

Meeting Messiah Knowing God

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Meeting Messiah ~ Knowing God

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Welcome to the Mishpochah (the family) of God!

If you have prayed and asked the Lord Jesus (Yeshua) into your life, you have just made the most significant choice you will ever make. You have stepped into a personal relationship with God Himself. There are many blessings and opportunities that He has made available to you. These pages will help you understand what these blessings and opportunities are and will introduce you to how they can become yours.

If you aren't sure yet if you're ready to welcome Jesus (Yeshua) into your life, reading through these pages will help you see what making Him Lord of your life will bring to you so you can make an intelligent and informed decision.

You may be a Jewish person who has just come to realize that Yeshua (Jesus) is the Messiah of Israel, or you may be someone who has known about Him for years but never turned your life over to Him as Lord of your life before. Maybe you never even gave Him a thought before now. Either way, God has reached out His loving arms to you, wanting to draw you closer to Himself if you are reading this. As you come to know Him more and more, you can look forward to becoming increasingly aware of the goodness of God operating in your life. The best is yet to come!

Welcoming Yeshua (Jesus) into your life is not like switching political parties, like deciding to become a Conservative after being a Liberal (or the other way around) all your life. It's not only a change in what you believe about God, but you have now entered into a relationship with God who is real and supremely interested in your well-being. Living with God in your life is the most natural thing in the world, because we were created to be in loving relationship with Him. To begin to live your life in concert with God is to return to normal life as God has created you – to be one with Him.

You are a person with a personality, with emotions and with intelligence all of which enable you to make choices in your life. These are qualities that you have because God created you in His image and these qualities are part of His own nature and character. He understands you because He created you with these characteristics of personality, emotions, and intelligence.

The major difference between us and God is that God alone is holy and without sin and all that He does is good and right and just and He is motivated by love in everything He does. Once you come to faith in Yeshua He begins to teach you to be more like Him day by day. Not only will you come to know and love Him more and more, you will find that you also love others – and even yourself more. These pages will reveal to you much about God as well as how His goodness toward you will affect your life in many positive ways. While we cannot address every aspect of knowing God – that will take eternity – meeting Yeshua (Jesus) is the beginning of the wonder of coming to know God for yourself.

You will notice that we call Jesus by the name His family and friends called Him when He was on earth – Yeshua. Yeshua means “God is salvation” or “God saves.” The Hebrew term for salvation means: saves, rescues, helps, heals and frees. Yeshua has accomplished all those things

for us. The term “Christ” means “anointed one” which in Hebrew is “Messiah.” When the Bible was translated into other languages the meaning of His name was lost in the translations. Jesus Christ was not His name when He walked the earth. We choose to call Him by His real name – Yeshua, and His real title – Messiah. We will use Hebrew for some other names and words at times as it seems fitting also.

We will occasionally quote a Scripture verse and list its location in the Bible just in case you care to look it up and get the whole picture of what it is saying. For instance, John 3:16 would mean the quote is taken from the book of John, chapter 3, and verse 16. There’s a Table of Contents in the front of your Bible to tell you where each book of the Bible is located.

Each chapter of this book you hold in your hands is followed by a number of questions designed for your own personal edification or for group discussion. If studying it in a group, each person may want to read the chapter and then answer the questions for themselves at home and then come together to discuss your answers. Some chapters have more challenging questions than others. The questions are designed to help you to learn what the Bible says so that you can decide, based on the Scriptures, what you believe. You will also notice that we quote Scripture throughout the book, giving you chapter and verse as to where you can find it, should you care to look it up to see it in context.

Now, come along with us while we introduce you to Messiah Yeshua and the wonderful blessings and the exciting life with God that is ahead for you.

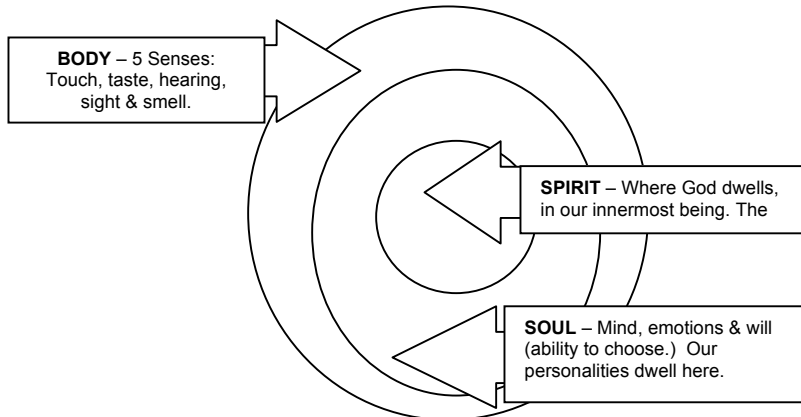
Chapter 1

BEING BORN AGAIN

If you have truly opened the door of your heart to Yeshua, your life will reflect it. There will be a change in you. You may not “feel” anything initially or you may have had a profound experience. Sometimes people have experiences with God before they truly commit their lives to Him. This is a time when God is drawing people to Himself. But at some point in our lives, if we are to be truly born again, we will yield to the love of God and submit to Yeshua as Lord of our lives.

It's kind of like getting married. You're not really married until you make the commitment to share your life with that special someone and you say “I do.” When you ask Yeshua into your life, you're saying “I do” to Him and committing to share your life from now on with the Most Special Person in the universe – Yeshua. Your “I do” is also a commitment to live your life “in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Colossians 1:10). The most amazing thing about these words is that God – Almighty and Holy God – even though they were written centuries ago, is speaking them directly to you today. He wants to lead you into this kind of enormously satisfying life. It begins with being born again.

What does being Born again mean? We were all born in the natural from our mother's womb. As you know, we each have a physical body and we each have a soul. The soul is the place of our emotions, our mind and our will (where we make decisions). Our soul is that part of us where our personalities dwell. But we also were created with a spirit. Our spirits are the inner most part of us where we communicate with God. Some people get involved with so-called “spiritual” religions and occult practices, but these still take place in the soul. Our spirits were designed by God as the place of interaction with Him. You will find that you sense God with you in your inner most being, usually as a quiet peace deep inside.



Most of us don't even know we have a spirit because it's basically non-functional until God comes to dwell within us when we are born again. As you will see in the next chapter, we are all sinners. There is not one person – except Yeshua – who has ever been without sin. The Bible says, “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). You're part of “all.”

It is our sin that has kept us separated from God. Some think they are not separated from God because they talk to Him, but that is not the same as having your spirit alive to God so that you can hear Him speaking to you on a daily basis. Your spirit will know when you are united with God. “The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God” (Romans 8:16). You may not have given a lot of thought to God or to being accountable to Him before, but once you are born again, you will find that He has become a part of your life, of your thinking. He's moved in! He will become your delight and fascination and you will want to know more and more about Him.

Previously, your spirit was as good as dark (without His light) and dead (unresponsive to God). People often see themselves as good people, and they undoubtedly are in many ways. You are probably one of them. But if you have ever told a lie, or wished someone was dead because you were so angry with them, or stolen something, then in God's eyes you are a liar, or murderer, and a thief. If you've ever taken God's name in vain, you've blasphemed the holy name of God making you a blasphemer. If you've ever lusted after someone, you have had fornication or adultery in your heart making you an adulterer. You have, therefore, broken the Ten Commandments because God says that if you break one of them, it's as if you broke them all.

Your heart is the place of your affections, where your desires reside. It is not only what we do but what we have entertained in our hearts and minds that contribute to our sin nature. Even living a life of independence from God, as if He didn't matter, is sin. The Bible says, “Whatever is not from faith is sin” (Romans 14:23). The sin of independence, as if we are our own god, is what has kept us from knowing God before.

However, when we open our hearts to God and acknowledge our sin before Him and accept His forgiveness, the Spirit of God comes to dwell in our own spirit and restores our union with God so that we can enter into relationship with Him. Imagine that! Relationship with your Creator. Being born again of His Spirit, you have become alive and responsive in your spirit to God and can begin to enjoy the bountiful benefits of His goodness.

When we come to Yeshua this way, we accept that He made the way for us to be forgiven by God, not only for the sins we've committed, but for our sin nature – that inclination to sin that exists in all of us. God offers forgiveness to you because His Son Yeshua (Jesus) took upon Himself the punishment for sin that you would have had to pay. The punishment for sin is death and eternal separation from God because God, being holy, does not dwell with sin. But once you accept the forgiveness He offers us through Yeshua, your spirit becomes as if it's brand new, as if you are born anew, this time by the Spirit of God. In many ways, it is as if you really are beginning life all over again, with a new start, because God has given you a new heart, one that now includes Him in your life as Lord.

HEARING THE VOICE OF GOD

Now that you are born again and one with God, you will find that you can hear His voice speaking to you on a regular basis. You have become one of His sheep. Yeshua said, “My sheep hear My voice and I know them and they follow Me” (John 10:27).

Sometimes people hear God’s voice before they are born again as a call to them from God. It may be Him drawing you or wooing your heart to Him, or it may be a call from God to warn you of some danger or of a sin that will take you down a path that will bring harm to you. Once you are born again, you will be aware that God is speaking to you on a regular basis. It is in heeding the voice of God and doing what He’s telling you to do that results in being counted by Him as one of His sheep, like sheep that follow their shepherd.

He speaks in various ways. On rare occasion someone will hear God’s voice audibly, just as we hear others speak. But generally, He speaks into your spirit through your thoughts or in an impression you receive. Or you may just have “a knowing” and suddenly you are aware of something you didn’t know before and couldn’t have learned. Being able to hear God speak to you is most likely to become one of the greatest delights of your entire life and something you depend upon to give you wisdom and comfort when needed.

He will primarily speak to you as you read your Bible. As you read, something may seem to jump off the page, or it will seem like He’s speaking right to your heart. You are impacted by the words or the thought behind the words and you know that what you just read is specifically for you from the Lord.

He also speaks through a gentle tug (or not so gentle if need be) on your conscience. God warns us of what is not good for us through our conscience. Since He only wants the best for you and He can see what’s ahead for you, you would be wise to heed what your conscience tells you. Beware, however, of anything that brings you demonic fear or guilt.

The Bible often speaks of “the fear of God.” That means the reverent awareness of His holiness and the need to be respectful of Him. If you have a thought that brings you fear, it’s not a thought from God. A fear that brings you terror or drives you away or makes you want to withdraw from Him is not from God. God’s “nudges” are always loving, and never rejecting. Even if He is correcting us for something, He is always gentle and encouraging.

He also speaks through other people. You may hear a teaching or a message being preached, or something someone says, that makes you know God is speaking directly to you personally through their words.

You may want to pray every day, “Lord, open the ears of my spirit to hear when You are speaking to me.” He loves to communicate with His people and He does so with each of us very personally and lovingly, so expect Him to speak to you. And speak to Him; ask Him questions. Then listen for what He would say to you. He may respond back, as we said, in various ways. You can enjoy dialogue between you and God throughout your day. Just as we wish to be heard and to hear from those we care about, so does God, so talk to Him. That’s what a relationship is,

isn't it? Include Him in your thoughts, even in your most secret thoughts. That may take some time to get used to. He knows them anyway, so why not get His input on what's important to you. Sharing what is going on in your life with God as your Closest Friend will bring an added dimension of delight and security to your life as God gives you wisdom for situations or comfort in difficulties, especially when you maintain a thankful heart for Him being with you.

You may want to keep a journal of the thoughts and impressions you are having and what you are learning from God as you process things with Him. You may also enjoy recording your thoughts as you are reading in the Bible. Your Bible reading will become an adventure. Ask Him what He would like to show you in the passage your reading. Write down what comes to your mind and what the verses mean to you as you ponder them. After a period of time, you'll see patterns in what He's showing you. Periodically read back over your notes and see what you've been learning and you may see how those things have been working out in your life, one day at a time. You may notice a pattern of things He's been teaching you. This will help you to develop a sensitivity to when God is speaking to you and to what He is doing in your life, because He's always at work deep inside to change you for the good.

Note: You are now ready to answer the questions on the first chapter. You will be required to look up these verses. This will help familiarize you with your Bible. You may want to write out the verses and your answers in your notebook. If you are in a discussion group, read the verses to the group before answering what you think each question is saying. This can be an opportunity for quite a lively discussion.

Chapter 1 ~ Being Born Again

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. Read John 3:3 - 7. This was a dialog between Yeshua and one of Israel's leading teachers. It becomes clear that it does not require being born again to teach natural things, but it does require being born again to know what God is saying. How imperative does Yeshua say it is to be born again? What is your understanding of being born again? What does this verse say you able to "see" if you are born-again? What does that mean to you personally?
2. Read 1 Corinthians 2:14. How is a "natural man" (a person without the Spirit of God) likely to differ from a spiritual person in the way they see things? What examples can you think of as the difference between the two ways of seeing things? How extensively might that difference affect people's lives? How might your own life be affected by this difference?
3. What does Romans 14:17 say about the Kingdom of God? Are those three qualities mentioned becoming more meaningful to you? In what way?
4. Are you becoming more aware of the Kingdom of God in your life as being different than, perhaps, the way you saw things before you met Yeshua? If so, in what ways? You may want to pray and ask God to make you more sensitive to His voice and to "see" the Kingdom around you, that is to see things from His perspective. You may want to note the things you become aware of in your journal each day. Be on the lookout for God-sightings (places where you see Him at work)!
5. Read John 10:26. What does this verse say about someone who does not believe what Yeshua says? Keep in mind that to the Hebrews, which would certainly include Yeshua, to believe is to line up one's actions and life according to what they believed. Then how critical is the issue of faith (belief)?
6. Read 1 Peter 1:3 & :23. What does being born again enable you to participate in? How closely linked is Yeshua's resurrection and being born-again? Please explain. What does God's Word say about how long this 'salvation' will last?
7. Read John 10:27, 28. Who hears Yeshua's voice? What is His response? What should their response be? There is a three-fold promise in verse :28. What are those three promises? What do these mean to you? How do these promises apply to you personally?

Mazel Tov! Congratulations! You just completed what might be your first Bible study. You will find that going over these notes, and memorizing or re-reading the Scripture verses will begin to make them a part of you.

The world gives you ungodly input all day long. These studies are giving you godly understanding that will indeed result in righteousness, peace, joy and love as you increasingly see things from a Kingdom perspective.

Chapter 2

GETTING TO KNOW YESHUA AS GOD THE SON

Your life just changed because you have met the Person of Messiah Yeshua (Jesus). You can't see Him in the natural realm but He's there with you in the spirit realm. Though He came and lived as 100% Man on the earth, He is also 100% God. The mystery is that all the fullness of God was resident in a single human being. Yeshua was all God and all man at the same time. God manifested Himself (made Himself known) by sending Yeshua as His Son into the earth in order to bring mankind back to Himself. This does not mean, as some have erroneously thought, that Yeshua and God are two Gods.

The most often prayed prayer by Jewish people since Moses' time is called the *Sh'ma*: "Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one" (Deuteronomy 6:3). This prayer is called the *Sh'ma* because *sh'ma* means "hear" or "listen" in Hebrew, the word the prayer begins with. The word for "one" in Hebrew is *echad*, which means "one with several parts," such as one bunch of grapes, or one class of many students. We could say, then, that God gave Moses this prayer to remind Israel that God is a compound or many-faceted One. It also means that He is the only God, there is no other God.

YESHUA IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Bible makes some very strong statements about Yeshua that tell us that the pre-incarnate Son of God was involved in creation. The writer of the Book of Hebrews give Him praise and says, "You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of Your hands" (Hebrews 1:10). John saw Him this way: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being" (John 1:1-3). Yeshua is the word of God because everything He said and did was in exact compliance with God's Word. He is the embodiment of law and the prophets of the Old Testament.

This may all sound outrageous but if Yeshua is God, how could He not be eternal and if eternal He would have been involved in creation. Prophecies of Messiah and glimpses of Him are found in the Old Testament but are hidden to us until we know who Yeshua is. Proverbs gives us one such poetic glimpse.

The Lord possessed me at the beginning of His way,
Before His works of old. From everlasting I was established,
From the beginning, from the earliest times of the earth.
When there were no depths I was brought forth,
When there were no springs abounding with water.

Before the mountains were settled,
Before the hills I was brought forth;
While He had not yet made the earth and the fields,
Nor the first dust of the world.
When He established the heavens, I was there,
When He inscribed a circle on the face of the deep,
When He made firm the skies above,
When the springs of the deep became fixed,
When He set for the sea its boundary
So that the water would not transgress His command,
When He marked out the foundations of the earth;
Then I was beside Him, as a master workman;
And I was daily His delight,
Rejoicing always before Him,
Rejoicing in the world, His earth,
And having my delight in the sons of men.” (Proverbs 8:22-30)

God manifested Himself in different ways to Israel, for example, in fire and thunder on Mt. Sinai, as a pillar of fire at night and cloud by day for forty years while Israel wandered the Sinai desert, and in a glory cloud of His awesome presence in the tabernacle and later in the temple which we refer to as His *Shekhinah* glory. Also each time the “Angel of the Lord” appeared to Israel, He spoke in the first person, as only God could speak, as Creator and the One who causes miracles to happen, like when He promised Abraham that his wife Sarah would give birth to a child at age 90!

God has also chosen to manifest Himself in the Person of Yeshua. Though our English translations of the Bible call him the “Son of God,” it would actually be more accurate to address Him as “God the Son.” This is not two Gods. As Yeshua said, “I and the Father (God) are one” (John 10:30). God is only and ever one and Yeshua is God manifested in the flesh. One translation of the opening verses of the letter to the Hebrews, speaking about Yeshua says so beautifully that “He is the out-raying of God’s glory” (1:3), meaning that though the sun is far brighter than what we are able to look at directly, the rays of the sun bring the reality of the sun to us in warmth and light. So Yeshua brings the reality of God the Father to us.

While Israel was aware of God’s care for them, it is through Yeshua that we really come to know God as Father. As a Man, Yeshua’s relationship with God when on earth was as a Son to His Father. Yet it is clear that Yeshua is God just as His Father is God, there really being only one God. The Hebrew prophet Isaiah declared one of the major Messianic prophecies God gave to Israel: “For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us, and the government will rest on His shoulders. And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6.) So we see how God declared that the Messiah would be born as a baby boy – “a son” – who would also be “Mighty God (and) Eternal Father.” No wonder He is also called “Wonderful!”

WHY DID YESHUA COME TO EARTH AS A MAN?

The Bible tells us that we “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Yeshua came to earth as the only sinless man by the fore-ordained plan of God to bring mankind back to God. But how did we get into all that sin in the first place?

