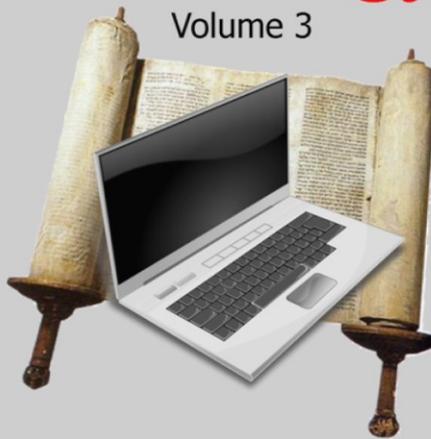


The Scrolls Anthology

Volume 3



A collection of writings
by Peter McArthur

A collection of spiritual writings by Peter McArthur

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The Issachar Scroll Writings Volume 3

These writings and the other Volumes in this series are some of the monthly teachings that have appeared on The Issachar Ministry web site (issachar.org) over the past 10 years or so.

I felt it helpful to compile the writings into easy-to-access volumes rather than just have them listed on the web site and singularly at other sites. So, here they are. I hope they may help you grow in the Messiah and the Father's grand purpose for us all.

Peter McArthur

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On the Road to the City



A reflection on the spiritual journey

By Peter McArthur

In a dream I was walking along a road called “Straight Ahead”. I could see in the distance, a very clear sight of the Eternal City, with a glimmering not overstated, but undeniably there. It was positioned a little above the natural horizon, not floating yet it did seem to be so. Yes, on a hill, raised up, but not as so high that it seemed at all out of reach.

The road on which I travelled was wide, yet its pavement was ancient and rugged, but all the while it was somehow fresh, but not new – at least not newly made. It was ancient, with a firm foundation well worn but not as much as it might’ve been. It could still take plenty of more travellers. Plenty more of feet to tread the way ahead. What made the roadway seem to be wider were the verges on each side flanking the road.

These were as wide again as the road, if not more so! The verges on either side were grassed, and seemingly recently mowed, but natural enough to give it that comfortable look of a welcome, come-rest-here-awhile kind of beckoning. Beyond the verges on each side stood the tangled forest, with mature ancient trees and thick handsome looking bushes of verdant green as the undergrowth; enticing, and even desirable, yet somehow dangerous in their siren-like luring. The forest stood high and slightly overshadowed the verges, but

interestingly did not overshadow the road at all. No shadows of any sort obscured or touched that roadway.

The forest, ancient as it were with a distracting tempting that seemed pleasant, was nevertheless a dangerous place. What however was comfortable were the verges. Places of rest on the journey, places of pleasant comfort with no hint of danger whatsoever. So long as you stayed on the verge and did not approach the forest you could feel (and were) safe.

Here and there on the sunny verges stood wonderfully large oak trees with grand branches and leaves that seemed so enticing with a hint of some ancient times about them. The delicate grasses stretched from the road right up to these trees and then on again until the very edge of the forest. The road itself was no more than the width of a common suburban street, perhaps smaller. Cobbled, but not unpleasant to walk on, and straight as a die.

The verges either side were at least double that width. The forest – well, who would know how large that was – not unless you were foolish or at least unwise to enter and see. But who could come back to report on what they found? No one ever did! Better to stay on the verges if the road became wearisome.

Beneath some of these grand trees on the verge were seats, some of logs, a few of stone, and now and then even a swing dangling from the enormous overhead branches. All this, coupled with the pleasant warmth of a sun-drenched spring's day was indeed enticing. A chance to stop and rest from the hardness of the road under foot. Interestingly the further you walked upon the road, the same distance the City seemed to be! It did not seem to get closer, but yet this didn't quite seem to matter – at least not while you were on the road. It still beckoned on, still stood there waiting – even watching you!

If you found yourself weary of the journey, strangely you never felt thirsty or overheated, only a little tired, a kind of weariness, not from the walking - but of the progress. So the verdant grass on the welcoming verges enticed you to stop a while, rest under the shady trees, even sit on a swing and enjoy. The trouble it seemed was that the longer you sat and enjoyed the pleasantries of the verges, the longer you wanted to enjoy them more. You could so easily convince yourself to stay just that little longer. Rest up, become refreshed, for the journey will still be there for the taking another day. And another. And another after that.

The journey somehow seemed to displace the actual road. The cart was now in front of the horse, as it were. The lure of the welcoming grass verges began to ensnare, entrap and engage one's thoughts and even one's values. A change of ideals and direction began to take root, ever so slowly, so subtly, but so devastatingly dangerous for any traveller on that road.

Should you linger too long, even a little too long, a complacency began to waft over you, a drowsiness of spirit and purpose that sang to your soul and spirit enticing you to remain there on the pleasant verge and to forego the hardness of the road – which by now was beginning to be out-of-mind; almost.

A shudder passed through me, a shaking that threw off the cloak of slumber and contentment. I found myself walking again on that road, gazing at the City in the distance, just a little nearer now. Not out of reach at all, but still there like a beacon soaking up the sunlight and emitting its inherit gloriousness.

Then as I walked on, foregoing the lure of the pleasant resting places, I said to myself: “Whether I arrive alive at the City or not, when others come after me, they shall see my body unmoving laying there on that road, and they will know, I kept my face toward the Eternal City and did not leave the road Straight Ahead.”

Whatever the outcome after that, I care not, because it will no longer be in my hands. It will be His work to finish my travel and He will take me into the City.

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Night Demons



This topic is a very disturbing one, so I encourage you to pray as you read this. It deals with sexual visitations of two demon powers that come in the night season.

Pastoral evidence shows that many women have experienced sexual attacks by the incubi demons, although it's rarely discussed. Many ministers and pastors refute the possibility of a demon having sex with a human. However, biblically and pastorally the evidence is there.

The names "incubus" and "succubus" are familiar terms in psychiatry where dreams of being sexually harassed are identified with these. In fact this isn't really a psychological problem, or even one to do with nightmares. The incubi and succubi are demonic forces that sexually visit their victims at night. The incubus is a "male" demon who attacks and violates woman, and the succubi is a "female" demon who seduces and attacks men. In some cases it's be known that the male incubi demon will visit men for the purpose of sodomy. The succubi also will engage in lesbian attacks upon women.

I'm writing about this because many Christians believe that these visitations are nothing more than horrid nightmares. In some cases it seems that the nightmare (which is from the Latin meaning to "lie upon") is just that – a bad dream. But occasionally this is nothing to do with bad dreams, but can be an actual demonic visitation. The attacks from these spirits may begin by the victim having sexually arousing dreams, but that's only a vehicle for what comes next.

I've written a small e-book on the subject that explains the history and methods of attack by these demons. It also gives practical advice on how to defeat these demons in the name of Jesus. You can **[download it FREE from here](#)**.

Here I want to confine the discussion to dreams, and how demons will use these. Basically if a person has a loose mind, one that is prone to fantasize, and lacks self-discipline, they may become a target for these powers. Those who have indulged in excessive sexual activity are also likely to experience such visitations.

These by themselves are not the only factors that will draw a night demon to visit, as such issues as occult involvement and unconfessed sexual sin will also determine whether a person is a candidate. Therefore it's important to guard your dream-life by committing your time of sleep to the Lord.

A night demon will often approach a woman on her own at night, bringing with it the ability to sexually arouse her. The attack is quite direct, but it may start with a dream of some sort that quickly turns into a nightmare. Depending on what has allowed the incubi to come, the woman may begin to feel an actual weight on the bed with her, or even upon her own body. In advanced stages the defilement by the demon is as real as a normal physical sexual encounter, although much more violent.

After some sort of sexually unpleasant experience has occurred the woman will feel great shame and much fear. Unable to confide in her husband or a friend, the problem only compounds – these demons thrive on the secrecy this kind of attack fosters. Night and sleep become times of great anxiety for the woman, and her dream-life becomes a time of nightmarish proportions.

In the case of the succubi attack upon a man, the method of attack is nearly always through the mind. The demon will implant sexually impure thoughts allowing the mind of the man to fantasize until he's unable to resist the images that come.

When a man is under this kind of attack he's likely to think the experience was just a dream. Some men, especially young men, think it's just part of their manhood development. The thoughts of sexually attractive women, combined with an actual experience of sexual satisfaction, only lead the man deeper into the trap. It's often only later that he realizes this is no longer a dream but an actual physical experience. Confusion can then grip him and he's torn between finding the experience satisfying, and yet fearful at the same time.

