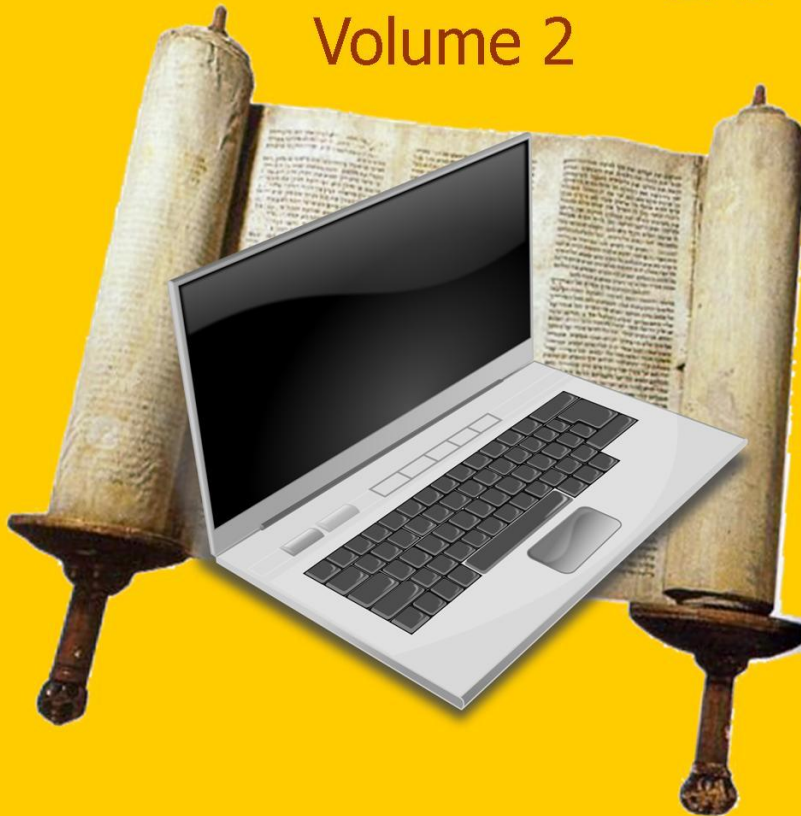


The Scrolls Anthology

Volume 2



A collection of writings
by Peter McArthur

A collection of spiritual writings by Peter McArthur

issachar.org

The Issachar Scroll Writings Volume 2

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.

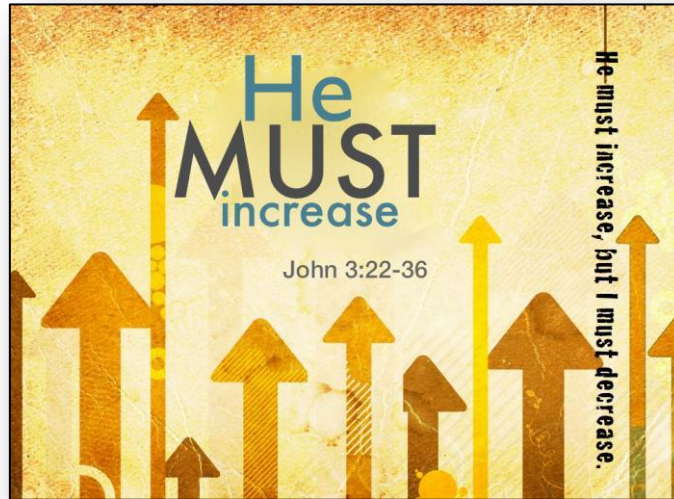
I felt it helpful to compile the writings into easy-to-access volumes rather than just have them listed on the web site and singularly at other sites. So, here they are. I hope they may help you grow in the Messiah and the Father's grand purpose for us all.

Peter McArthur

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He Must Increase



By Peter McArthur

“He must increase, but I must decrease.” (Jhn 3:30). All true spiritual insight is gathered up in this one little sentence. John the Baptiser had an insight into the person of Jesus Christ – which was to fulfil the Father’s purpose.

Who must increase? Jesus. Who must decrease? Us. Simple really, but so hard to apply.

But when (and if) we apply these seven little words a wonderful transformation can happen. We begin to learn that everything (past, present, and future) can be explained by this fundamental principle. It explains everything the Father HAS done, IS doing, and WILL do. What a breadth of thought this is!

Let’s take a closer look at John 3:30.

The word **“must”**. It literally means “it has to be” or “it is necessary”.

The word **“increase”**. It means “to enlarge and fill, to give increase.”

In other words Jesus is to go on increasing. His authority and influence will spread unhindered. What a thought.

The word **“but”**. Here it simply means “now”. So the text would read “Jesus must increase; now I decrease”

The word **“decrease”**. Means “to be less in rank, to be inferior in dignity, to decrease in popularity and in authority.”

So filling all this out the text could read like this: **“It is necessary that Jesus should enlarge and go on increasing. Now it has to be that I must be less in rank and decrease in popularity and my own authority.”** Or at least something akin to that.

Notice that the divine (biblical) order is for Jesus to increase first, and then we decrease. The world sees it the other way round. The natural way of thinking would be to say, "As I choose to decrease then Jesus can come in and fill up the empty places and so then He can increase in me."

That's fleshy thinking. It is soulish, but it's not how the Father thinks or works. The Word clearly and quite bluntly says "Jesus must increase FIRST, and then you decrease".

It's as though we need Christ to exceed more and more within us, so that we realise there's no more room for "me" inside, only Him. Jesus first; then us. This is a remarkable and wonderful truth. It doesn't say "Jesus MIGHT increase". It firmly says "He MUST". It's a certainty; He has to increase.

Truth is truth whether we know it or not, whether we believe it or not, whether we agree with it or not.

"...if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus..." (Eph 4:21)

It's a process that Jesus is increasing. It MUST be so, therefore it IS so!

"He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will." (Eph 1:9-11)

But the issue is – we must decrease. The Father's purpose is for Jesus to increase and for us to do the opposite. Die to self, to ambition, to our own plans even. A horrible thought for most of us. But, it's the way forward and the way of the upward call for the prize in Christ Jesus.

"He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have the pre-eminence in everything. For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him." (Col 1:17-19).

Notice that extraordinary phrase, "in ALL things that Jesus Christ might have the pre-eminence." This is truly a monumental text. We should think soberly and deeply on its truth.

The reason there needs to be an increasing and a decreasing is so that FULLNESS can have its perfect way.

"...His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all." (Eph 1:23)

"He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things." (Eph 4:10)

So there it is. Seven little but great words. Apply it and see the transformation that comes from obedience. Grace and peace, Peter McArthur

To Sit at God's Table



By Peter McArthur

In Exodus chapter 24 YHWH commands Moses and Aaron, with 72 others, to ascend Mount Sinai. There they saw God, and they ate and drank.

"Then Moses went up with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and they saw the God of Israel; and under His feet there appeared to be a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself. Yet He did not stretch out His hand against the nobles of the sons of Israel; and they saw God, and they ate and drank." (Exodus 24: 10-11)

A slightly more accurate translation could read: **"...as they were eating and drinking they saw God..."**

But what did they eat and drink? Whatever this was they nevertheless had a table prepared for them by the Lord. They sat at His table!

Later (in Exodus Chapter 23) Moses alone went up the mountain, while Aaron was left below. We are told that Moses was delayed. While this happened the Israelites made the golden calf. It's as if they "ate" something of their own making. They had in fact prepared their own table, their very own feast, even though they justified it as a "feast to the Lord".

Now when Aaron saw this he built an altar before it; and Aaron made a proclamation and said, **"Tomorrow shall be a feast to YHWH"**. So the next day they rose early and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play. (Exo 32:5-6).

They didn't want to know what the Lord had provided; they didn't wait for Moses to come down with a word from on high. They forged ahead with their own "food". In these days we

could say that the Lord is indeed preparing a table for us to eat at. What we choose to eat of is vital for the next season of the Lord.

Many modern prophets have been saying there is a coming and marked increase in dreams, both to the saved and unsaved. To the saved for encouragement. To the unsaved to drive them to madness! I find an echo of this in the following text.

“This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that there is one fate for all men. Furthermore the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil and insanity is in their hearts throughout their lives. Afterwards they go to the dead.” (Eccles 9:3)

When the saved dream dreams of the Lord, their hearts will be at peace. This will be due to their righteousness, even amid tribulation and persecution. But when the unsaved dream and “see” what is coming on the face of the earth, they will become restless, with great anxiety. More and more their wickedness and horror will cause them to go insane. The rejection of truth will always bring about opposition to the Lord and cause the mind to be greatly disturbed.

The question we should now ask ourselves is, “at what table do we find nourishment?”

Many ministries are moving to and from amongst the Body of Christ. Some are a blessing; some are dangerous through their pride of false revelations and soulish teachings. Spiritual food is being presented in copious amounts at present. So much teaching! So many prophecies. So many “great ones” of God presenting themselves! So much danger.

Jesus Christ truly needs to be Lord and Master over our spiritual food in these days. I heard of church in the USA that decided to fast and pray for 3 months because it had realised it was living from pre-conceived doctrines that weren’t entirely in accordance with the Word.

What a great thing for a group of believers to do. I have often wondered what would happen if congregation after congregation sat down for a couple of months and went through their bibles to see if their cherished doctrines actually measured up with the Word. If they didn’t, would they have the courage to jettison or change their teachings? What a day that would be in the Body of Christ.

How the Lord needs to be allowed to feed us from His prepared table, and not that of our own setting and fancies.

Biblically speaking a “table” means “the place of God’s covenant”. **“For they invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods.”** (Numbers 25:2)

When you eat at table you are identifying yourself with the god of that table. Tables represent gods. See how Moses tries to rectify this in Exodus 32:20. There he causes the Israelites to drink the powdered image of the calf mixed with water.

And note also how the disciple’s eyes were opened at Emmaus when at table they had a revelation of the stranger among them – Jesus!

Using the imagery of table manners, I sense we need to have protocol (good spiritual manners) and eat only from what the Lord sets before us. Eating what is given at each season of God. Here is a principle to consider: When you eat what the Lord gives you, others will also want to eat from you!

It's a sin to feed people what the Lord has NOT given you to eat first. Otherwise you will only feed them your thoughts and teachings. There is far too much second-hand teaching passed around in the Body of Christ these days. Eat for yourself, digest it well, and only then pass it onto others.

Some of this personal "eating" may take many, many months (and in some cases years) before you have digested what the Lord gave. When it has done its work in you first, then you may feed others. Not before!

Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings; for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, through which those who were so occupied were not benefited. We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. (Heb 13:9-10)

When the Lord sets a table, we might not like what's on it – but He is looking for our response. He is after those who will respond to His Spirit.

Sometimes we find many "dishes" set before us, but only ONE might be of God. It's then we need to use our spiritual discernment. Learn to increase this.

The "vessel" or "dish" may not actually appeal to us – but it's the FOOD that's important.

Wisdom speaks and says, **"Come, eat of my food and drink of the wine I have mixed. Forsake your folly and live, and proceed in the way of understanding."** (Prov 9:5-6)

It has been said that Wisdom not only supplies the right principles of life, but also forbids the wrong principles. Choices are being laid upon our table by the Lord. Let us discern well and eat gratefully!

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The Spiritual Man



By Peter McArthur

1. THE SPIRITUAL MAN

- The Spiritual Man lives from his spirit, not from his mind life, the soul.
- We need to learn how to come into an “Assembly of Believers” and not just be individuals in a Meeting.
- Be a congregation of one spirit, mind and heart.
- When we meet in true spiritual unity there is a sense of the quality of the Holy Spirit’s presence
- There are “laws of unity” which have nothing to do with agreement of doctrines but are “spiritual laws”. Our growth in the Spirit depends on how much spiritual substance or character we have.
- We need the “discerning of spirits”. But he who is spiritual judges (=discerns) all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. (1 Cor 2:15)
- Such a spiritual man is beyond human and soulish judging because he is a “mystery” to people. He lives in and from a different realm, the spiritual!
- Our minds might think like Jesus but it still cannot produce “life” or comprehend the things of God.

2. THE MIND OF CHRIST

- We have the mind of Christ: For “who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?” But we have the mind of Christ. (1 Cor 2:16).