God created the first man, Adam and his wife Eve, to be perfect and innocent. However, they succumbed to temptation and soon found themselves living in the consequences of separation from holy God. Mankind has been living with the result of that separation and loss of holiness ever since. We refer to this as “The Fall,” meaning a fall from the innocence and purity with which Adam and Eve were created. From that time forward, because each generation carries the nature of their father, our sin nature is passed down through our generations through our fathers. God knew about this “Fall” before He even created the earth and prepared ahead of time for a solution. The solution was Yeshua, God Himself coming in the flesh. That was the only way to bi-pass the sin nature of the fathers, by God being the Father of the sinless One who would come to restore mankind back to Himself.

WAS YESHUA REALLY BORN OF A VIRGIN?

When God wanted to send His Son Yeshua to earth, God through His Holy Spirit miraculously caused a virgin named Miriam (Mary) to conceive a child. The Hebrew prophet Isaiah prophesied about the coming Messiah’s birth saying, “The Lord Himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14). Some Old Testament translations have used the word “maiden” instead of “virgin” for the Hebrew word “*alma*,” but it would be no sign from God if a young woman had a son. That Miriam (Mary) was a virgin when Yeshua was both conceived and born, is a definite fulfillment of this verse that contributes to validating Yeshua’s Messiahship.

God sent the Angel Gabriel to Miriam to tell her what was about to happen. Here’s the conversation. Let’s listen in:

“And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.... Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" 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” (Luke 1:31-35).

The Bible tell us that God is the Supreme Creator of all that exists: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth... and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters,” (Genesis 1:1,2). If God could speak all of creation into existence while His Spirit interacted with what was being created, then surely He could cause a fetus to be implanted into the womb of a woman. And since all He created was “good” (Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, etc.) and entirely without sin or evil, then we see how this Son could be altogether “good” and without sin.

Isaiah had prophesied that this Son was to be called Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14) which in Hebrew means “God is with us.” It wasn’t Yeshua’s literal name but it was who He was – God with us. Yeshua was born just like any other baby is born – only He was the Son of God. And He was without sin, having no sin nature because He had no sinful father. Being free of sin which brings separation between people, He grew up “in the favor of God and men” (Luke 2:52).

WHAT WAS YESHUA’S LIFE ON EARTH LIKE?

Yeshua grew up in a very Hebrew (Jewish) environment in a large family. We know about His mother and earthly father Joseph who was a carpenter. Scriptures says that after Yeshua was born several siblings were born. When He began doing miracles, the townspeople questioned, “Is not this the carpenter, the son of Miriam (Mary), and brother of Yacov (James) and Yosef (Joseph) and Yehudah (Judah or Jude) and Shimone (Simon)? Are not His sisters here with us?” (Mark 6:3). We have included their Hebrew names to make the point that Yeshua was born into and was raised in a wholly Jewish family rather than what the anglicized names found in our English Bibles seem to present. Extra-Biblical writings speak of Miriam’s mother being named Ann, which in Hebrew was more likely to be Hanna. Did you ever think of Yeshua as having siblings, and a grandmother? A normal family, it would seem.

Along with all the other people in His family and around Him in the town He lived in, Yeshua believed in and lived His life before the God of Israel. They would have faithfully observed all the Jewish holidays and the Sabbaths and obeyed all that God had commanded Israel. So, you can see that Yeshua grew up in a thoroughly Hebrew culture, religion and lifestyle, exactly the environment God wanted His Son to be brought up in.

Yeshua followed in the footsteps of Joseph as a carpenter. Since the Bible tells us, “He did all things well” (Mark 7:37), most likely He was a pretty good carpenter at that. When He was thirty years old, the same age that a Hebrew man could enter service of the priesthood before God, He began His ministry. Shortly before that, God sent a man named John (in Hebrew: Yohanan), who was actually Yeshua’s cousin, to begin to preach a message to Israel to turn away from their sins and to turn to God.

Most of Israel was following God, but their leaders taught them to observe the “traditions of the elders” which put legalistic requirements upon them that far exceeded what God had intended for Israel when He gave them His commandments through Moses. These added “laws” resulted in a misinterpretation of what God is really like and what he expected from them as His people. He wanted them to love Him in response to His love for them, not to be preoccupied with law-keeping in minutia. It’s why the most important commandment He gave to Israel says, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (Deuteronomy 6:5).

God sent John ahead of Yeshua to begin to call Israel back to Himself. As he did so, John baptized (immersed) people in the Jordan river who wanted to be cleansed of their sins and to turn back to God. These washings were called a *mikveh* by the Jewish people and were done in

order to be clean before the Lord. (We will talk more about baptism, or *mikveh*, in a later chapter.)

Though Yeshua had no sin, He came to John to be baptized “in order to fulfill all righteousness” (Matthew 3:15), that is, to obey all that God has said to do. So Yeshua was immersed in the water in baptism. At that time a voice was heard from heaven saying, “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17). God Himself spoke from heaven to acknowledge how pleased He was with His Son Yeshua, even before He did any miracles or preached one message. At that time, John saw the Holy Spirit of God coming down from heaven in the form of something like a dove and settling upon Yeshua. The Holy Spirit is not a dove for He is a Spirit, without a physical body. But the dove symbolized that something directly from heaven came upon Yeshua that enabled Him to enter into His ministry empowered by the Spirit of God.

Yeshua’s whole ministry was to bring mankind back to His Father. For three and a half years He taught people about the Kingdom of God, demonstrating God’s love and power by healing the sick, raising the dead, and setting people free of all that held them bound. As He taught them of how the Kingdom of God is so far greater than Rome or any government of men, He gave them hope to live in an overcoming way so that in their new-found faith in God, they no longer feared the Romans.

WHY WAS YESHUA CRUCIFIED?

You would think that since He brought such good to so many, that everyone would love Him. And thousands did. However, as the people flocked to Him to listen to what He had to say, and many were healed of diseases, quite a number of the priests and leaders in the Temple saw Him as a threat. Many of these were men who were working in collaboration with the Romans and they wanted to keep their positions of power. Actually, the high priest at that time was no longer a descendent of Aaron, Moses’ brother whom God had made high priest, designating his sons to continue the priesthood for generations to come. Now the title went to the highest bidder with payment going to the Romans who ruled over Israel at that time. These priests saw Yeshua as disrupting the status quo in which they had favor with Rome and also exercised control over all that transpired in the Temple, including the Temple funds.

The priests, Pharisees and Scribes were so concerned that their laws be observed that they reacted to Yeshua’s non-compliance to them. In reality, these were additional laws that had been added to the Commandments which God gave to Moses. They knew that Israel had been exiled to Babylon in 586 B.C.E. because they broke God’s commandments as a nation and worshipped other gods. So they decided they had better not only learn the laws but add “fences” around them, to be sure they weren’t violated. Now the fences had become as binding as God’s commandments. It was these fence-laws that Yeshua called “the traditions of men” which He saw as keeping the people from God’s true words to Israel.

This conflict set up a good bit of the animosity that the priests had for Yeshua. Consequently, these leaders accused Him of breaking the laws (of the Sabbath, for instance) when it was their traditional and burdensome added laws which He did not follow. He always kept the commandments God had given to Israel. Of the men who most violently opposed Yeshua were

the Sadducees, a sect of priests who did not believe in life after death, nor in angels nor anything supernatural. And they evidently did not fear God's judgment in wanting to have Yeshua murdered. And so they plotted against Him to have him killed.

It may look like all the Jewish people were against Him as you read the Gospel accounts but in fact, it was only some of the leaders and a group they stirred up against Yeshua who came against Him. Not even all the priests or Sanhedrin (governing body of seventy elders) were against Him, some even vocalizing that He might be the Messiah. The ordinary people, the "*am ha eretz*," the people of the land, loved Him. After all, He healed their sick, raised their dead and set people free from demonic oppression. Of course, they would love Him. But what none of them knew was that God had planned from the foundation of the earth that Yeshua would be crucified for the sins of mankind. However, who would be involved in His murder and who would choose to follow him was each person's individual choice.

God had told Israel through Moses that sin had to be paid for by blood. An animal had to die to pay for the sins in order for the person to be forgiven. A significant part of Israel's existence before God had to do with the sacrifice of sheep and goats and other animals that were required for God to forgive the sins of the people. Sin is so terrible that blood had to be spilled in order for sin to be atoned for and washed away. The Bible tells us, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I (God) have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that makes an atonement for the soul" (Leviticus 17:11). Much of what took place in the Temple was the blood sacrifices. The animals had to be pure, without any blemish or spots. Perfect, in other words. Not just any animal would do. A holy God demands a holy and perfect sacrifice.

Yeshua was to be that final holy and perfect sacrifice. He would die once and for all, meaning one time for all people, though it is for each person to accept what He has done for us. We are talking about God the Son, the One who created the world, the One in whom all authority and power exists, the One who is altogether holy and altogether pure, the One whose nature and character is altogether good and good only. Can we even imagine what these words mean? This One came into the earth like all other men, as an infant, lived a sinless life and then God condemned Himself (in the Person of His Son) to death for the payment of other people's violations of the commandments He gave them!

He is love unending, love unselfish, love fully committed and complete. It is without reservation or limitation. Being the All Powerful One He humbled Himself to the point of death on our behalf. Humankind would never have envisioned that kind of selfless love. Only God would have. His death on the cross reveals all this to those who have spiritual eyes to see it. Not everyone does. "For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18).

It was God who set the standards in the first place for righteousness and holiness. And it was God in the Person of Yeshua who took the punishment for our violation of those standards. No one else could have. No one else was without sin to qualify as the Perfect Sacrifice.

Yeshua lived His life to show people what God was like and how He loved them. The ultimate reason for His becoming a Man was to die as the sacrificial “lamb of God” (1 John 1:29, 36), to show us the ultimate expression of the love of God for mankind. He so loved us that He went to these lengths to bring us out of sin and back to Himself. “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). If you have accepted His sacrifice for your own sins, you have become one of His friends!

WHY YESHUA IS CALLED “THE LAMB OF GOD”

In order that people would know later, when they figured out that this was God’s prophetic doing, Yeshua died at the exact time that the sacrificial lambs were being slain in the Temple for Passover. Passover is the celebration of the power of God, through a series of miracles, to set Israel free from 400 years of slavery to Egypt, the most powerful nation on earth at that time. God also showed Pharaoh that he was not a god as he and Egypt thought he was. Only Israel’s God is God; there is no other. Each year since, for some thirty-five hundred years, Jewish people have commemorated the deliverance by God from slavery to freedom at the same time of year, in the Spring, at Passover time.

The year of Yeshua’s death, God was at work to bring about the ultimate freedom – releasing the world from the greater slavery to sin and death. By God’s great divine hand, Yeshua died on Passover, at the exact time the Passover lambs were being slaughtered. Like the lambs that were inspected for purity before being deemed perfect for the sacrifice, Yeshua too was being examined to determine His sin. He was found without guilt, yet even so, condemned to die so that, unbeknown to the men who condemned Him to death, His perfect and sinless life enabled Him to pay the price for the sins of the whole world. That’s why John (Yohanan) had announced prophetically to the people when he saw Yeshua, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29).

Though Yeshua had the power to call ten thousand angels to come to His rescue, He willingly gave up His life on our behalf. No one could have taken His life from Him. Here’s what He had to say to His disciples about His life when He knew His death was approaching: “No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again” (John 10:18). That does not mean it was easy for Him. He suffered greatly when the moment finally came upon Him as his struggle in the Garden of Gethsemane to submit to the crucifixion. He could have called legions of angels to come and rescue Him, but no. He “began to be grieved and distressed. Then He said to them (the disciples), "My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me." And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will." (Matthew 26:37-39)

In one of the major Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament, the prophet Isaiah described what would take place:

“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” (Isaiah 53:7).

Yeshua willingly submitted Himself to being misunderstood, mocked, ridiculed, beaten unmercifully and crucified which is the most torturous form of death imaginable. He endured the worst of what mankind has done to each other since the beginning of time. Yet He still never sinned. Instead of becoming bitter against those who inflicted the suffering upon Him, He asked God to forgive those who brought this upon Him. By that forgiveness, He forgave us all. His cry was, "Forgive them, Abba (Father), for they know not what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). Had they realized that He was "the Lord of Glory" and the "Holy One of Israel," they never would have crucified Him (See 1 Corinthians 2:8). His is Omnipotent Mercy!

It was predetermined by God that He would die as He had to become the atonement (though only God knew it) in order for the sin that separates mankind from God to be done away with, once and for all. This one final sacrifice would extend not just to Israel but to all mankind. As He died, your sins and my sins were supernaturally drawn into His Being. Because sin causes us to be separated from God, when our sin was upon Him, Yeshua was left with only His humanity and in complete identity with the separation from God that mankind has lived with since sin first entered the world with Adam and Eve's first act of disobedience.

Never having known it before, having always been in union with His Father, the separation Yeshua experienced shocked Him. Because He could not sense His Father with Him for the first time, He cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Psalm 22:1; Mark 15:34). This was the first time He didn't call God "Abba" (Hebrew for Father). We cannot imagine the agony and possibly the terror He went through. It seems that He experienced the absolute abandonment men experience when they are found eternally separated from God at the point of death. But even so, He still did not sin. He did not get angry with God whom He thought abandoned Him, He didn't lapse into resentment or bitterness against the men who arranged His death, or against those who tortured Him. He remained faithful to God to the end, breathing with His last breaths the forgiveness that was in His heart. We remain forever grateful for His obedience and His atonement on our behalf.

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HIS RESURRECTION?

If you would die while still in your sin, you would remain eternally separated from God, and therefore you would go to hell. So did Yeshua, instead of us. Hell is real. It is a horrible place, intended for the devil and his rebellious angels, but people who choose rebellion against God and make the choice that they do not want God in their lives, will spend eternity away from God there. What He experienced in that horrific place we do not know. But we do know that because He was sinless, death and hell couldn't hold Him and through the power of God, He was resurrected from the dead into a newness of a life never to die again.

After three days of being dead, suddenly Yeshua came alive again! Just as He was crucified on Passover, Yeshua was resurrected three days later on the Jewish holiday of "First Fruits" (Hebrew: *Hahg Habikkurim*) which immediately follows Passover three days later. Everything took place exactly as God had planned it on the calendar of events He had given to Israel centuries before. The synchronized calendar events tell us we can be sure that God had it all

under control and that it all happened just as and when He intended. This does not mean that Yeshua didn't suffer, He did. And it doesn't mean that God wanted Yeshua to suffer, He didn't. But it does mean that God Himself in the Person of Yeshua submitted to the suffering in order to rescue us from an eternity of suffering!

The resurrection of Yeshua from death to life confirms that He was sinless because death could not hold Him in its grip. "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23), but since death couldn't keep Him dead, the resurrection proves that He is God, for only God is sinless. He was entirely and completely alive! His "old" body was not resuscitated, nor did He now have a spirit body but He had a new and eternal form of body, so that He could eat with His disciples and also walk through walls since it was not limited to time and space as our natural bodies are limited. Since this body will never die again, it is not subject to dissipation or deterioration in any way. This is the same bodily form of flesh and bones (notice, no more blood) that God will give to those of us who are born again when we die physically. We no longer need to fear death because Yeshua has made the way to eternal life with God.

Yeshua's life shows us not how God would live on earth, but how any man or woman under the Lordship of God and filled with His Spirit can live. He was not able to live a holy life and do miracles because He was God; He did so because He was operating under the anointing of the Holy Spirit as a Man. He has given to us the same Holy Spirit so that we are able to live as He lived. Indeed, He has commanded us to do so, expecting that we will.

The way to heaven and eternity with God is assured to all who put their faith and trust in Yeshua having paid the price for their sins, and who continue to trust in Him and live accordingly throughout their lives. His pain has become our healing, His agony our freedom, His separation from God became our way to being united with God, and His death has become our eternal life. Wonderful God! Glorious God! Beneficent God!

Chapter 2 ~ GETTING TO KNOW MESSIAH YESHUA

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. The most explicit Old Testament prophecy of the Messiah came from the prophet Isaiah 700 years before Yeshua was born. It almost reads like it came out of the New Covenant. Would you please read Isaiah chapter 53. It tells you about the Suffering Messiah and the reason for His suffering. Take it line by line. What does it tell you would take place? From what you've believed about Yeshua already, how does this match what you are learning about Him now? Does it tell you anything you didn't know before? If so, what?
2. Read Acts 10:43. Yeshua's name in Hebrew means "God is Salvation." What does it say all the prophets of Israel bore witness to? Read Micah 5:2. Where does it say Messiah would be born? Read Isaiah 7:14. What would distinguish Messiah's birth? (Note: The Hebrew word "alma" is sometimes translated as young maiden; but the correct translation is "virgin." It would be only be a sign if the word meant virgin.)
3. Following is one of the most beautiful and explicit verses that reveal the nature of Yeshua and His relationship with God, His Father, and for that matter the universe. Inserted is who each pronoun is referring to. "And He (Yeshua) is the radiance of His (God's) glory and the exact representation of His (God's) nature, and upholds all things by the word of His (Yeshua) power. When He (Yeshua) had made purification of sins, He (Yeshua) sat down at the right hand of the Majesty (of God) on high" (Hebrews 1:3). You may want to read that a few times to let it sink in. What does it mean that Yeshua is the exact representation of God's nature? What do you envision upholding "all things by the word of His power" means? How powerful is that power? How did Yeshua affect the purification of sins? Where is He now?
4. Read John 8:28; 14:10; 5:19. How dependent was Yeshua on His Father? What did He initiate on His own? From where did His teachings originate?
5. Read Acts 10:36-38. What does Peter (:31), who was an eye-witness, tell us about Yeshua? Who anointed Yeshua to heal? Do you think He could have healed on His own without the Spirit? How extensive was His healing people? Read Luke 5:21-24. Is Yeshua's ability to heal people connected to His power to forgive people's sins? If so, in what way? Read Hebrews 13:8. What does this tell you about whether God still heals people today?
6. Read Acts 10:40-42. What is being spoken of here? Have you ever seen someone dead? How dead is dead? Could Yeshua have accomplished His resurrection from the dead on His own? (That's an obvious answer. But the next question shows He was validated by the God of Israel.) Who was responsible for raising Him from the dead? Read John 20:11-20. This is an abbreviated account of His friends seeing Him alive after seeing Him die. What do you think they experienced? Can you project yourself into that scene? Describe it. How do you think you would feel seeing Him again? What would you want to do or say to Yeshua if you were in that room?
7. Read Hebrews 5:7-9. What does this tell you about Yeshua's stress and obedience in facing crucifixion? What did He have to learn as we do, even though He was God's Son? What do you

see in the relationship between suffering and obedience? What was the result of His obedience? Do you believe that your obedience to God and His word can affect other people for God too? In what way?

8. Read Hebrews 4:14-16. What does this say about how Yeshua relates to our weaknesses and suffering? Is this what you expected from God regarding your own temptations and weaknesses? So where are we to go for help? How assured can you be that you will receive help from God when you go to Him for it?

9. Read Matthew 16:13. You have heard much about Yeshua from other people and from the world around you. What have you learned about Him in the past? Who did you think He was before now? Even people who don't "believe in Jesus" still have some idea of who He is or was. What has yours been?