It's imperative that we understand these demons principally use dreams as a first method of attack. So guarding our dream-life is vital.

The average born-again believer shouldn't worry unnecessarily about these attacks as the demons can only operate if there's a legal ground for them to do so. Living a righteous life before the Lord is the best protection. But if there's unconfessed sexual sin, or unsavoury sexual practices, as well as a weak mind with a lack of self-discipline, then the prospects will increase for a visitation.

Medical researchers have found what they consider as abnormal sleep patterns from people supposedly suffering from nightmares. In most cases the similarity with attacks from incubi and succubi are striking. Generally psychologists don't believe there are any such things as evil spirits so the responses they collect from nightmare sufferers are regarded as paranoid or psychotic-like behaviour.

However for Christians who are aware of these demonic powers the responses the sufferers give are more like statements of a demonic attack!

DESCRIPTION OF THE DREAM OR NIGHTMARE

For a Female

- ◆ Feelings of malevolence; paranoid fantasies, "He is watching everything", "It's alive..."; Hybrid (a mixture of human and animal) creatures in the dream.
- ◆ Bleeding uterus; the mind flooded with anxiety.
- ◆ Feels her anatomy is vulnerable to attack.

For a Male

- ✦ Vivid fantasies of violence combined with sexual fantasies; a sense of mutilation of the private organs.
- ✦ Pre-occupation with anatomy and sex.
- ✦ Malevolent response; “medieval drawing of demons” come into the mind.

While this doesn't prove that these nightmares were actual demonic attacks, the content is very similar to demon intrusion. Note some of the things seen in the nightmares, such as:

- ✦ **Sensing a malevolent presence**
- ✦ **Seeing hybrid creatures**
- ✦ **Having a sense of extreme vulnerability**
- ✦ **The deliberate drawing of demons to a person.**

Many Christians including ministers and pastors simply don't believe these things happen. In over 30 years in ministry I've counselled a number of people, usually women, who've experienced vivid attacks from unseen but very “real” spiritual beings who've sexually violated them. In many cases dreams or nightmares have been a part of the initial attack. We need to be more pastorally sensitive about this issue, and more discerning of the dream-state.

Here I've listed some things to watch for in dreams that might indicate either an incubus or succubus attack.

- ✦ Are there recurring sexual fantasies?
- ✦ Is there sexual symbolism in the dream?
- ✦ If you're a female do you feel a weight on the bed or on your body during your sleep?
- ✦ If you're a male have you felt the physical sensations of sex?
- ✦ As far as you're aware, do these begin with a dream?
- ✦ After the dream, do you wake up feeling shame and fear?
- ✦ Is there both a mixture of enjoyment yet uncleanness (particularly in the case of men)?
- ✦ Are you beginning to dread going off to sleep?
- ✦ Have the visits begun to materialize in the room and not just appear in your dream?

Experiencing some of these points to the strong possibility that you're the victim of an attack from a night demon. In my e-book I explain how to deal with these intrusions. There is help in the name of the Lord Jesus but it's also important to understand why these demons come.

I introduce this distasteful topic because it's a subject we need to be aware of. For the record, I've found that victory in the name of Jesus is assured and lasting. But many people are very reluctant to share their experiences because of shame or ridicule. Those of us who are in the pastoral ministry need to be aware of this particular problem – and how to set the victims free.

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Re-directing the Heart



Peter McArthur

Perhaps our greatest struggle is in keeping the heart regularly focussed on the Lord. It would seem that almost every other spiritual endeavour is easier than this one. Fasting we can get used to; regular prayer we can discipline ourselves in; Bible reading we can work at. But keeping and guarding the issues of the heart — this is an awesome task. Yet God commands it as vital if we are to grow in spiritual health.

Keep your heart with all diligence; for out of it spring the issues of life. Prov 4:23

The actual Hebrew reads this way: “Observe and guard, preserve, protect and watch over your heart with all your watching...” or “...keep your heart with all your keeping...”

Note there’s an insistence to “doubly” watch over and keep the heart. Since the Lord is a God of economy He doesn’t waste words. So when He says that we’re to “doubly” watch out for the state of the heart, He certainly means it! In the original language there is the emphatic meaning of setting a double guard over the ground of the heart, just as a king might set a double watch of guards over his city gates.

John Flavel was a Christian of the Puritan era much concerned with practical Christianity. He wanted to see believers Walk the Talk, as we say today. He once wrote: “**The greatest difficulty before salvation is to win a person’s heart to God; but the greatest difficulty after salvation is to keep a person’s heart with God ”.**

Nothing has changed in this matter. The first flush of faith and love in the Lord can give way to a familiarity that is based on a lack of fear of the Lord, and apathy in progressing spiritually that comes from being distracted by other issues. What is it that’s so important about guarding the heart, and how on earth do we do it?

First of all, no one, absolutely no one, can possibly keep guard over their heart unless there has first been the wonder of the New Birth. This “re-generation” of one’s heart must always be the starting point of learning how to constantly keep focussed on the Lord.

Sadly there are many who profess a faith in Christ who have not been truly regenerate. Pastors see this often. Men and women who have come to the altar so to speak, who have made a declaration of faith in the Saviour but whose hearts have not been deeply moved. Moved in their soul, maybe; but not in their heart.

This has caused me my own fair share of soul-searching when I have been party to somebody “coming to the Lord.” I have searched my heart and soul to know how I missed discerning that such a person had not been truly converted deep within. Too many of us as leaders in the Church have had to bear this burden.

However, when a person is “soundly converted” and the heart truly regenerate by the Holy Spirit, the work of guarding the heart from slackness, disorder and dullness can begin. This then is where we begin, all of us. Trying to maintain a guard over the heart without being born again from above will only end up becoming a religious work. And religion will always keep you in chains, usually to itself. □

However, if you’re truly assured you are regenerate and converted deep within, then the task ahead is easily stated. It is simply this:

To take such care of the soul,
that together with the Holy Spirit,
we work towards preserving our heart
for the purpose for which God first saved us.

Put like that, do you see the grand scope of this thing? The practice of guarding the heart is not a religious work that tires us out and wears us down. Rather it’s a joyous co-operation with the Holy Spirit in maintaining the fresh condition of the heart that occurred when we were first saved!

As we work hand in hand with the Spirit we’ll be continually adjusting the state of our heart so that it always conforms to God’s intended purpose for us — maturity.

I find this an exhilarating thought! This is not just another discipline and religious thing we have to do to become “holy”. Rather it’s an exciting journey walking with the Spirit as He convicts us when we’re to adjust something in our lives that’s out of order. He will alert us to anything that displeases the Father, and if we’re sensitive to His leading, we will instantly correct that area of our life.

What child of God wouldn’t want to participate in this? This ongoing practice will propel us into greater and greater realms of spiritual sensitivity. Ofcourse, it’s not without effort. Don’t think you can arrive at such a spiritual state through half-heartedness and laxity.

Your flesh will certainly resist the effort required, and it will tell you there are other things to do rather than pray. It will baulk at the idea of disciplining yourself. It will tempt you with other more “pressing engagements”. It will even make you feel hungry and lure you to the refrigerator!

It will, as Paul said, war against your spiritual inclinations:

For the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. Gal 5: 17

Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit stands beside you to comfort, aid and work in bringing you to maturity of spirit and soul. So, now to the practical application of this. A foundation is always given by the Lord for anything He does, and this is also true in this case. The foundation for learning how to re-direct the heart and keep focussed on the Lord is found in the words of Jesus.

But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. Mtt 6:6

Here we find the clue for beginning this work of guarding the heart. And ofcourse it has to do with our unseen spiritual life. What we do in private before the Lord is far more important than what we present as an outward show to man.

In this passage Jesus is telling us an all-important spiritual truth. He says that if we lay a foundation in our life, of regularly going to the Father in the privacy of our prayer life, if we seek Him far from the eyes of men, then He will reward us openly in the public arena when the time comes.

In other words, what we do in private before God will always pay dividends in the daily press and busy-ness of life. We cannot possibly keep guard over our heart in the day-to-day issues of life, if we haven't already prepared ourselves with the Lord beforehand.

When the rush of the day and the clamour of the world begin to squeeze in, it's far too late to attempt then and there to guard the heart. We only tend to rush it, to fall back into some tried and tested past "method" to protect our inner peace. Usually this is all done in an atmosphere of being caught unprepared. I know, I've been there.

