clear as to what extent Protestants should worship and evangelize alongside Catholics. However, before finishing this **2ND EDITION**, Holy Spirit revealed to me that there was more to the story. The end result is that I broke up this issue into 4 parts including 1) the Catholic church as an organization 2) Catholic leaders 3) lay Catholics and 4) societal issues.

1: Roman Catholic Church as an Organization

To begin, let me do a heart check by asking a few questions of Protestants who support the Roman Catholic church.

- 28:8 If someone you deeply care about - spouse, parent, child, sibling - is starting to seek after Jesus, would you want them going to a Roman Catholic seminary, or being taught and mentored by someone devoted to Roman Catholic teachings?
- 28:9 Would you share the stage and support a Catholic priest or apologist who was speaking on the merits of the Roman Catholic faith, the titles, rosary, importance and blessings available through Mary, the need to go to mass and to be a member of the Catholic church, confessing to priests for forgiveness of mortal sins, indulgences and the blessing of purgatory, praying to deceased saints and creating statues of them? Would you want to participate in communion led by a priest who calls down Jesus to be sacrificed one more time?
- 28:10 If you have any qualms at all about seeing a loved one either going to a Roman Catholic seminary or becoming a Roman Catholic, then how can you support or encourage anyone to go to a Roman Catholic church?

28: Protestants and Catholics Together?

And again, if you're Catholic, please know I am not against Catholics. I simply want to seek and share the truth in God's Word, and want all believers to seek - and live in - God's truths. And thus, my comments are made in response to what I see are the many false teachings, practices and traditions within the Roman Catholic church. Let me share a few additional tidbits of information that have added to my concerns about the Roman Catholic church as an organization.

Other Faiths in General

Consider a December 20, 2019 meeting with students at Rome's Pilo Albertelli classical secondary school. Pope Francis stated people of all faiths are children of God. God's Word, however, tells us that no person is a child of God until they are born again. Only then are we adopted into God's family.

- ❑ *John 1:12 But as many as received Him, to them **He gave the right to become children of God**, even to those who believe in His name,*
- ❑ *Ephesians 1:5 He predestined us to adoption as sons **through Jesus Christ to Himself**, according to the kind intention of His will,*

Pope Francis also said we should respect people of other faiths and not try to convert them to Christianity using words. In contrast, the Bible is clear that Jesus is the only way and while respecting people and their different beliefs is important, respecting their beliefs in a way that endorses or promotes their beliefs does them no good at all. Moreover, God's Word is clear that we are to preach and share the gospel in words - a message that directly contradicts Francis's teachings.

- ❑ *John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "**I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.**"*
- ❑ *Mark 16:15 And He said to them, "**Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.**"*
- ❑ *Romans 15:20 And **thus I aspired to preach the gospel**, not where Christ was already named, so that I would not build on another man's foundation; 21 but as it is written, "**They who had no news of Him shall see, And they who have not heard shall understand.**"*

- 28:11 The 9 Holy Spirit gifts are key for sharing the gospel in words and power. This may seem like an unfair question, but I believe it is important to ask tough questions. This is one of them. Is it purely a coincidence:
- i. Pope Francis encourages Roman Catholics not to share the gospel; and
 - ii. the mainline Catholic church neither encourages the pursuit of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts nor equips the vast majority of Catholics on how to use these gifts - gifts which are so helpful in sharing the gospel?
 - iii. Put it another way, doesn't satan love this situation? Wouldn't satan hate the opposite situation where Francis taught it was vital to share the gospel in words and in power, and then hundreds of millions of lay Catholics did just that by operating in the 9 Holy Spirit gifts?
- ❑ *1 Thessalonians 1:5 for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction ...*

Islam and Catholicism

Much has been written on how Islam and Catholicism seem to be unusually connected. I will only make a few comments. On February 4, 2019, Pope Francis representing Catholics, and Grand Imam Ahmed Al-Tayeb of Al-Azhar University representing Muslims, issued a joint declaration:

“in the name of God who has created all human beings equal in rights, duties and dignity.”

In 1965, the Second Vatican Council approved *Nostra Aetate*, a declaration on relations with non-Christian religions. Part of it reads:

“The church also regards with esteem the Muslims. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in himself, merciful and all-powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth,” although “they do not acknowledge Jesus as God and regard him as only a prophet.”

28:12 Various articles written by Catholics talk of why we should understand and be open to the idea that Muslims and Christians worship the same God. The argument is largely based on the premise that Christians and Muslims both worship the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. However, how can that be so? Jesus is God but Islam teaches Jesus is only a prophet. We know God is Father God, Jesus and Holy Spirit. Muslims worship Allah who is not the Father, Jesus and Holy Spirit. Whatever justification and rationale one wants to use, the truth is Christianity and Islam do not worship the same God. And aren't any efforts that encourage, support, rationalize or promote that view not only wrong, but dangerous? Doesn't supporting that teaching in any way, shape or form:

- i. contradict the truths of the Bible;
- ii. reinforce Pope Francis's comments that Christians don't need to share the gospel in words;
- iii. contribute to Muslims believing they know the truth, when they don't;
- iv. support the view all are saved - universal salvation - which is false;
- v. support the view there are many ways to heaven - which is false;
- vi. support the view that Jesus isn't the only way - which is false; and
- vii. make one wonder as to the real agenda behind these statements and related actions of Pope Francis and of previous popes before him?