10. Now please read Matthew 16:15. If you're doing this study it's because you have probably had an encounter with Yeshua yourself. Does your experience with Him recently, even through this study, differ from the way you saw or thought of Him before? In what ways? Did you have any expectations of Him interacting in your life before? What are your expectations now? Are there any things about Yeshua that you have just come to know of which you were entirely unaware of before? (Note: An increased revelation of Yeshua is not something that only happens to new believers. It goes on and on. There is so much to know of Him, that unfolding revelations of Him are an ongoing marvel.)

Chapter 3

GETTING TO KNOW GOD AS YOUR FATHER

The Bible is God's Self-disclosure to mankind. It begins with the words, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). From this we know that God existed before the earth and the heavens (plural) existed. He was there before "the beginning." He is the Creator of all that exists. The entire universe owes its existence to God. There is nothing that exists that does not originate in God. The world speculates as to the origin of the world, but the Bible tells us clearly of its origin in God and tells us amazing things about God. The Bible is our primary way to know Him.

THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

God is outside of time and space. He is eternal and unlimited. He pre-existed before anything created. God is everywhere all the time. We call this characteristic being omnipresent (all present), omni meaning all. He is not limited to "when" any more than He is limited by "where." Because He is not limited by time, so what we see as unfolding, or ongoing, He sees in an eternal now, which is why He knows the beginning and the end. Being outside of space, size doesn't matter to Him. Nothing is too small or too big for His equal attention.

God knows everything (yes, everything!). This is called being omniscient (all-knowing, from which we get the word science). This means He knows your every thought and intention. There is nothing in all of creation of which He does not have intimate knowledge and complete understanding, nor is anything hidden from Him. It may take you a little while to get used to Him being there all the time and knowing all that's going on in your life, your heart, your head and in your most intimate moments, but remember, He created you this way in order to bless you.

God is all powerful which is called omnipotent (all potent). One of the many names which describe God's character and nature is "Almighty," *El Shaddai* in Hebrew. Ultimately all power and all authority are God's. This can only be fully appreciated in a nation with a king who is greatly revered and honored, but Yeshua is the King over all the kings and authority in the earth (See Revelation 9:6).

Sounds pretty big, doesn't it? Bigger than we can imagine. Yet, He is intimately and tenderly involved with each one of us, knowing our thoughts, anticipating our needs, being there with us, even when we aren't aware of Him. You are never outside of His care or concern, even if you may not think so. Many of us, after we come to know Yeshua, look back on our lives and can see that God has been there all along, like a good Father, looking after us, bringing us through what might have been some very difficult situations.

ONE GOD OR THREE?

As we mentioned above, we do not worship two Gods as the Father and the Son, nor three with the Holy Spirit. (More on the Holy Spirit later.) These are all different manifestations of the same

God. God makes Himself known to us in many ways. God, identified Himself as *Yahweh* (*YHVH*) to Israel. Yahweh is the Self-existing One, that part of God with whom we have a loving relationship. He also manifested Himself to us as the Father and as Creator. As the Son He also made Himself known as our Redeemer who paid the price (or redeemed us) to bring us back to God. And He is also with us as the Holy Spirit in regeneration, working in our lives to make us more like Yeshua in character, and to be with us in the daily thoughts and activities of our lives.

The important thing for us to understand is that Yeshua's Sonship is in His humanity, while in His Spirit He is One with the Eternal Father. Also there is only one Holy Spirit who is also identified in Scripture as both the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of Yeshua. While it's a bit hard for us to understand, just as it's hard for us to understand eternity which has no beginning or end, God in the various ways He has appeared to His people is in fact one God.

Not to belittle the majesty of God, but you could think of God as being like an egg. There is the white, the yolk and the shell of an egg. Each part is equally as much of an egg as the other, while each part has its unique quality. We can separate the parts of an egg but each part always maintains its "eggness." So in God, the Father, the Son and the Spirit remain one and the same God.

Here's how John, one of Yeshua's closest disciples phrased it, seeing in Yeshua the same creative Word as the Creator of all there is. "What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life, and the life was manifested and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us, 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 Messiah Yeshua" (1 John 1:1-3)

John is saying that He who was there at the very beginning and was responsible for bringing about all of creation and the life that was born with it, John saw, heard, and touched. John also knew that the purpose of Yeshua coming to them was for a loving relationship with Him and His Father. God who created all things wants fellowship with you. Amazing, isn't it?

There are some places in Scripture in both the Old and the New Testaments where all three, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, are revealed together. This is the God of Israel validating Yeshua in His Sonship as a Man who was empowered by the Spirit of God to obey all the Father showed Him to do. One such incident took place when Yeshua was baptized and the Father spoke the words, 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased' (Matthew 3:17).

We do not presume to understand the fullness of who God is in His many attributes, but we do know that as we look to God in faith He is always to us our own Heavenly Father. He is looking out for us and providing for us far and beyond what our natural fathers were ever capable of. At the same time, Yeshua as Lord is our example of how to live our lives as He did by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit which He sent to us.

FATHER, SON & SPIRIT AS CREATOR

As was mentioned before, the Bible does give us pictures of pre-incarnate Yeshua present at creation. We can see further in several places in Scripture where even in creation the varied attributes of God were at work. As was mentioned earlier, the Bible tells us, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters” (Genesis 1:1). Then in the New Testament it speaks again of “the beginning” (John 1:1) and tells us, speaking about Yeshua, “All things came into being through Him and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being” (John 1:3). The Book of Hebrews tell us, “God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world” (Hebrews 1:1,2).

THE MAJESTY & AUTHORITY OF GOD

This letter written to Hebrew believers in Yeshua by another Hebrew (before the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD) goes on to say, “And when He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Hebrews 1:3). The expression “right hand” is used by the Hebrews to mean the authority of the one at whose right hand they stood. Sitting indicates that the work was done and accomplished. The majesty of God on high is authority and power above all other in the universe. Yeshua entered into what is far beyond our imagination – the glory and majesty of God and His unchallengeable authority!

Hebrews being a letter written to Jews by a Jew (and why the letter is called Hebrews), these people knew the authority and calling God had put upon the priests, who were to act as intermediators between Israel and God. It was the priests whose chief responsibility was to administer the sacrifices as atonement for sin before their God. That is exactly what Yeshua accomplished. Being the willing sacrifice, He atoned for the people as both priest and as the sacrifice. So the writer of Hebrews says, “Now the main point in what has been said is this: We have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens” (Hebrews 8:1). He could sit at the right hand of God on the throne of the Most High God because He is God!

Chapter 3 ~ Getting To Know God The Father

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. Read John 17:1-5. This is Yeshua's prayer to His Father just before He would be arrested and crucified. What does Yeshua see as His relationship with God? What is He asking God to do? (Note: Glory has to do with honor, praise, (worthy of) worship, and dignity.) Knowing He was about to be brutally beaten and then crucified, what glory is He talking about? How could the cross bring glory to Him?
2. Regarding verse :2. When talking about God's authority, how far does it extend? (Clue: Think Omnipotence.) What is Yeshua saying about God's authority here? Would God entrust His authority to anyone lower than Himself? Why or why not? What (who) has the Father given to Yeshua? What does His authority enable Him to provide for mankind?
3. Regarding verse :3. What is eternal life? (Note: The term "know" is an intimate, personal knowing, likened to the intimate union between a husband and wife.) Who are you to "know"? How do you get to know someone? How would you apply that to this relationship Yeshua is talking about here? What does this have to do with time? Are we able to enter into eternal life now without having to wait until we die?
4. Read John 20:21, 22. How did Yeshua say He glorified God on the earth? Who is involved in this encounter? What takes place? Read Genesis 2:7. God formed man, then what did He do so that man came alive? Do you see a correlation taking place between what God did in Genesis 2:7 and what Yeshua did in John 20:22? (Note: Breath and spirit are the same word in Hebrew: *Ruach*.) When God breathed on the first man, Adam, he came alive and since he was created without sin, he became alive spiritually as well as physically. When Yeshua breathed on the disciples, they became alive with the Spirit of God. How significant was it that Yeshua breathed on them?
5. Read John 14:16, 27. What does this have to do with Yeshua breathing the Spirit into them? How is the Spirit identified here? How do you relate to the world not having (the Spirit of) truth? In what way(s) would believers in Yeshua be able to see truth that the world can't? Can you give examples? Read John 3:3. How does this relate to being able to perceive truth?
6. Read Isaiah 42:8. What does God say about sharing His glory? Read John 17:5. What is He saying about His own existence? What does that say then about Yeshua's eternal nature? That would make Him..... what? Who? Do you see this as confirming Yeshua's divinity?
7. Read John 17:20-23. Yeshua is praying here. Who is He praying for (:20)? Does that include you? The Hebrew concept of "one" here is united, alike, unified, of the same mind, in the same way Yeshua was united with His Father. In :21-23 what is Yeshua saying about being one? In :22, what amazing thing has He given to those who are His? What is the goal? How important is unity of the believers to reveal Yeshua to the world?

8. We see in Scripture the unity between the Father, Son and Spirit of God to save the world from sin and its eternal consequences. Yeshua brings us into that unity of purpose. We find that our concerns extend beyond our own well-being and that of those we love to others. We even find that Luke 6:35 becomes a reality in our lives. What does Luke 6:35 mean to you?

9. Read Matthew 16:12-16. Do you see why how others perceive God and what you now think about Him based on the Scriptures, may be very different and critical in your thinking?

10. If you have doubted in the past that Yeshua could possibly be God, what do these passages say to you now? Has this study caused you to think of Him differently than you had in the past? In what way? Would you take a few moments and pray and thank Him for showing you Who He is?

Chapter 4

GETTING TO KNOW GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT

During one of the times Yeshua was with His disciples after His resurrection, He greeted them and said, "*Shalom Alechem* (Peace be with you)." Then He preceded to say, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that He breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 30:21, 22). This can be likened to their born again experience. Even with all the time they had spent with Yeshua, they could not receive the born again experience until the atonement for sin was made. Now the Spirit of God was indwelling them so that they were alive and responsive to God as they had not been before.

Then, before Yeshua ascended into heaven the last time, He was with His disciples one more time. "Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, telling them, 'You will be baptized (immersed) in the Holy Spirit not many days from now'" (Acts 1:4,5). What could that mean? They had already received the Spirit when He breathed on them. But John the Immerser (Baptizer) had declared that "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." (Luke 3:16). What could that mean? They continued to pray together and waited as Yeshua commanded them to. Sometimes your greatest blessings will come after a time of waiting on the Lord to weave things together for you.

Exactly fifty days after Passover, on the day of the Hebrew feast of "Shavuot" (also called Pentecost; 'pent' means fifty), the disciples were all gathered together in one place. They were most likely in the Temple because that's where Jews would have been on *Shavuot*, including those who had come for the Feast from other cities and even other countries. Here's what the Bible says happened:

"When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

"Now there were Jews...in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. 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. They were amazed and astonished, saying... 'How is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born?' " (Acts 2:1-8).

That day, as a result, three thousand Jewish people became Believers in Yeshua. And that was only the beginning. They remembered that Yeshua had told them, "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" (Acts 1:8). They had received the Holy Spirit when Yeshua has breathed on them, to make them alive in their spirits unto God just as God had breathed upon Adam and "he became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7). But there was a second experience with the Spirit when they received the power of the Holy Spirit so that they could now function by the Spirit as Yeshua had!

Now that they had experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit, they had the Spirit's empowerment to be His effective witnesses, to tell others the message of Yeshua so that they too could hear and commit their lives to following Yeshua.

THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Now the Holy Spirit was not only with them but in them, in their own spirits, as He had been with Yeshua. Now they were able to move in the same supernatural power He did – to heal, to cast out demons, and to raise the dead – all signs that the Kingdom of God remained with them even when He wasn't with them “in the flesh” anymore. Since “God is the same yesterday, today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8), as Believers in Yeshua, we have that same power those first followers of Yeshua did through the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God is just as available to each of us today to do signs, wonders and miracles in Yeshua's name as He was to the earliest believers in Yeshua.

Though we receive power through the Holy Spirit, He is not just a force or an energy or power alone. The Holy Spirit is God and He is Lord and He too has a personality. Where He has freedom to act, there is a wonderful sense of His presence. The Bible tells us “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Corinthians 3:17). We can have a relationship with the Holy Spirit in the same way we relate to God as our Father or Yeshua as the Son of God. In fact, it is through the Holy Spirit that our relationship with the Father and the Son becomes real and present to us. It is He who brings us into the presence of God and teaches us of the things and ways of God. It is the Holy Spirit that interacts with us to make the things Yeshua said real and alive to us.

THE SUPERNATURAL “GIFTS” OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

It is also the Holy Spirit that empowers us to carry out God's will and to operate in the supernatural gifts He gives to us. The Bible speaks about what are called “spiritual gifts” (1 Corinthians 12:1; 14:1) which enable us to have access to the ways that Yeshua functioned as apostle, prophet, evangelist, teacher and pastor. He was all of those to His people. These same gifts or “callings” of functions exist within the body of believers, generally as leaders who give direction, oversight and insight to the people. The Bible makes it clear that this kind of leadership is made up of those who serve rather than desiring to be served. Church leadership is always to be carried out in a godly, respectful and humble manner.

There are many other gifts of the Spirit that are available to everyone, not just those in leadership. After the Disciples received the Holy Spirit, they realized that all the supernatural abilities Yeshua had, they could now function in. Here's how it works:

To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of

healing by the one Spirit, 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. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills (1 Corinthians 12:7-11).

One does not have to be a prophet to prophesy. There are levels of prophesy which range from a word of encouragement and a declaration of God's love all the way to direction for world leaders. One should know their level and sphere of influence before speaking out for God. He'll let you know when the time is right. A "word of knowledge" comes when suddenly you know the answer to a problem or you're aware that someone has a particular illness that God wants to heal, for instance. Gifts of healing and of miracles are available to any believer who has faith to believe God for them to take place.

There are also gifts of administration and of helps and hospitality. We can do a lot of those in the natural, but when the Holy Spirit is enabling us to do them, there is a joy and empowerment that is just not there in the natural. We can develop an awareness of the Holy Spirit being with us and that we are carriers of the Spirit of God within us. Pretty powerful, wouldn't you think? And you never know when the Holy Spirit will move to have you minister something miraculous to someone while you're fulfilling a seemingly mundane task. A case in point involved the original Apostles when faced with needing to find men to help serve food to the growing number of people who were coming to faith. There were those in attendance for their communal meals. The qualifications for choosing these servers is this: "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" (Acts 6:3). Nothing we do for the Lord is without meaning or significance, nor without cause for holy character.

The Holy Spirit also enables us to pray with power for what God is doing in our own lives and in the lives of others. Prayer and the Holy Spirit go together inseparably. Pray for others the same way you would like them to pray for you. Yeshua said "Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (John 14:13). God's Word carries power and authority, but so does the name of Yeshua. We can pray and also perform miracles in His name, because all the universe responds to Who He is, including the demons. Yeshua's parting words to His disciples before returning to heaven were full of Holy Spirit promise.

"He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved... These signs will accompany those who have believed: In My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; 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" (Mark 16:16-18).

Pretty exciting, yes? His words are just as true today as they were when He said them. Don't let anyone who hasn't yet experienced them tell you they're not for today. These are not New Age or mystical experiences. These are the God-given abilities that Yeshua functioned in for the good of the people. We now can operate in them through the Holy Spirit just as He did. In fact, He even told His disciples, "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" (John 14:12). That's because once He

was in heaven with the Father, He sent the Holy Spirit so He would indwell the Believers to take the power of the Gospel (the Good News of Yeshua and the Kingdom of God) around the world.

It is important for you to understand that you do not make the healing or the miracle happen – only God can and only He does. Our job is to pray believing that God will answer. Sometime He answers immediately (a miracle) and sometimes He answers more slowly (a healing), and sometimes we don't get to see the immediate answers to our prayers because He is working behind the scenes to deal with circumstances in that person's life or in our own lives that take precedence to the healing. Keep praying!

THE CHARACTER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is so close to us that He works in our innermost being to develop in us the same character as Yeshua. These attributes are known as the fruit of the Spirit. "The fruit of the Spirit is Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control" (Galatians 5:22,23). Notice it seems to be saying that the fruit is singular. That's because the Greek text gives the idea that the fruit of the Spirit is love, and all the rest are subsets of love. Love is the heading, what follows defines love. That goes together with John's simple but profound statement: "God is love" (1 John 4:8, 16). Does this kind of a loving person sound like someone you would like to be like? You can be with the Holy Spirit's help.

In Hebrew He is actually called the Spirit of Holiness ("*Ruach haKodesh*"). As you get to know Him more and more you will become more sensitive to God's holiness. We become more like Him as we begin to love what He loves and hate what He hates. What He hates is never people, but He hates sin because it hurts people. Sin is always unloving. God will always love the sinner, but hate the sin that brings harm, and sin always brings harm.

Even if someone were to say, "My sin doesn't hurt anyone else. It's only about myself," that's not true. If we are living in some kind of sin, we are not available to God or others to be of a godly impact. We all affect our sphere of influence in some way, which will either be positive or negative. There is generally no neutral ground. Sin is serving the devil and his ways – there's no getting around that fact. And no good ever comes out of that!

As the Holy Spirit gently convicts you of something that is not pleasing to God, you will feel a tug on your conscience, or you will briefly lose your peace. That's how you know the Spirit is leading you. Where His peace is, that's the way to go. If you lose that peace over some issue, you would be wise to drop it and you'll see that your peace returns. He will make it quite clear what is pleasing or unpleasing to Him. Let the precious peace of God be your Umpire to make the calls of either "Safe!" or "Out!"

Our peace is in being obedient to Him. This is how we show Him that we love Him. Yeshua said, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" (John 14:15). He also gave us some insight into His own heart when He promised, "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love" (John 15:10).

When Yeshua knew He was going to be leaving His disciples, He gave them specific instructions. Telling them He would not be with them much longer, He said this: “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful” (John 14:27, 28). History tells us that the followers of Yeshua lived fear-free lives in the power of the Spirit – and so can we! “Trust in the Lord with all your heart....” (Proverbs 3:5a).

Obedying God does not limit our freedom, rather we actually find that as we enjoy God and seek to obey His Word, we are more free to be ourselves than we ever were on our own, without Him. It is the Holy Spirit that will lead you and teach you how to stay in God’s will and to walk in His peace and joy, no matter what the circumstances in your life. It is He who will give us insight into God’s Word (the Bible) so that it becomes as alive to us, not just as information, but as divinely-imparted insight.