- This mind is not in our soul but in our spiritual life. It is gained both by being Born Again and by habitually abiding in the presence of the Lord.
- The mind of man cannot receive the things of God (1 Cor 2:14), if they do try to hold these it can only be done so by memorizing them in our minds, not our spirits.
- By abiding in the presence of the Lord we can begin to receive all He has for us. The fruit of this will show in the divine effect our words and actions leave behind us as a deposit.
- Jesus always left a supernatural effect and deposit.
- If we don't have such an effect it means our soul is displacing Jesus. The mind sets itself up as "God" in the Temple of God. But if we walk in the Spirit we'll never have failures.

3. BECOME A FATHER PLEASER 2 Cor 5:9

- Jesus was a Father Pleaser (Jhn 5:19 and 8:29).
- Since the Father is a spirit we cannot know Him except by the spirit and we cannot "see" Him except by spiritual eyes.
- Pleasing the Father is doing the things He shows us and saying the things He speaks to us (Jhn 5:19 compare Lk 2:49).
- Enoch's testimony was that he pleased God: "for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God." (Heb 11:5)
- Faith pleases God: "But without faith it is impossible to please Him " (Heb 11:6)
- The flesh cannot please God: "So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. " (Rms 8:8).
- Jesus lost nothing even though He gave the Father all the glory! When we please the Father rather than ourselves we will in fact benefit much more than we can ever hope for.
- This is a spiritual secret that the spiritual man has learnt, to please the Father even to the hating of his own needs.

4. MIND OR SPIRIT?

- All our Knowledge and Learning cannot produce spiritual results. We can learn about truths but they won't work.
- If we don't learn how to distinguish (=divide) our soul and spirit, then our minds will play "God" and attempt to direct and control us.
- The mind/soul might even "talk like God" and sound "spiritual" but it won't be Him. Many Christians fall into deception about hearing the voice of God thinking He has spoken to them when in fact it's been their own soul "playing God".

*"Those in the
flesh cannot
please God"*

Romans 8:8

5. EXPERIENCE BY THE SPIRIT

- It's with our spirit that we experience God. Growing up in Christ isn't "learning" but experiencing.
- During a message or sermon "lean forward in your spirit into" the teaching. Never become passive in your spirit-man.

- ♦ The Holy Spirit has much to say when listening to a preacher, teacher, etc. We should be able to draw 10 times more from the preacher than he's in fact saying, but the Holy Spirit.
- ♦ Learn to mix the Word with Faith. This is not an ability of the mind but of the spirit: "but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. (Heb 4:2).
- ♦ The consequences of not doing this is that the Israelites died! There are drastic consequences when we don't live from the spirit.
- ♦ We grow through intimacy, both in the natural and spiritual realms. Intimate acts are done in a private, secret place. So too in the spiritual realm – intimacy with God is found in the secret place in the prayer closet (Mtt 6:6).
- ♦ Living in the Spirit and living from our spirit-man is living and walking, saying and hearing, thinking and speaking, and working by faculties and senses that are non-existent in the natural man. Exercise these spiritual senses (Heb 5:14).

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Necessity of Right Vision



By Peter McArthur

Often when we enter into some fresh Biblical revelation we might think we are beginning to get a fairly good hold on what the purpose of God really is about. Even if we think we do have a handle on it, there is always more. It's not enough to have an understanding of the Grand Purpose, we also need to know HOW we are to participate in it, and also HOW God is working all this to its appointed end. Correct vision of this purpose and right "seeing" is important, but do we understand the ways in which God will bring all this to pass? There are certain spiritual principles ("laws" if you like) that God uses in order to bring things to their appointed end.

When we can truly say in our hearts that we not only "know" the vision but also what in us is likely to stymie it, only then can we have a valued testimony and stand before the brethren to speak it. Then they will say about us; "This one knows the vision and can even alert me to the pitfalls along the way – to this one will I listen, for he has heard from heaven".

So God will use men and women of Heavenly Vision who are able to state what it is, to disclose the ways in which God will bring it to pass, and who are able to adjust the thinking of those who might be prone to hasten or even short-circuit the prescribed way. We dare not entertain doing this unless we have first "seen the Lord".

From the Beginning of the gospel period to its End we find those who have "seen the Lord". The apostles saw Him in His resurrected state, and in John's grand revelation he saw Him in His glorified state. The whole New Testament from start to finish is a collection of writings that cry out "We have seen Him!" There is literally no greater vision than this.

Everyone from that first point on who has lived out the gospel has also "seen Him". It's this vision of Him and Who He is and our part in it that glues the whole story together. When we get the right vision it will stay firm within us despite all the daily grind, the times of fleeting doubt or soulish fretting, even the illnesses and seeming injustices of life.

When we can stand in “**a broad place**” (**Psalm 18:19**) and see things as they are eternally meant to be, then we can proclaim from the very depths of our inner man and say “I know this to be true despite what the circumstances of life might otherwise say”. We will stand firm in our conviction. This is one reason why correct vision is so important. True heaven-sent vision that has engaged one’s heart and become a foundation deep within, will bring us through. Recall that it was Joshua as a young man who remained faithful at the door of the Tent of Meeting to keep his focus and vision centred (**Exodus 33: 11**).

Imagine this for a moment. Moses had come down from the mount only to find another “vision” had been placed before the people; the golden calf. After this idol was destroyed we find young Joshua remaining at the Tabernacle, the meeting place of man with God, the place of extraordinary heavenly vision. No doubt he wanted to keep close as possible to God’s original vision for Israel. He stayed focussed. He didn’t let the sin of false vision, as displayed by the golden calf, sway him off course.

Later this would happen again. At the entrance to Canaan, Joshua was excited to at last see the Promised Land. He, along with Caleb and the other ten entered in according to God’s command. They saw and they tasted the fruit of that Promise. Two grasped what God’s intent was about; ten let the circumstances speak a different vision to their hearts. The ten said, “**We SAW the giants...we were like grasshoppers IN OUR OWN SIGHT**” (**Numbers 13: 33**). Take note of what their vision dictated to them.

It was strong enough to make them fear, doubt and rebel. But when God forbade the people to enter into Canaan that first time, when they had to endure the forty years of hardship, mumbling, fear and regret, Joshua kept his vision focussed. He kept the vision sharpened. He undoubtedly reminded himself of what was yet to come. This enabled him to be ready to go in when the Lord spoke the second time. He wouldn’t let unbelieving hearts dictate to him now. He had accepted what Heaven spoke to Moses and he held fast to it, not wavering in it, but letting it day by day grow deeper and deeper in him, and yet at the same time, letting its truth rise to the surface.

Joshua’s vision of “entering in” was always just below the surface. True, it had gone deep in him at first, but when it had formed a solid foundation within, it began to rise towards the surface. Day by day it must have grown within him, so much so that no doubt he groaned waiting for its reality. When that day came and Heaven spoke to enter in, he was ready. He was prepared. He was not slack. He was a man of the given vision and he had not let it wither those forty long years.

There are many today amongst the brethren who are hearing this wonderful purpose and vision extolled. Not near enough are hearing it but at least more than in previous generations. However unless the proclaimers of this Grand Purpose of Harmony are also able to warn about the pitfalls, to alert the brethren of the subtle deceptions, and to disclose God’s way of bringing it to pass, we will have “ten” more who will balk when the “entering in” is at hand.

Those ten spies (note how they are described!) would’ve known the vision that Moses had repeatedly spoken about the Promised Land. But when the crunch came they were self-focussed. True vision actually means death to self-vision. We need to get that straight in our thinking.

Joshua was not identifying himself so much with the vision of “entering in” as if it was some “thing”, or some “purpose” to be fulfilled. Rather he was identifying with the Mover of that purpose, God Himself. There’s a great difference between aligning with a “movement or purpose”, and aligning with God who is the Mover of that purpose.

Some people will readily jump on the band-wagon of a new movement, they will clamber to identify with a new church across town that has a great vision, and they will readily give themselves to the “new work”. They speak of commitment, and maybe even consecration to the new work, but when things become difficult and Satan or the soul presses in, they cave in. What’s happened?

They have made the error of aligning with the “vision or purpose” rather than aligning themselves to the Mover, the Lord God. Worse still they may be the type of people who live off second-hand revelations rather than receiving the call direct from the Lord. Our commitment or consecration must always come out of identification to the Lord, rather than our identification with the vision. He must always take the priority.

As we allow the Lord to take His rightful place, we begin to see what He’s really about. We glimpse the vision He has, and it’s out of seeing like He sees that we’re moved to identify with that vision. In other words, commitment to a vision should come of out seeing as the Vision-Giver sees, not just because we approve of the vision itself. We need to see as God sees. **There’s a principle in the Word:** “Seeing precedes entering in”.

Think about that for a moment. Abraham had to “see” the stars in the heavens before he could move on in his journey. Moses was taken up the mount to “see” the Promised Land before the people could enter in. The disciples had to “see” what the Kingdom was about through signs and wonders, before Jesus could send them out to proclaim it.

A wise pastor or elder will not get too excited when people want to join their church because they “like the vision”. He will be cautious, because such people often put the vision before He who gives it. They’d never say that of course, but their words and works will eventually betray that attitude. How important it is to make certain the flock under one’s care know the Vision-Giver first before they sign up to the vision itself.

Without “seeing” the vision for ourselves we are prone to want to adjust it later as we tire of, or get frustrated with, the outworking of the vision. Our own ideas may begin to surface in an attempt to rescue the supposed decaying vision. Striving soon takes place, and a spiritual battle will ensure. Sadly this often ends in spiritual depression for some and usually results in a parting of ways for others.

So it is that we first need to get to know God’s great eternal purpose, as clearly as possible in our heart. Once we have seen what He purposes then the next step falls into place.

That next step is to be so close to Him that we know His heartbeat. We recall that Jesus said the twelve were no longer servants but friends to Him (**John 15:15**). Servants certainly know about their job description, they act according to given commands. Friends on the other hand are closer and they know the mind and heart, and they are even privy to certain issues not disclosed to others (**Matthew 11: 13**).

We need to know both the “outward” eternal purpose as well as the “inward” heartbeat of our Divine Friend. When these two are harmonious in a person’s life then we’ll have people who know the Vision-Giver well, and are equally clear about the vision itself. This marrying of the inward and outward will bring about a consecration of a person’s will to the task. Such a person becomes both a Knower and a Seer of the grand vision.

It’s this combination that enables a person to remain steadfast to see the vision through. It will be tested, certainly, but the Knower-Seer will stand and wait, assured that the outcome will truly come to pass.

How will God bring us to His desired end? What spiritual laws will He use in our preparation? One of the most fundamental ways, which God uses to prepare us for our destined role, is the New Birth. Just as Jesus was a Son from above, so we too, who are Born Again from above (**John 3:3 margin note**) are members of “the First Family.”

We are partakers of the Divine Nature of God (**2 Peter 1:4**), a very real “next of kin” if you like. In fact our association with and to the Lord Jesus enables us to be of one Spirit with Him: **“The one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him” (1 Cor. 6:17)**

This is our starting point; our preparation for having right vision is the New Birth. It propels us into a new order of being. This spiritual heredity enables us to perceive the Eternal Vision of the heavens; our mindset can now know the Purpose, while the carnal mindset cannot: **“The mind of the flesh is enmity towards God; for it is not being subjected to the Law of God, and neither can it be.” (Rom. 8:7)**

Jesus Christ is THE Son; He is the mould, the prototype, the “image” of what all other Born Again ones are to be like. We are “spiritual blood-brothers” to Christ. **“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” (John 1:12-13)**

This relationship with the great Son of God is not confined to being of “one family” but extends to actually partaking of His glory. He said: **“...and I have given them the glory which You have given Me, that they may be one, as We are One.” (John 17:22)**

Thus the purpose of our being is unravelled even further with this understanding. Paul prayed that his readers would begin to grasp this wonderful truth when he wrote: **“(I pray) that the eyes of your mind having been enlightened, for you to know what is the hope of His calling, and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.” (Eph. 1:18)**

Only by a divine revelation of God’s eternal purpose can we ever begin to know what has been proposed for us. Only by the Holy Spirit enlightening our regenerated mindsets can we see this truth, which begins with the New Birth. This then is the first spiritual law that is enacted to bring about our “seeing” of the vision.

A second spiritual law that soon follows is that governing time. “Time” is a fundamental characteristic of those who are coming to maturity. Saints who begin to appreciate the seasons and times of God, particularly in relation to waiting, are on that road.

The outworking of any vision requires the obvious passage of time. Time must elapse before the vision becomes a concrete reality. This is so in the natural realm and it's even more so in the spiritual. Rarely if at all, do we see an "incarnation" of a vision come about quickly. We must wait, expectantly, yet with an increasing desire of yearning for the vision to come to pass. Patience is of paramount consideration. It's a testing.