But by daily preparing ourselves in the secret place, and waiting upon Him to come into our life in a fresh way, a foundation will be laid, upon which we can build during that day. So if a situation should arise that might attempt to "steal away our heart", the inner preparation gained in the secret place will carry us through. □

The situation we might face need not necessarily be temptation to sin. It could be the issue of an unpleasant encounter with someone, or finding yourself in an argument. There could be anger, accusation, jealousy, gossip, etc. All of these things can steal away the stillness of our heart. We need to be on watch and not allow the situation to dictate to us how we might act.

We've all found ourselves in the situation of trying to remain calm and in control, only to find that the person stirring us has touched on a raw emotional or personal nerve. We try to "be Christian" about it, but allow ourselves to be drawn in. We then go through the inner struggle of feeling we've let ourselves down and compromised our spiritual integrity by reacting to the situation rather than responding.

Guilt builds up and we leave the encounter frustrated with ourselves because we hoped to be in control and keep a level head and quiet heart. Yet the situation deteriorated and we fell into the trap of over-reacting. Outwardly we might've kept some composure, but inwardly we failed to keep our peace intact. Sound familiar?

Usually this is an indication that we've been unprepared, or at least not prepared in the right manner. While I'm all in favour of spontaneous "arrow prayers" to the Lord in a moment of need, it's not good enough to simply rely on these for ongoing inner peace and self-control.

We need more preparation than that. We need the mercies of the Lord at the beginning of each day, for He has promised this to us.

Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. Lamentations 3: 22-23

The meaning of “new every morning” actually means “to receive fresh mercies each and every new day”. What a thought: the Lord’s intention is that by turning our focus upon Him as each new day begins we receive the fresh mercies made available for that particular day! Nothing is stale in God and nothing is ever second-hand quality. Everything is brand new, freshly given, and can be appropriated for that particular day or need. Such is the bounty of our limitless God.

Spending time with Him like this will lay a foundation from which to build as the day goes on. Some situations may allow us the luxury of spending a quiet time in personal preparation before a face-to-face encounter with someone. But other situations will pop up out of the blue. It’s these in particular that will require us to draw from the well of peace deep inside.

Peter McArthur

Reflection on The Mystery



Peter McArthur

“THE MYSTERY” ACCORDING TO PAUL

The Greek word "*musterion*" has within it the connotation of one initiated into the pagan mystery religions ("*mustes*"). The pagan view of course is a far cry from the Scriptural one, but nevertheless we do find a connection with what might loosely be termed "initiation" in Paul's letter to the Philippians.

"I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need." Philp. 4:12

The phrase Paul uses here, "in all things I am instructed" (Grk: *mueomai*) actually means, "to be initiated into a mystery". Note also these words from the Lord Jesus.

"He answered and said to them, because it is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." Mtt. 13:11

"For truly I say to you, Many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which you see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which you hear, and have not heard them." Mtt. 13:17

Naturally we're not speaking here of some sort of "initiation rite or ceremony" but we are talking about "gracious enlightenment" from above. This clearly comes from God the Father through the Holy Spirit. We need to recognise that "initiation" or "enlightenment" is that which God alone gives, and requires no special induction, ceremony or rite. What it does require is "teachability" and an open, willing heart ready to receive truth. Some might add that "election" is also a factor regarding the ability to receive enlightenment.

At the same time it's patently obvious from Scripture that God has kept some things hidden from the prying eyes of man and even of demon.

Nevertheless, even in this "hidden-ness" it's not for the sake of 'mystery' alone. There's nothing mystical about our Father's holding back something. His purpose is actually to reveal that which is hidden, but in His timing. When it is made known it can be understood just like any other revelation from Him can be.

Note these passages:

"For I would not, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in." Rms. 11:25

"Now to Him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began..." Rms. 16:25

"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world, to our glory." 1 Cor. 2:7

"Having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He has purposed in Himself." Eph. 1:9

"How that by revelation He made known to me the mystery..." Eph. 3:3

Certainly God's mysteries are hidden but only kept in reserve until the time of revelation comes. From that moment on, the mystery once hidden becomes part of the fuller revelation of God to man. In this sense revelation is progressive.

We should also note that the making known of the mystery (and knowledge of God) is nearly always linked to Wisdom. The continued use of this attribute by Paul signifies that we are to seriously consider wisdom as a necessary part of our maturing in Christ.

"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world, to our glory." 1 Cor. 2:7

"Wherein He has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He has purposed in Himself." Eph. 1:8-9

"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him." Eph. 1:17

"And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world has been hidden in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now to the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church, the manifold wisdom of God." Eph. 3:9-10

"To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." Col. 1:27-28

"That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Col. 2:2-3

So, what is this mystery so commonly referred to in Ephesians? Paul uses the word some 20 times and in each case it either directly or indirectly references to "Christ and His Church". Often he uses the term "THE mystery" meaning that at the heart of it all there is something quite specific, being referred to as THE Mystery (Eph. 3:3 and 9).

This mystery is no longer hidden but revealed by God as part of His eternal purpose. The mystery is:

**There is a divine indwelling
of the Heavenly Man, Christ Jesus,
in the one heavenly Body,
the corporate Church.**

The first thing we need to take into account here is that the Mystery is never connected to the 'individual' but always to the 'Body corporate'. How often we say something like "Jesus lives in me". That is so much a modern, western way of thinking. The Hebraic and the early Christian worldviews were based on the corporateness of the group, not the individual. The spirit of the present age has seriously infiltrated the Church like a cancer.

Where Jesus lives is in "us" corporately, in the Body, together. That's the Biblical thrust of the meaning; corporateness not individualism. It's a sad indictment on modern Christianity that most of our evangelism is based on the "what-Jesus-can-do-for-me" syndrome.

We even find it in our modern choruses. Next time you sing one of them count up how many times in the average "worship" service the words "me", "my" and "I" feature in the songs. You'd be very surprised to see how self-focussed those choruses generally are. I came across one recently that is a well-loved modern boppy-type of chorus that never once mentioned the Lord's name, or stated a fundamental Scriptural doctrine. But the words "I" and "me" appeared nearly a dozen times!

That kind of mentality is so far away from the beauty and the importance of The Mystery. It is so urgent for us to redress this imbalance. If we keep on evangelising about "what-Jesus-can-do-for-you" or keep on singing choruses that subtly teach new believers the supremacy of the individual over the group, then we will never comprehend the wonder of being a Heavenly Body in which lives that Great Heavenly Son!

The focus is, not "should be", the Son of God. He is already the focus of all that the Father is about. Let's realign our focus and take to heart the seriousness of the supremacy of Jesus Christ and His pre-eminence. Then, and only then, will we be able to shift our focus off self and onto the brethren, the Church of the One Body.

This wonderful Secret now revealed, this glorious Mystery is operative NOW; it is for this dispensation (or era) but will extend into the ages of ages yet to come (Eph. 1:10).

It's in Ephesians that this corporateness, referred to as the "One New Man", is fully disclosed. This was the mystery hid from previous generations up to Paul. Of course it had existed from before the beginning but hidden until the most opportune of times. Now however we can "see" that this Mystery has in fact governed the entire thrust of Scripture.

The Lord God had a purpose and set out to establish a "Man", first in Adam, then in Jesus, and finally in the elect Church. Note how each is designated as "son/s of God" (Adam = Lk. 3:38 / Jesus = Mk. 1:1 / Church of the One Body = Heb. 2:10).

Putting all this together we find the revelation-mystery Paul was specially called to propagate, alongside the message of Redemption. He never separated the two as to make them contest the ground of a man's heart. But he did enter into a wonderful understanding of God's Purpose as compared to His Plan.

The Purpose of God is to have His elected ones eternally with Him to share His glory. The Plan of God was to redeem us from the consequences of sin to enable the Purpose to come about.

The Purpose is still Sonship;
The Plan is still redemption through the Son.

The Plan is about How;
The Purpose is about Why.

As Paul unpacks this revelation he does so from a particular vantage point – the heavenly perspective. Five times he uses the phrase "in the heavenlies".

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ." Eph. 1:3

"Which he wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies." Eph. 1:20

"And has raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus." Eph. 2:6

"To the intent that now to the principalities and powers in the heavenlies might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God." Eph. 3:10

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies." Eph. 6:12

Paul's understanding was that we are heavenly sons just as Christ was a heaven-sent Son. Christ came from heaven; we are identified with Christ; we are born from the heavenly realms ("**born again from above**" Jhn. 3:3 margin).

It was this heavenly focus that caused Paul to grasp the eternal message of The Mystery. He saw things from the eternal perspective, from the Father's vantage point. His point of reference was heaven, not tradition, or even previous truth as treasured by his fellow Jews.