SPEAKING IN TONGUES

Do you remember when the disciples spoke in other languages or tongues when the Holy Spirit came upon them in the Temple on Pentecost? Similarly, we can each receive what is called “Tongues,” which is a prayer language (languages are often called Tongues) that enables our spirits to become edified and strengthened in the Lord. It is not a language you have learned. It is a supernatural ability to pray to God in a language that only God will understand. It enables you to pray far beyond what your natural mind is capable of understanding or thinking. Praying in tongues takes the limits off of our expectations from God if we believe He will do that in our lives.

The Apostle Paul had much to say about the spiritual gifts (see 2 Corinthians 14) including regarding praying in tongues: “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. One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church....I wish that you all spoke in tongues” (14:2, 4,5). To edify is to enlighten, inform or strengthen. Our own spirits are enlightened by the Spirit regarding spiritual truths when we pray in tongues. When we can see things from God’s perspective, we gain wisdom and faith for Gods’ goodness to be at work in our lives.

We do not always know how to pray for something, but God gives us the gift of tongues so that we can pray the will of God that is beyond our understanding. It is also a way to worship God because you know that it is an untainted language and whatever you’re saying to God is pure and perfect because it comes from the Holy Spirit. It also stirs up faith and power in our lives.

How do I receive the gift of praying in Tongues, you may be asking. You may ask a pastor or someone you know who is walking closely with God and who speaks in tongues to lay hands on you and pray for God to baptize you in His Holy Spirit, just as the disciples were baptized in the Holy Spirit on Shavuot (Pentecost). Or you can ask God yourself. You don’t really need another person – God is there with you. Ask Him to fill you with His Spirit and to give you His gift of

Tongues and then begin to praise Him but don't speak in your native language. I know that sounds silly and you may feel self-conscious at first, but Tongues are for every believer and it will come to you as you look to Him for the gift.

One evidence of people being filled with God's Holy Spirit is speaking in tongues and even prophesying: "When Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying" (Acts 29:6).

You will also find that you can sing in Tongues and the Spirit will give you lovely melodies. As you grow in the Lord, you may find that the language changes as you are praying for different situations or persons. It will help sensitize you to the Spirit's tenderness for the people or situations you are praying for.

THE LEADING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

We talked above about developing your relationship with the Holy Spirit and to depend upon Him to lead you and guide you. How do you do that? By faith. We don't ever get anything from God except by faith. Trust day by day that He is there with you. Yeshua called Him our "helper" or "comforter." You rely on Him the same way you rely on the Lord Yeshua to be with you at all times. He is, in fact, the Spirit of Yeshua, remember, as well as the Spirit of the Father. You can think of it this way, the Holy Spirit brings to us here on earth what God is in heaven. That's why Yeshua prayed that very familiar prayer:

"Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed (praised) be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:8).

It will take the Spirit's presence to bring that about. The more we rely on the Holy Spirit in our ordinary daily lives, as well as when we operate in His supernatural gifts, the more He can do through us. The key to walking out our lives in power is humility before God, realizing we need His Spirit in order to live our lives just as Yeshua did. In all we do, we must realize none of it is to our praise, but to the glory of God because "God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6). Grace is not only forgiveness for sins but God's enabling power to live a godly life. Many try to be "good Christians" in their own strength. That usually turns out to be a list of have-tos and musts. But Yeshua Himself relied on the Holy Spirit and so must we. Happily, He will teach you how.

Chapter 4 ~ Getting to Know God's Holy Spirit

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. Read Genesis 1:1,2. Who was there at the beginning of creation? How was God moving over the earth? Read Job 33:4. What aspect of God was involved in creating man? Read John 4:24. What is our response to be to God as Spirit?
2. Read Matthew 1:18 and Luke 1:26-35. How did Miriam (Mary) conceive Yeshua in her womb? Whose Son does that make Him (:35)? Since sin is passed down through the fathers what does that say about Yeshua being sinless? Could He be our Savior if He wasn't?
3. Read Exodus 31:3,4 and 35:31. We saw in the last chapter the world's idea of wisdom and their understanding is not always God's truth. What is God imparting here? These were men who were building the Tabernacle, which was the place of worship and God's presence. What does this say about the people who are "building" or leading the body of Messiah (the church) today needing these qualities from God? What do these verses also indicate about God (our Creator) and our own creativity?

We would be wise to ask God for His Spirit for ourselves, as well as to pray for our leaders to have God's Spirit impart these qualities of wisdom and creativity to us all. You may want to keep a small notebook with you as God often gives us ideas and thoughts through our day and they can be easy forgotten. Write them in your journal. This will help to "capture" what He may give you.

4. Read Numbers 11:25 and 1 Samuel 10:10. What else does God's Spirit enable men to do? Notice these were unique events in a very limited number of men's lives. Read 1 Corinthians 12:6-7 which was written after the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples at *Shavuot*/Pentecost. How many persons does this apply to? What was being given? What is God's goal in doing this?
5. Read 1 Corinthians 12:8-11. Who is working through these abilities? Take some time to think about how each would be of benefit for the common good? On what basis are they distributed? Ask the Spirit of God to show you what part He wants you to play and to equip you to learn to be effective in that role.
6. Read 1 Corinthians 14. What are the gifts of the Spirit? What do you see as the value of each one? Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-10. ("The Perfect" is Yeshua upon His return.) What must be the motivation of the spiritual gifts? Read 14:3. Old Testament prophets often exposed Israel's sin. What are New Covenant prophecies meant to express? How do both reflect God's heart for His people?

Chapter 5

GETTING TO KNOW THE BIBLE

The Bible is comprised of what we call the Old Testament and the New Testament, though “Covenant” is a better word than “Testament,” which is not actually found in the Bible. The Bible is really a collection of books that tell the story of God’s different covenants with the same people, Israel. All we know about God can be found in the Bible in both the Old and New Testaments. All the books were written by Jews with one exception. Both the “Gospel of Luke” and “The Acts of the Apostles” were written by a proselyte to Judaism, (a non-Jewish man named Luke who chose to identify with Israel and their God.)

There are sixty-six books in the Bible written over a period of approximately 1,500 years, by forty men who were inspired by the Holy Spirit to write what God wanted written. The Bible itself assures us that God is the ultimate author of it. That so many of the predictions spoken by Israel’s prophets, which include Moses and King David, have come to pass, validates the writings as being of God. We can be sure that “no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation...but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” (2 Peter 1:20-21)

The Holy Spirit will give you insight into God’s Word (the Bible) as you read it so that it becomes as alive to you as divinely-imparted insight, not just as information. It also has a way of bringing us to a place of accountability before God and is His way of making us aware of what He wants us to be aware of for good in our lives. “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...and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12). The Bible is not like any other book you will ever read. It is a loving encounter with God, even if sometimes it’s a means for God to bring some correction to us. Even so, He always does it lovingly and to bring us to a place of being able to receive more of His goodness.

THE “OLD” COVENANT

The Old Covenant, or Tenach was written between the years of 1450 BC and 430 BC. The first five books of the Tenach (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) are together called the Torah. The Torah was written by Moses who received these words from God when on the mountain with God for forty days. Torah is the foundation of both Judaism and the Christian faith. The first book, Genesis, contains the explanation of how God created the world. God would have had to explain it to Moses – Who else would have been there to know what had happened?

The Old Covenant is the story of Israel’s life with God, of the blessings He blessed them with when they obeyed and loved Him, and the tragedies that took place when they betrayed Him and walked after the gods (idols) of other nations, or simply disregarded His words to them. Always we read of how God wooed His people back to Himself again and again with a heart of love for them. Even when He was very angry with them, He loved them and worked to draw them back to Him.

Until God revealed Himself first to Abraham and then to his descendants and especially through Moses as God's instrument to accomplish His purposes, the world had no idea of the one and only True God. Many religions have developed to try and make sense out how the world came to be in the first place, but also of the vast concerns of life and of death. God chose to make Himself known to the world through Israel.

We also learn through Genesis how God created mankind to be innocent and sinless, and to live in a perfect environment. The Bible tells us of the first two humans whom God created, Adam and Eve. In Hebrew their names are "Adahm" meaning mankind and also red clay or earth from which he was formed, and "Hava" meaning life or living one, because she is the mother of all living persons). These two experienced all the goodness of God and unhindered joy in His presence – until they disobeyed God. That came about when the evil one, the devil, disguising himself in the form of a snake, came and tempted them to distrust God's good intentions toward them. (More on how the devil got there later.)

Their first real sin was in doubting God's goodness to them. Subsequently they disobeyed His words to them and ate of the forbidden fruit, the fruit against which God had warned them not to eat, "lest they die." The disobedience came after they doubted, at the devil's instigation, that God's goodness to them was sufficient for all their needs and desires. (You can read the encounter in Genesis 3.) If you are ever in doubt of God's goodness, you can be sure the devil is behind it. Ignore those thoughts. They will not lead to peace! Sometimes people blame God for bad things that happen, but God is good always and always good. In hard times, He is the One to trust, not the one to blame! In times of confusion, He is the One to look to for truth, not the One to run from to look elsewhere.

Once Adam and Eve did what God warned them not to, they suddenly lost their innocence and perfection and felt fear and guilt for the first time. How horrible that must have been for them, so much so that they hid from God who had been their greatest source of pleasure and delight until then, not to mention security. Not only did they feel fear, but without the glory of God upon them, as God had withdrawn His presence upon them due to their sin, they now saw themselves as naked. It would appear that the spiritual insight and wisdom they had always known would also have left them, leaving them with the limits of their own human intelligence. We know that we humans use only a portion of our brain capacity. As God does not create emptiness or vacuums, it would seem that human beings were originally created with a greater intelligence capacity than we are capable of accessing, presumably since The Fall. As Spirit filled believers, however, we are able to "know things" by the Spirit of God. Perhaps we are operating out of areas of our brain by God's Spirit that remain dormant without Him.

As God cannot dwell with sin, He drove Adam and Eve out of the perfect environment of the Garden of Eden to live in the world as we know it. Now man had to work for our provisions and try and sort out truth for ourselves. Haven't we been occupied with those very things since? But God did not abandon them. The unfolding story of the Bible is that of humankind's sin and God working with us to restore us to Himself. In time, God chose one man we know as Abraham to whom He promised great blessings of a land He would give them forever, and of generations that would come through him that would bless the world.

God also promised Abraham, “I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Genesis 12:3). The “you” in this verse is plural, which include all of Abraham’s descendents. Part of the recounting not only of Biblical history but of the history of mankind reflects both those blessings and curses where it is in relation to Abraham’s descendents, the Jewish people. Even today, we will see more consequences of that same promise to Abraham as Israel’s right to the land God gave them is challenged.

In time, God raised up a man named Moses through whom He gave Israel the Ten Commandments along with the rest of the Torah as a covenant between Himself and Israel. There are 613 commandments altogether, the remaining showing how to live out the first Ten Commandments. These commandments, which in Hebrew are more like “instructions” than laws, taught Israel how to live as the people of God in a quality of life that would be worthy of God. As long as they followed God’s Word to them, they would live just, moral and healthy lives, with the power of God evident on their behalf, such as no other people on the earth.

God anointed a number of men and on rare occasion a woman (e.g., Deborah) as Judges and prophets through whose words He would warn Israel or call them back to Himself when their hearts had wandered. The prophets foretold events that would happen in and to Israel within their life times as well as in the future. Hundreds of those prophecies predicted the coming of Messiah. Even today, all that is going on regarding Israel and the return of Jews to that land, and the nations coming against her and trying to divide her land – all that has been prophesied long ago. Reading the prophets of old is often like reading a newspaper today, because the same events are taking place now, and often with the same neighbors on Israel’s borders.

We also find great comfort and security in God in the promises that God made through the words of the prophets for His ultimate victory in conquering the evil that causes so much suffering in the world and establishing His justice, mercy and goodness when “the whole earth (will) be filled with His glory” (Psalm 72:19). The miracle of the re-establishment of the nation of Israel in 1948 after 1900 years reveals the sovereign faithfulness of God to bring every prophesy and promise to pass in His time. The promises are not only for the nation(s) but there are hundreds of promises you can take for yourself and believe God to make real in your own personal life. When a verse pops out to you as something God is making alive to you, write it down with the date in your God-sightings notebook and continue to pray it comes to pass until it does. Then you can write the date it did in your notebook with a big HALLEULIA! This applies to New Covenant promises as well.

THE NEW COVENANT

Through the Hebrew prophet Jeremiah God did promise Israel He would give them a New Covenant, not like the one they previously broke. This one would be an internal one, one of the heart, making it a part of their innermost beings, and would be equally available to all persons:

“This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel...” declares the Lord. I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. ... They will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the Lord. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more” (Jeremiah 31:33, 34).

In the fullness of time, according to the fore-ordained plan of God, it was decided by God before He set the foundation of the world in place that Yeshua would be born, live to bring people back to God and then die in order to inaugurate the New Covenant. It is just like God that the Messiah was born in a stable, His cradle being a feeding trough. This characterized the humility before God that Yeshua would live His whole life. He grew up like any other person, experiencing life as we all do, but because His Father was God, He was sinless. Even so, He was “tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). With all He went through of rejection and being misunderstood and hated, and plotted against, He never once responded in kind. He remained a man of godliness, strength and power, yet tempered by compassion and tenderness.

By the way He lived His life, Yeshua summed up all the instructions or commandments of Torah as love. Torah may show us specifics but the motive behind it all is love. The greatest commandment is made clear in both the Old and New Covenants: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (Deut 6:5). To this, Yeshua added, “...and love your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27). These are not three commands to love God, others and yourself, but one of inter-dependent aspects. The only way to love truly unselfishly is with God’s love, and when we have His love in us, we will love others unselfishly and ourselves without self-degradation or pride. Even so, we must rely on the Holy Spirit to reveal God’s love to us personally as well as to love others through us.

But just knowing these commandments does not enable us to carry them out. Like with any other relationship, the longer you know each other the deeper it grows. We know God’s love experientially in increasing measure as we spend time with Him and get to know Him better. With each experience we go through and find Him faithful, we know His love for us in greater measure and learn to trust Him at a deeper level.

The New Covenant writings include four of His disciples’ accounts of His life: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. These are followed by an account of the Acts of the Apostles, which resulted after what took place at Shavuot (Pentecost) when the Holy Spirit came upon them. A number of letters were written to the new congregations of believers by several of the Apostles which we still find very helpful and regard them as God’s word to us today. The New Covenant writings end with John’s account of The Revelation of Messiah Yeshua in which He is revealed as Lord of the whole earth and to whom all humankind must give an account of their lives. The culmination of the Revelation, the grand finale of all the Biblical writings, is the account of the return of Yeshua when God sets up His Kingdom forever and evil is no more.

NEW “OLD” AND NEW COVENANTS TOGETHER

As we said above, there are more than 300 prophecies of the coming Messiah in the Old Covenant Scriptures. (See the A for a partial list.) Yeshua fulfilled almost all of them. No one could have engineered all those “coincidences” but God. These include facts about His birth and birthplace, His childhood, His character, His death, His burial and resurrection. Even His divinity. Yeshua will return again and reign as King in Jerusalem one day. Only those prophecies that address His return have yet to be fulfilled.

The Tenach, as you know, is often referred to as the “Old Testament” but this term gives it the sense of being “old” or obsolete, which couldn’t be further from the truth. Yeshua Himself made this clear by saying, “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law (Torah) or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill” (Matthew 5:17, 18). Some have thought that when Yeshua used the word “fulfill” He meant He was effectively cancelling the Torah. Not so! To fulfill means to “fill full” or to make evident, to reveal, not cancel or do away with. It means to raise it to its highest level. This is a significant point because much has been lost and many have suffered as a result of this misinterpretation of Scripture.

It is important to become familiar with the both Tenach and the New Covenant as the Tenach is the very foundation upon which the New Covenant rests. Without a foundation, any building is vulnerable. In reality, the Old and the New Covenants comprise one book as together they present the picture of God’s unfolding interactions with those who are His own people. But mostly, the entire Bible is God’s Self-discloser of Himself. In both, He is relating to Israel, while others who wish to follow the Holy One of Israel are always welcome by God to join them, so long as they do so on His terms. No bringing in of foreign gods or foreign ways!

When the New Covenant was inaugurated by the Atoning Blood of Yeshua, it didn’t change the fact that it was still with Israel that God was establishing the New Covenant. The church has erroneously thought of itself as the New Covenant people apart from Israel. (See Appendix C for more information on how that happened.) But in truth, Christianity in its purest form is Hebrew. What God is restoring today is awareness of that fact to both Jews and Gentiles.

Therefore, it stands to reason that being familiar with Tenach will also give you greater understanding of many of Yeshua’s words and actions. Certain translations of the Bible will have references in the margins that link the Old Testament verses with the New Testament fulfillments of them. Much of what Yeshua had to say came out of Deuteronomy more than any other Old Testament reference He made. The Tenach will also give you a greater appreciation for what Yeshua actually accomplished on our behalf as you see His holiness in a way that you cannot grasp reading only the New Testament. It will also show you how God in His sovereign faithfulness has kept His Word and promises even over centuries and against great obstacles. They were never obstacles for God, only for man, so in this way, our faith and trust in Him is increased as we see how He has worked all things together according to His Word.

GOD’S PROMISES FOR YOUR GOOD

There are many promises throughout the entire Bible which we can draw upon in our needs from God. When you have a need in a particular area of your life, find some verses that speak to that

issue and pray them back to God. Memorize them. Keep them in your heart and you will soon see God fulfill His own Words to you as you ask Him for what He has already made clear is His will. Praying, for instance, Psalm 91 on a continual basis, sets up a protection for you should trouble arise. Many testimonies attest to God's protecting power from keeping verses of His protection and provision in your mind and spirit. Additionally, praying prayers you find in Scripture for God's power in your life will take you to places beyond where you would go if you weren't believing God for His answered prayer. As an example, praying "that the God of our Lord Messiah Yeshua (Jesus Christ), the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him" (Ephesians 1:17) is likely to open doors of revelation and wisdom to you that you might not have without asking Him for it. He put those words in there so we would come to Him to make them real in our lives. The word says, "You have not because you ask not" (James 4:2). So ask!

You can look at the Bible from many perspectives. Some see it as a history book of what happened to Israel and the followers of Messiah. Others see it as a book of how to obey and live out our lives before God. Both of these are true but it is also a book of God's Self-disclosure to us. The more we get to know Him, the more we have an increasing desire to know Him even more. He wants us to know Him. He wants to make Himself known to us. The Apostle Paul tells us that "he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). Nothing brings a greater reward than seeking to know God more intimately. You may want to ask God to show you Himself whenever you open the Bible. Something along the lines of Psalm 119:18 is a good thing to pray: "Lord, open my spiritual eyes that I might see and understand the wonderful things in Your Word."

If you are keeping a notebook, you might like to keep a journal of what you "see" and learn as you read His Word. Write out your thoughts and questions. Ask God for answers to your questions, then keep a record of what comes to your mind. In this way, you will develop an awareness of when God is speaking to you. Dialog with God on the page. You'll learn to recognize His "voice" this way too. Write out what you're reading means to you, briefly or extensively, and how you connect it with things in your own life. It's your journal, so write whatever comes to you! It's been said that writing helps you know what you think. It helps you process your thoughts so that you know what you believe. You can build a lifetime of wisdom and insight based on what God will show you day by day in His Word. There are hidden treasures in the Bible for you to explore and discover. Enjoy digging for them.