As God is still seasoning our flesh and mind in this waiting period, but we're prone to want to hasten the day. This can occur in various ways. A practical sort of person, like a pastor for instance, might want to use some method or programme to help the vision become a reality. He may attempt to "prime the pump" and help the spiritual flow come forth. He may even subconsciously misread events around him to try to convince either himself or others that "something is moving in God; can you sense it?" Discernment is displaced by undue haste. Confusion begins to take root and wrong decisions soon follow.

Or there might be a prophet who was initially used by God to prophesy the vision, which may become impatient and start to prophesy slight alterations to God's programme. The prophet who at first spoke boldly about the coming Move might cautiously add to the original word as time seems to pass by rather more slowly than expected. The prophet who first saw what God revealed tends to live in that future realm and often finds the waiting hard.

This is particularly so with immature prophets. If they've been so foolish as to prophesy a date or time they inwardly panic as the day draws near with no sign of the Move breaking forth. Right at this point they "add" some later "revelation" to save face.

Of course it's all done subconsciously, and they would never think it's them – but it usually is. Little "excuses" creep in; subtle changes to the original vision take place; and impatience comes into the mind. The excitement of first grasping the vision, of seeing it and being thrilled by its grandeur, begins to fade as we await the hour of its fulfilment. But it's this very passing of time that the Lord can use to adjust our thinking.

It's a truth that we usually don't comprehend the full nature of the initial vision until much time has elapsed. Only then do we truly see what it's about. This "blind spot" is done by the Lord in an attempt to increase our faith. It also quickly sorts out those who have really appreciated the given vision from those who have put their hand up without considering the responsibility it requires.

Now a third spiritual law comes into play; that of the adjustment period. We're not expected to simply get the vision, and then wait around until one day it comes to pass. No, there's a requirement for us to be corrected, adjusted and transformed during this time. More often than not it requires suffering!

The suffering is of course the challenging of our mindset by the Lord. How often do we see or hear of saints who leap into fervent action when a vision is prophesied or first presented. They might even appreciate the need for a waiting period, much like a pregnancy, before seeing the fruit. After all, they concede, that's Biblical enough.

But they're not ready for the transformation of the mind that **MUST** take place if the vision is to change them. The suffering it will entail brings all the dross of their inner life to the surface and they can't cope with it. Hurts, regrets and unresolved issues quickly surface as the Spirit stirs the depths within.

It's at this vulnerable point that the vision they were once so excited about takes a dive while they focus on the mess that's floated to the surface of their mind. Over and over we see such people consumed, no longer by the God-given vision, but by the sewage of the past.

At this moment God's wonderful grace and mercy can cleanse and restore them, but more often than not the process of adjustment is too much to bear. In order to find some relief from their inner woes they begin to attack the Keepers of the Vision to divert attention. A displacement of purpose and vision takes place, and unless there are wise men and women of God to help restore such ones, the outcome is often tragic.

As painful as this is, it's nevertheless one of the ways which God uses to purify the outcome of His vision. He yearns for the vision to remain pure and intact. Inevitably there will be some "deaths" along the way. Some may "die" in the early stages of the vision, only to find a wonderful opportunity of restoration later. Others may well "die" and never see a resurrection from their inner struggles that would enable them to be part of the vision.

At this stage a rather wonderful thing happens. The initial vision, which could only have been in embryonic form, begins to expand outward. The very core of the vision, coming from God Himself, does not alter, but it does take on a new shape as it were.

As we yield to the correcting, adjusting and patience needed to see the vision unfold; our spiritual eyes begin to take in a grander panorama than first envisaged. Our spiritual horizon expands quite markedly, and in some cases very rapidly. What we saw from one perspective is now seen from another, and the scenery is breathtaking. From this new vantage point, that of submitting to God's ways, the view encompasses so much more than we first thought.

When this begins to take place, the former vision is not abandoned, but actually enhanced; it becomes broader. Right at this point others who were not aligned with the earlier vision begin to line up with this new "seeing". The new blood brings a great thrusting forward of intensity, and it can be a very exciting time.

But some who initially refused the earlier vision may now try to jump on the wagon and be part of the new move. Sometimes the Lord allows this; other times He resists the resisters for not moving on in faith earlier. It will require wisdom to know just who is approved by the Lord in this and who is not. No one should think they can simply "get" the fresh vision and join the parade. This vision is not "got" – rather it is "given".

This is precisely where the maturity of apostles and prophets comes into play. The mature prophetic voices will herald the broadening horizon, and encourage the saints to go with it, while at the same time warning people to have a right heart in their motives for wanting to be part of all this.

There's also likely to be a marked increase in dreams, visions and prophetic words at this time. However the words of the prophets will not be enough to stabilise the ship. The spiritual fathers, the apostles, will need to know how and when to apply the truths that will cause the vision to become a reality. Generally they will do so in tandem with local eldership.

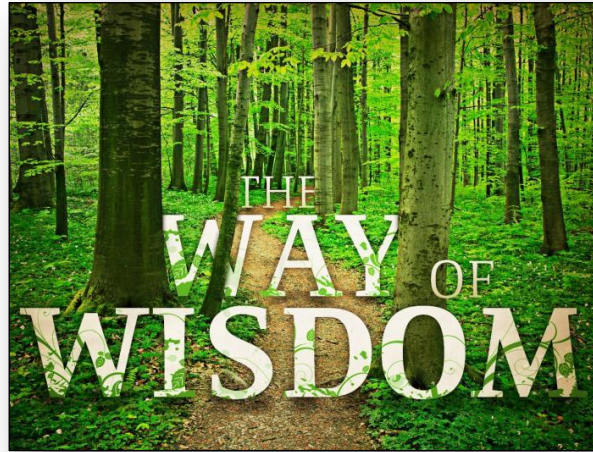
The prophets will proclaim the fresh vision to the Body, the apostles apply its truths for the Body, while the local elders administer these within the Body. One sees the vision and speaks it; one applies these truths to the here and now, and the other facilitates it locally.

Of course it's not as clear cut as that, for there will inevitably be some overlap as each ministry works in harmony with the others to bring the saints into greater maturity. This exciting marrying of ministries will set the church on a new course of life. Currently this is where the Body of Christ is heading, but there'll be many labour pangs yet to come before we see the birth.

Blessings and the Lord's favour upon you,
Peter McArthur

The Issachar Ministry.

Lessons on Wisdom



By Peter McArthur

In Jewish understanding “Wisdom” is personified in the writings of the Torah (the “Law” given to Moses). However, in New Testament understanding, “Wisdom” is personified in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Wisdom is both individual (personal) and corporate (accountable). It is a distinct End-Time characteristic that needs to be sought after, for in the days that lay ahead, wisdom and its companion, discernment, will be greatly needed. So let’s look at how we can lay hold of such a beautiful gift. We start with what the Spirit reveals through the letter of James (Jacob).

James 3:13-18

13 Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good life that his works are done in humility born of wisdom.

14 But if you have bitter jealousy and rivalry in your hearts, stop boasting and lying against the truth.

15 That kind of wisdom does not come from above. No, it is worldly, self-centred, and demonic.

16 For wherever jealousy and rivalry exist, there is disorder and every kind of evil.

17 However, the wisdom that comes from above is first of all pure, then peace-loving, gentle, willing to yield, full of compassion and good fruits, and without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy.

18 And a harvest of righteousness is grown from the seed of peace planted by peacemakers.

Exposition of the verses:

Verse 13: Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good life that his works are done in humility born of wisdom.

- ✦ Many want to be seen as wise, but few actually are.

- ✦ So how do we show (lit. “prove”) that Christ clothes us as new creatures? James tells us in chapter 3:1-12 it is to do with our tongue!
- ✦ A wise man who has understanding can bridle his tongue; he has learnt how to contain his words, and order his thoughts. We should note that the soul cannot control the tongue, but the soul that is controlled by the Holy Spirit can!
- ✦ This is a distinct but very important difference. Many believers try to control their thoughts and tongues merely by using the power of the soul and mind. This will always lead to religiosity and works.
- ✦ We are called on to “show” forth wisdom, not merely “profess” it.

Verse 14: But if you have bitter jealousy and rivalry in your hearts, stop boasting and lying against the truth.

- ✦ “Bitter jealousy” (or “envy”) comes from words that mean “piercing zeal”. Bitter literally means sharp piercing (G4089). Jealousy (or envy) has the literal meaning of heat, zeal, indignation (G2205).
- ✦ There is a zeal that is corrupt or bad. The “zeal” of Hitler or of a terrorist, for example. Compare this to what we might call “good” zeal. Jesus showed this “good zeal” when He overturned the tables of the sellers in the Temple precincts (John 2:17 / compare Psalm 69:9) – “Zeal for Your house has eaten me up”.
- ✦ “Bad zeal” is actually bitter because it pierces and cuts the heart of the hearer. Goodness knows what it does to the doer!
- ✦ “Jealousy” or as some versions translate it, “envy”, is self-devotion because it seeks to exalt itself above others. There is fierceness in this kind of behaviour, and it will often try to punish those it’s envious of. It is born out of rivalry and competition; always contentious, accusing and vitriolic – such things end in boasting. Envy will always attempt to justify and defend itself, even if it means lying!
- ✦ 2 Peter 2:19 gives us a very salutary lesson in what such behaviour leads to – DOMINATION by what we allow to control us. **“Promising freedom, they themselves are slaves to depravity, for a person is a slave to whatever conquers him”**. What an insight; we come into bondage to that very thing that has overcome us inwardly. Yet those who do such things hardly ever realise this great calamity that has occurred within them. No wonder God hates sin – look what it does!
- ✦ To “lie against the truth” is a horrible phrase that makes my spirit recoil. It’s a strikingly accusative statement that no true follower of Jesus would ever want directed against them. It actually makes me shudder. But that’s what the Word says jealousy, envy and bitterness are allied to – lies!
- ✦ And not just any type of lying, but lying against the very Truth of God and all He encompasses. Lying is bad enough, but to set oneself deliberately against God’s Truth and to align with it is extremely dangerous. It’s also futile because it leads nowhere!
- ✦ “Boasting” in one’s own wisdom / ministry / calling / etc is literally “to play false”. How often we hear ministries in the Body of Christ boast about themselves. It isn’t always obvious, but nevertheless if you have ears to hear, you can pick it up. Picture the person who in giving a

testimony prefaces it with “This morning when I got up at 4.00 am to have my daily 3 hour prayer time with the Lord, He showed me....”

- ✦ Why not simply say “During my prayer time today the Lord....”?
- ✦ When we brag or boast, even though we might try to spiritualize it, then the inward applause or admiration of the people is our only reward we’ll ever get. Jesus said; “Whenever you give to the poor, don’t blow a trumpet before you like the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they will be praised by people. Truly I tell you, they have their reward” (Mtt 6:2)

Verse 15: That kind of wisdom does not come from above. No, it is earthly, self-centred, and demonic.

- ✦ Clearly there is a “wisdom” that seems wise (like Islam, Evolution, Philosophy, etc) but which breeds contention and fear. It has no standard by which to judge itself, except itself!
- ✦ Such “wisdom” seems skilful, shrewd and even logical – but is in fact talk disproved by life! James 1:22 says, “Keep on being doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves”.
- ✦ The wisdom that does not come from above, no matter how fine-sounding it is, no matter how appealing to the mind, no matter how much finance is behind it to publish and disseminate it – all this is empty and in the end goes nowhere. It may seem to satisfy the mind, the soul and the sensual, but it is NOT from above and so is a lie.
- ✦ James tells us that such “wisdom” is three-fold in nature. Earthly, Self-centred, and Demonic. Strong words indeed. Let’s unpack these a little.
- ✦ = this kind of human wisdom is limited, has no knowledge of Holy Spirit revelation or truth, and originates in the mind of man (being seeded by demonic thought). It is based on worldly man-inspired thoughts, and therefore only has THIS earthly life in view. By nature it’s directly opposed to that wisdom coming from the Father of lights (James 1:17).
- ✦ (sensual or natural) = it actually means “animal-like” or “animal-souled” meaning it is not born of God, so does not have the Spirit of God. This simply means that there is a “wisdom” that is self-gratifying and has as its main objective the satisfaction of animal-like passions (1 Cor 2:14 – “a natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he is not able to know them, because they are spiritually discerned”. Such “wisdom” only wants to feed the soul, and brings a corruption.
- ✦ = this is a disturbing word that means to exhibit a so-called wisdom such as demons exhibit. It is a partaking of a true demonic work. It has the idea of not only being inspired by demons, but also continuing in their work through their on-going influence upon the mind. It is “from hell” and not “from above”. Nothing could be plainer here. Serves the interest of Satan’s kingdom only.