To Paul the whole Purpose and Plan only made sense when understood from a heavenly perspective. Therefore to "**set your eyes on things above and not on things on the earth**" (Col. 3:2) was of paramount importance.

It is this he taught, as much as he taught redemption in Christ, and The Mystery he outlined in Ephesians and Colossians. We would do well to imitate him in this (see 1 Cor. 11:1 and 4:16).

Peter McArthur, The Issachar Ministry

A House of Greatness



Peter McArthur

1 We need to hear and then understand the truths of Scripture, and finally apply them. It's obvious that amongst many believers there's a lack in understanding of their goal in the Lord - other than a hope of getting to heaven! If you were running in a race it would be foolish to run without aim and purpose. Sadly many today don't seem to know what the finishing line actually is, let alone where it is and how to aim for it.

2 But our Father has not left us directionless or without hope. His Spirit has been sent to guide, teach and comfort us (Jn. 16: 13 and 14: 26). He will give all that's required to understand our destiny and how to mature in it. The Spirit will reveal to us the "finishing line".

3 Anointed by this same Spirit Jesus said "**Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.**" (Matt 5: 48). The word "perfect" is *teleios* which means "of full age, a mature and finished adult, wanting nothing necessary to completeness, brought to its conclusion".

4 With this in mind it's plain that God's destiny for us has to do with finishing what He has started: "**He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ**" (Phil 1: 6) See also 2 Tim. 3: 17 and Heb 13: 21 and Jms 4: 1. Compare 2 Thess. 1: 10-12.

5 Do not let unbelief rob you of this great promise. "**But what if some do not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God ineffective? Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar**". (Rms 3: 3-4). We must believe what God says instead of man. When we don't listen to the words of the Lord and act on them, we make void His promise in that part of our life. We may even become responsible for the tumult in the lives of those around us!

6 How do we finish the race; how do we complete the House? The answer lies in appropriating all that Jesus has provided through our faith in Him. If He is the cornerstone of our faith, then we need to align our lives with Him. To use the imagery of the building - our stones must touch Him as the chief cornerstone; we must abut Him, and even be anchored to Him.

7 The Father has laid down a costly cornerstone. That stone has been tested, approved, and placed in the exact position from which it will bless and strengthen every other stone that aligns with it.

8 Our quality of life as disciples of Jesus depends entirely on this. We cannot impart to others what we have not experienced for ourselves. Our chief cornerstone is Christ, but unless we are aligned with Him we will never bring strength and direction to others. Even the quality of our corporate church life will depend on how well we have built on that same cornerstone.

9 Build in holiness, strive in the Spirit to be a worthy disciple, run with vision, keeping your eyes fixed on he who is the goal of all that we live for - you will NOT be disappointed. **“Behold, I lay in Zion A chief (choice) cornerstone, elect and precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame”** (disappointed). (1 Pet. 2: 6)

10 We can be encouraged by one overriding truth: the Lord's purpose has never been altered or modified and nothing will delay its fulfilment. His purpose is to reveal His glory through those He's been preparing for all eternity (Isa. 46: 9-10). This should stir our hearts and spirits! He will accomplish everything He's ever desired to do, and its culmination shall be when His House will be eternally filled with His glory! Nothing can ever be greater than this.

11 So we can now appreciate that the main objective of each local assembly (Church) is to reveal and express God's glory. He is seeking a House not to contain Him, but through which to reveal Himself. So it is our quest to search out and speak forth the precious mysteries of God: **“But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory”** (1 Cor. 2: 7-10).

12 To do this our character needs to align itself with this great purpose. His glory shall not be revealed through a united House until each room has been "sealed" for its chosen purpose. We are to cooperate in this sealing and to make every endeavour to establish our life according to His ways (Psa. 15: 1-3 and 24: 3-4 and 92: 12-15).

13 So we can ask ourselves, on what is our heart truly focussed? The mysteries of God deal with three main desires:

1. When the Father speaks, His heart is focussed on us as Children and Sons.
2. When the Son speaks, He is focussed on us as the Bride and the Body.
3. When the Spirit speaks, He focuses on us as the Dwelling Place, the House, the New Jerusalem.

It's significant that in Scripture God speaks more often of the one latter desire than the former two. This is God's focus, and He desires to seal this truth deep within us.

14 In Jewish thinking this "seal" is understood to be the letter Tau (t) the final letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In fact the rabbis regard it as YHWH's seal! The High Priest's golden headgear had **"Holiness unto YHWH"** inscribed (sealed) upon it. (Exo. 28: 36-37). Note this truth: the Lord's Name was engraved in gold upon the place of the mind!

15 In other words, His name, which is the same as His nature, was to be written (sealed) always on one's mind. Those who are sealed and marked with His holiness and His name will have the victory. They are predestined for the House of Understanding, the New Jerusalem.

16 This Name written in one's mind becomes like one's surname, thus it's written in Jewish literature that there are three who are called by the Name of YHWH: (1) the Messiah, (2) the Hasidim (the Righteous ones), and (3) Jerusalem. This establishes all three in the family of YHWH's unity, where all are of one mind, soul, and spirit, and all are in agreement - this truly is the greatness of God's House, for no other house shall ever be like the unity of this one (Jhn chpt. 17).

This is our goal, this is our unalterable destiny - this is our prize: I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this same mind. (Philp. 3: 14-15)

Grace in the Messiah to you.

issachar.org

Developing Prayer Principles



Peter McArthur

The maturity of the Inner Man is vital if we are to pray like the Apostles. While this maturity can take many years to attain we need to start the journey as soon as possible. In one sense this begins at salvation, but in another sense we come to this point again and again in our walk with the Lord.

Developing the 'Spiritual Man' is probably a major desire of most Christians, even though they mightn't use that precise term. However, for most of us it's been an ad hoc thing. We have spurts of interest in the deeper things of God, work at perfecting our interior life, then for various reasons, let it lapse. Some time later the stirring starts again and we begin to focus on it once more, usually going through seasons of such interest, but rarely committing long periods to it, and so our progress is haphazard.

However it's evident from Scripture that the development and nurture of the Inner Man is an ordered and disciplined lifestyle. Sometimes because of that very idea, modern Christians reject it as a traditional religious practice akin to ritualism and formalism.

How wrong we'd be to think like that. John and Charles Wesley gathered like-minded Christians around them in a group called "The Holy Club". They regularly met to encourage one another (Prov. 27:17) and out of this came the movement we know as the "Methodists". Note the name: Methodists! They had a method, a disciplined order of lifestyle.

We shouldn't think that simply because discipline, method and order are required, it's necessarily wrong or like Catholicism. It can be strongly argued that early Jews used such method and order in their spiritual education and instruction.

The life of a Rabbi revolved around such a concept, as we see with Jesus and the twelve disciples. Remember that the word "disciple" comes from the word "discipline"! The three and a half years the disciples shared with Jesus were far from experiences that 'just happened'. Jesus the Rabbi was using a well-known way of nurturing, challenging and testing those who were committed to Him.

As the Father spoke to Jesus, He would lead the disciples along the next stage of the path, revealing new truths to them, opening up new vistas, and deliberately bringing them closer and closer to maturity.

Today we would do well to reconsider such a disciplined lifestyle. Naturally I'm not talking about being rigid, controlled or legalistic in this, but free and receptive to the Spirit as He **"blows where He wills"** (John 3: 8).

We won't grow in the Lord unless we're consistent and disciplined in our walk. However, the discipline we're talking about here is not sticking to a programme, like ACTS, but being open to what the Spirit tells you, and having a willing heart, ready to obey.

A disciplined prayer life doesn't necessarily mean you pray at the same time each day, in the same place, and in the same way. You may do these things, but you shouldn't feel guilty if you break the pattern.

The best example of a disciplined (read "obedient ") prayer life is found in Jesus. He never spoke out of His own mind or will. He deliberately chose to listen to the Father.

Some Christians think that Jesus somehow just received messages from His Father and churned them out, so to speak. Rather, Jesus chose to submit His will, emotions and mind to Abba. In doing this He was able to act solely on the Father's will, either by doing what the Father was showing Him or speaking what the Father had already spoken to Him (John 5: 19).

That is the pattern we need to follow and imitate. His prayer life was an example for us. It was, and still is, the perfect pattern of prayer.

