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ChristianDissenter

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*"Have You Tasted
the **DIFFERENCE**
in Religions?"*



Gluten Free Christianity!

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Gluten Free Christianity

It seems as if everything is gluten-free these days. I guess we're headed toward a gluten-free society — a Utopian dream, judging by the latest ads in the food magazines and health food stores. Reading them made me wonder how I'd lived this long without knowing about this destructive ingredient in my diet!

Not wanting to appear unenlightened, I thought I'd try a gluten-free bagel. I mean, there's nothing quite like a warm, chewy bagel fresh out of the oven. Imagine a bagel without the detrimental effects of that gastronomical goblin called *gluten*! It looked like a real bagel. I could hardly wait to get out of the store to bite into my prize.

As the first bite broke free too easily, and too quickly turned to mush in my mouth, my hopeful anticipation evaporated. *Yuck!* Each subsequent bite eroded away my vision for a gluten-free diet. What was so bad about gluten, anyway? I decided to take a closer look.

Reaping, Threshing, and Winnowing

I was amazed to learn about the journey of a kernel of wheat from its origins in the ripe head of wheat to its destiny in a fresh-baked loaf of bread, and the role that gluten plays in producing that result. Of course, in these days of mechanization, most of this journey is hidden from the human eye until identical loaves of bread in plastic bags arrive magically on the shelves. So it is far more interesting to follow the journey as it went in days of old.

First the field of ripe, golden wheat, with its heavy heads of grain bowing humbly to the reapers with sickles in hand, was cut and bound in sheaves, then stacked together in "stooks" to dry. After a week or so, the sheaves were brought to the threshing floor where they were trodden underfoot by a team of oxen dragging a heavy threshing sledge. The hooves of the oxen, as well as the weight and rough underbelly of the sledge, would separate the heads of wheat from the stalks.

Next came the winnowing process, to separate the kernels from the chaff. In the late afternoon, when the wind began to blow, the farmer would take his winnowing fan (like a wooden pitchfork) and toss the mixture of chaff and grain high into the air. The wind would blow away the light chaff, and the heavier kernels of wheat would fall back to the winnowing's feet. It took a long time, and countless tossings, to get rid of all the chaff. Eventually all that remained on the threshing floor was a sea of golden brown kernels. Then the women would come and sift the grain into baskets to be stored in a cool, dry place.

Into the Vortex

As beautiful as they are to the eye, and as pleasant to the touch, baskets of wheat kernels do not make a loaf of bread. The life-giving potency of each kernel is locked up within its hard shell. It must first be made into flour. No single kernel can retain its own identity, but must lose itself in the vortex and be ground up.

The mill consisted of two round, flat stones stacked one on top of the other. The bottom one was stationary, but the upper one would spin. Radial grooves were cut into the facing surfaces of the two stones. The wheat kernels were funneled into the hole in the center of the top stone as it spun — this was the vortex, drawing the kernels down and spinning them out into the grooves so that they would be ground between the stones. As the grinding continued, the finest flour began to drop from the outer edges of the millstones into the tray beneath the mill.

The Glory of Gluten

Finally it was possible to begin making bread! Here is where the miracle of gluten happens. When you put the flour in a bowl and add water, oil, and salt, and then begin to kneed it into dough, *gluten* is formed from proteins in the flour that link together to form a stretchy network. It's actually the "glue" that holds the dough together. Gluten also traps the gases released from the working of leaven, causing the bread to rise rather than simply break apart. When the bread is baked, the gluten hardens, giving the loaf its firm structure. Without gluten, what we know as "bread" would never have come into existence. It's really amazing stuff!

So why all the rage to get rid of gluten? And what does gluten have to do with Christianity?

Well, a few people (less than 1 percent) are actually allergic to gluten because of a rare disease, and many others have jumped on the gluten-free bandwagon largely because it's the latest health fad. And as for Christianity, well, it all has to do with what happens when you try to make bread without gluten.

"This Is My Body"

Let's consider an analogy that comes from the Bible:

"Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life...'" (John 6:35)

"And He took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is My body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.'" (Luke 22:19)

The Messiah, the Son of God, whom we call by His original Hebrew name, *Yahshua*,¹ chose bread as a metaphor to identify Himself as the One who gives and sustains spiritual life. He said that the loaf He broke and shared with His disciples on the night before He was crucified represented His body. Then the Apostle Paul carried the analogy a step further, stating that the church was *Yahshua's* body on earth:

"And He is the head of the body, that is, the church..." (Colossians 1:18)

So it follows that the church also, being His body, can be characterized as a loaf. In fact, the Apostle

¹ See *The Name Above All Names* on page 30 for more about this name.