Verse 16: For wherever jealousy and rivalry exist, there is disorder and every kind of evil.

- ✦ Where jealousy (envy) and rivalry (self-seeking) exist there will also be Confusion and every Evil Thing.

- ✦ = a disorder and instability. The root word actually means “tumultuous anarchy”. James 1:8 shows the consequence of this in an individual.
- ✦ Every evil thing = such things start out as trivial, then move onto things that are “cheap” with the result being “against God”, hence evil.
- ✦ Both of these are part and parcel of the Jezebelic pattern. Note that James does not refer to these as “fruit” as he does with true wisdom (see vs. 18), but as “works” of the flesh (Gal. 5:19).
- ✦ Godly wisdom will always bring about a reconciling peace between God and man, whilst ungodly wisdom can only ever produce confusion – and that in abundance.

Verse 17: However, the wisdom that comes from above is first of all pure, then peace-loving, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, and without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy.

- ✦ “The wisdom that comes from above” is a joyous phrase. We are Born-Again from above, Jesus came from above, we will ascend to above, and we are to look to the things that are above.
- ✦ Here is the great declaration that true wisdom always comes from the Lord above. God is its only author; it is never a mixture of God and Man. It is pure because it comes from one source only.
- ✦ Such wisdom can be noticed in any true believer by the following three characteristics:
 - ✦ Pure ☐
 - ✦ Peaceable ☐
 - ✦ Willing to yield
- ✦ **"Pure"** here has the connotation that such heavenly-born wisdom is pure because it comes first in all essential and true things. All else is secondary to the purity and perfection of Wisdom. How we need this. Do you hunger for it? It is indeed pure because this is the first effect it has on our mind!
- ✦ **"Peaceable"** isn't so much internal peace of mind, but more the peace that is evident between persons the believer associates with. The man of wisdom will instinctively promote peace between people. It literally means to be a “lover of peace”.
- ✦ **"Willingness to yield"** here refers to the wise saint being the kind of person who approachable, one who always yields to the Truth when it is presented. It has the sense that such a wise peaceable person is never over-bearing or obstinate.
- ✦ Out of these pure characteristics the following fruit will blossom; mercy, no partiality, and no hypocrisy.
- ✦ **"Mercy"** = it means to be disposed towards compassion. It is a practical and active thing being considered here, not simply a doctrine or ideal.
- ✦ **"No partiality"** = most probably refers to the wise one making no distinction between people, and treating them all alike. It of course also means that a wise man will not be swayed by self-interest, preservation or reward.

- ♦ **"No hypocrisy"** = the word literally means "without wax" and alludes to the ancient practice of unscrupulous potters disguising cracked pottery with wax, that when dried, looked as if there was no blemish. However when put up to the light, or in the sun, the wax would readily show up as a defect. For us in context of this teaching it means that we are not to pretend to be more than we are.

Note that all these relate to our conduct towards other people.

Verse 18: And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for the ones making peace.

- ♦ Just as earthly "wisdom" (so called!) has certain results, so too does godly wisdom. They are: Fruit and Peace.
- ♦ **"Fruit"** = remember the Biblical principle that "you reap what you sow". We can only impart to others what we're truly ministering in (no second-hand revelation). If you're into some secret sin, then no matter what you preach, teach or say the sin (or its consequences) will come to the fore at some time, exposing the sin in you, or worse – affecting those to whom you minister. I have noticed that those who are in literal adultery will eventually bring forth spiritual adultery in the form of wrong teaching. The reverse is also true: teach wrong doctrine (spiritual adultery) and it won't be long before you're also into physical adultery.
- ♦ **"Peace"** = nearly always in Scripture peace refers to the reconciliation between God and Man. It can have the same meaning in relation to other people, but in the New Testament is usually confined to that peace between God and Man brought (and bought!) about solely through the saving work of Jesus.

So we come to the end of this short study – but because wisdom is wise, there is no end to studying it – and living it! Blessed are those who have such godly characteristics in their hearts and who sow it, so that in due season others might reap.

If we would be truly "wise" then we should SHOW it, not in vanity, self-righteousness or pride, but by being wise ones. We also have the duty to ACT in a peaceable manner to others as Righteous Ones. (Proverbs 2:2-6)

**"If you attend to wisdom, you shall extend your heart to understanding.
For if you cry for discernment, lifting up your voice for understanding;
if you seek her as silver, and search for her as hidden treasures,
then you shall understand the fear of YHWH and find knowledge of God.
For YHWH gives wisdom; out of His mouth are knowledge and understanding."**

And finally, this most beautiful text (2: 10-11)

**"When wisdom enters into your heart, and knowledge is pleasant to your soul,
discretion shall keep you, and understanding shall watch over you."**

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Four Things of Great Importance



By Peter McArthur

THE INWARD AND OUTWARD WORKING

What makes something “important”? On what basis do we accept whether something is, or is not, important? Clearly as Berean-believers we would want to see how Scripture treats such a question; and we find a very good overview of what the Father regards as “important” in the following verse. **“That you should walk worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit and increasing in the full knowledge of God.”** (Col 1:10)

In this text there are FOUR things that are deemed as “important” and not surprisingly they are all connected to the Lord. The four things of great importance to Him are -

1. **Walk worthy of the Lord**
2. **Be pleasing to Him**
3. **Bear fruit (for Him)**
4. **Increase in the knowledge of God**

Let’s now look at these four things. The first thing we notice is that two of them are OUTWARD works, and two are INWARD works.

Our walk is obviously on public show and is therefore an OUTWARD work.
So too is the fruit we are to bear – another OUTWARD work.
Then we have our pleasing God, an INWARD work.
Also increasing in knowledge of Him is an INWARD work.

Now note how these four are grouped: One OUTWARD work, followed by an INWARD work, followed by another OUTWARD work, and followed by yet another INWARD work. There is a wonderful balance here of Outward / Inward / Outward / Inward. These are progressive – from the Outer Man to the Inner Man, and form a spiritual principle.

There is so much to do in Scripture that is balanced. For example, the Book of Genesis is balanced by the Book of Revelation. The 3,000 who died in Exodus 32:28 are balanced by the 3,000 who find life in Acts 2:41. Even in the structures of the various books of the Bible

there are set out balanced harmonies (see The Companion Bible and its appendixes by E.W. Bullinger).

So it is we see that there is an OUTER work to be done (our walk), which corresponds to an INNER work of pleasing God, which manifests itself in fruitfulness (another OUTER work), culminating in our coming to a (lit.) full knowledge of God (a final INNER work). Note that it starts with an outward walk and finishes with inward knowledge. The point being, that a true and full knowledge of God's will is inseparable from walking in conformity to it. In fact we only ever come to a full and mature knowledge of God's ways by His grace, which is granted by the revelation in the first place. We cannot make revelation come to us, it's a gift granted from heaven. Treat it so!

We will only get such wonderful knowledge if we're willing to walk in it. In today's age there is a great demand for more and more knowledge – or should we say “information”. However in the spiritual realm of things knowledge is dependent upon our willingness to use it wisely.

Wisdom is applied spiritual knowledge. This is what biblical wisdom is, applied spiritual knowledge. So if you want wisdom you're going to have to be willing to use it, applying it first to your own life before you inflict others with your “wisdom”.

There is a saying – **“the purpose of all knowledge is right conduct.”**

This is the first manifestation of their “walking worthy of the Lord.” The second is, “increasing (growing) in the knowledge of God (or as the oldest manuscripts read, ‘growing BY the full knowledge of God’)”

It is by endeavouring to become better acquainted with his true character. God is pleased with those who desire to understand what he is; what he does; what he purposes; what he commands

1. To walk - to be active in their Christian calling.
2. To walk worthily - suitably to the dignity of that calling, and to the purity of that God who had called them into this state of salvation.
3. To do everything unto all pleasing; that God might be pleased with the manner, the time, the motive, disposition, design, and object of every act.
4. That they should be fruitful; mere harmlessness would not be sufficient; as God had sown good seed, he expected good fruit.
5. That every work should be good; they must not be fruitful in some works and fruitless in others.
6. That they should increase in religious knowledge as time rolled on, knowing, by genuine Christian experience, more of God, of his love, and of his peace, day by day.

“The full knowledge of God is the real instrument of enlargement in soul and life of the believer” [Alford]. Another manifestation of their walk is (Col 1:11), “Being strengthened with all might,” etc. And yet another is (Col 1:12), “Giving thanks unto the Father,” etc.

“The end of all knowledge is conduct” (Lightfoot's translation).

Grace to you in the Messiah. Peter McArthur issachar.org

Revelation and Light



By Peter McArthur

REVELATION IS A FORM OF SPIRITUAL LIGHT

"For with You is the fountain of life; **in Your light we see light.**" (Psalm 36:9)

"But all things being exposed by the light are clearly revealed, for everything having been revealed is light." (Ephesians 5:13)

There's a saying: "The prayer that won't move your heart, is unlikely to move the heart of God either." The meaning behind this is to get us to be engaged in prayer and not just speak out without paying attention to what we're actually saying. In other words: pray specifically and with fervency. Note what James 5:16 says. "Confess your sins one to another, and pray one for another, that you may be healed. The effectual prayer of the righteous man avails much."

The emphasis in the Greek apparently is on the word "fervent" not on "righteous". It's not simply our righteousness in Christ that gets our prayer heard (even though it's vitally important of course), but our fervency in asking.

If we initiate something in the Spirit, the Father will respond. The Holy Spirit always responds to spiritual activity – as long as it's righteous spiritual activity and not deception, pride or manipulation born from the soul of man. Recently as I was pondering this, these questions came to mind.

"What revelations did I have this week?

"What have I experienced this week in the Lord?"

It was as though the Father was asking me, "Are My revelations becoming your experience?" It was quite sobering. I began to see more clearly how the Father desires to present Himself to the Body of His Son. He loves to reveal Himself.

Partly because of this I began to understand how the Father wants us to receive an increase in spiritual ability. This would require us to learn to walk and live in His Spirit. Being sensitive in the Holy Spirit allows the Father to deal with us in many ways. For example, if we are truly open to the ways of heaven, there may well be occasions when we shouldn't ask the Lord to stay His hand, but do with us as He chooses. That's a very serious attitude to have.

Remember what Job said: **"Even though He slay me, yet will I trust Him."** (Job 13:15). Now that's maturity in the Spirit.

Why does the Father desire us be spiritual active? Answer: So we can adjust our lives and align with His purpose. It's got nothing to do with becoming "more spiritual" and "holy" and honoured by others. So many times people think that by being "more spiritual" they will be seen as more holy.

In fact it's the other way around. Becoming increasingly spiritual is the result of living a holy life, not vice versa. Many of us have fallen for this trap at various times I'm sure. We think that if we can prophesy well (and hopefully accurately), heal the sick, and have insightful dreams and visions, then we'll be looked upon as spiritually mature, close to God, anointed, etc.

But it doesn't work that way. Miracles come out of holiness of life. You don't become holy because you can do miracles. This is the false reasoning the Catholic church has when it wants to "make a saint". It goes looking for "holy people" and then sees if they've done a miracle – and whamo, you get made a saint! Quite unbiblical.

So it is that revelation, which is a form of spiritual light, enables us to see what God sees. Look at this text about Elisha. **"And Elisha prayed and said, I beg You, O Lord, open his eyes so that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man. And he looked, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha."** (2 Kings 6:17)

Dreams and visions are part of this too. Likewise also prophecies. Now most of us would thoroughly love to "see" into the heavenlies I'm sure. We would be thrilled to see into the spiritual realm and know what's going on. But seeing what God sees isn't a one way street. The other side of the coin is: Would you like to see how God sees you? Probably not.

This is the other side of spiritual advancement. To know God AND to be known by God. The more spiritual you become in Christ, the more aware of sin you will become. The point is, to grow spiritually will open us up to God's scrutiny. This is a point not usually recognised by many Christians. The more revelations, dreams, prophecies and spiritual revelation you receive, the more you will personally come under the microscope of the Lord's gaze. It will be unsettling to say the least.

When God's light shines, everything is seen in its true colour. **"And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him to whom we have to give an account."** (Hebrews 4:13)

Spiritual advancement (or revival, if you like to call it that), whether it be individual or corporate, only seems to come when God's light focuses upon us. Therefore we need to see (1) our own state, and (2) God's abundant grace to meet the state we're in.