28:13 Contrary to what Pope Francis says, God's Word tells us we are to preach the gospel and that Jesus - Jesus - is the only Way. And contrary to what Pope Francis says, God's Word is clear that the only people who are '*children of God*' are those who are born-again followers of Jesus.

- i. If you're Roman Catholic, whose instructions are you going to follow - God's Word or the Roman Catholic church's teachings?
- ii. If you say Roman Catholic teachings, what are you going to say to Jesus when you meet Him face to face?

28: Protestants and Catholics Together?

A Recent Example of How Mary is Seen

To give a final insight into how big a role Mary currently has in the Roman Catholic church, consider the following article written by Nick Benson, dated April 23, 2020 and published during the COVID-19 pandemic. The article was copied from a Catholic website at the link: <https://www.thecatholicuniverse.com/bishops-of-us-and-canada-will-consecrate-their-nations-to-mary-on-1st-may/>

Highlighting and formatting are mine. The word consecrate means to dedicate.

BISHOPS OF US AND CANADA WILL CONSECRATE THEIR NATIONS TO MARY ON 1ST MAY

*Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles, president of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, has announced the US bishops will join the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops on 1st May in **consecrating the two nations to the care of the Blessed Mother** under the title **'Mary, Mother of the Church'**.*

*'This will give the Church the occasion to pray **for Our Lady's continued protection** of the vulnerable, **healing of the unwell** and **wisdom for those who work to cure** this terrible virus,' said Archbishop Gomez in a letter to the US bishops. **Each year, the Church seeks the special intercession of the Mother of God** during the month of May.*

*'This year, **we seek the assistance of Our Lady** all the more earnestly as we face together the effects of the global pandemic,' he said.*

*This consecration reaffirms the bishops' previous consecrations of the United States to Mary. In 1792, **the first bishop of the United States**, Bishop John Carroll, **consecrated the nation to Mary** under the title Immaculate Conception, and **in 1846, the bishops unanimously chose Mary under that title as the patroness of the nation.***

In 1959, Cardinal Patrick O'Boyle of Washington again consecrated the United States to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.** This was the year when construction of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington was completed. The **national shrine was elevated to minor basilica status** by St John Paul II on 12th October 1990. This was **renewed by the US bishops on 11th November 2006.

*Archbishop Gomez will **lead the prayer of reconsecration** on 1st May at 3pm EDT (8pm UK time) and has invited the bishops to join in from their respective dioceses and asked them to extend the invitation to the faithful in their dioceses for their participation.*

- 28:14 The Roman Catholic church believes Mary is able to care for the nations of Canada and the United States, protect the vulnerable, heal the sick and give wisdom to those seeking a cure for COVID-19. Every year, bishops seek assistance from Mary. Shrines have different statuses. None of those beliefs are supported in the New Testament. None. When Mary was still

living on earth, she was not credited with doing one miracle involving the 9 Holy Spirit gifts including healing or any of the speaking gifts. Only Almighty God cares for nations. Only Almighty God protects, heals and gives supernatural wisdom that is implied or stated in this consecration of two nations. Again, I ask: Given the god-like expectations on Mary, don't these Roman Catholics expectations, beliefs and actions have their foundation in a view that Mary is effectively part of the Godhead? If not, why not?

- ❑ *Acts 4:12 And there is salvation in no one else; for **there is no other name under heaven** that has been given among men by which we must be saved."*
- ❑ *Philippians 2:9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, **and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name**, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*
- ❑ *John 14:13 Whatever you ask **in My name**, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*

28:15 Given the accolades, titles and devotion given to Mary - and not God - aren't there only two options that each Catholic has to choose from in regards to Mary?

- i. **Acceptance and endorsement that Mary is God:** Mary can do all the things mentioned in **CEASED?** including delivering on the 15 promises of the rosary, and the 7 graces - plus a whole lot more. Mary is God, and warrants all titles, homage and attention to her as the Roman Catholic church teaches.

Or

- ii. **Mother of Earthly Jesus only:** Mary is to be appreciated for giving birth and caring for Jesus during parts of His earthly life. However, Mary is not God, and she is one of many millions of saints currently in heaven enjoying her time with God. Mary doesn't have the ability to meet the many supernatural expectations that many Catholics and the Roman Catholic church have placed on her. The titles and accolades given to Mary today do not honor her, but in fact dishonor her, because they are extreme exaggerations of who Mary was back then, and is today. All such unwarranted titles are to be rejected, and all statues and shrines of her need to be destroyed.
- iii. What's your decision, and why?

28:16 In relation to these Bishops who consecrated the USA and Canada to Mary:

- i. Why did these Bishops go to Mary, and not Jesus, to consecrate Canada and the United States and seek His help to care, protect, heal and give wisdom? After all, isn't Jesus God, and weren't all things

28: Protestants and Catholics Together?

created through Jesus?