Paul firmly warned the church in Corinth that it was a grave sin to eat the communion bread without “discerning the body,”² for the one loaf represented the Body of Messiah, which is one, yet they were divided from one another.³

Evidently, they were lacking the spiritual “gluten” that binds the loaf together. That “gluten” is self-denying, self-sacrificing love. To see where this love comes from, we have to go back to the wheat kernels, and what it took to make them into one loaf.

How Spiritual Gluten Is Released

Each of the disciples that make up the Body of Messiah can be likened to a kernel of wheat:

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a kernel of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone would serve Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there will My servant be also. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him. (John 12:24-26)

Those who are ripe for salvation, because they hate their life in this world, are cut out of the world by a sharp sickle — the so-called “hard words” of the gospel⁴ — and gathered together on the “threshing floor” of the community. The “church” described in the Bible was a *community*, where “all who believed were together and shared all things in common.”⁵ That community is where Yahshua is, where His Spirit dwells in those who serve Him. There, through the difficult circumstances of their life together, the chaff is separated from the wheat kernels.

As the Apostle Paul said in Acts 14:22, “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.” The word *tribulation* actually comes from the Latin word *tribulum*, which is a threshing sledge! Therefore it is no coincidence that John the Baptist prophesied, speaking of Yahshua:

His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire. (Matthew 3:12)

This “chaff” — whether people or things — is whatever is gathered in with the wheat, but has no weight, no glory, no substance, but is blown away by the winds of adversity. But the true wheat kernels always fall back down at the Winnowing’s feet. They are those who utterly surrender their lives,⁶ their independent existence, by diving into the vortex of the salvation process. They fall on the Stone⁷ so as to be ground up together into fine flour as they do the deeds prepared for them to build up the Body of Messiah.⁸

These surrendered lives, as they are saturated with the water of Yahshua’s word, the oil of the Holy Spirit,⁹ and kneaded together with a little salt by the loving hands of the apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers,¹⁰ are formed into one loaf — the very Body of Messiah on earth. The combination of these essential elements releases the spiritual gluten — the self-sacrificing love¹¹ that binds everything together in unity.¹² If any one of these elements is missing, everything soon falls apart.

That explains the 44,000 denominations of Christianity,¹³ a gluten-free religion.✿