Developing our Inner Man brings us closer and closer to living in the Spirit, and praying the prayers of the Spirit. Think about that for a moment. "Praying the prayers of the Spirit." Wouldn't you like to be so attuned to the Father that you only pray what the Father by the Spirit shows you to pray? What freedom there is in that!

In order to live such a spiritual life we will need to exercise our Inner Man, learning how to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit and attentive to Him. We're so used to using our minds when praying that we often unwittingly block out the still small voice. A basic spiritual principle is this:

**It's in the mind that you hear the Logos,
but it's in the spirit that you hear the Rhema.**

We need to cultivate the sensitivity of our spirit so we can tune in to the Rhema Word of the Lord. Of course the Rhema can come at any time; during a counselling session, as a Word of Knowledge, during ministry time, etc. But generally these Words come while we're actively engaged in something, while we're busy.

However there's another level of the Rhema that comes when you're quiet, in a receptive attitude, and focussed almost totally on the Lord. It's this level of the Rhema that's developed within as you learn to sit quietly in His presence, looking away unto Jesus, and seeking Him and Him alone, and for no other reason than to be with Him!

This can be hard for us. We're so used to seeking 'something' from the Lord, asking Him for an answer to prayer, etc, that we can easily ignore HIM!

Even having said this, there are times when we seek to 'experience' Him. But stop for a moment. What are we saying when we want to 'experience Him'? It sounds right enough. But once more we're seeking 'something' from Him, an experience – but still not HIM for Himself!

It really is surprising how greedy and self-seeking we can be. Even when we desire to be wholly devoted to God, somehow the flesh creeps in and taints our endeavour. It's a bit like people who want to worship the Lord so much that they focus more on the act of worship than Him. In the end they end up worshipping 'worship'. It's so easy and can happen to any of us. However, don't despair about it. God knows our intentions and His mercy will override the weakest attempt and bring it to fulfilment. That's why He's the God of grace and kindness!

The Hebrews who had a willing heart were the ones that contributed to the building of the Tabernacle. A willing heart, despite its own carnality, is still what God desires. The carnality of man can be dealt with by grace and mercy. The hardness of heart is a great offence to the Lord. It usually requires chastisement, and even judgement – sometimes severe.

Get a willing heart even though you might have mixed motives to begin with. Tell God you want to be wholly devoted to Him, but there's still a mixture within you. Since He knows this already He will overlook the taint and accept the heart-felt attitude. The mixture can be separated as He works on you later, but the willingness of heart is the prime thing He's seeking. Another way of saying this is: God wants you to be single minded about Him, and that's a heart condition.

The consistent nurturing of your Inner Man will gradually bring you to the point of willingness, obedience and transformation. It could be said that God isn't all that interested in 'changing' us. Rather His intention is that we be transformed!

A lot of Christians use their prayer and devotional life as a pathway for change. They want to be changed on the inside; to become more spiritual; to live a holy life. All of which is good and honourable.

Nevertheless, if we're honest, this attempt to be inwardly changed often ends up becoming a religious work. It saps our energy and because it's 'work' ultimately brings frustration and despair. Even worse, it can deceive you into thinking you're spiritually progressing when in fact the spirit of religion has blinded you from seeing the true state of your soul.

One of the saddest things I've seen is when believers spend years cultivating their interior life, but which, unknown to them, is actually devoid of true spiritual anointing. The wasted time, energy and application makes me shudder. Having spent six years living in an Anglican monastery proved this to me.

And don't be proud! It can happen to Bible-believing, Spirit-filled people too. Think of all those Christians who have a certain doctrine or teaching that becomes more important than God Himself. Some denominations have even named themselves after their favourite doctrine or belief.

So it's not necessarily the amount of time you spend in prayer that's the key, it's what your heart is like as you do.

I've been thinking lately how great men of God like Martin Luther and John Wesley spent considerable amounts of time in the presence of the Lord yet still failed to identify wrong teachings they believed in.

For example, Luther was a man who spent hours in prayer each day and long arduous hours in studying the Word. Yet he failed to see that his anti-Semitism could not at all be supported by Scripture (see Rom. 8: 23) and that eventually it would be one of the motivations for Hitler's slaughter of six million Jews.

Likewise, John Wesley loved the presence of the Lord and gave many, many hours to his devotions with Him. He gave up his life to study the Word of God, wrote thousands of hymns, preached twice a day even up to the age of 80. Yet despite all this he couldn't see that the doctrine of the Baptism of Infants was un-Biblical.

These examples should ring warning bells for us. You can be wholly devoted to God, spend hours and hours a day in worship, study and ministry and yet still be blind to some truth that's staring you in the face.

It only goes to show that even the most anointed, God-called, and devoted servant of God is not immune from error. So, it's not the amount of time we give in prayer that's so important but that our heart be totally open to Him ready to accept correction and change if needed.

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Before Times Eternal



Peter McArthur

All believers have a birthright to “see” God’s purpose and plan.

Eph 1:17-18 “... that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints...”

Eph 3:9 “...and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things...”

This insight is given by the Holy Spirit of God.

1Jhn 2:27 “As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.”

However, it seems like Paul had a special revelation due to his special calling.

2 Cor 12:2-4 “I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago (whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows) such a man was caught up to the third heaven. And I know how such a man (whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows) was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.”

So Paul takes us back “before times eternal”.

2 Tim 1:9 “...who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the eternal times.”

Tit 1:2 “...on hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before eternal times...”

He writes as though he’s “seeing” the ecclesia as a COMPLETE unit. Yet today we know it’s still not completed, either morally, spiritually, or even numerically. Paul has seen that the “church of the One Body” was pre-chosen and pre-determined by God “before times eternal”.

Eph 1:4 "...just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him in love..."

2 Tim 1:9 "He saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our own accomplishments, but according to his own purpose and the grace that was given to us in the Messiah Jesus before time began."

He sees the Church as though he's standing outside of time! What Paul "saw" was that the "elect" would enter, not only into salvation, but into A PURPOSE. The Father's purpose for us is certainly related to our salvation, but they are different things. Indeed **salvation is something far more radical** than what it's normally said to be! There is a clear distinction in Scripture between the Plan of God and the Purpose of God. How often do we hear preachers say to the saved and un-saved, "God has a plan for your life"?

We should NEVER start with the Plan of God, but with the Purpose. That is the foundation upon which we should build, before we even get to "the Plan".

PURPOSE = sonship, maturity, eternalness. (**Rms 8:29** "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that the Son might be the firstborn among many brothers.")

PLAN = salvation in order to enter the above Purpose.

God's purpose is to SECURE and to ESTABLISH a man. Now please note carefully the following sequence.

Adam in the Garden – there is a Father, but no mother.

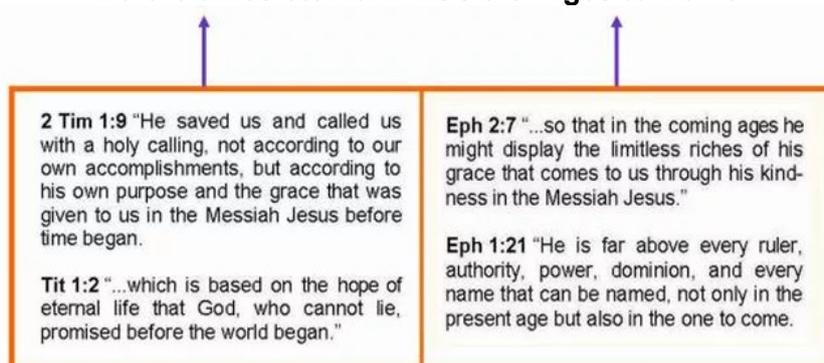
Jesus in His flesh – there is a mother, but no (earthly) father.

Sons of God (elect/church of the One Body) – there is a Father and a Spirit.

New believers in Christ should be made aware of their heavenly calling. All "weakness" in any new convert stem from them not knowing what their ultimate purpose in Christ is!

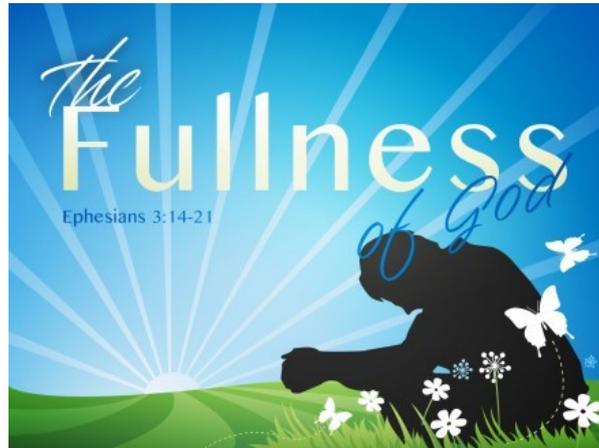
Reflect please on these scriptures.