- ii. Who do Catholics have their trust in - Jesus, or Mary?
- iii. If these Bishops are children of God and in leadership roles, they are to be led by Holy Spirit, to seek the Kingdom of God first, and to abide in Jesus. Do these consecrations line up with any of those 3 characteristics of a Christian?
 - ❑ *Romans 8:14 For all **who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.***
 - ❑ *Matthew 6:33 But **seek first His kingdom** and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*
 - ❑ *John 15:5 I am the vine, you are the branches; **he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit,** for apart from Me you can do nothing.*

28:17 Would it be surprising if many believers wonder if these Bishops are being led by a spirit other than the Holy Spirit? Or if they are abiding in someone other than Jesus? And if they are not abiding in Jesus, how much good fruit will result from such a consecration?

- ❑ *John 15:6 **If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.***

While all children of God are called to love other people, we are not called to love all organizations, all teachings and all belief systems. We need to show due respect to people, but that doesn't mean we must accept and, in any way, endorse false beliefs and teachings, especially those that impact the eternal lives of people. Loving people all the way to hell is not part of our mandate.

When it comes to the Roman Catholic church, there are no shortage of issues – only one of which is child abuse - that have caused many people to view the Catholic church in a very negative way. And understandably so. I can't imagine the pain caused to so many individuals and their families. If the key teachings, practices and traditions of the Roman Catholic church were clearly based on the Bible, then individuals within the Catholic church can focus on these behavioral issues to right the ship. However, as **CEASED?** has shown, there are many critical teachings, practices and traditions that are not Biblical. They serve to hinder and even derail the personal relationships that lay Catholics have with Jesus by inserting the Catholic church (and priests, leaders, teachers etc.) between the individual and God. To refresh your memory, I refer you to look back at Figure 27:7 on page 435.

The end result is that I don't believe Protestants should in any way validate the teachings of the Catholic church nor the Catholic church as an organization, just as I don't believe we should validate the teachings of other religions and their organizations. I appreciate the good things these organizations may do such as feeding the hungry and fighting against abortion, but if such appreciation and support serves to prevent or direct people away from an eternal, personal relationship with Jesus, how can I support them? And let me reiterate that my views are not a result of not liking individual Catholics. It's purely because there are such a multitude of significant issues in Catholic teachings, traditions and practices that

conflict with God's Word.

I make these and many other comments and raise many questions on Mary, Bishops, Peter/Popes, Catholic traditions, sacraments, forgiveness of sins by priests, communion, graven images, 10 Commandments etc. with a heavy heart. I'm raising issues that conflict with long-held views that run deep in hundreds of millions of sincere, well-meaning hearts. I'm not dealing with opinions on what's the best cookie recipe or the best way to cook red cabbage. I'm dealing with people's personal belief systems that are treasured by so many. But I'm also dealing with their relationship with God or lack of it, not only for today but for the rest of their earthly lives and into eternity - either in heaven ... or hell. I take these issues very seriously and, again, it's not lay Catholics I have an issue with. It's the Roman Catholic teachings, traditions and practices that concern me greatly.

God's Word is the one source of information that we know is true, and we must put it as our source of truth above all else apart from hearing from God directly. Unfortunately, too many Roman Catholic teachings contradict or conflict with God's Word, which is why I don't support the Roman Catholic church as an organization. This is a sensitive point, but I feel I need to reiterate it once more. The role Mary plays, and the things that Mary is expected to deliver, are things that only God can deliver. By believing and teaching that Mary can deliver on them, effectively puts Mary in a position of being God. For that reason alone, I can't recommend anybody be involved in any part of the Catholic church which promotes Catholic teachings.

If you're Catholic, these comments probably seem awfully offensive. But I would sooner you be mad at me now because I am speaking up, as opposed to being mad at me later when you realize you were led astray. It's vital to ignore the rhetoric that "*Mary is not God or even god-like*", and look at the evidence - the prayers of Pope Francis and others, the 7 graces and sorrows, the rosary and the 15 promises of the rosary, the titles, the statues, the shrines, the accolades - and then compare all that to what the New Testament actually says about Mary. Nothing of note in the New Testament supports the supernatural, elevated role Mary currently holds within the Roman Catholic church. Nothing. If this evidence doesn't alarm you, let me remind you that after resurrection Sunday, there is only one verse that specifically mentions Mary. One. Mary's entire involvement role after Resurrection Sunday was that of a person in prayer, one of ~120 other believers gathered together in prayer. After that, nothing more is specifically mentioned about Mary. Nothing.

- *Acts 1:14 These all with one mind were **continually devoting themselves to prayer**, along with the women, and **Mary the mother of Jesus**, and with His brothers. 15 At this time Peter stood up among the brothers and sisters (a group of **about 120 people** was there together), and said,*

And just so you know, while I believe in unity and love my Protestant fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, I also won't recommend someone attend a Protestant church where the Bible isn't front and center in its teachings, where Christ-like love is not central, where personal and corporate prayer are not a priority, where there is a watered-down gospel, where universal salvation is taught, where habitual sin is endorsed, where saints are not equipped to share the full gospel, where sexual predators are given priority over victims, where witchcraft and spiritual

28: Protestants and Catholics Together?

abuse/control are tolerated and perpetuated, or where ... That's just me. You have to make your own choice.