While most of us would think it would be a good thing to "see" just where we're at, it's quite amazing that we also have the ability NOT to recognise the pride and self-centredness within.

They said to him, **“Let us sit in your glory, one at your right and one at your left.” But Jesus told them, “You don’t realize what you’re asking. Can you drink from the cup that I’m going to drink from or be baptized with the baptism with which I’m going to be baptized?” They told him, “We can.” Jesus said to them, “You will drink from the cup that I’m going to drink and be baptized with the baptism with which I’m going to be baptized.** (Mark 10:37-39)

The most effective Christians seem to have been those who judge their own lives, not according to their own measure, but solely according to the Word.

"But if we judged ourselves correctly, we would not be judged. Now while we are being judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined lest we be condemned along with the world." (1 Corinthians 11: 31-32)

If we desire spiritual insight into God’s purpose for our lives, our churches, even our towns and cities, then first we need to let God’s light work in us personally. It is a spiritual truth that our spirit is released from bondage and darkness according to the very degree of our brokenness. Or to put it another way; revival begins furthest from the eyes of man and closest to the eyes of God.

The effects of this are powerful, and indeed, vital. When we know our own weak spiritual state, we gradually learn to hate it. This makes us distrust our own thoughts, and seek only for God’s. As we learn this reality, we actually grow quieter in the Lord. Wisdom brings a settling of the spirit man.

This can often be misunderstood by others who think “we’ve lost it” or have given up in spiritual things because we don’t argue the point anymore, or think we have to defend every doctrine that’s being debated. Indeed the most common characteristic of a truly mature believer is their humility. They have been broken by the Lord many times, and learned to bend to His will. Spiritual insight and revelatory light is born out of the fear of the Lord.

The very shedding of the Father’s light on us is not for condemnation, but for rewarding!

**Search me, O God, and know my heart;
Try me and know my anxious thoughts;
And see if there be any hurtful way in me,
And lead me in the everlasting way.**
(Psalm 139: 23-24)

**Teach me to do Thy good pleasure,
For Thou art my God –Thy Spirit is good,
Lead me into a land of uprightness.**
(Psalm 143:10)

**My eyes shall be on the faithful of the land,
so that they may dwell with me;
he who walks in a perfect way shall serve me.**
(Psalm 101:6)

It is a great joy to arrive at this place spiritually. It’s an exhaustive journey because the soul will have to die many times, willing to be crucified and learn the ways of heaven. But the rewards are eternal, and bring great pleasure to our heavenly Father.

Peter McArthur
The Issachar Ministry

Seeing from a Heavenly Perspective



By Peter McArthur

DEEP UNTO DEEP

According to traditional Jewish understanding, the Sabbath does not conclude until three bright stars are seen at the beginning of nightfall (the Jewish and therefore Biblical day begins at sunset, not twelve midnight).

In times past those heralding stars had to be seen from the precincts of the Temple. Not until they were seen at dusk from the vantage point of Jerusalem was the Sabbath deemed to have ended.

This sets a principle for us, which is: in Scriptural prophecy, all celestial and eternal events are to be viewed from the perspective of natural Jerusalem. The red blood moon, a falling star, a comet, or the Sabbath stars, etc., must first be seen from the perspective of the natural city of Jerusalem in the natural land of Israel.

If the celestial event is seen from any other vantage point, but not seen from Jerusalem, it is regarded as not warranting undue attention. In other words, all prophecy involving celestial signs can only be regarded as valid if they can be seen from natural Jerusalem.

We can now extend this principle further: so too all spiritual issues are to be discerned and judged from the perspective of Spiritual Jerusalem. Another way of saying this is that issues must be seen from the Heavenly viewpoint and not from the earthly, worldly or even religious one. This is vital to understand if we are to fathom the grand panorama of God's eternal purposes. We must seek to view things from a heavenly frame of reference, not a worldly one, a religious, or even a Christian one. **Heaven is always the reference point in Scripture.**

In fact the Bible begins with this perspective very much in mind: **In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...** (Gen 1:1)

It is the heavenly realm that comes first in God's agenda of the created order, not earth, or even light! We can take this one step back and find an even earlier reference point: God Himself!

In the beginning GOD (Gen 1:1) and, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (John 1:1).

This establishes the fact that God is the source, the beginning of everything. He is the author of all things, all promises, all destinies, all designs. Everything emanates from Him and everything returns back to Him. He is the one supreme focus of absolutely everything.

Another way of stating this is that, pertaining to humanity, we are seeded from the Father. The seed was placed within the first Man, Adam. Out of him came the first Woman (*ishshah* lit. = bride). Adam named his bride Eve (lit. = life, living) because she was the mother of all living. Their first child was seeded from them both, but was not born in the Garden of Eden but outside of it, after sin had erupted. Earthly things had displaced heavenly things.

Surely it was God's intention that the seed of Adam and Eve should be born in the Garden, not outside it. An earthly focus (giving way to the serpent's words) had supplanted the heavenly focus (heeding God's words). How often it is that heaven's agenda has been delayed (but never supplanted) by the earthly. It takes men and women of revealed insight to keep on the right path; people of heavenly vision who will not give way to the earthly, even religious, vision.

Joshua and Caleb were two who had the correct heaven-sent vision. The other ten spies were taken in by the earthly issue; fear of the giants in the land, etc. What should have been a relatively quick entry into grander things (the Promised Land) became a staggering hard learning curve of forty years! And even then many failed to understand and fully enter in. In fact two tribes chose to remain on the other side, close to entering in, but encamped on the eastern side of the River Jordan. Close, but not fully in. Remember, Judas heard all of Christ's sermons. Close but not there!

Believing the right teaching, being part of a Holy Spirit inspired move of God, sitting with anointed brethren and sharing, making choices of coming out of Babylon, pursuing Biblical truth and excellence, associating with those of the worthy household – all these are right choices but if the initial vision is not in accord with God's pre-determined plan, we will come close, but never fully arrive.

When we come face to face with entering-in we will most likely choose to stay just over the river – watching from a distance, perhaps even associating with the right brethren, but not quite there. Therefore it's vital to have a clear understanding of God's grand purpose, to have a heavenly vision, a supernatural focus. We are to make sure we nurture what God has revealed to us, treating it as precious treasure (which may sometimes cause us to act strangely) and not cast it before swine.

In the end there is only one right way; there are no detours acceptable, no diversions suitable, no options to be added. He has ordained one way and one way only for us to arrive at His predestined place. That vision He gives to one person, or a small group of people, and chooses to work through them. Is that exclusivity on God's part? No. He understands only too well that crowds make compromising choices, that groups will debate and reconsider, that entities will sway one's mind. So initially He chooses one or only a few, to reveal His plans to.

Moses was the only one of his generation to whom the Lord revealed His grand plan of deliverance. God then had that shared with others, but Moses was the spokesman, he was God's voice. The Lord expected the people to listen to His spokesman. He intended that they should listen to the vision Moses handed to them from Him.

They had to believe that Moses knew the vision. They had to accept he heard from heaven. When their mumbling and grumbling caused them to disbelieve, they lost confidence in the spokesman. They resisted what he spoke. They no longer accepted he had the correct path clear in his mind. Heavenly purposes were soon displaced by earthly considerations and short-term conveniences.

All seemingly valid, all seemed to have good considerations, after all there are women and children stuck out here in the desert. We can almost imagine what they had to say to their leader. "Think of them, Moses. We can't let the elderly who've been used to the houses, food, climate and the support of city life cope with this desert wandering any more. Have some compassion Moses! Aren't you a man of God? And by the way, are you really sure you had a spiritual experience up there on the mountain? We think you're a good enough leader but are you certain it was God who spoke to you and not your own imaginings? Let's reconsider before it's too late."

Such is the talk of discouragement, of disbelief, of disobedience, and eventually, of disaster. But Moses would not budge. Heaven had spoken. I have talked with you from heaven said the Lord (Exo. 20: 22). Moses was enraptured by all its power and forcefulness. His very mind was overtaken by heaven's ways, heaven's voice, heaven's plans.

For forty days and nights he was enveloped in the pure atmosphere of heaven with the Lord. For forty days and nights his mind was increasingly adjusted and altered, his vision re-directed and his thoughts re-aligned to heaven. It permeated his mind and soul, even his very bones. So much so that he was somewhat transfigured and his face actually beamed with Shekinah light as he came down from that mountain.

No wonder the Father sent Moses to Jesus at His transfiguration (Matt 17:3). You see, it does matter what heaven says. To substitute any part of the plan, to redirect even one small measure of the vision, to make the focus a little more realistic, acceptable or balanced will always cause the disintegration of the purity of heaven's ways. It certainly does matter a very great deal that we stick to the revealed plan, the predestined purpose, the heaven-sent vision, and never, never substitute any other way for it. Ever!

It did matter a lot how Noah built the ark; it did matter a lot that Moses made certain the Tabernacle tent was constructed after heaven's own plan; it did matter that David instructed Solomon to stick to the plans received from heaven for the Temple. It did matter how Joshua captured Jericho, for no other plan to take the city would have succeeded. And of course it did matter absolutely that Jesus only did what heaven showed Him to do and spoke what heaven spoke.

The pattern of heaven does matter entirely. It's the only trustworthy pattern, the only complete and competent design. Father does know best! Throughout history (His-story) all who have adhered to heaven's voice have seen the result.

You could asked Abraham about that, you could ask Moses, David, Josiah, Paul or any other of the great heavenly-orientated saints and they will tell you the same thing. Human considerations and balanced viewpoints and realistic agendas just do not fit in with the plans of heaven. It's as stark and mind-affronting as that. Why? Because heaven has a life all of its own. All things are seeded from heaven; all things are born from that realm. And the greatest and most astonishing act of God working in man is being born again from above.

Usually we omit those last two words and just say we're born again. But the phrase literally means we are born again from above, or from the top (Strong's G509). We are born from heaven! This is extremely important both to grasp and to proclaim. It's from above that we are conceived. It's from the Father that we are seeded with an eternal life-seed.

...having been born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible seed, through the living Word of God, and abiding forever. (1 Pet 1:23)

Earthly-realm views cannot comprehend this. Religion says it accepts this doctrine, but it certainly neither teaches it fully, or in fact really believes in it. So brother persecutes brother; the earth-bound ones persecute the heavenly-dreamers (Gen. 37: 18-20).

The One having come from above is above all. The one being of the earth is earthy, and speaks of the earth. The One coming out of Heaven is above all. (John 3:31)

"And He said to them, You are from below; I am from above. You are from this world; I am not from this world." (John 8:23)

The worldly and religious ones would not accept the Heaven-Man Jesus, God coming and abiding in the flesh; today they still will not accept those in whom God and heaven abide.

The earthly realm always wants its own way and always seeks its own recognition. When heaven proclaims another way of doing things, the earthly realm will shout foul. When heaven puts us through a particular spiritual experience (although we rarely see the experience as spiritually beneficial at the time!), the fleshy realm in us protests loudly.

Why? Because the heavenly realm has only one way of dealing with the earthly. It must subjugate it by attacking all its priorities, which are self-importance, self-recognition, self-service, self-aggrandisement, self-pride, self-pity, self-sufficiency, self-belief, and self-serving vision.

Heaven does the exact opposite of what earth-realm people think is important. There is a clash because heavenly-desired things cannot be accomplished by a mixture with the earthly. Heaven confronts and re-moulds us so that we conform to its vision, to the great Purpose of the Lord.

This may take some time. In the case of the Israelites it took forty years wandering (although it was certainly not an aimless wandering; God was the director), and the death of one entire generation. In the case of David it took some fifteen years until Saul was removed from the throne. Each time there was a period of learning heaven's ways.

Not using earthly principles to deal with the issue, but allowing heavenly concepts to take root before the fullness of time arrived bringing in the necessary change. Heaven was the Governor, not earth! Those who are wise will always look to heaven for their orders.

It's a very wise person indeed who will take the necessary time to learn heaven's ways. And it takes a very courageous person to live habitually subjugated to God while He prunes back the wild branches and re-shapes us to conform to His desired image.

There is no other way – this is it and this is how it will be! Bend to it or be broken by it. In the end we need to remember that heaven has the superiority in all things. The sooner we learn

to live from the heavenly realm and see the heavenly perspective, the better off we shall be in spirit, soul and body – and even socially.