Chapter 5 ~ Getting To Know The Bible

THOUGHTS TO PONDER

1. Read Genesis Chapter 1. Take note of how often it says “God said” or “God called.” (You may want to highlight those words in your Bible. It is not only acceptable to write in your Bible, you will find it helpful to do so when God gives you insight into a particular passage you’ll want to remember later.) Why do you think God had to say those things out loud? How powerful are His words to create? If we are created in His image, according to Proverbs 18:31, what power do our words have to create or change situations for good or bad?
2. Read 1 Peter 1:24, 25. How long will the Word of God (the words of the Bible) remain in effect? Read Matthew 5:18; 24:35; Mark 13:31; and Luke 21:33. What will His word outlast? If we find something in our lives that contradicts what God has said in His word what should be our response?
3. Read Hebrews 1:3. In this amazing see-behind-the-scenes verse it speaks of God’s word through Yeshua. What does it say His word accomplishes? What would be “all things” to God? How powerful is His word to sustain what He’s created? (Note: God exists outside of time and space, so our sense of what is significant or not is unlike His.) How powerful does God seem to you from this verse? Do you think “all things” includes what goes on in your life? How valuable then should His words in the Bible be to you?
4. Read Hebrews 4:12. What is different from God’s word than any other writings? What is its affect? Read 2 Timothy 3:16. What is the value of the word to you? In what ways will the Bible help you? (Note: There’s an old saying: The Bible will keep you from sin; sin will keep you from the Bible.) Are you willing for God to point out where you need to align with His word?
5. Read Deuteronomy 12:28. Joshua 1:8 and Jeremiah 17:7-8. What does God say is the result of valuing and trusting in His word? What will it do for you? Read Psalm 103:20. Who besides mankind is required to obey God’s word? What does that tell you about God’s word affecting both the spiritual and the natural world?
6. Read Psalm 1:1-3. What is the distinction here; between what two groups of people, both of whom seem to be seeking counsel? As a believer, where should your first line of wise counsel come from? (Note: You will find that miraculously the Lord manages to have you read what you need to know if you look to Him for wisdom.) What “paths” or “seats” are you encouraged to avoid? What do they mean in practicality to you? What is a scoffer, for instance?
7. Read John 1:14. God’s word is always true and represents Him precisely. So what does this verse mean to you? Who alone could be consistent with all that God said and is? Why? Read Revelation 19:10. What do the prophecies give testimony to even before it happened? Read Romans 1:-5. What did God promise through His prophets in the “Holy Scriptures”? Why do you think the Scriptures are referred to as “holy”? (Note: Holy means to be set apart and unlike anything else; entirely righteous and pure.) List what else these verses tell you about Yeshua?

8. Read Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 12:32; and Revelation 22: 18-19. What is God saying? Read Matthew 5:17-19. What does Yeshua say about how long the word will remain? What does He say are the consequences of disregarding any part of God's Word? (Note: He was referring to Torah and the prophets, not the New Covenant which had not been written yet.)

9. Read John 14:23-24. What does Yeshua say love for Him is contingent upon? Can we say we love Yeshua and not follow what He had to say?

Chapter 6

COMMUNICATING WITH GOD

Now that you have entered into a relationship with God, it is the most natural thing to talk with Him. Prayer is conversation with God. You may never have prayed before, but the way is now open for you to talk with your heavenly Father. He is not some far off, distant and disinterested God. He is your Father who is in heaven, but also right there with you by His Holy Spirit.

Prayer is first of all enjoying God and sharing your thoughts with Him. Prayer is thanking Him for all His goodness to you, day by day. Prayer is about loving God, but it is also sharing your heart's desires and the things that concern you with Him. You are likely to find that there are many things you want to ask Him to do in your life or the lives of those you care about, as well as things you want to ask Him for. Since He really is the source of all things, ask! God loves when we are dependent upon Him and in fact, that is the way He would have it be. We were created to be dependent upon God and to involve Him in every part of our lives. This is not weakness but reality!

But like with any relationship, if all you do is ask someone to do things for you, it's a pretty lopsided relationship, isn't it? So also with God. Prayer is also largely about listening to God as well as talking to Him. We talked earlier about God speaking with you through His Word, to your heart or your thoughts. As you develop a prayer-life with God, develop a listening-life with Him as well. Spend some time listening for what He would say to you daily. Hearing God's voice will keep you close to Him and out of trouble. Yeshua said the greatest of all the commandments begins this way: "Hear (listen) O Israel..." In Hebrew, the words to hear indicate a follow through on what was said. So to hear what God is saying is equal to obeying what He has said. If you think you hear something from Him that seems questionable to you, be sure that the Word confirms to you that you are hearing from Him. If it goes against Scripture in any way, forget it. You can always run it by someone who is older and wiser in the Lord to be sure you're hearing from God. If it appears to go against the Word of God, disregard it. Let His peace be your monitor to judge what you're hearing. Remember, no peace, no go. But for the most part, you will just enjoy God giving you input, knowing He's there with you.

Develop the habit of chatting with Him throughout your day, asking Him questions, thinking out loud to Him, sharing your thoughts with Him. He really does care and actually loves when you do that. In other words, don't just make your talks with God about your list of needs but make Him your Companion. It's just living your life with God as your Best Friend, as Your Comforter, Helper and Confidant.

Prayer does not have to be a formal scheduled purposeful time. But there is also that time when we are more structured and a regular scheduled time to be alone with God for prayer is something that you may want to make a priority. Mornings are best before the day gets started and you get distracted. It sets the tone for the day and when we ask God's help with the things that are before us, we find that He actually does help. Things go more smoothly and we sense His presence with us as we go through our day. Whether it's casual or more formal, we can enjoy being with God.

At the same time, be aware that you are talking with our Holy God and remain most respectful of Him. We are not to take Him for granted or treat Him casually. A loving and humble attitude will enable you to come to know Him intimately. He invites you to share your innermost secrets and desires with Him as your Best Friend and Confidant, though intimacy does not mean irreverent familiarity. He is King! He is Lord Almighty! He is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. Yet, wonder of wonders, He desires to be closer to us than anyone else in our lives. What a profound honor to be called a child of God! “As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12).

We pray with power also when we pray His Word back to Him. The Bible has hundreds of promises. God loves to keep His promises to His people. And He loves when we respectfully and lovingly hold Him to them. Find verses in the Bible that speak to just what your need or desire is, or someone else’s, and bring what God said back to Him. You can pray, “Lord, You said..... Bring it to pass in my life, in so-and-so’s life.

PRAYING TO HELP OTHERS

Praying for others is something that comes naturally to a believer. It is a wonderful thing that we have a God we can rely upon to help where help is needed. We may see a need we ask God to help someone with. Or perhaps we have been angry with someone or worried or frustrated with them for justifiable reasons but were helpless to change anything. When we ask God to help us with our emotions and to be loving and forgiving, we can ask Him to help that person and bless them as well. That way we can rest, “convinced that He is able to guard what (we) have entrusted to Him” (2 Timothy 2:12). No situation is hopeless when we can pray and ask God to intervene. After all, He can even raise the dead!

One thing we do not want to do is pray against someone else’s will. We don’t want to impose our will upon someone else so that we’re praying our will as if it’s God’s will. If we are praying any kind of controlling prayers that is what we call witchcraft or sorcery and is not God’s ways. For instance, we don’t pray along the lines of “Lord, make that person do what I want them to do.” God won’t hear that kind of prayer. It would be the evil one who would violate someone’s will and we don’t ever want to participate in that. One good thing we can always pray is for God to reveal Himself to others, or to reveal His truth to others. We can pray for His will to be done in their lives and that He would rescue them from sin or temptation if need be.

We can pray that God enable someone to forgive where bitterness seems to exist, or for God to break the power of evil in their lives if we see them bound in something like addictions or unforgiveness. But always we pray in love and forgiveness. To do otherwise is to act outside of God’s character and nature, even if correction is needed. One who loves as God loves, “bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things, (because) love never fails” (1 Corinthians 13:7,8).

One way to see God change situations is to pray His blessings upon others. You can bless their relationships, their home life, their health and their finances, etc. Releasing blessings into

people's lives will change the spiritual atmosphere around them. If they don't know the LORD (yet), blessing them will help them be able to see the truth and the goodness of God around them. A good thing to keep in mind is to pray as you would have others pray for you. Remember the Golden Rule? – "Treat others the same way you want them to treat you" (Luke 6:31). Those are Yeshua's words. He saw this principle as summing up the Torah and the prophets. (Matthew 7:12 and Luke 6:31).

Prayer is a privilege and a blessing. We can participate with God to see lives change, including our own, as we pray. The amazing thing is that we partner with God when we pray to bring His Kingdom to earth as it is in heaven. What greater calling could there be?

Chapter 6 ~ Beginning A Life of Prayer

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. Read Jude 1:20, 21. What is the effect of prayer? Do you see prayer as a way to build yourself up in faith? What else does this verse say prayer will enable you to keep or strengthen in yourself? In what ways do you think these things are important in your relationship with God? Perhaps you may want to pray for these qualities in your own life and for others.
2. Read Ephesians 6:18. How often should we pray? For whom? Read 1 Thessalonians 5:17. How much should we be praying? (Note: This means you can keep a running dialog with God all the time when things come up, for yourself or for others. You will find this a natural flow that is not the least burdensome. It's just sharing your life with God, including concerns for others.)
3. Read Philippians 1:3-4. Can prayer be joyful? Read Romans 8:26. Can prayer sometimes be too deep for words? Read Psalm 39:12. What is King David experiencing here? Read Acts 4:31. Can prayer sometimes release the power of God into your midst? Read 1 Corinthians 14:15. What different ways are there to pray? (Note: "by the spirit" means in Tongues here.)
4. Read Colossians 1:9-10. What is the Apostle Paul praying for here? Do you expect his prayer was answered? What is the goal of this prayer? What would walking in life in ways that please God look like?
5. Read Matthew 26:41 and Mark 14:38. What are we to do when faced with Temptation? Read Philippians 4:6. What are we to do with anxiety?
6. Read Colossians 4:2. What place should prayer have in our lives? (Remember, that means staying in touch with God all the time including structured times of focused prayer.) What do you think this means keeping alert to? What attitude are we to have at all times? Read 1 Timothy 2:1. For whom are we to pray? With what attitude? Does that indicate you expect God heard your prayer?
7. Matthew 7:7-8. What could keep something you want from God from happening? How many who ask, receive? (Note: In the Greek, this is in the continuous sense, such as keep on asking or knocking until the answer comes.) Read Matthew 18:19. What does this say about the power of agreement?

Chapter 7

STAYING FREE IN GOD

Because our souls are used to thinking in certain ways, and our emotions have been responding accordingly our whole lives, it may take a while for our souls to catch on to what our spirits are learning from God. You may find yourself having to make choices to obey God and change how you have been thinking, or even living. These changes will often come to us in the most natural ways as we walk through our lives, though you may find that there are definitely some things, or even some people, that need to be removed from your life if they have contributed to ungodliness in your life. You will know if your peace is disturbed and you feel an uneasiness that something needs addressing.

This is the Holy Spirit telling you what is not profitable for you. It could also mean staying away from angry or negative people who complain or gossip about others all the time. Such people can pollute your spirit with their negativity and bitterness. You may want to point out to them there's another way to look at things, and try and lead them to the Lord, but if they don't want to change, you may want to do the changing in your relationship with them.

If the Spirit is telling you to step out of such a relationship, there will be no doubt in your mind as to who they are. Please note that this does NOT extend to stepping out of a marriage. God has special grace for a person with a difficult spouse. Scripture is clear that if an unbelieving spouse is content to live with you, then you are to remain married, believing God to save them and unify your marriage in Him. (Please see 1 Corinthians 7 for more specific information.)

Stepping out of an unprofitable relationship applies to other relationships than a marriage, such as social or business relationships. Perhaps even as you read these words the Holy Spirit is bringing someone to mind. You may feel a struggle to let go but the sooner you do, the sooner you will find yourself in God's peace. His peace is the most precious thing we have in our lives. We can go through anything as long as we have His peace which comes from having confidence (faith) that He is with us and that we're in His will.

This does not mean that you are to be friends with only believers. How else will others know of Yeshua if those of us who know Him don't tell them? Yeshua was with "sinners" all the time. That's how they soon became believers. Share your testimony of how you came to know Yeshua and what He's doing in your life. You may not know a lot of Scripture (yet), but no one can tell you that your experience isn't valid. Just be sure you're not involving yourself with their worldliness and sin. If you find yourself being weak and vulnerable, obey God and head for safety and righteousness in Him. Flee if you must, as Joseph did from Potiphar's wife (See Genesis 39 for the story.)

We may often find ourselves faced with a crisis in which we are confronted with a choice to do things God's way or not. We have been given the power by the Holy Spirit to make the right choice to follow God's will. He has promised us that "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, he 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” (1 Corinthians 10:13). Neither can we say that God has tempted us because God does not put us in the place of temptation. The devil does, but we are not following him, we’re following God.

Choosing God’s way will always bring us peace. You will get better at choosing God’s way as you become increasingly sensitive to Him speaking to you. But what about if you make a wrong or bad choice and do what you know you shouldn’t do? Sometimes we don’t realize until after the fact that we’ve disobeyed God. Either way, the way back is to repent.

Here are some very good verses that define a life of godliness before God. If you take these verses apart and look at the different aspects, you’ll find some good advice and wisdom here. “In all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us. Urge (employees) to be subject to their own masters (bosses) in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect. For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Messiah Yeshua, 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” (Titus 2:7-14).

What Does It Mean To Repent?

Repentance means, first of all, to agree with God. He’s always right and His ways are always just and everything He does is good. If we find ourselves acting or thinking outside of His justice or goodness, then we need to repent. Repenting is not the same as telling God we’re sorry. We might do that because we’ve been caught or found out, but we repent upon realizing that our sin has caused some level of separation between us and God and that we have offended the holiness of God. Repentance means we turn away from the sin and are no longer involved in whatever the sin was. To repent means literally “to turn” away from something detrimental to you or ungodly and “to turn” to God. The Hebrew term is *shu'ee*, meaning to turn (away from sin). A wise man once said, “If you ever feel like you want to blame God or doubt God, take a dive for His feet.” In other words, humble yourself before Him; We cannot overemphasize that God is always right and good and just! A good part of our trust in God is because He is the embodiment of those qualities.

He cares so much about our wellbeing that He withdraws Himself somewhat when we are in sin so that it gets our attention and we turn back to Him. Does that mean that He forsakes us or He leaves us? No, He has promised, “I will never desert you nor will I ever forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5). But it does mean that we may not sense His presence or that our fellowship with Him is disturbed until we make it right. Then He welcomes us back lovingly.

When we realize we have sinned, we must bring our repentant heart immediately to God. But His constant willingness to forgive genuine repentance does not give us a license to sin repeatedly or

intentionally. We are not to tolerate ongoing sin in our lives, figuring we can ask for forgiveness again and again. God will not be duped. “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap” (Galatians 6:7). If you plant the seeds of sin, you’ll get a crop of judgment!

However, once you realize you have displeased Him, be it immediately or months or even years later, the immediate thing to do is repent. Come to God and acknowledge your guilt and ask Him for His help to completely turn from it. He will give it to you. That’s one prayer He’s always willing to answer. Once you do this, if you are in earnest about it, you are immediately restored. This would be a good time to thank God for “the blood of Messiah Yeshua that cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

The other side of repentance is to turn the matter over to God once you repent, believing that He has forgiven you and rest in Him while He fixes whatever needs fixing and changes you. We sometimes strengthen something we want to be rid of by focusing on it. Focus on Him instead, on His great grace and mercy, on His goodness, or even on His suffering but without sin. Fill yourself up with Him and don’t leave room for the devil or the hurt. Forgive where necessary and enter back into God’s rest. It can be done by the grace of God.

BLOOD-BOUGHT FORGIVENESS

God always required a blood sacrifice to atone for the sins of man. Countless animals were slaughtered for that purpose. Yeshua, the perfect Son of God, fulfilled the entire required atonement as the final Sacrifice dying once and for the sins of all people. His blood was shed when He was beaten unmercifully and when He hung from the spikes driven through His wrists and feet on the cross.

God’s word to Moses for Israel was of His requirement for blood: “For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement” (Leviticus 17:11). Yeshua basically bled to death which had to happen because every animal sacrifice had to be drained of its blood.

His blood is still effective for us today to cleanse us of our sin. It may sound strange to you now, but in time you will thank God for the shed blood of Yeshua. His blood ushered in the New Covenant which allows us to come into God’s presence by His Spirit. It is His blood that is the currency of the Kingdom which bought us the freedom He offers us so freely today.

FORGIVING OTHERS

There is probably nothing more critical as a believer in Yeshua than the matter of forgiveness. Since Yeshua died to forgive our sins, if we hold unforgiveness against anyone (including ourselves), then we are saying that His death and His Blood were not sufficient for that person’s sin. Wouldn’t we then be in the place of saying our judgment displaces God’s mercy. We are setting our unforgiveness up as a higher law than God’s law of forgiveness. It’s as if we are

challenging what Yeshua did and saying it was not entirely true, that it doesn't apply to the one(s) you won't forgive. God has accepted His death as forgiveness for all persons everywhere. So as between us and God, if we hold bitterness and unforgiveness against someone, we are as an unbeliever, because we are not believing in the all encompassing power of His atoning blood.

That's pretty serious because unbelievers, those who do not believe in His forgiveness, do not spend eternity with God. They remain under the judgment of God as if they hadn't been forgiven for their sins. Yeshua said, "If you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions" (Matthew 6:13-15). If He has suffered on our behalf that we might be forgiven, then He has also suffered that those who have sinned against us may be forgiven. When Yeshua was dying, after having been betrayed, tortured unmercifully and nailed to a Roman cross in inhumane relish at his suffering, He cried out, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing " (Luke 23:34).

No one, if they were to know the eternal consequences of either their sin or their bitterness against others, would continue in them. Yeshua knew well what He was saying that they "do not know what they are doing." We would all flee to Yeshua and His mercy if we could see what terrible consequences eternal separation from God would bring to us. Yeshua talked about hell more than He talked about heaven. It is a reality He warned us about over and over. It's not that what may have been done to you is brushed off as insignificant. Injustice is always something God will hold people accountable for. Either they will see their sin and repent and accept Yeshua's forgiveness or they will suffer the judgment for it. God does not wink at sin. It does not mean it was okay for you to be hurt or violated. But it does mean that you give up not only your desire for vindication, but you give up your right to be right about it. Turn it all over to Him. Let Him cut the emotional ties between you and that person so that you can be free in your spirit.