I've mentored quite a few young adults about the importance of digging for the truth when considering business deals and investments. In business deals, there are many wonderful people. There are also many unscrupulous people - people with kind or flattering words, but deceitful, self-serving hearts. Their sales pitch may sound great, but when one gets into the nitty-gritty details, the story often changes. In cases of fraud or corruption, the deception of the deal is usually surrounded by a great deal of truth. To illustrate my point to students, I often offer an unopened bottle of water, pop or juice. and ask if they would like it. The person typically says yes. When I tell them that I might have injected 10 drops of arsenic into the bottle, their desire for the drink changes.

28:18 Catholics have done many good things. Fighting against abortion, feeding the poor, and emphasizing family are all so important. However, when teachings of salvation are in error, when a different Godhead is taught and when Jesus and/or His one-time sacrifice on the cross is diluted, don't these and other false teachings add drops of arsenic to God's Word?

The end result? I recommend against supporting the Roman Catholic church as an organization. I also won't recommend a person attend a Catholic church - unless they are led to do so by God to be a missionary. And if an individual Catholic church says it doesn't follow the teachings related to Mary or other key issues identified in **CEASED?**, my response is why then does it remain a Catholic church and expose itself to the leaven of other unbiblical teachings, practices and traditions?

2: Catholic and Protestant Leaders

God loves every Protestant and Catholic leader. All Protestants are called to love Catholic leaders, to pray for them in terms of their study of God's Word, their personal walk with God etc. However, I do not believe God wants Protestant leaders to come alongside Catholic leaders in any way that would endorse the Catholic church and its false teachings and traditions. In the same way, I don't think God wants born-again Catholics to come alongside 'Protestants' who engage in false teachings, endorse sin etc. etc.

❑ *Matthew 16:6 And Jesus said to them, "Watch out and **beware of the leaven** of the Pharisees and Sadducees."*

What that looks like in day-to-day in Protestant interactions with Catholic priests, leaders and teachers will vary by person and situation. All I can say is seek God and ask Holy Spirit what to do.

3: Lay Catholics and Protestants

God wants Protestants to love all Catholics, to pray for them, to encourage them to study God's Word for themselves, and to help them in their personal walk with Father God, Holy Spirit and Jesus. Similarly, God wants Catholics to love all Protestants, to pray for them, to encourage them to study God's word for themselves and to help them in their personal walk with Father God, Holy Spirit and Jesus. In

terms of gathering together, Protestants and Catholics alike need to be led by Holy Spirit as to whether or not they should join together in times of Bible Study, praise, worship and evangelism. Only God knows what believers should do, and thus we need to seek Him for wisdom and discernment in all situations. Building relationships, showing the truth in God's Word, and helping others realize that it is God's desire to have an intimate, personal, one-on-one relationship with every person are all so important. But if we engage in things that sound good, but which cause other believers to stumble, that's not a good thing.

- ❑ *Mark 9:42 **Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble**, it would be better for him if, with a heavy millstone hung around his neck, he had been cast into the sea.*

4: **Issues of the World**

Many issues are impacting the world that conflict with God's Word and which are causing so much damage and/or evil in this world. On issues including but not limited to abortion, human trafficking, same-sex relationships, and limiting freedom of speech and religious freedom, it is vital that Protestants and Catholics alike stand up for what God's Word tells us about such issues.

One last comment. If Holy Spirit tells you to do something that disagrees with what I recommend herein, do it. Just ensure it is Holy Spirit you are hearing from.

GOD'S WARNING TO TEACHERS

The Bible says all scripture is inspired by God.

- ❑ *2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;*

God's Word is ... God's Word, and we are not to add to God's Word. It is a supernatural book as evidenced by prophecies and its mathematical complexity as shown by the work of Harvard-educated Ivan Panin beginning in the late 1800's.

- ❑ *Proverbs 30:6 Do not add to His words, Or He will rebuke you, and you will be proved a liar.*

God's Word is also clear that those who teach what God has to say are held to a higher standard. It is best for them if they stay true to God's Word, or else ...

- ❑ *James 3:1 Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.*

For those who change the teachings of God, Paul says not once but twice, that teachers of a false gospel should be accursed.

- ❑ *Galatians 1:8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, **should preach** to you a gospel **contrary to what we have preached** to you, **he is to be accursed!** 9 As we have said before, so **I say again** now, **if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary** to what you received, **he is to be accursed!***

Consider the gospel, the core of which is the mangled body, shed blood, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

28: Protestants and Catholics Together?

- ❑ *1 Corinthians 15:1 Now I make known to you, brethren, **the gospel** which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that **Christ died for our sins** according to the Scriptures, 4 and that **He was buried**, and that **He was raised on the third day** ...*
- 28:19 I believe Roman Catholic teachings that Jesus's crucifixion was not a one-time provision to pay the penalty for all sins, and therefore Jesus must be sacrificed over and over again represents a false gospel. If I'm right, what are the consequences for all the Catholic priests, Catholic nuns and lay Catholics who have taught a false gospel?