"Before times eternal" PLUS the "Ages to Come".



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God's Way is Fullness



Peter McArthur

God's way is always the way of fullness! He is not a God who cares about partial things, half hearted things, or lukewarm people. He is concerned with Fullness, Completeness, Maturity, and the Final Product. We are here of course not referring to what happens prior to salvation. Before anyone is saved God is loving, merciful, forgiving and full of promise. However, after salvation things begin to get much tighter, and the Father begins a special correcting work in us.

Eph 1:22-23

And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the **fullness** of Him who **fills** all in all.

Jer 23:24b

"Do I not **fill** the heavens and the earth?" declares the LORD.

God has never been satisfied with "converts" or just "followers". He wants people Full of Himself! To do this He does something very practical. He takes us OUT of something to put us INTO something better. Israel was taken out of Egypt, into the Promised Land. We are taken out of sin, and into Forgiveness. Not only does He take us Out to put us In, but He also Empties in order to Fill. The Father doesn't believe in partial filling.

2 Chron 7:1-2

Now when Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD **filled** the house. The priests could not enter into the house of the LORD because the glory of the LORD **filled** the LORD'S house.

The Hebrew word means "abundance, satisfied, accomplished, ended, to confirm". He wants to FULLY occupy.

Eph 4:10

He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might **fill** all things.

That of course is one reason He gave us His own Spirit. Our life on earth should be a continuing letting go, and emptying, so that the Spirit might fill us; it's an occupying!

Eph 3:19

"...that you may be **filled up** to all the **fullness** of God".

Everything the Father does is to Build Up until all things are Completed. It stands to reason that our entire Christian ministry should aim for this also.

Col 1:9-12

For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be **filled** with the knowledge of His will in **all** spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk 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; strengthened with **all** power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of **all** steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.

Jesus Christ is of course the image of this fullness. Note these texts.

Col 1:19

For it was the Father's good pleasure for **all the fullness** to dwell in Him.

Col 2:9

For in Him **all the fullness** of Deity dwells in bodily form.

Jhn 1:14

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, **full** of grace and truth.

So, we see Fullness is the very purpose of God for us. This is a spiritual and eternal issue. It can't be understood in just an earthly and passing manner. We need to have this truth reinforced over and over, until we grasp it in our renewed minds. So, the writer of Hebrews encourages us with many "Let us..."

Heb 4:1 Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains...

Heb 4:11 Therefore let us be diligent

Heb 4:14 Let us hold fast our confession.

Plus these other verses: 4:16 / 6:1 / 10:22-24 / 12:1 / 12:28 / 13:13 / 13:15

Jesus Christ is fuller than we can ever imagine. All our teaching and revelation and spiritual growth keep us moving on and on. In fact LACK of regular spiritual encouragement brings deceit and even sin!

Heb 3:13

Encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Spiritual fullness is the Father's purpose for us. **Let us** not waste time with things that don't count!

Peter McArthur

[The Issachar Ministry](#)

A Place to Dwell



Peter McArthur

What is the PURPOSE of God for us? Is it salvation, world peace, justice, to take us to heaven? All this is of course partly correct, but they all revolve around MAN and our needs.

However the Scriptural view is quite different. God's purpose is to do something for HIMSELF! He is the one who is at the centre.

Because Man is the pinnacle of God's creation, we quite obviously play the major role in His purpose. God repeatedly says in Scripture He wants to DWELL with us, especially through the Incarnation of His Son.

So our greatest priority is to understand this purpose. God's will and purpose is to be revealed only through His people, who are the "called out ones" (the "ecclesia").

Eph. 3:9-11 (James Murdock's NT version) "... and should show to all men what is the dispensation of the mystery, which for ages was hid up in God the Creator of all things so that, **by means of the ecclesia**, the manifold wisdom of God might become known to the principalities and powers that are in heaven: which he arranged ages before, and he has executed it by Jesus the Messiah our Lord..."

This is why God is so long suffering with Mankind. Time and time again He restores us back to a relationship with Him.

God gave us clear insight to His desire to DWELL with Man.

First, in the Garden.

Second, in the Tabernacle tent and ark.

Third, in the Temple.

Even while the Temple was still standing He prophesied He would dwell MOST INTIMATELY in our flesh! Emmanuel = God with us. (**Isa 7:14**).

Partly for this reason we know Jesus was born during the Feast of Dwelling, the festival of Tabernacles! This God-ordained feast is held during the western months of September to October.

Many scholars for the past 150 years have studied the fact that historically, Jesus was most probably (even perhaps “definitely”) born, not in December, but two months earlier during the Feast of Dwelling (Tabernacles).

How appropriate that the Messiah should be born at the time of that very symbolic and prophetic Feast. Very fitting. We actually miss something very important by not celebrating Messiah’s Incarnation at the Feast of Tabernacles.

God wasn’t satisfied with meeting with Man in a Garden, or inside a Tent, or even in the splendour of a beautiful Temple. He wanted to dwell INSIDE Man himself. And so He did.

Eph 3:17 “...that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.”

He doesn’t want to live in us in order to contain Himself – He doesn’t need that! He’s looking for a place to REVEAL His Glory!

Isa 66: 1-2 This is what Yahweh says: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house that you would build for me, and **where will my resting place be?** All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came into being," declares Yahweh. "But this is the one to whom I will look favourably: to the one who is humble and contrite in spirit, and who trembles at my message."

The local church isn’t primarily to be a place of good teaching and encouragement, correct doctrine, or biblical government. **The prime purpose for its existence is to be a place where God Reveals Himself!**

The celebration of Messiah’s Incarnation (wrongly called “Christmas”) brings all this purpose into focus. God’s purpose is to dwell, to habitat, to live in Mankind. The “called out ones” are to be an Assembling of such like-minded people.

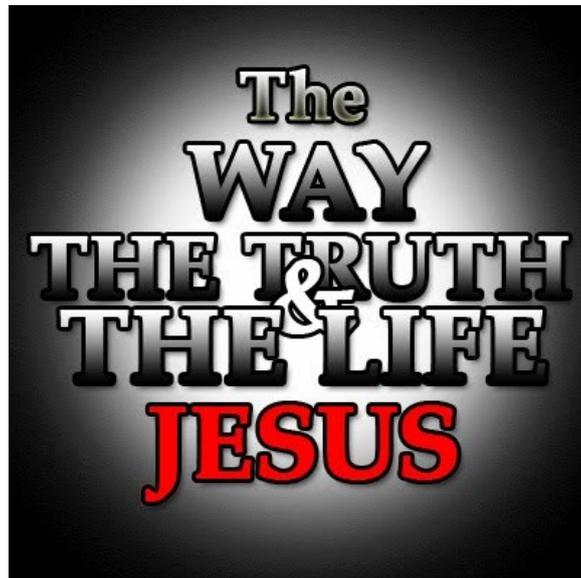
- ◆ We are to be a place where the will of God is done.
- ◆ A place that fully expresses His glory, person, life and power.
- ◆ A city that is His abiding place.
- ◆ A place made up of saints who although all different, are unique, having been conformed to Christ’s image.

For this is the very eternal purpose of our God!

May we adjust our thinking to His.

Peter McArthur
issachar.org

Truth or Life?



Peter McArthur

"No longer do I call you servants, because a servant does not know what his master is doing; but you I have called friends, because all things which I heard from my Father I have made known to you." (John 15:15)

In the New Testament there seems to be a difference between "disciples" and "friends". This is partly based on John 15:13-17. We could describe **DISCIPLES** as "students" because a disciple is a follower and student of a mentor or teacher. **FRIENDS** on the other hand are "beloved ones" - literally. The Old English word *frēond* is related to the old verb *frēon*, which means **"to love, to like, to honor, to set free"**.

It is in fact a permanent state of a new dignity recently given by the Lord. What an amazing insight!

Friends are those who go up mountains with Him (Matthew 17:1 Luke 9:28).

Friends walk on water at His voice (Matthew 14:29).

Friends lean on His breast (John 13:23).

Disciples are concerned with Truth and Knowledge.

Friends are more concerned with Life issues.

If the heavenly Father gave you a choice, what would you want more, Truth or Life?