You may want to think of it as a triangle, point at the top. Yeshua at the top and you at one corner, with the other person at the other base corner. We forgive by going up to Yeshua for His power to forgive first. Then we extend it to the other person. It's Yeshua's forgiveness we enter into. We forgive to honor Him and what He has done for us. We forgive because we don't want to dishonor His precious Blood that bought us our own forgiveness. We forgive in the reverential fear of the Lord. What a great release you will find if you have held unforgiveness in your heart. To God be the glory for His forgiving mercy!

When you're forgiving someone, don't just speak a general one-size-fits-all forgiveness prayer. Be specific. What are you forgiving them for? There may be several aspects to what you're forgiving them for. It may have affected you several ways. If you feel that you must, forgive them for what the LORD brings to your mind about the situation. But don't go digging in your soul for things. This isn't psychology. You don't need to re-experience them or look for things inside. Just forgive as things come to your mind. Forgiveness becomes a way of life, just like repentance. As something comes up, either in experience or in your memory, just release it to the Lord in forgiveness and stay in His peace.

SELF-FORGIVENESS

This also applies to unforgiveness we may carry against ourselves. The same belief that you are forgiven applies to yourself as it does for you to forgive others. To hold onto any unloving thoughts or feelings toward yourself is still not forgiving. You've still held onto standards that are higher than God's. You need to repent if you've been unloving toward yourself. Do not let the devil tell you you're not worthy of forgiveness, or that your failure was too bad to be forgiven. That's keeping you focused on what you did or even what you think you are, rather than on what Yeshua accomplished on the Cross. Focusing on your sinfulness rather than His righteousness will not get you free of sin or guilt. And self-recriminations will never get you the forgiveness you need. It will, rather, act as a blessing-blocker. Only humble repentance and thanking God for His mercy and forgiveness will restore you to His loving presence as you accept His love for you.

Be humble enough to accept His forgiveness. He didn't die for you to carry your guilt around with you. Some religions, even some forms of Christianity, heap guilt on you even though Yeshua died to take it from you. This comes because of a misinterpretation of Scripture. He died to set you free and to give you joy. The more we walk in righteousness, the more joy we will have. Yeshua told us, "The thief (Satan) comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). You are one of the "they." Enjoy it!

Never carry an awareness of sin for longer than the time it takes to say, "Lord, I'm sorry. Please forgive me for _____" and name your sin. It is a good idea to verbalize your commitment to turn from the sin and line up with God's Word. You might want to pray something like, "Lord, I now renounce (come out of agreement with) _____ (identifying the sin). I no longer will be identified with that sin. I choose you, Lord. Thank you for forgiving me and strengthening me against it so that it has no power over me anymore, in Jesus' name." Be specific about what you're renouncing. Then receive from the Lord by faith the forgiveness. Count it as yours! Once you have forgiven yourself, don't fall into the trap of thinking you have to now be the perfect believer. It'll never happen. That's like standing on a scale and holding in your stomach. Trust God to make you righteous one decision at a time, one day at a time.

Trying to be a perfect believer is an exercise in futility because our self-effort is works, not trust in God. Yes, we want to walk in righteousness and yes we practice walking in love and integrity, etc. but even the apostle Paul confessed, "when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10). He meant by this that God's strength comes in when we are weak and when we remain dependent upon the Lord rather than on ourselves, He can get the job done much faster and better than anything we could do.

This is the secret to resting in the Lord. If we could fix ourselves Yeshua wouldn't have had to come and die. We can embrace our weaknesses, knowing that God will work it all out as we keep our faith in Him to do so. Pray with thanksgiving, and keep on praying until you see what He will do in your life. In the meantime, enjoy Him with thanksgiving. Enjoy that you can trust Him with your weaknesses and your life. God is most pleased with us when we are enjoying and resting in Him!

Chapter 7 ~ Staying Free In God

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. Read Genesis 1:26-31. Does that sound like a life of freedom to you? In what ways? In verse :31 what does God say about all He has created? What do you interpret those words to mean? Read Genesis 2:15,16. How do these verses enlarge on 1:26-31? Now read 2:17. Does God's freedom include restrictions? How would a violation of this restriction affect the "good" that the man had been created to enjoy? Do you think, then, that remaining free would also include restrictions for our good? Give an example. How has the world misunderstood freedom?
2. Read Acts 2:38. What is required for the forgiveness of sin? In whose name are we forgiven for our sins? Read Acts 2:39; 5:31. To whom was the forgiveness offered? Are you among those in 2:39? Why?
3. Read 1 Peter 3:21. What is the appeal to God here? What would it be based upon? Read Psalm 32:1. What is the blessing here? Read Acts 10:43. To what did Israel's prophets bear witness? (Note: God required a blood sacrifice for forgiveness of sin. Yeshua's holy blood has satisfied that requirement counting those who accept what He did as righteous in His sight. For those who receive this as truth, their sins no longer separate them from God.) Read Genesis 15:6 and Romans 4:3-7. What does it say about Abraham? How do you enter into this righteousness?
4. Read Ephesians 2:7-9. By what are we "saved"? By whose doing is it and is it not accomplished? Read Romans 4:13. (Note: Abraham lived before God gave Moses the Torah so God's promise to him was not Torah-bound.) What was God's promise to Abraham based upon? What, then, could we have done to earn salvation (being saved)?
5. Read Acts 2:41-46. Does this sound like a community of "free" people? In what ways? Give some thought to being part of a large community of people who have been released from guilt and failure to love God and one another from a cleansed conscience. (Note: that kind of freedom means freedom from intimidation, from fear of rejection, from competition, etc.) Read 1 John 4:7. How can you see this being applied in your own life?
6. Read Galatians 5:1. What did Messiah (Christ) come to do? What are we to be careful to do? What would a yoke of slavery be? Read Galatians 1:8-9. What are we to be careful to avoid? Read Colossians 2:18-19. What kind of influence would be fraudulent (not really worshipping the LORD)? How would each of these qualities listed keep a person from true freedom in Messiah? What is the only thing we are to hold fast to in order to remain free?
7. Matthew 18:21. How many times must we forgive others who wrong us? (Note: seven is God's number for completion.) Is that a specific number or do you think it means always forgive completely? Read Hebrews 12:14. What are we to pursue? With whom? Whom does that leave out? In what ways should you pursue peace with people you know? Read

Luke 11:1-4. What did Yeshua teach His disciples to pray? What does :4 say about forgiveness, in the receiving and the giving of it?

8. Read Ephesians 6:10; 13-15. This armor is spiritual. Consider how each piece of the armor is meant to protect you in your spiritual walk with God. What does :15 say about peace? Does it sound like something that should be prepared, or decided upon, before an incident occurs? To walk always in peace may mean having to forgive. We can choose to forgive whatever may come. What do these thoughts bring to mind for you? Is there anyone you need to forgive? Will you do so now? Have you felt God's freedom when you relinquished the hurt and forgave someone? If you have, you will want to protect that freedom by staying in forgiveness.

7. Read Luke 10:27 and Leviticus 19:18. How are we to love our neighbors (meaning anyone who can affect your life, or you theirs, in any way)? If you loved your neighbor as you love yourself, how good a relationship could you have? Can you truly love your neighbor if you do not love yourself? Matthew 6:15 and Mark 11:26. What is the connection in these verses between forgiving and receiving forgiveness? Do you think that unforgiveness toward someone else might be a cause for a lack of self-love? What would be the remedy?

9. Read 1 John 4:16. Spend some time this week thinking about how God is revealing His love for you, starting with drawing you to Him. What does having His love mean to you? Is it changing you? Do you feel more loving toward others? Toward God? Toward yourself?

Chapter 8

BECOMING A PART OF THE FAMILY OF GOD.

Babies are born into families and you were Born again into the family of God. You were not meant to live life in the LORD isolated from other believers in Yeshua. Just as we would not leave a newborn baby alone, you as a newly Born again child of God need to learn more than this study can teach you. Yeshua was clear that we are to make disciples of new believers. That means learning the ways of the Kingdom and how to walk out this wonderful life in God.

There is such a thing as spiritual impartation and anointing. Anointing means coming from God with His enabling power through His Spirit. When we hear an anointed message or teaching, or someone lays their hands on us to pray for us, there is transference of their spiritual DNA to your own spirit. Therefore, you want to be sure that godly people are in your life and praying for you and teaching you things of the LORD. You will grow in the LORD and avoid even years of struggling with some things in life by connecting with stable and godly people. They can help you navigate life's challenges with the blessings and wisdom of the LORD.

Yeshua put it this way: "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Life happens, as we know. However, you will be strengthened by being with other believers who know how to walk their lives out in peace with the LORD regardless of what is going on in life.

"ONE ANOTHERING"

We all need the fellowship and friendship of others to share the life of God with us. There is no friendship like friendships in the LORD. It's like the LORD is right there with you as we're there for one another. The LORD meant for us to encourage and help one another. There are 146 verses in the Bible referring to "one another," 46 in the Old Testament, and 100 in the New Testament. They say variously, "love one another, trust one another, help one another, pray for one another, speak truth to one another..." The list goes on and on. The point is, we are to be intimately involved in each other's lives, to be there for one another, and to share in the life of the LORD together.

In the LORD, we are all equal. There are no individuals or people groups that He loves or regards higher than any other. It's the nature of God to love unconditionally. Therefore, we are to love the same way and we can when we let Him love through us. Just as "the Fall" brought separation into the world where once there was only unity and oneness, when Yeshua went to the cross, He cancelled the power to keep us in sin. That included cancelling the separation that exists between people as well as between us and God and to bring us back to oneness, into union again. But we must make the choice.

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

Oneness does not mean we are to be the same. God made us with a great harmonious diversity all of which in some way reflects Him in His vastness. We are in harmony with each other when we are in harmony with the Spirit of God. He wants unity, unity is not uniformity. We are often threatened by people who are not like us be it how we think or what we look like. The world erects walls and barriers between people. Don't we have prejudices and divisions based on race, gender, social status, religion, economics, education, physical appearances and beliefs? But for those who are the Lord's, there is no justifiable reason for separation, except sin. He loves us all equally and we all have equal access to His presence. He made us all one in Him.

That means we don't entertain evil thoughts toward one another; we forgive where needed. We don't participate in gossip about one another. If we see someone not living as we think they should, pray for them. Yeshua died for them and He forgave them. Don't hold anything against them He hasn't. If He could forgive after what men did to Him, especially considering Who He is, then so can we. The Holy Spirit is there to help you forgive. Ask Him to help you.

We who are Yeshua's will all spend eternity together in a love and full acceptance that will come from knowing each other entirely, for nothing will be hidden. Keep in mind that you will take not just your soul into heaven when you die physically, but the one other thing that you can take into heaven with you is the relationships you build in the LORD. Our friendships in God are eternal and that's something to cherish and protect.

Chapter 8 ~ Becoming Part of the Family of God

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. Read Genesis 12:3 and 28:14 and Psalm 22:27. How important do families seem to God? In the last chapter, we read about how the community of Believers became like a giant family. Read Mark 3:34-35 and Matthew 12:48-50. Who does Yeshua consider His family? Would you be included?
2. Read 1 John 1:7. What is this saying about “light”? How does walking in light affect our relationships? Read John 13:34; 15:12-13. In what way has He loved His disciples? What does that mean to you in practical terms? Read 1 John 3:16. How can this verse be applied to your life? Read John 13:25. What is the effect of our love for one another? Does it extend beyond our personal one-on-one interactions? How might others observe our love for one-another?
3. Please look up the following verses and list or discuss how you see each one as important in relationship with God and our fellowship with one another?
 - a. 1 John 4:17, 11-12
 - b. 1 John 3:23
 - c. Romans 12:10
 - d. Romans 13:8,14
 - e. Romans 14:19; 15:7,14
 - f. 1 Corinthians 16:20; 11:33
 - g. 1 Corinthians 12:25; Galatians 15:14-16
 - h. Galatians 5:26; Ephesians 4:32
 - i. Ephesians 4:22, 25

Chapter 9

KNOW YOUR ENEMY

It may surprise you to know, with all the goodness of God around you, that you have an enemy. Actually, he's God's enemy. Since he is against God he is called "the adversary" which in Hebrew is pronounced "ha satahn" from which we get the name Satan. It's a title, not his name. He is also known as "the devil," which comes from the Greek word diabolos, which means slanderer or accuser. That tells you about his character and how he attempts to influence people.

His name was originally Lucifer and he was one of God's highest angels until pride overcame him and he decided he would like to be God rather than of God. So he led a rebellion in heaven and one-third of the angels, now called demons, mutinied. Only it didn't work out as they thought it would and God, who knows everything, hurled them out of heaven and, it appears, expelled them to the earth, which continues to be a battleground between God and Satan.

Behind all the distrust or rebellion against God, behind all the lies, hatred, antagonism and rebellion in the world, behind all the quarrels and the wars, all the sickness, suffering and sorrow in the world, is Satan and his demons. They work undercover to rob, destroy and kill and are the instigators of stress and striving that rob us of peace. Each of these tells us about Satan's nature while God's nature is to bless, to provide and to prosper.

And God is always just (as in brings justice) so He gives us free will. We each get to choose just as Adam and Eve got to choose, whether we will act out of God's nature or Satan's nature. We can trust God's goodness on our behalf and obey Him, or live a life of independence from God, or even in rebellion against Him.

The truth is, we were created to be one with God, just as we were meant to fulfill the will of God flowing through us. Now that you are God's, His goodness will continue to flow through you to others. Again, it is a choice. We can react with Satan's nature or with God's goodness. If you ask God to help you be more like Him, He will do so. It may take a while until you're free of old habits and responses, but every experience with God enables us to become stronger in Him. On the other hand, yielding to the devil by disobeying God will weaken you. Thank God for repentance that restores us when it is heartfelt.

All this may be new thoughts to you and it may sound scary that perfectly nice people would be under the influence of Satan in any way. But think of it this way. What do we call anyone who has ever stolen even the smallest thing? A thief. Do you know of anyone who has not told a lie? What do we call someone who lies? A liar, the same name that Satan is known as. Have you or that nice person you know ever taken the name of the LORD in vain? That's blasphemy.

Have you ever wished that someone was out of the way so what they have could be yours? That is covetousness, or you could even have harbored murder in your heart if you wished them really 'out of the way.' Those are sins which the devil has instigated. Even the nicest of people are influenced by the devil. From arguments to wars, the devil is in there, trying to take over the

world and be God. But it's not a contest. "The earth is the Lord's and all it contains" (1 Corinthians 10:26).

OVERCOMING TEMPTATION

When we come to know Yeshua, we start to become aware that there is a force that is against God and His goodness, and consequently against those of us who belong to Yeshua. But that's where the Holy Spirit can empower us to live above anything that Satan tries to put into our lives. We can pray and stand against him. And we can become aware of his tactics.

For instance, temptations are not from God. Eve was tempted by the "lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16). It will almost always be something along those lines that would draw us to sin. Lust is saying, "I want it and I want it now." Pride is thinking more of ourselves than of others, or even of God. We can call upon the Lord to help us stand against these temptations, and agree with God's Word rather than our own demanding character.

We can ask the Lord to strengthen us and believe that He will because He always hears us when we pray according to His will. Yeshua knows what it is to be tempted by the devil. He went through it! (See Matthew 4.) He'll empower you to just say "No!" Once you are aware of what is a ploy of the devil, you can just turn to the Lord and turn away from it. The devil's only power is to get you to believe what he's lying to you about. But God's word is Truth. If you believe God, the devil has no power over you. The battle is in our minds. But God's Word says, "Submit therefore to God, resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

Giving praise to God and worshipping Him will also turn a spiritual attack of the devil into victory. Also reading God's word and filling your heart with His truth and His promises will cause the devil's lies to flee from you. God's Word, the Bible, is as a shield to protect us.

DENYING DISSENTION

We must be aware that the devil tries to bring division between people, especially between Believers. But we are not each other's enemies; we have a common enemy whom we call satan or the devil. The Bible tells us that a believer in Yeshua "must turn away from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it" (1 Peter 3:11). Never agree with the devil against another Believer or even an unbeliever by gossiping. Satan is the "accuser," God never is. It is the devil who is behind accusations, incriminations, or speaking against another person. God forgives and "does not take into account a wrong suffered" (1 Corinthians 13: 5), meaning we should not keep alive a recounting of how you were wronged in your mind and heart.

The devil and his demons remind us constantly of reasons we have a right to be angry and unforgiving toward others. Remember, all this happens in our minds, so your own thoughts may accuse you of wrongdoing, even against yourselves. He may even try to get you to dislike yourself. Don't respond to the devil's accusations.

This does not mean we condone sin or wrong or injustice. Those must be dealt with. God hates sin and injustice. But we can do so by “speaking the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15). We might be angry about sin or injustice; Yeshua was. There is a righteous kind of anger that rises up inside of us against sin and injustice. But we must be careful not to respond with more sin. The Bible tells us we can “be angry but sin not” (Ephesians 4:26a). Further, we must turn our anger over to God and let Him deal with it. “Let not the sun go down upon your wrath” (Ephesians 4:26b).

We, however, have the power to come out of agreement with what Satan may have been telling us about ourselves or others. He may have even been lying to us all our lives so that we are influenced by things that aren't really true or good for us. But thanks be to God, God gives us the power to turn toward belief in what God says about us. You can say, “I come out of agreement with that lie of the devil, in Yeshua's name” and be free of it. That sounds simple but if you will believe God's promises to you, God will change you to be aligned with His goodness toward you, not from crisis to crisis but from “glory to glory.” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

YOU ARE IN CHARGE OF WHAT YOU THINK

You need not be preoccupied with Satan and you don't need to fear him. Yeshua has defeated him and it is by faith in what Yeshua has done to defeat him that we are protected. We were given power in Yeshua's name over demons and the devil himself. As you grow in the LORD, you will learn to take the authority God has given us in the name of Yeshua to win spiritual battles to rescue others as well as things in your own life. Remember, “God has not give us a spirit of timidity (or fear), but of power and love and discipline.” Discipline can also be translated as “sound mind” (2 Tim 1:7). That's a good verse to memorize and let sink down in your spirit.

Occasionally, we need to have someone pray for us and take authority over a demon that has been plaguing us, perhaps for years. Ask the Lord to lead you to someone you can trust who is mature and discerning who has experience in setting people free. Yeshua told His disciples that this should be a normal part of being a believer: “In My name you will cast out demons.” You may find that once a harassing demon is gone from your life, you can enter into Yeshua's peace much more. The best way to avoid being harassed by the devil is to not open the door to him in the first place.

It is the authority of Yeshua's name that demons must obey. Yeshua “is the name which is above every other name” (Philippians 2:9). In other words, what He says goes. He has given us the authority over demons so when we tell them to go in Yeshua's name, they must go. You can tell them to go from your own life as you come out of agreement with what they've been lying to you about all this time. Thank God for the name of Yeshua. He is the God who saves!