A former acquaintance of mine decided to attend a Roman Catholic seminary to become a priest. Over a period of several weeks, we discussed several issues including the issue of a false gospel. He wasn't concerned if he learned something false, and then proceeded to teach others that same false teaching. His lack of concern came about because his priest said he wouldn't be held accountable.

28:20 When this man meets Jesus face to face one day, what is Jesus going to evaluate this young man on - His Word or the priest's opinion?

- ❑ *John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*
- 28:21 When we share information that contradicts, adds to or deletes from, or in any way changes what the Bible teaches, aren't we playing spiritual poker with ourselves, and potentially influencing others to do the same?
- 28:22 Coming alongside a Roman Catholic to study God's Word is great, and highly recommended provided the focus is on God, and God's Word. God's Word is alive and active. It illuminates, and it will draw people to His truth. For Protestants involved in the ecumenical movement or who otherwise come alongside and embrace/support in one form or another the Roman Catholic church and its teachings - where God's Word is not held up as the ultimate authority - aren't these individuals also at risk of running afoul of Galatians 1:8-9 and James 3:1?
- 28:23 Would you want a young person you love to be mentored by priests who would tell him or her not to worry if he or she engages in false teachings?

ITEMS WITH LIMITED SCRIPTURAL SUPPORT

Another consideration when looking at some of the key teachings that **CEASED?** addresses on Roman Catholic teachings is to take note of the limited scriptural support found in God's Word on critical topics such as:

- ❖ Peter being the first Pope, and the position of Pope today;
- ❖ the elevated status, titles, abilities and devotion to Mary;
- ❖ the ability of priests to forgive sins on behalf of God;
- ❖ water baptism is required for salvation;
- ❖ Baptism of the Holy Spirit is required for salvation;
- ❖ the existence and role of purgatory;

- ❖ the existence and role of indulgences;
- ❖ praying to deceased saints;
- ❖ communion to be taken literally, not symbolically; and
- ❖ membership in the Roman Catholic church is required to be saved.

28:24 If you're Catholic - and especially if you're a Catholic teacher or priest - are you satisfied the extremely limited scriptural support on the above issues is adequate? And give you comfort to teach Catholic teachings to others?

SHOULD PROTESTANTS COME HOME TO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

A key Roman Catholic teaching, which is not always shared fully, is that without being a member of the Catholic church, one is destined for hell. As a result, many Roman Catholics believe they need to help Protestants '*come home*' to the Roman Catholic church to save us from hell.

The word '*catholic*' means universal. Most Protestants don't see the Roman Catholic church as the one, true universal church. We believe the one true church is not a formal organization per se, but the overall Body of Christ comprised of born-again believers with Jesus as its head.

If I ask Protestants if they would join a Mormon, JW or Bahai church, or even getting together occasionally to worship and evangelize alongside people of these faiths, the vast majority - thankfully - would say no. A key reason for saying no is that these religions worship a different Jesus than our Jesus. They worship a different God. While the Catholic faith has the same Jesus as Protestants, the Roman Catholic church effectively views and treats Mary as God. As a result, it has created a 4-person Godhead, and thus also worships a different God than Protestants. Political correctness would say that is way too harsh a comment. But that's the reality, and when we're dealing with people's eternal lives, we can't afford to dance around the truth. For me, with Mary and the litany of other issues, how could I possibly recommend Protestants '*come home*' to a Roman Catholic church? I can't. Another critical difference is salvation. My view of Catholic salvation is as follows:

Repentance + believing in Jesus + confession of faith + membership in the Catholic church + 1-time water baptism + 1-time confirmation + ongoing communion + ongoing confession of sins to priests + ongoing works + ongoing indulgences + purgatory

The Protestant camp typically includes repentance, belief in Jesus and confessing one's faith with one's mouth. Some also believe water baptism and Baptism in the Holy Spirit (somewhat similar to the Catholic 2nd sacrament of Confirmation) but I think the evidence is clear they are not.

The vast majority of Protestants don't see joining the Roman Catholic church as going home. We would see it as going astray. Christianity, in its simplest form, is about having a personal relationship with God where the Father, Jesus and Holy Spirit are first and foremost in our lives. Instead of wondering about '*going home to*

28: Protestants and Catholics Together?

the Roman Catholic church', our thoughts are more along the lines of:

"How can a Roman Catholic, if truly born again and Holy Spirit is in [en] them, stay in the Catholic church where so many issues contradict the Bible, where the church has inserted itself between individuals and God, where Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the 9 Holy Spirit gifts are largely sidelined, where idolatry is rampant, and where lay Catholics' personal relationships with Jesus - which is the essence of Christianity - is not facilitated but hindered, and placed third behind their relationships with Mary and the Roman Catholic church?"

CLOSING POINTS TO PONDER

In the Introduction to **CEASED?**, my perspective on the issue of Protestants and Catholics evangelizing and worshiping alongside each other was as follows:

First, how significant are the differences in key beliefs between Protestants and Roman Catholics, both Charismatic and non-Charismatic? Second, should these differences prevent individuals of these denominations from worshipping and evangelizing alongside each other, even in situations where both appear to have been Baptized in the Holy Spirit and operate in 1 or more of the 9 Holy Spirit gifts?