Let us remember that the heavenly perspective of our sojourning on earth is this: God has taken us out, to lead us through, in order to bring us into.

May the Father of this grand purpose always be our vision, and Jesus His great Son be our example. Lord do these things in our lives we pray!

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Adjusting to the Truth



By Peter McArthur

There are many differences between the two great competing cultures of the West and East, but it's in the area of education that we find one of the most marked divergences.

The Greek or Western idea of education emphasizes what we might call "detached information," while the East or Hebraic idea stresses something akin to "a personal encounter." This of course is a generalisation, but nevertheless is basically true.

Biblically speaking it was important to the Hebrews that each learner should have a personal encounter which would transform them. It's obvious that having an encounter and responding to God are the central dynamics of Scripture. For the Hebrews all of life became a classroom.

Should we choose to use this method today we need to ensure that our "classrooms" are where we practice truth and love (Eph.4:15 "**Being the truth in love**" is a more accurate translation of the Greek than "speaking the truth in love") and be willing to adjust to it where needed.

One of the key factors about participating in a Lamad-style encounter is understanding the need for each participant to have love from a pure heart, have a good conscience, and a sincere faith (1 Tim. 1:5). Each of these are heart issues, and anyone participating in Lamad will soon come "undone" if they have a bad attitude or selfish motive.

I recall one time some years ago when someone was asked to share a personal reflection at one of our lamad-style meetings ("Lamad" meaning an interactive question/answer style of teaching – which Jesus and the rabbis of His time used). The person utilised the occasion to attack the policies of our Church, as well as me as the Pastor, taking us all by surprise! It wasn't long before it became clear she had a major grudge and seized the moment to deliver it, virtually wrecking that Lamad encounter.

Unfortunately this just happened to be our first meeting, and it turned many people off from coming again. It took some months of careful preparation and the binding-up of hurt souls before we could initiate another attempt. I learnt a significant lesson that day.

While this kind of thing isn't at all uncommon in congregations, it does show how many believers allow the mind to subjugate their spirit. Biblically speaking the mind is made to serve the spirit. All spiritual instruction and training is to be focussed on the spirit (or heart), so it's important that a healthy Lamad group should have participants who have already dealt with many of their soul issues, or at least are attending to them for adjustment.

Now this doesn't mean you can only have a Lamad group if you have "mature" people, but it does mean that those in the study group should be willing to strive for maturity. Being open and teachable is something vital to Lamad experiences.

There's a helpful adage that goes like this:

**The spirit is king;
the soul is a servant to the spirit;
and the body is a slave to the soul.**

As we adjust more and more to the Word of God, we find that our personal encounter demands a teaching style of Holy Spirit guided discovery. Lamad learning encourages the flow of revelation within the hearts of the students. Discovery often happens best in a lively interchange within the classroom. Therefore, effective group interaction must be promoted by the lamad teacher.

However we do need to be aware of those who might hijack the encounter for their own purposes, as in the case mentioned above. Also, the leader or facilitator will need to carefully but firmly address inerrant doctrine.

I find the best way of doing this is to encourage the person who's spoken by affirming their right to speak to the group, but then to let Scripture adjust the issue by saying something like: "Now let's reflect on what Mike said by seeing what the Word says about that." If the comment was unscriptural then the Word will show it to be so. It's very hard to disagree with the Word, but they might well disagree with the leader!

So it's helpful to keep the focus firmly on what the Word clearly says. Certain things are central to life and eternity, others are not. Anger, fear, and doubt are temporary and will be swallowed up by the realities that abide forever: faith, hope, and love.

The Lamad curriculum constantly emphasizes the abiding, eternal realities, instilling these into the lives of the students. For this reason it's vital to conclude a lamad meeting with prayer; praying for one another in small groups, asking the Holy Spirit to bring about a reality in our lives based on what's been discussed.

Man is to live in the constant flow of God's grace and purposes. This is accomplished by lifting up our eyes in worship to the King, and becoming consumed by His presence. While we are in the Lord's presence, we acknowledge that we no longer live, but that Christ is our life, and the life we now live is by faith (Gal. 2:20).

We live out of daily fellowship with the Holy Spirit, recognizing that everything done outside of divine flow is a dead work.

Such is the joy, the thrill and the aim of a Lamad style encounter. An encounter with our brothers and sisters, an encounter with our God, and an encounter with those things that are eternal. Lamad encounters will bring us into confrontation with the thoughts of others, and especially with our own ideas and thoughts. Have you ever noticed how we as humans react rather than respond to new ideas? Very few people "respond to"; most of us "react against" what might be presented. This isn't such a huge problem because it's natural that we would

defend long-held opinions. But it does become a problem when, after due consideration, we begin to actively resist what's being shared.

In a lamad style encounter we don't set out to pull down the views of others, nor do we attempt to exalt our own. What we do is to listen, and then measure everyone's views against the standard of Scripture.

For some years now I've wondered what it would be like to have a group of believers meet together for one purpose: to methodically go through all the fundamental doctrines of "church teaching" and to be scrupulously honest in seeing how they measure up against the plain teaching of Scripture. I wonder how many of us would be so brave? To test how you might react, I'll throw something your way right now.

As Christians we commonly speak about the New Covenant; when we share communion we usually refer to that whole event as the inauguration of the New Covenant; and some groups even call themselves "New Testament churches."

Now - here we go, so get ready! Scripturally speaking what group of people are associated with the "New Covenant"? Some might answer, "All who have faith in Christ", others might say "Those who are born again", and others might boldly declare "Only true Christians are members of the New Covenant."

Now, what does Scripture simply and plainly say? Read it slowly and out loud to yourself.

"Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah." Jer 31:31

"Listen! The days are coming, says the LORD, and I will establish a new covenant over the house of Israel and over the house of Judah." Heb 8:8

Now please read it just once more before we go on, asking yourself that one question, 'With whom is the new covenant made'?

Note what the Word says, in two different places ("two" for witness - Deut 17:6); "...**with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah...**"

Not a mention of the gentiles here! No mention of any other group except the houses of Israel and Judah. The Word plainly says the new covenant will be established with **Israel and Judah**.

Let that sink in for a moment. Now please, I'm not trying to stir you up and get you all agitated, but I do want to ask you a question.

What are you feeling right now? Are you stunned by what you plainly read from Scripture? Are you agitated that I should throw you a curly one? Are you angry with me because you conclude I have some weird doctrine? Is your mind already racing ahead and making certain deductions about me and my opinions?

Well, that's OK because I'm not going to defend myself about what I've asked you to read through. What I would like you to consider is 'How do you feel? What emotions has this brought forth in you?'

What has just happened is what happens when we share in a lamad encounter. Issues will definitely come up that will test whether you're going to respond to or react against something.

I'll let you mull over those two Bible verses for a while; the Word and the Spirit will be the only ones that will work it out for you. Besides, my point in doing this little exercise was NOT to try and change your doctrine, or to make you run to other verses to support your entrenched views (and by that I don't mean to be demeaning).

I'm not making any judgement on you, truly! All I wanted to do was to see how you felt about something that would challenge your understanding. That's all.

Let's move on. If you can tap into your feelings about being challenged and begin to assess them, then we're off and running. What will happen as we further investigate our opinions, is that the Word will open new ways to us. We'll begin to see how long-held understandings can't always be supported by the direct reading of Scripture. Gradually the Holy Spirit will enlighten us about some of our views, even dearly held ones.

It's not that we've believed a lie and exalted it as truth, but that we've simply taken on-board some teaching in good faith, often from a respected preacher or established doctrinal stance. If the Word shows us that our view point isn't quite accurate, all we need do is to adjust to the truth.

This is a regular feature in Scripture, but often we overlook it. Revelation is progressive, and so too should be the formation of our mind. We are to conform to the mind of Christ and to His Word, not to what our favourite preacher said or what the latest best-selling book propagated.

I prefer to not try and "change" people's minds; that rarely works. And actually it's not the way of Scripture either. What is needed, and what works best, is allowing our opinions to be re-evaluated against the standard of Scripture. This is what I prefer to call "adjustment". It's a less confrontationist word and encourages us to re-think our ideas by testing them solely against Scripture and no other source. Quite exhilarating really!

So let's look at some examples from the Word. **"And going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and his brother John in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets. And He called them."** Mtt. 4:21

In this verse the word **"mending"** (or **"repairing"**) is where we start in considering adjusting to the truth. In Greek it's *katartizō* (G2675) and a more accurate meaning is **"to adjust, to put to rights, to articulate, to mend if needed, to get ready, to equip thoroughly, to fully train, to render fit, to make complete again, to make sound, to restore, to mend what has been broken or torn"**. What rich insights are here! You can probably already see where we're going with this.

Here we have James and John **"restoring"** their fishing nets because they needed to be made sound again, they needed to be adjusted and put to rights so that they'd be useful, equipped and functional at sea.

Now transfer that kind of concept to a believer who needs their doctrine re-aligned so that it comes back into harmony with Scripture, and there you have it - adjustment to the truth.

Other supportive texts in Scripture are: **"(Apollos) began to speak boldly in the synagogue. And Aquila and Priscilla heard him, and they took him aside and expounded to him the way of God more perfectly."** Acts 18:26

Here we find a believer called Apollos, fervent in spirit and who taught boldly about Jesus as Messiah (vs. 25), but who was nevertheless limited because he only had John's baptismal

understanding. So Aquila and his wife take Apollos aside and adjust this thinking so that it more accurately reflects the complete truth about Jesus. Apollos is thus rendered fit, made sound and put to rights.

Aquila and Priscilla did it the Biblical way, and re-aligned a new believer so that he'd be equipped for further ministry. They didn't chastise him, run him out of the synagogue, confront him rudely or criticize him - they simply took him aside and explained things more accurately to him. There was a re-alignment of received truth. This should be a good model for us. Let's continue with this vein of thought:

"But I exhort you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you; but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same purpose." 1 Cor 1:10

Here we have the same Greek word *katartizō* as found in the text about repairing the fishing nets (Mtt. 4:21). Paul is exhorting the Corinthians to be like minded and wants them to be adjusted in their thinking so that they all have **"the same mind and same purpose"**. If only today's churches would sit down and do this, what single-minded purpose we would have as the joint Body of Christ! (see 2 Cor. 13:11).

Paul gives us a clue towards the adjustment process when addressing the brethren in Galatia.

"Brothers, if a man is overtaken in a fault, you the spiritual ones restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering yourself, lest you also be tempted." Gal. 6:1

Here is the use of a metaphor taken from the idea of a skillful surgeon restoring a dislocated limb and putting it back in place. Notice that Paul says it's to be the "spiritual ones" who are to do the restoring.

Those believers who are still carnal, loose in their minds, untested by the Spirit, and not been through the adjusting themselves (i.e. unskillful), will not be able to properly adjust others. Leaders in the Body need to take notice of this, and implement it well. Failure to do so has taken a drastic toll through the years.

Should a person considering themselves to be "spiritual" Paul throws in a warning about pride. His exhortation is addressed to the conscience of each believer as if to say, 'Before you deal severely with your erring brother, consider your own weakness and susceptibility to temptation first, and only restore him in view of that fact.' This is a good antidote for spiritual pride. An old saying makes the point rather well: "Satan loves a shining target."

So far we've looked mainly at the how to adjust others, but now it's time to bring the matter closer to home and take stock of ourselves. In His discourse to the disciples on the Mount of Olives, Jesus gives this exhortation. **"Therefore you also be ready, for in that hour you think not, the Son of Man comes."** Mtt. 24:44

The phrase **"be ready"** (G2092 *heteos / hetoimos*) means **fitness, adjusted, made ready, accomplished**.

It also has an added meaning that is quite striking: **to receive One coming** (Thayer's Bible definitions). Here the Lord Jesus is exhorting in very strong terms, the need for believers to be adjusted, and spiritually and mentally fit. And notice how this is linked to being aware of the times and seasons relating to His return.

Further on in the same discourse Jesus tells the parable of the Ten Virgins; and notice what He says about the state of those welcomed into the wedding feast:

“And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came. And they who were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut.” Mtt. 25:10

Only those who were **“ready”** went in to the wedding feast! Guess what that English word means in the Greek? The same as in Matthew 24:44, *hetoimos* meaning **fitness, adjusted, made ready, accomplished**.

So we have Jesus warning us to be adjusted, for if we don’t bend to it, and if we’re alive at His Return, we will not be welcomed into His wedding feast. Let that sink in!