The Bible tells us that satan has held man captive through the fear of death. Death and hell go together. Both are separation, from life, from God, and from all goodness. Through His death and resurrection, Yeshua took the keys out of Satan's hands — the “keys of death and Hades” (Hell) (Revelation 1:18) — which is to say that He took authority away from him. Yeshua now

holds those keys. For that reason, the devil can't threaten you with fear of death. When we know even if the worst thing happens to you and you die, you get to go to heaven where there is no fear, no pain, no suffering and no loneliness. There is only love, the perfect liberating love of God.

As we have said, all the troubles in the world are due to the instigation of the devil who works behind the scenes unknowingly to most people. But we who are Yeshua's are aware of his tactics and we can overcome them with wisdom in the Lord and what we call spiritual warfare. "The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses." (2 Corinthians 10:4). Those "fortresses" are usually in our minds, the ways we've been thinking that are not for our own good. Do you have any of those thoughts? How do we overcome them? "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 [Messiah]" (2 Corinthians 10:5).

For every lie and every negative or threatening thought the devil puts in our minds, there is a promise of God to be employed on our behalf to "trump" the lie. Open your Bible and see what God shows you. Memorize verses that speak to you about issues in your own life. With the help of the Holy Spirit and God's Word, you can begin to replace those negative thoughts with what God says. His words are truth and life. Choose life! (Deuteronomy 30:15, 19)

HOW TO AVOID GOING TO HELL

In this day in which we live, numerous people have experienced both being taken to heaven and hell by the LORD and lived to tell about it. He has allowed people to experience one or the other, sometimes both, and then sent them back to life here to tell of the reality of each place. Hell is beyond anything you can imagine of horror, terror and darkness. It is for people who have chosen darkness rather than light. Darkness is about hiding from truth. Yeshua put it this way: "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil" (John 3:19). Evil will never go unpunished even if it doesn't happen immediately. Nothing goes beyond God's knowledge or His justice. "For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; (however) mercy triumphs over judgment" (James 2:13). For those who are truly repentant and, even evil can be forgiven.

Yeshua has also said, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life" (John 8:12). Hide nothing from Him. His mercy will overcome all judgment when we confess any sin or let Him in on our darkest secret place. He knows anyway, but He waits for us to let Him in, then He will work to free us from those places in our hearts. Then you will find that "the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth" (Ephesians 5:9). Those are easy qualities to live with.

Chapter 9 ~ Know Your Enemy

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. Read Isaiah 14:12-14. (Note: These verses are about Lucifer, who was the star of the morning indicating a high place in God's presence, but who forfeited his position as one of God's most authoritative angels. Lucifer was his name, but remember that he became God's adversary (satahn in Hebrew) and so bears the title of satan.) Read Ezekiel 28:14-17. This too is about satan. What does it tell you he was created to be like? What happened in :15-17?
2. Read John 8:44. What does that tell you about satan's character? Read 1 John 5:19. God has allowed him power for a time before the final judgment. How far does his power extend? Read Luke 22:24. Can you see how satan might have been the instigator behind this dispute? In what way? In what way is that like satan's character and goal?
3. Read Genesis 2:16-17. How many trees could they eat from? What was the restriction? What would be the consequence of eating from it? Read Job 2:2 Who is roaming around on the earth? (Note: We find satan in the Garden talking to Eve having disguised himself as a serpent/snake.) Read Genesis 3:1. How many trees is he trying to make it sound like the restriction involved? Read verse :4. How does this line up with 2:17? What (Who) is he trying to get her to doubt? Read 2 Corinthians 11:3. What happened?
4. Read Matthew 4:1-11. In each of these scenarios satan was attempting to try and get Yeshua to succumb to temptations to accomplish things that were very real to Yeshua. What might they have been regarding verses :3, 5, 8? Read Matthew 4:9. This is satan addressing Yeshua while offering to bribe Him. What was satan's ultimate goal? With what did Yeshua counter these temptations? Read 1 Corinthians 10:13. What does this tell us about dealing with temptations? Are there any temptations you deal with in your life? Do you now see who the "tempter" is behind those temptations? What verses might be your weapons against the enemy of your soul?
5. Read John 17:15. What is Yeshua praying for His disciples (us) here? Read 2 Corinthians 10:4-5. While we are in the world, there is a battle against evil. How do we fight that battle? "Fortresses" are in our minds. How are we to tear them down? Knowing what you have just learned, is it possible that every thought you have is not your own but could come from the enemy? Read Hebrews 4:12. How can the Word sort out where your thoughts come from?

Chapter 10

NOW WHAT?

You should now have a picture of what life in the LORD is like and how important it is to know Him personally. As you can see, life would be quite different without Him. Being one with God in love is the supreme reason God created you. You will find fulfillment you never dreamed was available to you. His power will work in your life to set you free and to make you an instrument to bring His message of love and salvation to other people as you increasingly enjoy His love for you.

The opportunities that are open to you are unlimited. Pray with outrageous expectation. God is so big and so awesomely powerful, nothing is beyond His reach. If you have a desire in your heart to do something for Him, ask God to purify your motive and to equip you to do it. Keep praying and expecting.

He longs for people to stretch out and reach for places in Him they've never been before. Let Him give you dreams only He can fulfill and then trust Him to bring them to pass.

You have every opportunity in Him to become a history maker. That can mean in your own immediate sphere of influence or to reach the world. Find what tugs at your heart in the Bible. Find what makes you want to say, "Oh, Lord, make me like that. I want to be that way for you," and watch what happens as you continue to pray for it for yourself and for others. There is so much that is available to us in God. And there is so much in the world that needs His love and ways.

Even if you just read your Bible every day, each time you do, you present yourself to God for the Holy Spirit to work in your life. The same goes for praying, whether you pray with your mind or in the Spirit in tongues. You are building up your inner most being where God dwells and allowing yourself to become more sensitive to Him. Never let being with Him become a chore or drudgery. If you aren't coming to Him in love, find out what is coming between you. It's on your end, not His. It's been said, God is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. If you feel further away from Him than you did before, guess who moved? Ask Him to show you if you don't know why and He will. Then just turn back to Him in "the simplicity of devotion to Messiah." (2 Corinthians 11:3). He is most pleased with you when you are most enjoying Him!

Will it always be easy? Probably not. Nothing really worthwhile comes without a cost. But we grow the most when we are the most challenged. You know the old adage: No pain, no gain. Our spiritual muscles must also be exercised to be strong. No matter what comes our way, God can be relied on to bring us through – victoriously! Keep in mind that when things are hard here in this life, even though you do not see Yeshua (visually) in the here and now, there is eternal "joy unspeakable (which is) full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8) awaiting those who keep on trusting Him.

OPENING YOUR HEART TO YESHUA

If you have truly opened your heart to Messiah Yeshua and asked Him to come and be Lord in your life, then you are among those “who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:5).

But perhaps you have read through this entire book and have still not yet come to a born again experience through accepting Yeshua into your life. The Hebrew prophet Zechariah prophesied 500 years before Messiah Yeshua was born, “I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son” (Zechariah 12:10). This tells us that those who did not realize it before, will realize when Yeshua comes and they see Him, they will recognize Him as the Messiah, the One who was “pierced” and nailed to a cross and it will bring great sorrow upon them as they realize Yeshua really is the Messiah of Israel.

But thanks to our great and gracious God, He has opened His heart and His arms to thousands of Jewish people and non-Jewish people the world over in this day in which we live and welcomed them into His forgiving arms. We need not be among those who mourn when He comes, or when we stand before Him in the judgment, as every person who has ever lived will at some point. When you come to God now in humble repentance for your sin and for living your life in independence from Him till now, and to the best of your ability you invite Yeshua into your life as Lord, “He is able...to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy” (Jude 1:24).

There is no greater peace than knowing that whatever comes, God is with you and He will protect and lead and guide you. There is nothing that will come at you in life for which God will not give you the wisdom, victory or strength to overcome when we look to Him for it. There is no greater joy than to know that you will see God face-to-face and enter into His joy forever one day! Nor is there any greater security than knowing you are loved by God, that you have been born again in your spirit, your innermost being, and knowing assuredly that you have been made one with God through accepting His Son, Messiah Yeshua. As you continue to live your life in and for Him, eternal life is yours. The Biblical truth is, as Yeshua said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me” (John 14:6). Because He made the way past our sins into the presence of holy God, He is the only way to God.

If you have not done so already and you would now like to invite Messiah Yeshua into your life, you can repeat this prayer or pray something similar in your own words as follows. You may want to address God as “Lord,” or you may feel more comfortable, especially if you’re Jewish, addressing Him as, “God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” However you choose to address Him, continue to pray something like this:

I have just learned things about You I didn’t know before. I now wish to be Yours and to live in ways that please You. Lord, please forgive me for my sins and for living independently of You. I thank You for sending Your Son Yeshua who paid the price of death for my own sin so that I can be forgiven and come to know you. I thank you for reaching out to me and making me Yours. Thank you for helping me to be sensitive to

Your Spirit, and to love and obey you always. I thank you that I am now Yours for all eternity, in Yeshua's name.

If you have prayed that prayer and repented as earnestly as you know how, angels are rejoicing in heaven that you have come to the Lord. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents"(Luke 15:10).

Now, if you just prayed that prayer above, or if you had already accepted Yeshua into your heart and life before you read this book, the next step is to be filled with God's Holy Spirit. Will you pray this prayer with me:

Lord, I am so grateful to be Yours. I thank you for making me a child of God. I want all that You have for me. I want to know You and to be filled with Your Spirit. Lord, fill me to overflowing with Your love and Your Holy Spirit. Please give to me Your gift of speaking in Tongues so that I can praise you and pray beyond the limitations of my mind by Your Spirit. Lead me by Your Spirit, Lord, to learn to let you minister to others through me. Teach me, Lord, how to walk in Your power but also to be humble before You and before people. Help me to be all You intend for my life. I wish to live my life for Your glory, in Yeshua's name. Amen.

Now you can speak in a prayer language that God will give to you, also known as praying in tongues. Begin to speak, or even begin to sing, but don't speak in English. I know that sounds foolish and you may wonder how in the world you can do that. Just begin to do it and the Holy Spirit will give you the words to begin to speak. You must open your mouth and speak; tongues will not overtake you. But expect God to bless you with this wonderful gift and don't be discouraged if it does not happen immediately. Please go back and reread the section on speaking in tongues on pages _____ so you are more informed about speaking in tongues.

Now, I would like to pray for you what is called the Aaronic Benediction. It's the prayer that God told Aaron to pray over Israel and which rabbis have been praying over the Jewish people for centuries. It still applies today for all God's children and comes with a promise of His blessings: "So they shall invoke My name on the sons of Israel, and I then will bless them." His blessings are what God promised to Abraham, and His blessings are now yours as His child.

"The Lord bless you, and keep you;
The Lord make His face shine on you,
And be gracious to you;
The Lord lift up His countenance on you,
And give you peace." (Numbers 6:26)

May His highest will be done in your life and may your life be lived for His glory. Amen.

Appendix A

MESSIANIC PROPHECIES

Below are only a limited number of the hundreds of Old Testament prophecies of a Coming One or an Anointed One, which is another name in Hebrew for “Messiah.”

The Old Testament prophecies that predict the coming of Messiah appear to be conflicting. This in itself has been perplexing to Jewish scholars who assumed there were two Messiahs. The one would be Messiah ben Joseph (ben means son of) who would be the suffering Messiah just as Joseph suffered. The other would be Messiah ben David who would be the King Messiah, reigning over Israel as David did when God was pleased with them and they were at peace with all their enemies. The conflict of the two different Messiahs is resolved in Yeshua who already came as the One who suffered (His first coming), and as the One who is yet to come again (His second coming) as King.

There are literally hundreds of prophecies relating to the Messiah which Yeshua has fulfilled. Those which He has yet to fulfill cannot be fulfilled until He returns and sets up His Kingdom on the earth. The prophecies state that the Messiah would save not only a righteous Israel, but other righteous people in the world “through the Jews,” which is to say through the Messiah of the Jews.

Look up these prophecies in your Bible to see what God promised and how He fulfilled His promises in Yeshua. This is a wonderful way to get to know the LORD better and learn specific things about Him. It will also help you to familiarize yourself with your Bible. And such a study will help you to have faith to believe God for things in your own life and what is taking place in the world around you as you see how faithfully He fulfills what He promises.

You may want to keep a notebook to list what each of these verses means to you and what you learn through them. Such a study can be a source of fellowship between you and the LORD. This will be true if you’ve just come to know the LORD or even if you’ve known Him for years. We can never know Him too well!! There’s always more to learn about our everlasting God.

Enjoy your study. May the LORD bring you much revelation whether you study this on your own or with friends in a discussion group. Amen.

MESSIANIC PROPHECIES FULFILLED

Messianic Prophecies	Hebrew Scriptures / Tenach	New Covenant Fulfillment
Messiah’s pre-existent and Eternal nature: Only God can be eternal, proving His divinity.	Micah 5:2; Isaiah 9:6; Psalm 90:2; 102:25-27	Matthew 1:23; Luke 1: 31, 32; John 1:1, 14; Hebrews 1:10-12; 1 Tim 3:16
Born in Bethlehem;	Micah 5:2; Jeremiah 33:14-15;	Matthew 1:1; 2:1; Luke 2:4-7;

Descendent of David	Ezekiel 17:22-24; 34:23-34	Luke 3:23-31;
Born of a Virgin	Isaiah 7:14 (Alma refers to a virgin, not young woman or maiden as some translations say. It would be no miraculous sign if she were not a virgin.	Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-35
Descendent of Abraham, through whom the world is ultimately blessed.	Genesis 12:3	Matthew 1:1-16; 8:5, 10.
From the tribe of Judah and descendent of David; Jesse was David's father	Genesis 49:10; 2 Sam 7:12; 1 Chron. 17:11; Psalm 110:1; 132:11; (rod of Jesse) Isaiah 11:1	Matthew 1:1; 9:27; 22:43; Luke 1:32; Romans 1:3; Luke 3:23, 32
Declared to "God with us" and "the Son of God."	Isaiah 7:14; Psalm 2:7;	Matthew 1:23; 3:17; Romans 1:4
He would be a son called out of Egypt.	Hosea 11:1	Matthew 2:15
He would be presented with gifts by kings who would pay tribute to him.	Psalm 72:10, 11	Matthew 2:1-11
He would be a Nazarene	Judges 13:5; Amos 2:11; Lamentations 4:7	Matthew 2:23
His ministry would take place in Galilee.	Isaiah 9:1-7	Matthew 4:12-16
Messiah would come at a prophetically designated time.	Daniel 9:25-26	Galatians 4:4; Ephesians 1:10
A messenger would go before Him to prepare the way for Him in the spirit of Elijah.	Isaiah 40:3,4; Malachi 3:1; 4:5-6	Matthew 3:3; 11:7-11; Luke 1:17; John 1:23
He would be a prophet like Moses (able to stand in God's presence and reflect the glory of God on His face, give a law to the people, miracles, feed people bread from heaven,	Deuteronomy 18:15	Matthew 2:15; (reflect God's glory); John 13:34 (New command given); Matthew 14:19-21 (Feed bread to the people miraculously); Luke 19:37 (miracles performed)

etc.)		
God would call Him His Son and be delighted in Him.	1 Chron. 17:13a; Psalm 2:7; Isaiah 42:1	Matthew 3:17; 17:5; Hebrews 1:5
Anointed by the Holy Spirit - to preach good news to poor, brokenhearted captives.	Psalm 45:7; 147:3a; Isaiah 11:2; 42:3; 61:1	Matthew 3:16-17; 11:5; John 4:14; Hebrews 1:9;
He bore our sicknesses and healed many (deaf, blind, lame, epileptics, etc.)	Isaiah 35:5-6; 29:18; 53:4; 147:3b	Matthew 8:16-17; 11:5
Sent by Father-God to speak His word.	Deut 18:18	John 8:28-29
Words of Grace came from His lips.	Psalm 45:2	Luke 4:22
As a Teacher He taught in parables.	Psalm 78:1,2; Isaiah 48:17	Matthew 13:34-35; John 3:2
God's Spirit was upon Him	Isaiah 42:1; 61:1	Luke 4:18 ; Acts 10:38
He spoke with authority and the wisdom of God.	Psalm 78:2b; Proverbs 2:6	Luke 2:52 (Even as a child He had wisdom); Matthew 7:29; Mark 6:2;
His character of goodness, grace, justice, truth and compassion.	Psalm 100:5; 112:4; Isaiah 9:7; 11:2,4; 42:2	Matthew 9:36; 11:28-30; 19:16-17; John 4:4-26; 5:30; 14:6
Messiah would have a ministry of miracles	Isaiah 35:5; 53:5	Matthew 11:46; Luke 19:37; Acts 2:22. (Matthew 13:58 – He did so many miracles that it was note-worthy when no miracles were performed.)
Blind eyes opened	Isaiah 42:7	John 9:25-38
Messiah would enter the Temple with authority	Malachi 3:1	Matthew 21:12; Luke 19:45
The people were trusting in traditions that exceeded God's word to them.	Isaiah 29:13	Matthew 15:8
He was a "stone of stumbling"	Isaiah 8:14-15	1 Peter 2:8

to many in Israel.		
He was hated without cause & accused by false witnesses	Psalms 35:11, 19	Matthew 27:23
Entered Jerusalem on a donkey; hailed as King	Zechariah 9:9	Matthew 21:1-11
He remained silent before His accusers.	Isaiah 53:7	Matthew 26:62, 63; 27:12-14
He was spat upon, beaten and scourged (with a whip). Wounded for our sins. His body would be pierced.	Isaiah 50:6; 53:5; Micah 5:1 (He was the judge who was smitten on his cheek) Zechariah 12:10a	Matthew 27:26, 30; John 6:51; John 19:34-37
He bore (carried) the sins of many	Isaiah 53:10-12 (Read all of Isaiah 53 – major prophesy of Messiah)	Mark 10:45
Crucified with convicted criminals	Isaiah 53:12	Matthew 27:35
Betrayed for 30 pieces of silver	Zechariah 11:12	Matthew 26:15; Luke 22:5
Forsaken by His friends in the end	Psalms 41:9; Zechariah 13:7	Matthew 26:56; John 13:21
Messiah was not killed for Himself	Daniel 9:26	Matthew 20:28
It is His blood that effected the Atonement of the New Covenant	Leviticus 17:11	1 John 3:14-18
Not one of His bones was broken	Numbers 9:12	John 19:31-36
He would be buried in a rich man's tomb	Isaiah 53:9	Matthew 27:59, 60; Mark 15:46; Luke 23:52, 53; John 19:38-42
He took the curse of sin by being hanged on a tree (wooden cross)	Deuteronomy 21:23	Acts 10:39; Galatians 3:10-13
Messiah is initiator of God's New Covenant w/ Israel, open	Isaiah 55:3-4; Jeremiah 31:31-34	Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; Acts 10:34, 35;

to all men		Hebrews 8:6-13
“Behold Your God!” He would come to Zion as Redeemer	Isaiah 40:9; 59:20	John 1:36; 19:14; Luke 2:38
It was God’s plan for Messiah to die	Zechariah 13:7a	John 18:11
He would ascend into heaven	Daniel 7:13	Acts 1:9-11
Gentiles flock to Him	Isaiah 55:5; 60:3; 65:1; Malachi 1:11; 2 Samuel 22:44-45; Psalm 2:7-8	Matthew 8:10; John 12:21
He will come again! And we who are His will be with Him forever.	Zechariah 14:5	Mark 13:26; 1 Thessalonians 4:17

Appendix B

PROPHECIES OF ISRAEL'S RETURN TO THE LAND

Biblical prophecies are like history written before it happens. In many cases, hundreds of years before it takes place. Below is a partial list of Old Testament Scriptures relating to the Land of Israel and their fulfillment.