By no means does **CEASED?** provide a complete analysis of all the issues on which Protestants and Catholics disagree. I do hope, however, that **CEASED?** brought clarity to some of the most critical issues. Much like the Cessationist vs Continuationist debate, the only way Protestants and Catholics can truly agree on matters of disagreement is if individuals:

1. are committed to seeking the truth;
2. will admit they're wrong if wrong, and want to go where the truth leads; and
3. accept the Bible as their ultimate authority on matters of faith.

If you're Roman Catholic, I hope **CEASED?** has brought you increased revelations of God's Word. If I have said anything wrong or misleading in any way, I apologize. That's not my intent. Going forward, you have to decide whether or not the Catholic church is teaching you the truth, and is helping you to grow in your personal relationship with Jesus. Yes, the Roman Catholic church has roots going back many centuries. Exactly when is debatable, but there is no question it was long ago.

28:25 Given the many issues surrounding the teachings and traditions of the Catholic church, is it prudent to ignore such issues in order to stay loyal to the Catholic church, and/or to stay true to long-standing family ties to the Catholic church? Or is it most prudent to seek God and study His word for yourself, and as God leads you, to then go to a church or denomination where the truth of God's Word is pursued and taught, and where your personal relationship with Jesus is the first priority?

28:26 The Bible is clear that individuals will do signs and wonders such as prophesying, casting out demons, and other miracles, but who won't get into heaven because they don't know Jesus on a personal basis. They are able to do amazing things, but only because they use the Name of Jesus. How many Charismatic Catholics and Protestants do you think this applies

to today? If we're engaged in such things but don't have an ongoing, 2-way, personal communication with Jesus going on, shouldn't we be worried? Shouldn't our first and immediate priority be to seek Jesus and get our relationship with Him established above all else?

- *Matthew 7:21 "Not **everyone** who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' **will enter the kingdom of heaven**, ... 23 And then I will declare to them, '**I never knew you; depart from Me**, you who practice lawlessness.'*

28:27 I suspect that even if the concerns raised in **CEASED?** are deemed to be legitimate, many Catholics will still believe that Roman Catholic teachings must be true, and that the Roman Catholic church must be the one true church simply because the Catholic church has been around for so long.

- i. If a teaching or organization has been around a long time, and that longevity means something must be true, wouldn't that mean Hinduism which started in ~2,000BC, Buddhism which started in ~500BC, and Islam which started in ~600AD, must also be true?
- ii. However, given so much taught in these religions contradicts the teachings of the Bible, doesn't that mean all of these long-standing religions must be wrong?
- iii. As a result, given all of these long-standing religions must be in error, doesn't that invalidate the argument that because the Roman Catholic church has been around for so long, its teachings, traditions and other practices must be right?

If You Decide to Leave the Roman Catholic Church

The thought of leaving the Roman Catholic church may be very difficult, especially if friends and family members don't understand the issues as you do, and may speak or behave unkindly towards you. However, please remember you're dealing with eternal matters here. Your strength to witness through words and actions could be the catalyst for friends, family members and others in the Roman Catholic community to also seek the truth in God's Word, and to cause them to make the Bible their final authority on matters of faith.

If you're a Roman Catholic priest or are otherwise employed by the Roman Catholic church, leaving the Catholic church presents even more challenges. I encourage you to seek God, and He will guide you as to what to do, and when. He loves it when we decide to pursue Him above all else. God can solve problems and move mountains you may think are impossible to solve or move. He is God after all. Open God's Word, and read how He rescued Israel time after time. And reach out to some local Protestants - or to Protestants who may not be so local.

For all Roman Catholics, regardless of your beliefs and decisions, I pray God radically blesses you with His truth, His love, His presence, and His power. One of the things Jesus came to do during His earthly ministry was to reveal Father God. I pray you will get deep revelation of your heavenly Father's love for you. And thank you for reading **CEASED?**. I hope it benefitted you in some small way. And if you seek Protestant' teachings, there are many good teachers. Ask God to guide you to a church where the Bible is central, and God's love, truth and power are evident.

To Leaders

THE Christian walk is an interesting one. We all have our unique quirks, giftings, desires, personalities, and a willingness to offer unsolicited advice that leaders are 'blessed' to have an opportunity to hear. Today's walk for leaders is challenging in ways that do not apply to us laypeople. Leaders, especially pastors, have so many demands which often make it difficult to live a life where one's spouse and family are the first priority after Christ. Pastors often can't share personal, financial and relationship struggles out of fear of losing credibility and even their job. They often can't go to another pastor in their home town to talk about personal issues. I've been told that doing so is like going to the competition. Pastors are often expected to lead the way in living by faith. The result is they often work for relatively low salaries. Pastor's children often pay a significant price. To pastors, spouses and children, you have our thanks and prayers. May God bless you all.

But ... here's the deal. I firmly believe the Baptism in the Holy Spirit and the 9 Holy Spirit gifts continue today. They have not ceased. For those Cessationists that now agree with me, several challenges await. One challenge is learning how to properly use the 9 Holy Spirit gifts in their personal Christian walk. Another challenge is equipping the saints they influence in their use of the Holy Spirit gifts. And for some, a third challenge may be how to reconcile with those whom they spoke and/or wrote about inappropriately in the past.