Hence we find the disturbing truth that adjusting to truth is not simply something for new believers; it’s not just something that needs to happen to those with wrong doctrine or misplaced sympathy for unusual teaching; it’s also got something to do with an issue as large and important as being welcomed into the Lamb’s wedding banquet!

How vital then is it that we give ourselves over to the adjusting work of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. This is not an option. It’s a Biblical requirement associated directly with our maturing. Dare we hesitate to not bend to this great adjusting? I think not, and I sincerely pray not.

Paul saw this as a major component of his ministry, and he made a very bold declaration stating that the joint ministries of the apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher would continue to exist until the Body came to the **“measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ”** (Eph. 4:13).

Adjusting to the truth, being made internally fit for ministry, put to rights, and all the other words that we’ve looked at so far; all these come together when Paul says that individually you and I need this to happen to us.

For when that process is underway within us, then the Body corporate, the “Church” will begin to mature. Then and only then. And it will be the on-going ministry of Ephesians 4:11 that will enhance that maturing.

This stirs me; this excites me; this makes me jealous to be part of that great day; this is what our purpose is to be as the Body **“...with a view to the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the perfecting up of the body of Christ.”** Eph 4:12

“For the perfecting” (πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν). This phrase is only used once in the entire New Testament. In non-Biblical classical Greek writings it referred to the idea of re-fitting or equipping a ship, or the re-setting of a bone.

This radical idea of adjustment we’ve been looking at is forcefully brought out in the next verse.

“...that we all may come to the unity of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, to a full-grown man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” Eph. 4:13

You can’t get better than that. This is what the Word tells us the Father wants of us; this is what the Word tells us will actually happen in His timing.

Fear not that you might die before that day arrives, for Paul encourages us that “...**we the living who remain at the coming of the Lord will not go before those who have fallen asleep.**” 1 Thess. 4:15

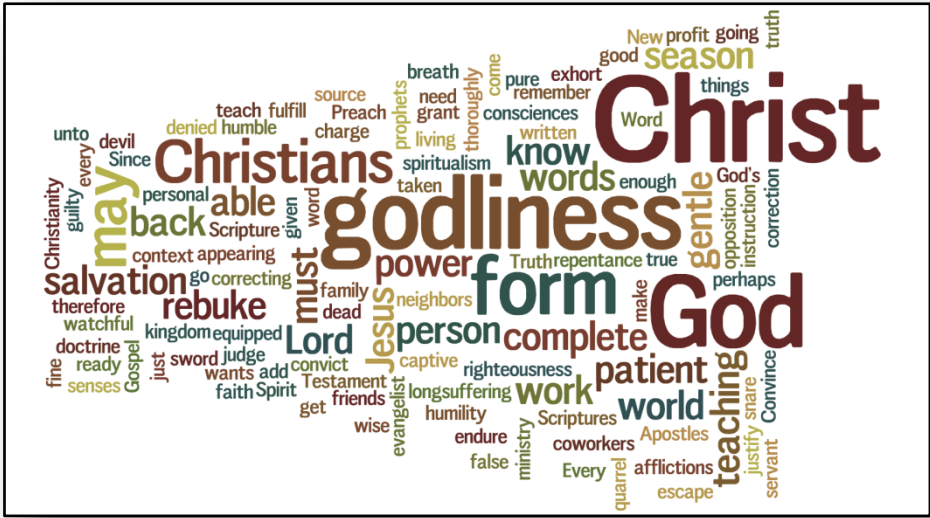
We go together; we arrive together; we are glorified together, as a Body!

Now whether our joint maturing happens all at the same time, or whether it happens to individuals throughout history and accumulates on the Great Day - I don't know. But logically it would seem that this exhortation by both the Lord Jesus and Paul, indicates that it's our personal obligation and duty throughout all periods of “church history” to get ready, to be adjusted, to be rendered fit.

May it be so, **individually and corporately.**

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Protocols for the Sons of God



By Peter McArthur

“Sonship” is a shorthand term to describe those who are no longer children in the spiritual, but adult-like. A Jewish boy became a man when he turned **30 years of age**; note that this was the age when Jesus was declared to be “God’s Son”:

“You are beloved My Son in whom I am well pleased.” (Luke 3:32-33)

This was also the age that David was anointed as King over Israel. It was from this point that David truly began to reign:

“David was thirty years old when he began to reign, he reigned forty years.” (2 Sam 5:4).

“Sons” are therefore believers (of either gender) who have come to a place of spiritual and soul maturity and are set on a particular course of action. In the case of Jesus it was His Messiahship; in the case of David it was as king. Sons are no longer babes but full-grown in both character and nature.

Because of this, those who aim for a “higher call” should be aware that Sons need to pursue spiritual protocols that will enable them to incarnate the truths of He who alone is Truth. (A protocol is simply an agreement or course of action).

So those who hunger for the “meat” of spiritual life will need to have a protocol or agreement to what is Biblically required. Some of the following principles from Scripture will assist us to see this.

Sons must be Father-pleasers. They must not be self seeking, neither act out of rejection, nor pursue their own ministry; they must not separate themselves from the brethren, or harbour hurts and grudges, no matter how justified they are or feel. Sons must learn to “bear

one another's burdens". Like the Sons of the Resurrection they need to know their eternal destiny, and the spiritual nature with which they have been impregnated:

"...for they cannot even die anymore, because they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection." (Luke 20:36)

The Hebraist phrase, **"sons of the resurrection"** defines "sons of God" not in respect of character but nature; "being the children of the resurrection" to an un-decaying existence; and thus the children of their Father's immortality.

1. Sons are led by the Holy Spirit

(Romans 8:14) For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

2. Sons must be willing to be sacrificed

(Romans 8:32) He who did not withhold even His own Son, but gave Him up for all of us, will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

3. Sons are related to heirship

(Galatians 4:7) So that you no more are a slave, but a son, and if a son, also an heir of God through Christ.

4. Sons have to learn what obedience is

(Hebrews 5:8) Although He was God's Son, yet He learned obedience from the sufferings which He endured.

5. Sons are sent forth and willing to go

(1 Corinthians 4:17) For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.

(Galatians 4:4) But, when the time was fully come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born subject to Law.

(Philemon verses 10-12) God's love for us has been manifested in that He has sent His only Son into the world so that we may have Life through Him.

(1 John 4:9) I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten while in my chains... I am sending him back. You therefore receive him, that is, my own heart.

6. Sons are linked to glory

Hebrews 2: 10 For it was fitting that He for whom, and through whom, all things exist, after He had brought many sons to glory, should perfect by suffering the Prince Leader who had saved them.

7. Sons must be willing to be chastened

(Hebrews 12:5-7) And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?

8. Sons must be proven in their character

(Philippians 2:22) But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel.

9. Sons pass on the Father's purpose to others

(2 Timothy 2:1-2) You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

10. Sons are foundational in building

(Genesis 4:17) Cain had relations with his wife and she conceived, and gave birth to Enoch; and he built a city, and called the name of the city Enoch, after the name of his son.

(Revelation 21:14) And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

11. Sons are to be strong in grace

(2 Timothy 2:1) You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

12. Sons are linked to resurrection power

(Romans 1:4) ...who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord.

13. Sons are inseparably connected to revelation

(Galatians 1:16) ...to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood.

14. Sons receive the Holy Spirit in intimacy

(Galatians 4:6) Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

15. Sons are faithful to their call

(Hebrews 3:6) ...but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house, whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence...

16. Life is associated with those in Sonship

(1 John 5:11-12) God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

Some distinctive features associated with "Sonship:

- Sons of God are early targets for "hits" by the enemy to kill them before their destiny is complete. (eg: Moses, Jesus).
- They are content in all circumstances (eg: Moses, Joseph, Jesus, Paul).
- Sons are falsely accused, and then often persecuted.
- Sons "know" the wilderness and how to persevere in it, waiting their time to come forth.
- True Sons of God are patient and persevering.
- They don't have to try to vindicate themselves in the eyes of men.
- Sons are often found in isolated places, unknown and unrecognised.

- They know only too well the place of imprisonment and confinement, yet do not despise it.

Sons of God therefore have peculiar Biblical qualities about their character. They are mature in both spirit AND soul. They have leant to be dependent entirely upon their Head, Jesus Christ. Whilst they love the brethren, they SERVE only Christ. They are not man-pleasers, but Father pleasers.

The Biblical principles we have looked at earlier are the Protocols, the agreement based entirely upon Biblical truths. Any who desire to move on into the greater realms of Life will need to AGREE in their mind with these facts.

They will also need to LIVE these truths as realities from out of the inner man, and as such evidence that “Sonship” has truly taken hold of their spirit.

Living, or pretending to live as Sons when we are in fact still debating it within, will only bring frustration and death of expectancy. Neither will lead us to be fruitful spiritually speaking.

Let us therefore press on to the Higher Calling (Philp 3: 14) and by living out of our spirit-man evidence the wonderful maturity of Soul and Spirit that has been granted us by our Heavenly Father — that He might receive the glory and that we may be well pleasing to Him in all things!

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What Islam believes



By Peter McArthur

How the beliefs of Islam contradict the Bible

The following beliefs are an overview of how the teachings of Islam differ when compared to Biblical truth. Often in the Qur'an unsubstantiated statements are made by Muhammad (supposedly through a revelation from God), but when these are challenged Muhammad simply seems to suggest "believe or suffer the consequences".

For example he asserts that both Jews and Christians have secretly twisted their respective Scriptures to suit their own theology and concealed this, yet gives no evidence of this at all. He simply states it, and worse, attributes to Jesus a saying that foretells Muhammad's own coming! (see the Chapters on The Heifer verse 146, The Cattle verse 20, The Table verses 16-18, The Heights verse 157, The Ranks verses 6-7).

This belief of corrupted texts has found its way into common Muslim thought. Note this quote from the Christian writer J. Verkuyl in his book titled "Speaking to Muslims about the Gospel".

Islam believes that... "the contents of the original book have been corrupted. Most Muslims believe that the Bible texts written in Hebrew and Greek, including all modern vernacular translations, have been falsified. Muslims say that the Bible has a number of reliable sections, for example, those which deal with the Oneness of God, punishment and reward, and some of the prophets. But they also argue that large parts of the Bible are unreliable and the result of counterfeit and corruption. For example, the counterfeit texts are those dealing with the divine sonship of Jesus, his cross and resurrection, and those concerning the

Trinity. And many Muslim publications state that current versions of the Bible leave out whole sections, including any testimony to the coming of the prophet Muhammad."

While the Qur'an doesn't directly state this, Islamic tradition has, and uses "The Heifer Chapter" (II.106) to support it. This chapter says:

"Such of Our revelations as we abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring in place one better or the like thereof. Knowest thou not that Allah is able to do all things?"

This text is often used in Islam to declare that the Torah and Gospel have been surpassed; they are obsolete and the Qur'an has now taken their place. The question can now be asked: where is the evidence for this supposed corruption of the texts? Are there extant documents of the "original" that can prove this to us.

And since Muhammad by his own mouth says that he couldn't read or write, how does he know of any such corrupted texts? Bear in mind also that the Hebrew texts were first committed to writing about 1,600BC and that Muhammad lived in 600AD. That's a long time in between.

If Islam reckons itself to be a scholarly religion, which it does, where is the academic proof and scholarly methodology for proving the corruption of Hebrew and Christian texts?

Scholars and academics in any field of study or science will demand that assertions should always be supported by objective and comparative evidence. But in this case there is none! Muhammad's statement rests solely on his own words in which he says he had a personal revelation about it.

This is very similar to Joseph Smith's statement that he received two golden tablets on which the Book of Mormon was written. When he was challenged to produce the golden writings to verify this he said that they had simply disappeared.

I think that the spirit of Anti-Christ is at work in both Mormonism and Islam.

Following is a list of some of the more basic beliefs of Islam. You will see that the Biblical texts themselves have been corrupted by Muhammad (or by the demon using him) to counteract the unique claims of Jesus Christ. Below are some of these.

1. Muhammad was foretold by Jesus. "Jesus the son of Mary said: O Children of Israel. I am the apostle of God sent to you, to confirm the Law of Moses which came before me, and giving glad tidings of an apostle to come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad (Muhammad), but when he came to them with clear signs they said "This is evident sorcery"." (The Ranks 6-7).

2. The Comforter to come was in fact Muhammad. The Biblical texts of John's Gospel 14:16, 15:26 and 16:7 speak of "one who is to come". The Church throughout all generations has clearly seen this to be the Holy Spirit. The context shows this.