There are approximately 365 prophecies recorded by Israel's prophets who spoke for God stating that the land of Israel is to belong to Abraham's descendents forever. A number of these verses are also related to Israel returning to God in connection with their return to the Land. Following some brief commentary is only a partial list of the many prophecies that exist in the Scriptures.

After a period of almost 1800 years, despite repeated threats of annihilation and assimilation, the descendents of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob began returning to the land of their forefathers in the early 1900's. As was said above, no other nation in history has survived being conquered, banned from their own land, and dispersed throughout the world without losing their identity or disappearing altogether.

It is worth mentioning that at about the same time, a group of Jewish believers in Messiah in England began to feel that they did not want to lose their Jewish identity and be assimilated into the church as would generally happen on the rare occasion that a Jew would come to faith in Messiah. So they formed the Hebrew Christian Alliance which would eventually become the Messianic Jewish movement of today. Through this movement many thousands of Jews have come to know their Messiah and the church has become more conscious of the Jewish foundation of their faith.

It is not insignificant that these two events, the return to claim the land and the claiming or maintaining by believers in Yeshua of their Jewish identity, should coincide. In fact, we can trace events in Israel with events in the church. The most meaningful took place in 1967 when all of Jerusalem, for the first time in 2000 years, was once again in Jewish hands.

In the same year, an event not entirely unlike the Holy Spirit coming upon the disciples at Shavuot in the first century, the Holy Spirit came upon the believers as had not been experienced since the first century. It was the beginning of what is called the Charismatic movement. When the Jews were once again in Jerusalem, the Holy Spirit was once again moving in the same power He did among the first believers? There are too many of these kinds of "coincidences" for it to be other than God's sovereign doing.

We cannot over-emphasize the unprecedented sociological and historic uniqueness of Israel re-emerging as the same people with the same identity, with the same God, the same religion, and the history and the same language. Only God could have accomplished this. In fact, God proclaimed through the Hebrew prophet Jeremiah that the sun, moon and stars would have to disappear before Israel would disappear:

Thus says the Lord Who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, Who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; the Lord of hosts is His name. "If this fixed order departs from before Me," declares the Lord, "then the offspring of Israel also will cease from being a nation before Me forever". Thus says the Lord, "If the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth searched out below, then I will also cast off all the offspring of Israel for all that they have done," declares the Lord. "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when the city (Jerusalem) will be rebuilt for the Lord..." (Jeremiah 31:35-38).

Though the world may not always appreciate that it is God who has done this, it is for many Bible-believing people a standard of God's sovereign faithfulness to His word.

"And He (God) will lift up a standard for the nations, and assemble the banished ones of Israel, and will gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth." (Isaiah 11:12)

In actuality, this modern day return to the land was the second return. The first was after Israel had been conquered by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.

"Then it will happen on that day that the LORD will again recover the second time with His hand the remnant of His people, who will remain" (Isaiah 10:11).

This first return came about seventy years after Israel was captured by Babylon as prophesied by Jeremiah:

"For thus says the Lord, 'When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place' (Jeremiah 29:10).

When the prophet Daniel, who was living in captivity in Babylon, read Jeremiah's prophesy that Israel would be in captivity for seventy years, here was his response:

"in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was revealed as the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years. So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes" (Daniel 9:2,3).

Even the fact that Daniel set himself to task to fast and pray for Israel's return to their land after seventy years was prophesied by Isaiah:

"For thus says the Lord, 'When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.

Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you,' declares the

Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you,' declares the Lord, 'and I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you into exile" (Isaiah 29:12-14).

The Temple was destroyed in 586 B.C. Seventy years later, Cyrus, the king of Babylon (now Persia) got it in his mind that the Israelites whom Babylon had captured had to return to rebuild their temple in Jerusalem.

"Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he sent a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying:

"Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, 'The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. 'Whoever there is among you of all His people, may his God be with him! Let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel; He is the God who is in Jerusalem" (Ezra 1:2-4).

And so Israel returned to rebuild her temple and was reestablished in the land the LORD had promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. There are many other prophecies we could list here and of the history that fulfilled them over the centuries. Israel remained in the land until 70 A.D. when Roman troops burned the temple and destroyed Jerusalem. The Jews were banned from their own city for one hundred years. It was not until 1948 when, according to prophesy, Israel, the people of Zion, was 'born again' as a nation in one day.

"Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Can a land be born in one day? Can a nation be brought forth all at once? As soon as Zion travailed, she also brought forth her sons" (Isaiah 66:8)

One of the challenges of the new nation was that people spoke many different languages, of the countries from which they came. But a common language was necessary to build the nation. Through the impassioned efforts of one man named Eliezer Ben Yehuda, even before Israel was declared a nation again, he restored Israel's language so that today Hebrew is again the national language of Israel, the language of their forefathers. Like with Ben Yehuda, it takes only one person with a vision from God to affect a nation. Ancient Hebrew, incidentally, which includes Biblical Hebrew, has no curse words in it. It is, in fact, a pure language.

"For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the Name of the LORD, to serve Him with one consent." (Zephaniah 3:9)

The miracle of the rebirth of the nation, however, was not without challenge by her Arab neighbors who immediately attacked her. Entirely outnumbered and without arms and tanks as a victorious army should have had. Nevertheless, Israel won the war and maintained her position. She continues to be threatened by her Arab neighbors, as we all know. But God has seen fit to be her Victor each time.

While there are many stories to tell of prophecies coming to pass, one is of Egyptians leaving their tanks in the Sinai and running the other way. When captured and questioned, they all told the same story to the Israelis who then captured them: They saw more soldiers in white than they knew they could fight against, advancing toward them. But the truth is, there were only a minimal number of Israeli soldiers, who were certainly not dressed in white, and the Egyptians tanks far outnumbered the Israelis. The only accounting for this is the presence of angels fighting on Israel's behalf as God fought for Israel in the past. The battle looked like this:

In that day the Egyptians will become like women, and they will tremble and be in dread because of the waving of the hand of the Lord of hosts, which He is going to wave over them. The land of Judah will become a terror to Egypt; everyone to whom it is mentioned will be in dread of it, because of the purpose of the Lord of Hosts which He is purposing against them” (Isaiah 19:16, 17).

Now that Israel was in the land, they had a job to do—to turn the land of desert and malaria swamps into land that would produce food. Mark Twain had taken a trip to Israel in the 1800s and he remarked that there was nothing there but poverty and barrenness. Today Israel is green and lush and the cities are rebuilt. They produce not only an abundance of their own food but export large quantities of foods. No doubt you've eaten oranges and avocados and other fruits grown in Israel. Excellent wines come from Israel's vineyards. And beautiful roses from Israel's gardens make up a huge export trade, all in fulfillment of prophesy:

“I will restore the captivity of My people Israel, and they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them; They will also plant vineyards and drink their wine, and make gardens and eat their fruit.” (Amos 9:14).

“The wilderness and the desert will be glad and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly” (Isaiah 35:1,2).

Jews have been returning to the land of Israel from all the nations of the world. just as the prophets foretold. In the former Soviet Union, however, for many years it was considered treason to want to emigrate to Israel and the Jews were under terrible persecution. To even wish to speak Hebrew was enough to get you sent to Siberia or a Gulag. But God promised through the prophet Jeremiah that the return of Israel to the land would eclipse the Exodus from Egypt. It would include the Jews from the north. If you look at a map, you will see that Moscow is due north of Jerusalem. Here's what God said:

"Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when it will no longer be said, 'As the LORD lives, who brought up the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt, but, 'As the LORD lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of the north and from all the countries where He had banished them.' For I will restore them to their own land which I gave to their fathers” (Jeremiah 16:14, 15 and 23:7,8).

These verses above are but a smattering of the hundreds of verses in the Bible relating to Israel and her land. God will bring all of Israel back to the land at some point. It may be when He returns to set up His kingdom in Jerusalem, or before. We wait to see how these verses are all

fulfilled. The following words were written by Moses, so they've been waiting quite a while to be fulfilled. We are seeing the fulfillment in the process of taking place today! We can only be assured that one day these words will all be fulfilled according to the will of the Lord.

“So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind in all nations where the Lord your God has banished you, and you return to the Lord your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons, then the Lord your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the Lord your God has scattered you.

If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there the Lord your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back. The Lord your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers.”

Appendix C

THE BIGGER PICTURE

In order for you to understand that you have just stepped into a place in history as a believer in Yeshua, it is meaningful for you to have some understanding of where we are today in God's unfolding of His plan for mankind. For that reason, please take a few moments to read through this mini-history lesson.

Because God has given mankind free will, at times men have made grave errors, even when they think they are doing the wisest of things. This has certainly been true for the church. What began as an entirely Hebrew (Jewish) revival movement, in fulfillment of the prophecies that God had given to Israel for centuries, was quickly infiltrated by non-Jewish influences. The destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. sent the believers out of the city and environs and out into the world where they preached the Gospel and thousands of people heard the message of the resurrection and the forgiveness of sins and came to the Lord.

It was not long before the non-Hebrews outnumbered the Hebrew believers. Many of the Gentile believers brought along their pet pagan practices and wove them together with their faith in Yeshua. As there were less and less Jews among them to tell them what was error and in violation of God's commandments, these things became more and more entrenched. At the same time a great misunderstanding of Israel's place in the kingdom of God led to anti-Hebrew or anti-Semitic biases. With no Bibles to read themselves (few could read at all), and no leadership teaching them the truths of the Bible, it was assumed that the Jews were responsible for Jesus' death and so God must hate them. After all, didn't He oust them from their land? Surely that was judgment, they reasoned. And so they took on the hate against the Jews that they assumed God had for them despite Paul's words of words: "I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew" (Romans 11:1,2).

When the emperor Constantine held the Council of Nicea they made some decisions and decided what would be official church doctrine from then on. In reality, it was a peace keeping effort to unify the pagans with the Christians so an amalgamation of the two religions was codified. Constantine, needless to say, was not born again, nor evidently were those ruling with him, so no one seemed to mind the pollution of what was identified as Christianity. One can trace such things as believing in Mary as the mother of God to the pagan belief of Nimrod's mother as the mother of god. Passover was now forbidden but since the resurrection was a necessary part of faith in Jesus, it became linked with the worship of the goddess Ishtar so that we now had Easter rather than Passover, and now the fertility symbols of dyed eggs and those cute little ever-reproducing bunnies were incorporated into the celebration of the resurrection. You can see how far from truth the supposed church had come.

If you were born in the Roman Empire, that would make you a Christian. No more repentance or leading of the Spirit of God; no more being born again by the Spirit. It was assumed that the Kingdom of God was no being expressed in Imperial Rome and that the pomp of the emperor

was the glory of God being seen in mankind. He made himself the head of the church and declared he carried the apostolic mantle of Peter which essentially made him the first pope. What was outlawed was anything Hebrew. No more Sabbath on Saturday or keeping of the feasts God gave to Israel. And no more Scriptures about which King David had said, “The Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119:105). Having turned off the light of the Word of God to Israel, the church plummeted the world into what is called The Dark Ages.

During these darkest of days the world which Rome touched was thrust into disease including plagues, poverty, ignorance, superstition, witchcraft, fear and oppression. It would be hard for us today to understand how hard and dark life had become. The blessings of God were simply absent. In time, things did improve but the Catholic (meaning universal) church continued to dominate the people’s lives and livelihood, keeping them in fear of excommunication or hell, which indentally, one could opt out of by paying large sums of money should one be fortunate enough to have a sufficient amount, to the church. “Indulgences” were sold on a regular basis. One could buy their salvation, but few could afford it. What happened to Yeshua paying the price for our salvation?

Then one Catholic priest named Martin Luther discovered two verses in the Bible that said the same thing: “The righteous man shall live by faith” (Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17). The year was 1536. With this revelation, men and woman began to once again come to God on the basis of faith and were experiencing being born again and a fresh new relationship with the Lord. This challenged the status quo of the church and threatened the power base of the priesthood and leaders. A bloody war resulted between the Catholic church who defended the status quo and those who protested against the church’s practices. Those protesting became known as Protestants. Today we call them Protestants though they are no longer protesting.

As we know the Protestant Reformation was successful and what is since known as the Protestant church was now free to follow the Lord without many of the constraints and errors of the universal (catholic) church. However, the Reformation was just that, a reforming of the church to do away with much of what was ungodly and unbiblical. But the Reformation was still not a Restoration. And that is what was needed. And that is what appears to be happening today.

This being a mini-history lesson and certainly not at all complete, suffice it to say that what the Reformation did not include was the return to the Hebraic ways God had given to Israel and which the first century believers celebrated and observed. Consider that God gave six celebrations or convocations to celebrate with Him each year. Those plus the Sabbath on Saturday makes seven. But the church still celebrates none of those. It celebrates only two real holidays, Easter and Christmas, both of which have pagan roots. Both were instituted in the church during Constantine’s reign in an attempt to bring unity to his kingdom between the Christians and those who followed other religions.

Just to give you an example of how far the church strayed from its Hebrew roots, the Resurrection of Yeshua took place at Passover. But Passover was entirely outlawed by Constantine and the resurrection was intertwined with the celebration of Ishtar, a fertility goddess of long before. The symbols of fertility connected to Ishtar were colored eggs and those cute little rapidly-reproducing rabbits – which is how we got Easter (Ishtar) eggs and Easter

bunnies. Neither have anything to do with the Resurrection of Yeshua. Yeshua talked about the traditions of men nullifying the Word of God. This would certainly be an instance of it taking place.

But we now live in a time in history when things are being restored. The first thing that was restored was Israel to the Land God promised to them. After 1,878 years (between 70 AD and 1948), Israel was restored to her land as a State once again. Only God could have accomplished this after all that time. He did so in fulfillment of the many promises He had given to Israel in His Word. There is a principle in Scripture that goes like this: “The spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual” (1 Corinthians 15:46). Accordingly, there exists a parallel between what happens in the end of Israel and what takes place among the believers. We can track the Jews coming back and reclaiming the land that God promised them and at the same time, spiritual territory being reclaimed by the Lord among the body of believers around the world. Here are just a few but major examples:

- In the 1890s the first Jews from Russia, called the *Bilu*, returned to the land and began clearing swamps and establishing Kibbutzim with an intent on creating a Jewish homeland. At this same time, Jews who had come to faith in Yeshua determined they would not become assimilated into the church culture, but would retain their Jewish identity as believers in their Messiah and the first Hebrew Christian Alliance was formed. So just when Jews are moved, presumably by God, to return to the land, they also as Jewish believers in Messiah Yeshua, return to their Jewish identity. The correlation cannot be missed.
- Israel became a nation in 1948. She was alive again! At that same year, many healing evangelists were stirred and anointed by God to bring a message of Yeshua as our Healer and thousands came to faith in Yeshua and were healed what were often deadly diseases.
- In 1967 Israel regained control of East Jerusalem which included the site of their beloved temple. In that same year that the temple area was once again in Jewish hands, the Holy Spirit came back into the church. With this spontaneous move of the Spirit of God, the Charismatic Renewal began, in which the way was now open for millions of believers to be once again baptized in the Holy Spirit, with evidence of speaking in Tongues which was as rare in the church as the presence of the Holy Spirit. Gaining access to the temple site where the Holy Spirit had first come upon the believers seemed the catalyst for the Holy Spirit to once again come upon believers the world over.

Since then, there has been an increasing interest by a proportion of the church, to learn of her Hebrew roots, to celebrate Israeli's feasts, and to enjoy Davidic or Messianic (Jewish) worship. Churches are now having Passover Seders instead of Easter egg hunts. There is a growing awareness of the need for the church to support Israel – indeed Israel is becoming increasingly aware that her only real friends in the world are the Spirit filled born again believers.

So where to you come in? There are more Jewish believers today in Yeshua than since the first century. That's historic right there. But God is doing more to restore a Torah mindset to His true people. By that I mean this: Yeshua made it clear that the greatest commandments are about love. (See Matthew 22:36-38.) We live in a time when the Bible as the Word of God has been

greatly dishonored as have its precepts. As a result, we are seeing a greater moral darkness coming upon not only America but the world. The Scriptures are again being displaced by ungodly practices and beliefs in religions that are not based on the truth of Yeshua's profound words: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me" (John 14:6). Many people feel it is arrogant for believers in Yeshua to think that there is only one way to God. But there is. And Yeshua is the way.

While there is a falling away from this truth, God is at work right in the midst of it to bring about a great move of His Spirit among people who will be once again like the first century believers in terms of godly character and motivation to bring the Kingdom of God to as many people as possible. The first century believers changed the Roman world. Before Yeshua returns, by His Spirit He will have prepared a people to be as a Bride for the Son of God, pure and holy, having eyes for no one or no thing but Yeshua. The Bible tells us that in the midst of difficult times before He returns, "the people who know their God will display strength and take action. Those who have insight among the people will give understanding to the many.... Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. (Daniel 11:32, 33; 12:3).

Part of that understanding is what God is imparting to His people today. It means loving as God loves us. It means walking in truth as Yeshua did. But it won't be accomplished by our trying to do it. That would only be an attempt based on our own efforts. The ways of God can only be accomplished through faith in God doing it through us. It all must come from resting in God, like a Sabbath rest, and not from striving. The trust in God that the first century believers allowed God to impact the world through their obedience to God and their love for Him and for each other. Their expectation was that Yeshua would return at any time. Today for the first time in history, all the prophecies line up related to Israel. Few things have yet to happen and they could at any moment. Can Yeshua be far from coming? Many expect Him in our lifetime.

We who are alive today have an opportunity to be among those who welcome the King to the earth. We have an opportunity as "one new humanity," Jew and Gentile together, to see the manifestation of the restoration Peter preached on Shavuot all those centuries ago when he said,

"The things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Messiah...has thus fulfilled. 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; and that He may send Yeshua the Messiah appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time" (Acts 3:18-21).