If any of the above applies to you, I pray God blesses you, strengthens you, gives you wisdom, and draws you even closer to God Himself as you walk this journey. I also pray that brothers and sisters in Christ who are experienced in these gifts open their hearts, and share their experiences, knowledge, and wisdom with you.

Another prayer of mine is for leaders and their spouses to gather together, not only for times of praise, worship and reconciliation, but for the equipping of leaders who are new to the Baptism of Holy Spirit and the 9 Holy Spirit gifts.

And if you're currently Roman Catholic, and you want to pursue more truths in God's Word and grow in your personal relationship with God, I encourage you to start spending some time alone with Him. Speak freely and candidly to Him, and listen. Ask Him to guide you. Read His word starting with John, Romans, Ephesians and Galatians. Reach out to Bible-teaching, Protestant churches gathering online, in church buildings, or in homes near you. Leaders and people attending these churches will bless you immensely. One way or another, God will lead you to quality Protestant teachers, or He will bring them to you.

May God bless and guide you all.

In Closing

IF after reading **CEASED?**, you still believe the 9 Holy Spirit gifts/manifestations and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit have ceased, consider the apostle Paul one last time. Paul was very clear he fully preached the gospel in words and power.

- ❑ *Romans 15:19 **in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit**; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum **I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.***

30:1 If Paul, and by extension, all other apostles and believers who were Baptized in the Holy Spirit in the Bible, needed the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the 9 Holy Spirit gifts, why wouldn't we still need them today?

30:2 Wouldn't the power of God through signs and wonders such as instantaneous healings or words of knowledge be of great help in sharing the Good News of Jesus today?

And again, consider the following scriptures:

- ❑ *Mark 16:15 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and **preach the gospel** to all creation.*
- ❑ *Mark 16:17 **These signs will accompany those who have believed**: in My name they will **cast out demons**, they will **speak with new tongues**; 18 ... they will **lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.***
- ❑ *Matthew 10:8 **Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons.** Freely you received, freely give.*
- ❑ *Matthew 28:19 Go therefore and **make disciples** of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,*

30:3 Aren't all the above commands still applicable today? If you say no, why?

30:4 Within your own life and that of your church in the last 12 months, what are the counts of individuals who:

- i. were used by God to help others get immediate physical healing;
- ii. cast out demons;
- iii. shared the gospel in words;
- iv. shared the gospel in words and power; and who
- v. water baptized others excluding relatives?

30:5 If your 'numbers' are low, isn't something missing? And if it isn't the Baptism in the Holy Spirit and the associated Holy Spirit gifts, what is missing?

30: In Closing

30:6 Are we actively engaged in the Great Commission, or are our churches just a holding pen for sheep?

To Other Believers

I've been a low-profile Christian who ministers to others in the background. I've been blessed by coming into contact with people who have helped me learn and grow in many different ways including educating me in the 9 Holy Spirit gifts. Going forward, if you're new to the gifts and you're not sure if you should pursue them, I encourage you to ask God what He wants you to do. From my perspective, it would be great if every believer was Baptized in the Holy Spirit and operated in the gifts as Holy Spirit distributes them. However, it's a personal choice and if you choose not to pursue such gifts, that's ok. And in so doing, you're no less and no more, a child of God than the believer who does engage in them. Whatever our choice, I pray believers will love, respect and support those of us who make a different choice.

Roman Catholics and Roman Catholic Charismatics

I have addressed some issues that are very close to the hearts of Roman Catholics. After reading my comments that conflict with Roman Catholic teachings, I hope you see that the basis for my concerns is centered on what the Bible teaches. The Bible is my ultimate authority, not any church teachings or traditions. Jesus, and not a church or organization, died for me. Holy Spirit is in [en] me as is Jesus. Jesus is my mediator, not another person. Jesus has already paid the one-time penalty for all my sins on the cross, not some of them. Jesus calls each believer into a personal relationship directly with Him. Anything or anyone that comes in between us can only hinder my relationship with Him in the same way my relationship with my spouse or children would be hindered if I primarily communicated with them through a third party. Thus, when I say that I have major struggles in worshipping or co-evangelizing alongside Roman Catholics, it's not because of you as an individual. I'm not questioning if you're a Christian. It is because too many key teachings are contradictory or out of alignment with Biblical teaching, and it is these incorrect teachings and unbiblical traditions that cause me to grieve for Roman Catholics. My prayer is for every Roman Catholic to be immersed in God's Word daily, and that God speaks directly to you. And if you believe the Bible is not accurate or that you aren't capable of reading it, those are lies from the pit of hell.

But to Leaders - It's Another Story

I believe in unity and don't like division within the Body of Christ. However, there are a few big however's. Unity with compromise is fine if the compromise is a minor issue such as what color to paint the nursery. However, unity that compromises God's Word on key issues such as salvation is not acceptable. Unity that involves acceptance, endorsement and ignoring of sin is not acceptable. Unity that keeps problems quiet, takes away the voice of congregants, or in any way facilitates spiritual or other forms of abuse is not acceptable. Unity that undermines Father God, Jesus or Holy Spirit, the Bible, the cross, the shed blood of Christ, Christ's death, burial and resurrection, or the fact that Jesus is the only Way, is not acceptable.