We can have "truth" but still not possess "life". It's important to understand that Truth (or knowledge) without love and discernment is nothing more than criticism and gossip. It seems however that if we possess "life" then we'll automatically have "truth" along with it.

Note the order in which Jesus tells us about this in John 14:6. "**I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me.**" It is a sequence of progressive reality that leads to the Father.

Here we see that Truth teaches us the knowledge of God, and having done so directs us in the way to Life. The end result is that this Life will enliven all those who seek and serve the Lord. A life which is to be enjoyed eternally at the end of the way.

Let's unpack this three-fold sequence a little more.

1. **Way** = the means of the journey (it's a progressive path).
2. **Truth** = nothing is now concealed or hidden (John 15:15)
3. **Life** = something possessed of an eternal vitality.

Remember Thomas didn't know where Jesus was going, so he couldn't possibly know the way. It seems so obvious, but there's a very special point here.

When we get the "where" bit right (to the Father – not to a "place" but to a person), we then get the "truth" of it, and that brings us to possess the "life" of it.

- It's the **way** (=where) first,
- then the **truth** (=nothing's hidden),
- followed by the **life** (=vitality of truth).

Therefore we should desire Life more than Truth. Of course we recognise that Truth is so very important, but we all know people who sprout Biblical Truths, but who lack spiritual "life".

Jesus desires us to know that we're his friends, his "beloved ones".

Remember when Jesus started his ministry John penned these words, "**Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing. But Jesus, on His part, did not entrust Himself to them, for He knew all men, and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.**" (John 2:23-24).

Jesus didn't put "any trust" or reliance in the people who saw the miracles. He didn't leave himself in their hands so to speak. He acted cautiously because he knew the fickleness of man's heart. One commentator said that "many trusted in His name but Jesus didn't trust Himself to them." Apparently the Greek puts it this way: "**But Jesus himself kept on refusing** (negative imperfect tense) **to trust himself to them.**"

"Trust" in the verse above means "to have confidence and hence to give your spiritual well-being to another". Quite an insight isn't it!

These people had some limited knowledge about Jesus, even the disciples. But they were not yet "friends".

But, when you are "friends" Jesus will have confidence in you, and also be concerned with your spiritual well-being. Jesus looks beyond where we are now; He is looking at the Father.

So we see that the basis of our friendship with the Father is that we BELIEVE in His beloved Son. "**This is His (the Father's) commandment that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.**" (1 John 3:23).

The basis of our friendship with the Son is that we BELIEVE what the Father told him so say. **“Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works.”** (John 14:10).

Let us therefore not only be disciples, but friends.

Let's stick to the Truth revealed to us in Jesus, but above all, pursue Life that makes that Truth a truly living thing within us!

Peter McArthur

Gird up your loins



Peter McArthur

(1 Peter 1: 13-16) **"Therefore girding up the loins of your mind, being sober, rest your hope fully upon the grace being brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ, as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance, but according to the Holy One who has called you, you also become holy in all conduct, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."**

The allusion here is to the manner in which people of the period were accustomed to dress. They normally wore loose, flowing robes so that when they wanted to run, to fight, or to apply themselves to any kind of business, they would tie their garments close around them so as not to get in the way. The obvious meaning here is that they were to have their minds in constant preparation to go about their duties, or if need be, to endure any trials of life that may suddenly come.

It has a reference to Jesus' words in Luke 12:35. **"Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps lit."** Christ's call is a call to active service and being constantly prepared for it.

According to the Jewish NT commentary the phrase highlighted above ("girding up the loins of your mind") has the meaning of **"being mentally prepared for opposition, distractions, temptations and unexpected setbacks"**.

In Vincent's Word Studies it is expressed as a way **"to counter hypocrisy and falsehood"**.

Notice that the antidote to hypocrisy and falsehood is to "rest your hope fully upon the grace being brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (verse 13). Here we have a verb in the imperative form. It's a command to **"hope fully, or hope perfectly"** meaning **"completely or with maturity"**. So here is the command to perform an action you do with the mind. If you like, it's a command to hope.

In other words, a CORRECT FOCUS keeps the mind "at rest" and relatively free from attack.

The NT warns us many times about deceit, false doctrine and the traditions of men that will ensnare. Unfortunately strange and "different" teaching has affected some Christians we know and love as brethren. This happened to me at one time when a dear brother in the

Lord became ensnared by the legalism associated with the “Name of Jesus” movement, causing much angst between us.

My reaction to his insistence that the name “Jesus” was anathema, was I’m sad to say, a knee –jerk one on my part. In my attempt to wean him away from legalism I sprouted such things as “Let’s get back to basics”, or “Let’s just focus on the really important things”, etc.

The Lord had to pull me into line about my mind attitude and He spoke a word to me for adjustment. He firmly said “A response is required here, not a reaction.” I was quickly humbled!

So, let’s look at the “girding up” of our minds. A principle is set in motion once we let our guard down, and it’s that Carnal reactions only breed further carnality, and eventually some form of death. If we let our guard down (like I did, and react rather than respond) some kind of death will follow; death of relationship, death of expectations, death of spiritual insight, etc.

On the other hand another principle shows us that Spiritual things always reproduce their own life. Some spiritual things are not always “of God” as we well know from the occult realm. But we can say that “Soul reproduces death; Spiritual produces a life.” Of course the Holy Spirit always reproduces God’s Life!

While we’re looking at principles about all this we might note that the more we try to live according to the laws of good and evil, the more we become separated in our consciousness from God. In other words, if we allow legalism in while trying to be holy, it will take us further from God, not closer!

We would think it should be the reverse, but NO!

To live according to “good and evil” requires knowledge of the two and of their profound differences. This is what the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil is about. Notice please that Scripture doesn’t say it’s “the Tree of Good and Evil” but the Tree of the KNOWLEDGE of Good and Evil (Genesis 2:17).

There are two seeds at work reproducing themselves on earth. The Seed of Adam and the Seed of Jesus. One is the Serpent’s seed, and the other is God’s seed. One is the Adamic life, and is basically “anti-Christ” meaning “anti-Spirit” (Christ=anointed). The other is God’s life which always aligns with the Anointing, the Spirit.

Do you want to eat from that Tree of Knowledge? Fine! But please be aware to live from that Tree will require you to keep every part of its knowledge.

That’s why when you look into ANY doctrine and focus on IT as the end-all and be-all, you end up having to keep on INCREASING its details and “laws”. It will “gather” partners to it all the time, and wear you out trying to keep it, justify it, and defend it. It will bring you into Death, not Life. Of course the adherents of “Doctrine Keeping” think it’ll actually give them “Life” but it brings the very reverse.

Unfortunately the ecclesia of God has unwittingly taught new believers to live by the Tree of Knowledge.

Think about this: a seed is pre-programmed/pre-destined by the Creator to reproduce after its own kind. When a farmer puts a seed in the ground, he doesn’t take his Grower’s Manual out every day and read out something from it to the seed buried in the soil. The seed knows HOW to grow all by its own innate sense. It regenerates naturally.

When a person is regenerate by the Holy Spirit what do we normally do? Give them books to read! We try to teach the seed how to grow! We tend to heap "works" upon them. We tell them, Don't smoke. Dress differently. Separate from your friends. Truth isn't in intellectual understanding (at least not to begin with), it's in learning Who is He who is The Truth.

Someone was put it this way: Before I got saved they told me God loved me unconditionally. Now after I was saved they loaded me up with a list of conditions and instructions! Our Heavenly Father has made a covenant with the Seed in you; and it is JESUS in you!

(Gal 3:16) **"Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as referring to many, but rather to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ."**

No knowledge can make that seed grow in you – it is automatic because of Jesus living within the born-again ones, by the Spirit. A practical application of this is when some saint runs after a new teaching before truly discerning its merits and truth. Brethren who get locked into some suspect doctrine or false teaching need our patient correction in the matter.

(2 Tim 2:25) **"With gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth."**

To oppose oneself will bring about confusion, so it's very important we act according to Scriptural principles in order to help others get re-aligned with God's mind in a matter. We are not to try and "win them over" but to show them the reality of the seed within them. Let the Father reproduce His life in us, but not by knowledge and the keeping of laws and man-honoured doctrines.

The Adamic nature wants head Knowledge, it wants Religion. But the Anointing that is within us by Christ's Spirit will quite naturally, and automatically reproduce divine life. Let us learn to be constant in girding up the loins of our minds – to discern in all humility.