Yet Islam claims the Church altered the text with a wilful mistranslation. They say that the Greek name Periclitos is almost (!) a literal equivalent of the Aramaic "Ahmad" or "Muhammad", and that Periclitos was changed by the Church into Parakletos (meaning Advocate or Comforter). They say the texts in John's Gospel apply to Muhammad and not the Holy Spirit.

The Parakletos of course is regarded by Christians as being a reference to the promised Holy Spirit. What Islam says is that Jesus promised us Muhammad and not the Holy Spirit. Quite an extraordinary twisting of the text!

3. Jesus didn't die on the cross. Despite the New Testament being written 500 years earlier, Islam categorically denies one of its most entrenched declarations: that Jesus died on the cross.

The Qur'an states that Christ was saved from any indignity on the cross, and that miraculously someone else of the same likeness was crucified in His place, by an illusion sent by Allah to trick the executors. This most extraordinary concoction can be found in the Chapter of the Women, verse 157. Note the following commentary on that particular portion of the Qur'an.

"It would appear from verse 157 that contrary to the belief of Jews and Christians, Jesus Christ was not killed on the cross. Now this point is clear and definite in itself and needs no further elucidation." (The Holy Quran translated by M. Marmaduke Pickthall, page xxiv).

What an extraordinary statement by a professed scholar! How is this point "clear and definite"? Just because the Qur'an says so?

To deny the crucifixion of Jesus strikes at the heart of God's saving work through Christ's death. The Qur'an's view that Jesus didn't die undoes all that the Old Testament points to through the symbolism of the Passover, and makes New Testament theology totally invalid. Without a death there can be no saving work. And without that we are not restored to fellowship with God. The Qur'an attempts to undermine all this in one foul swoop.

4. Muhammad foretold in the Old Testament. Just as Muslims believe Jesus spoke of Muhammad's coming in John's Gospel, so they also believe the Old Testament prophesies his coming.

The text used to support this is Deuteronomy 18:18 where it says "I (the Lord) will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command Him".

Christians have always seen this as a reference to the coming of Jesus. It would be a far stretch to say that it applies to Muhammad. Anyway Deuteronomy says the Prophet shall come from amongst the brethren of Moses (through Isaac and ultimately the Jews). Muhammad and the Arab people trace their ancestry through Isaac's half-brother, Ishmael.

5. Allah is an impersonal god. Unlike the Old Testament and especially the New, the Qur'an never treats mankind as friends with God. We are to be regarded as slaves or servants of Allah (The Chapter of Mary verse 93).

Yet the Old Testament treats "former" prophets like Abraham and Moses as "friends with God" (Exo. 33:11 and Isa. 41:8). Then of course Jesus makes this very plain in John 15:15 when He says "No longer do I call you servants...but I have called you friends."

If Allah is the same as the God of the Bible why has he changed his mind and demoted us from the status of friendship to that of servant? The god of Islam cannot be the same as the God of the Bible because He doesn't change His mind!

In Islam Allah is not like a Father-God figure; that would be to debase him. Muslims see Allah as supreme and above any attempt that would reduce him to the level of mortals. So it

is that Muslims consider the Incarnation of God in the flesh to be the height of absurdity and demeaning to the Supreme God. For them it is a great blasphemy.

Allah is somewhat unapproachable and distant, and he even decides men's fate for them, which is unalterable. They might know ahead of time how an event will turn out for them but it's solely their duty to do their best and live the good Muslim life.

Islam believes that Allah is so pure and "other" that he doesn't even communicate directly with mankind. Rather he communicates messages through angels to certain chosen prophets, who in turn pass them onto common humanity.

One primer on Islam says:

"The will of God can only be known through his messengers; belief in God therefore requires belief in revelation, the books of God, and the messengers of God. Of all the messengers, sent to every tribe and nation, Muhammad is the Last, being the seal of prophethood and completing the process of revelation. Since God is transcendent and beyond all human perception, he communicates his message to his prophets through his functionaries, the angels." (Introducing Muhammad by Ziauddin Sardar and Zafar Abbas Malik).

This belies the truth found in the Bible that says God both desires to, and does, communicate with us. It is true that He does use angels to do this from time to time, but it's also true that He speaks directly to man, sometimes using dreams and visions, and of course communicating through the Holy Spirit.

The God of the Bible is close at hand and not distant. He is a God who chooses to speak and interact with His people and even with those who are far from Him, as in the case of Saul of Tarsus. Indeed many of us were far from Him but were confronted by Him, because of His great love (John 3:16). He communicated with us, even while we were sinners and called us to Himself.

6. The Islamic view of the End. The Islamic view of judgment, the reward of the after life, and the Last Days differ significantly from the Biblical view.

In the Bible there's a definite unfolding of God's plan for mankind. It's full of purpose, God's intervention in history, and stage by stage revelation on what is required to participate in this great plan. It's like a superb mosaic revealed piece by piece until at last we see it unfolded through the person and mission of Jesus Christ.

As well, the place of the Jewish nation is paramount in the Bible, and finds its natural expression in the New Testament through the coming of a Jewish Messiah. I've often pondered how a Muslim will feel when on the Day of Judgment, instead of finding himself standing before Muhammad, he will stand before a Jew (Jesus) seated on the Throne! It's worth reflecting on.

All the above Biblical issues relating to Judgment, Heaven and the End are missing in the Qur'an. There's no coherent unfolding on the purpose of life, that salvation is needed, or on the role of the Jewish people or the land of Israel.

To be fair the Qur'an does give Jesus a place in the End Times and even mentions His second coming. One commentary on "the Hour" as the Qur'an calls the Last Days, says this about Jesus and His return:

"Jesus shall convert the Christians to Islam and make it clear to them that it was wrong to honour him as Son of God. Then the returned Jesus will eradicate all

those who do not turn to the true faith of Islam. Only Islam will remain. Thereupon, Jesus will marry. After a time in Paradise there will be unity between man and beast. This time of Paradise will last for either 24 or 40 years. Finally Jesus will die and be buried in Mecca next to Muhammad.”(Quoted from a commentary on The Ornaments of Gold verse 61 by Ibn Abi Zayd Qarawan in The Challenge of Islam by G. Bergmann).

We see in this quote that Jesus is still to die! Obviously there is nothing like this teaching in the Bible. It is mere conjecture to suppose that’s how it will all work out at the End.

On the contrary the Bible finishes with a remarkable vision of the End of the Age with Christ seated in magnificent glory on His throne (Revelation chpt 22). And as if to ensure that this glory is not taken away from Jesus, John, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, pens these sobering words:

“If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life and from the things which are written in this book” (verses 18-19).

7. The Islamic world-view. The Islamic view of the world is based on the aim of making all the people submissive to Allah. “Islam” means “submission”. For Islam the world is divided into two “houses”. That portion of humanity that has embraced Islam is regarded as being in submission to Allah. This is called Dar-al-Salaam or “the House of Peace”. Those who have not yet accepted submission to Allah are in Dar-al-Harb or “the House of War”.

The logic of this is obvious. You’re either in the House of Peace, or you’re in the House of War. If you’re in the latter, Muslims will struggle against you to bring you into submission. Therefore the Jihad or struggle is the attempt to bring all things and peoples into submission to Allah. Anything that furthers this cause is justifiable.

To be fair Jihad does not simply apply to fighting other nations. It means “directed struggle” and can take a number of forms. It might be the struggle against social injustice, or that directed against oppressive modes of thought. Muhammad even said “the supreme jihad is against oneself”.

But of course Jihad can, and does mean, a physical struggle against oppression and aggression. While many Muslims decry the kind of Jihad used by dictators such as Saddam Hussain, the fact is that it’s a viable option for Muslims. The event of 9/11 was a definite reminder of this. This of course shows clearly that the god of Islam cannot be the same as the God of the New Testament, for Jesus Himself said: Love your enemies.

We need to be aware that Islam has an agenda to bring all things into submission to its god. To be a Muslim is to be in submission to Allah, and to spread the faith of Islam is to spread the spiritual power base of Allah.

It’s interesting to note that many scholars have recognized that Islam is not a religion that sets out to “convert” others on a one to one basis, like Christianity. Islam is more concerned with the community as a whole and great importance is given to it. So the politics of Islam are the politics of a community of people.

Islam is far more concerned with gaining more territory than it is gaining individual converts. It would rather increase its rule over nations than increase its faith through individual conversions. It is thus a “power” religion and not one so much concerned with the individual.

It even accepts you can be a Jew or Christian living amongst Muslims, as long as you live under Islamic rule!

8. Ishmael not Isaac. In Genesis we see that Abraham had two sons (Gen. 16:1-12). One of course was Isaac born to Abraham's wife Sarah. Isaac was the promised son to them both, but Sarah was impatient and gave her handmaiden Hagar to Abraham to bring forth the seed of promise.

The result of this was catastrophic, for Isaac was not born of Abraham's loins first, this was Ishmael through Hagar! Ever since there has been enmity between the sons of Ishmael and Isaac. This helps us to understand why there is ongoing conflict between the Arab nations (Ishmael) and Israel (Isaac). Even today in the UN whenever an Israeli gets up to speak the Arab delegates usually leave the chamber.

Muslims believe that it was Ishmael who was the promised one, and that the Jews have supplanted him in favour of Isaac. Yet 2,500 years before Muhammad it was recorded in Scripture that:

"...God said, No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son and you shall call his name Isaac: I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant and with his descendants after him" (Genesis 17:19).

And of course when Jesus, a descendant of Isaac, came it was said of Him: "Salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22).

If you read the Qur'an you will notice that Muhammad says little that is positive about the Jews, and nothing at all about the land of Israel and its place in the End Times. If Muhammad truly was a prophet from the God of the Bible, surely there would've been positive and prophetic mention of both Jew and Israel in the Qur'an. But there isn't!

In fact the reverse is true for Muhammad cursed the Jews in Allah's name.

Do ye not see those who have been given a portion of the Book? they buy error, and they wish that ye may err from the way! But Allah knows best who your enemies are, and Allah suffices as a patron, and sufficient is Allah as a help.

And those who are Jews, and those who pervert the words from their places, and say, 'We hear but we rebel, and do thou listen without hearing,' and (who say) 'ra'hina,' distorting it with their tongues and taunting about religion. But had they said, 'We hear and we obey, so listen and look upon us,' it would have been better for them and more upright; but may Allah curse them in their misbelief, for they will not believe except a few. Behold, how they devise against Allah a lie, and that is manifest sin enough.

Do ye not see those to whom a portion of the Book has been given? They believe in idols and false gods, and they say of those who misbelieve, 'These are better guided in the way than those who believe.' These are those whom Allah has cursed, and whom Allah has cursed no helper shall he find. Shall they have a portion of the kingdom? Why even then they would not give to men a jot.

Do they envy man for what Allah has given of His grace? We have given to Abraham's people the Book and wisdom, and we have given them a mighty kingdom. And of them are some who believe therein, and of them are some who turn from it, but Hell is flaming enough for them.

Verily, those who disbelieve in our signs, we will broil them with fire; whenever their skins are well done, then we will change them for other skins, that they may taste the torment. Verily, Allah is glorious and wise.

The New Testament however clearly states God's heart toward His ancient people the Jews, when He says through Paul. "...has God cast away His people? Certainly not! God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew" (Romans 11:1-2).

The Arab lineage from Ishmael is an historical truth, and one the Arabs are proud of. Yet we see that they hate their half-brother Isaac, the Jews. Why? Part of the answer comes from the Lord Himself speaking to Hagar in Genesis 16:12.

"He (Ishmael) will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers."

There seems to be an inbuilt urging in the Arab to commit violence. There's even a modern Arab proverb that says "I against my brothers, I and my brothers against my cousins, I and my cousins against the world." (Quote from The Arab Mind, by Raphael Patai, New York, Macmillan 1983, page 81).

I recently heard one Messianic Jew, who himself was close friends with Arab Christians, remark that the Arab people lacked knowing The Father whereas the Jewish people had profound insight about Him. He explained it as Ishmael not knowing and being accepted by his natural father, Abraham, whereas Isaac was accepted by him.

This opened my eyes to a profound truth. The Arab and Muslim people will not be at peace with themselves until they come to know their Heavenly Father, the God of the Bible. And Allah is definitely not such a father. Only the Father of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures will ease the pain of the "lost son" Ishmael. And only their "half brother" Jesus the Jew, will bring them through into fullness of life, salvation.

Grace to you in Yeshua (Jesus) the one and true Messiah.

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