Ungodly unity is dangerous, and I think it's important to remember Jesus's words and actions didn't always bring unity. And there is a teaching about sheep and goats.

- ❑ *Matthew 25:32 And all the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, just as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats;*

When it comes to Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the 9 Holy Spirit gifts, I don't think the biggest stumbling blocks are over disagreement on scripture or compromise. I believe the biggest issues are heart issues including pride, arrogance, greed, and perhaps most of all, loyalty to current beliefs over a commitment to seeking the truth in God's Word. Many concerns expressed by Cessationists are valid. However, I have also seen blanket statements and comments from Cessationists that are flat out wrong and misleading. Some Cessationist comments and behaviors were appalling. And my guess is, there will be Cessationists whose first reaction will not be to sit back and try to determine if my points are valid, but rather will try to find a way to justify existing beliefs and discredit myself or the contents herein. If anything short of seeking the truth is not pursued ... well, that's just sad. And please, if I'm wrong on something in **CEASED?**, please share. I do want to know.

Due Respect

None of us know another person's heart and thus we often don't know whether or not a person has a personal relationship with God. Leaders and those who feel they are called to speak out against other teachers need to pray and seek guidance from God rather than automatically criticize, mock and demean. And when adequate Biblical steps have been taken to no avail and we do feel led to speak out, leaders have a responsibility to be accurate and fair. We need to refrain from only seeking the negative, from presenting biased evidence using selective videos and incidents, from making blanket statements based on a limited sample size, and from misrepresenting the other's point of view. The standard used should be God's standard, and nothing less. We also need to seek God's guidance before commenting on others who are learning to live the more supernatural life, a life that typically requires a different level of faith.

CEASED? presents a considerable amount of evidence and asks hundreds of questions. **CEASED?** is not the be-all and end-all of information on issues addressed herein. However, I do suggest that Cessationist leaders who continue to teach that Baptism of the Holy Spirit and 9 Holy Spirit gifts have ceased, have a responsibility to explain where and why the key arguments against cessation in **CEASED?** are wrong. And to do so objectively with a mindset of leading those being influenced towards the truth, not to justify any long-held mindsets or teaching. Our focus has to be one of taking the love and truth of God to the lost and hurting, and anything short of honestly seeking the truth in God's worth is irresponsible.

Ok, I'm off my soapbox. May God bless you and your families with His presence not only today, but every day going forward.

About the Author

Don Dixon basically ignored the issue of faith for the first 45 years of his life. He spent the following 10 years attending various churches where he came to know a fair amount about Jesus. However, he didn't begin a personal relationship with Jesus until tough times hit in his mid-fifties. During one of his darkest days, he cried out to Jesus. Jesus responded and Don was truly born again. A transformation in his whole being began, one aspect of which involved a different attitude towards sin. His transformation process was expedited a few months later when Don was Baptized in the Holy Spirit and Fire.

After decades in the large corporate world where the pursuit of money was his key goal, Don's primary desire now is to have an ever-improving relationship with God and his family, to share the Good News of Jesus, and to support his wife Lori in her ministry, part of which involves educating church leaders and believers on trauma. Lori is the author of *'Soles Defining Souls'*, a book based on real-world experiences of women hurt by other Christians and church leadership.

Don and Lori live near Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

Contact Me

FEEDBACK on any aspect of **CEASED?** is appreciated, especially if it shows where and why I'm wrong, or provides new perspectives, additional scriptures and/or questions that would help clarify issues. God's Word is so rich, and His ways so far beyond ours. Just when we think we have some things all figured out on a particular issue, God shows us that there is more. While I think I have a reasonable understanding of Baptism of the Holy Spirit and related issues, I assure you that I have more to learn.

Please share your feedback through my website - www.ceased.ca. Thank you in advance for taking the time to share.

If your intent is just to attack, criticize, ridicule and/or make statements that aren't respectful, I won't validate such communications with a reply. I will, however, pray that God blesses you and your family in radical ways.

Finally, on my website, you will find 2 free lists of 50 questions in PDF format. One set is for Protestants and one for Roman Catholics. These questions are designed to stimulate thought and discussion.

Blessings to you all.

Don

- ❑ *John 14:16 I will ask the Father, and **He will give you another Helper**, that He may be **with [meta]** you forever; 17 that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides **with [para]** you and **will be in [en]** you.*
- ❑ *Mark 16:15 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation ... 17 **These signs** will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will **cast out demons**, they will **speak with new tongues**; 18 they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will **lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.**"*
- ❑ *Acts 1:8 but **you will receive power** when the **Holy Spirit** has come **upon [epi] you**; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.*
- ❑ *1 Corinthians 14:1 Pursue love, yet **desire earnestly spiritual gifts**, but **especially** that you may **prophesy** ... 5 Now I wish that you all spoke in **tongues**, but even more that you would prophesy; and **greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets** ...*
- ❑ *1 Corinthians 2:5 so that your **faith** would not rest on the wisdom of men, but **on the power of God.***