(2 Peter 1:3) **"Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence."**

Peter McArthur

The Outgoing and the Incoming



Peter McArthur

Many Bible commentators have often wondered why Jesus said to John the Baptizer “**It is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness**” at Jesus’ baptism (Mtt 3:15). We know from Scripture that John was the son of a priest according to the order of Abijah: (Luke 1:5). “**In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth.**”

This made their son John, of the Aaronic lineage.

There is a lovely spiritual link here because Aaron’s wife was also named Elisabeth. “**And Aaron took Elisheba [the Hebrew form of Elisabeth] daughter of Amminadab, sister of Naashon, to be his wife.**” (Exo 6:23)

It’s been suggested by some that Zacharias was in line for the Aaronic order of the high priest, based on Lev 10:8-9. Whatever the case, what we do know is that in the days of Christ’s ministry, the high priesthood fluctuated between Annas and Caiaphas.

At this closing stage of Temple worship the high priest was in fact appointed by Rome, not elected by the Aaronic priesthood. It’s extremely unlikely that those Roman political appointees were truly God’s high priest. Would God want His final earthly high priest to be one set up by Rome? Unthinkable! So it throws us back to considering that the final human high priest (before Jesus’ anointing) would be one according to the dictates of Scripture. If such a politically appointed man was not the true high priest from God’s perspective, who was? Could it have been that John the Baptizer was in fact the last (high) priest of the true Aaronic order?

We’re told that John didn’t drink wine, and it’s conjectured so because he was a Nazarite. However, some other qualifications for being a Nazarite (not cutting the hair and not being defiled by touching a dead person) are not mentioned in passages about him.

On the other hand abstinence from wine was a command for the high priest of Aaron's line. **"Do not drink wine or strong drink, neither you nor your sons with you, when you come into the tent of meeting, so that you will not die; it is a perpetual statute throughout your generations."** (Lev 10:9)

It would make perfect sense for the true outgoing high priest of God to baptize Jesus as the incoming (and final) high priest, according to Scriptural dictates. It would've been a kind of spiritual transition of the two priesthoods, and as Scripture shows, baptism (washing in water) was essential, as was the anointing that accompanied it (speaking of Jesus' anointing by the dove of the Holy Spirit).

"And you shall bring Aaron and his sons unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and wash them with water. And you shall put upon Aaron the holy garments, and anoint him, and sanctify him; that he may minister to me in the priest's office." (Exo 40:12-13)

"And the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased." (Luk 3:22)

If this scenario be accurate it gives us a new perspective on John's words **"He must increase, but I must decrease."** (Jhn 3:30). It's as if he's saying that while his own Aaronic priesthood was decreasing, the true and final high priesthood (the order of Melchizedek – Heb 7:11) was increasing.

Be that as it may, John the Baptizer was of the Aaronic priestly line, even though he himself didn't quite take on that whole function, particularly in the Temple. What we do know is that according to Jewish tradition it was the custom for the Outgoing high priest to baptize and purify the Incoming high priest. Hence Jesus said **"it was to fulfill all righteousness"** (Mtt 3:15).

John (one priest) introduces another (the Great High Priest). Seems to make sense. This gives us the basis for a Scriptural principle, that of the Outgoing and the Incoming.

We find this in embryonic form in Isa 42:9. **"Behold, the former things have come to pass, now I declare new things; before they spring forth I proclaim them to you."** Now while this verse in its correct context refers to the fulfilment of certain prophecies, it does give us the foundation for a general principle – that being, **only when the former things have been fulfilled, will the new be announced.**

Let's personalize this for us:

God will only open the next door for us once we've walked through the one He's already opened!

Or to use the imagery of pregnancy: We must carry what God's conceived in us until the appointed delivery time!

There is always an Outgoing giving way to an Incoming. We won't move on until we've obeyed what God has already spoken to us. This flies in the face of that often quoted popular platitude that preachers use: "God will open a door for you". This can be a form of False Comfort!

Yes it's true that one door closes and another opens, but it's not always the case when it comes to spiritual advancement towards maturity in Christ. There is a Voice to obey, and (tough) lessons to learn.

One season must close before another comes forth. Certainly there is an overlap, particularly in the natural seasons, but we can't always take natural analogies and transfer them to spiritual principles. Sometimes (often!) spiritual seasons just do NOT overlap, rather they depend of the conclusion of one in order to introduce the next.

You must be a SON in order to become an HEIR. We often have to be restrained in a small place before God lets us loose in a broad place. When the Father sees that one spiritual season has been fulfilled, He declares a new one. Isa 42:9B **Before they happen, I cause you to hear**".

This requires a hearing heart on our part, even a willingness to want to hear so we can truly hear and so obey! It's a sequence that requires patience and faith, and often quite a bit of testing.

Have you noticed in Scripture how the building always comes before the GLORY can fall; Solomon's Temple for instance.

The principle being, that **hard work, dedication and struggle usually precedes enjoying the beauty that follows.**

Imagine looking at the construction site at the Temple with all its dust, rubble, noise, etc. It would take a lot to imagine what the final product would look like. The building (the Outgoing) would've been something you got used to during construction over many years of toil, and the completion (the Incoming) would seem somewhat strange (but beautiful) after so many years of toiling and living amid what had become "the norm".

So we find there are some issues here for us, and it's partly because we've been so used to living in the "Outgoing" that the new "Incoming" can look rather odd to us.

Here are some of the issues that might complicate our moving on:

1. Because we tire of the "old" during the season of building we can easily jump at whatever looks "right" even if it seems a little at variance with Scripture.
2. We can become over-cautious about moving on, and miss the season that's coming.
3. We may settle for a lesser calling, because the new Incoming may seem to be inconvenient in our eyes.
4. We allow other people's plans and expectations dictate to us.

It's often at this point that some believers fall into deception because of the above. Look at some of the deceptions that have surrounded many of the popular ministries over the past 10 years or so. False prophecies about revival, strange manifestations of angel feathers, gold glitter and orbs.

On the other hand just because there's the cry of the new "Incoming" season, we can again jump the gun and shout "Heresy". They did that to Jesus remember? So how do we get around this and remain faithful and discerning? No easy or quick answer here, but over the centuries believers have learnt that abiding in the Secret Place of God's heart and mind (His "purpose" if you like) brings you closer to see the seasons as they alter.

Perhaps this is why many saints feel a renewed call to true intimacy, and set about to refine their ability to hear His voice afresh.

Maybe, just maybe, amid all the issues of modern life, all the anxieties of the daily TV news, and the myriad doctrines and teachings filling our bookshelves and beaming through the internet – maybe the Father is trying to get some of us ready for a new “Incoming”.

It may well be so different (even odd) that only those who’ve been hearing Him already will actually understand. God’s way is nearly always to use a REMNANT to bring in the New.

Scripture has many examples of the “few” who precede the “many”.

1. Noah and his family of seven people; then a re-populating of the whole earth.
2. Abraham who becomes the father to thousands.
3. Joseph the loner who becomes the life saver of all his people.
4. Zacharias and Elizabeth, Simeon and Anna; all who were a remnant awaiting Israel’s consolation (Luk 1: 5-6 / 2:25-38).
5. Twelve disciples to start with, then many who followed later.
6. One hundred and twenty on the Day of Pentecost, then three thousand get saved that same day (Acts 1:14-2:41).

A remnant first, who are willing to seek intimacy, to hear and then obey. A “few” who know the seasons are changing, who are willing to move from living in the “Outgoing” in order to abide in the new “Incoming”.

I’m not talking here about strange fanciful new doctrines, odd spiritual manifestations that purport to validate weird occult-like experiences, or the babbling of false “prophetic” voices. Rather I’m attempting to alert us to the change of spiritual seasons, and to be vigilant and discerning for what is coming.

First the Father prepares a remnant, and then He increases the number.
First the Outgoing, followed by the Incoming.

By the way, the Remnant should not be seen to be a special kind of elect group or special spiritual elite. There are many in this current season with claims to be Apostles, God’s chosen mouth pieces, an elect who shall reign over the rest of us. They are not the Remnant ones according to Scriptural principles.

Those we read about in Scripture like Abraham, Simeon or Anna, probably had NO idea at all of their calling – they just heard the voice of the Father, hungered after what He imparted to them and obeyed.

They would not have seen themselves to be any sort of elite persons or privileged ones. Yes, they certainly knew their God, and were aware of “being called” but not in any advantaged way - unlike so many today who claim mighty things for themselves and their carnal ministries!

May we be faithful, alert, discerning – and ready!
Blessings to you in the Messiah.

Peter McArthur
The Issachar Ministry

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