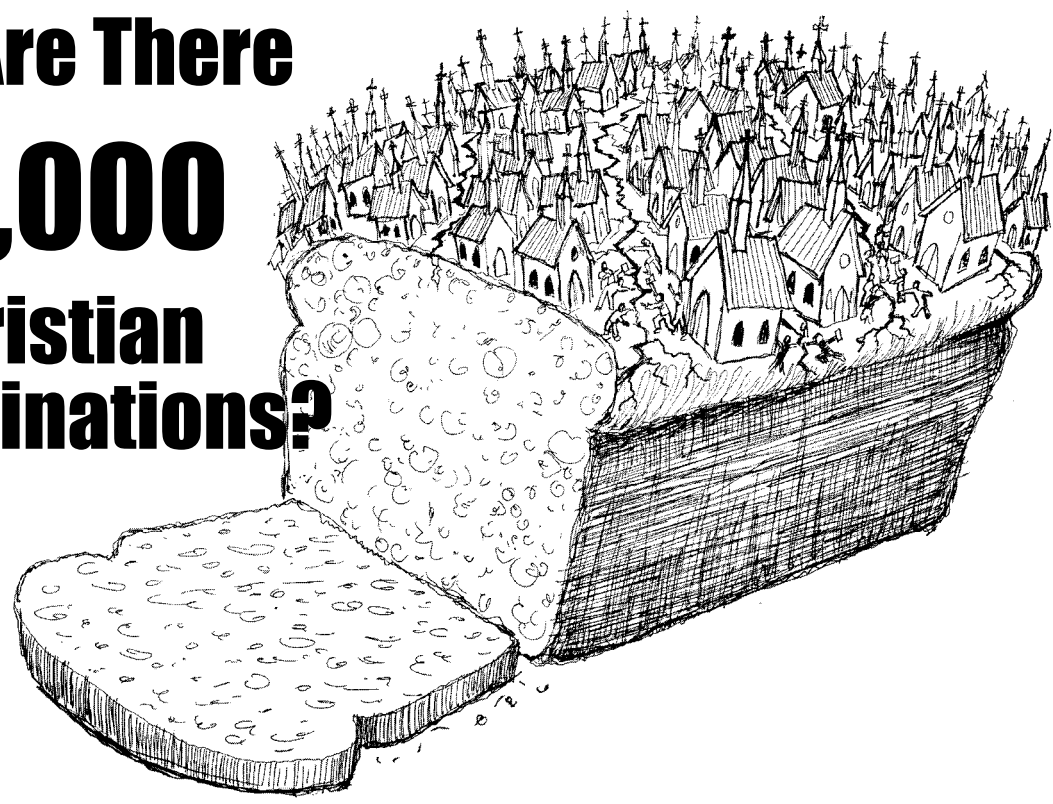


² 1 Corinthians 11:29 ³ 1 Corinthians 11:17-19 ⁴ Such as: Luke 14:26-33; Matthew 10:34-39; Mark 10:17-30 ⁵ Acts 2:44-47; 4:32-37 ⁶ Luke 9:23-24; Mark 8:34-35; Matthew 16:24-25 ⁷ Matthew 21:44 ⁸ Ephesians 2:10; Revelation 19:7-8 ⁹ Colossians 3:16; James 1:21; Acts 2:42 ¹⁰ Ephesians 4:11-16 ¹¹ Called *agape* in Greek, which transcends familial (*phileo*) love. ¹² Colossians 3:14 (in the context of verses 12-16)

¹³ <http://www.gordonconwell.edu/resources/documents/StatusOfGlobalMission.pdf>

44,000 DENOMINATIONS

Why Are There 44,000 Christian Denominations?



According to a report published by the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, in mid-2013 there were over 44,000 Christian denominations worldwide.¹ Furthermore, that number is increasing at the rate of 2.4 new denominations per day. This is a rather shocking statistic, considering the earnest prayer of Yahshua,² the Son of God, just before he was crucified:

I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one... The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. (John 17:20,22,23)

Knowing how important this prayer was, and sensing that the church was losing ground, the Apostle Paul strongly urged the church in Corinth:

I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. (1 Corinthians 1:10)

Obviously, Paul's appeal and Yahshua's impassioned prayer for perfect unity have carried little weight in the hearts of the Christians over the centuries who started each of those 44,000 denominations. How can they so easily do what Paul so firmly condemned?³ Without a doubt, each one thought he was justified in leading away his following.⁴ So just what is it that causes Christians to divide, and what is the "glue" that could have held them together?

¹ <http://www.gordonconwell.edu/resources/documents/StatusOfGlobalMission.pdf> ² Yahshua is the original Hebrew name of the Son of God; see also *The Name Above All Names* on page 30. ³ Titus 3:10-11 ⁴ Acts 20:29-30

In a word, it is *glory* — or the lack thereof.

Yahshua said, “*The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one.*” So whatever he meant by *glory*, he expected that it would enable his disciples to be one, just as he and the Father are one. Surely Yahshua and his Father don’t belong to different denominations.

So what exactly did Yahshua mean by the word *glory*?

In Hebrew, his native tongue, the word translated as *glory* literally meant *weight*, as a measure of the value of something. As applied to a person, *glory* is one’s inner worth which demands the respect of others.

Yahshua had received great inner worth from his Father, being filled with his word, and confirmed audibly at his baptism, “*You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*”⁵ In Hebrew, the word translated as *father* literally means *source*. His Father was the source of his glory, his inner worth, and everything he did or said expressed that glory:

It was not just *what* he said, but *how* he said it;
It was not just *what* he did, but *how* he did it;
It was not just *what* he saw, but *how* he saw it;
It was not just *what* he heard, but *how* he heard it.

When people saw Yahshua, they were seeing his Father.⁶ Anyone who sincerely desired to be connected to his Creator was drawn to Yahshua. The glory upon him demanded their respect. He had the words of eternal life, so where else could they go?⁷

“Well,” you may say, “that’s all fine and good. But he was the Son of God, and we’re just ordinary people.”

Yes, but that is the miracle of true salvation. Remember, Yahshua said, “The glory that you have giv-

en me *I have given to them*, that they may be one even as we are one.” Those who are truly baptized into him⁸ receive his glory, his inner worth, having been adopted by the same Father.⁹ True salvation connects us to the very Source of inner worth, giving us access to the same grace and the same wisdom that sustained Yahshua in his times of need.¹⁰ That

inner worth is expressed in what we say and how we say it, what we do and how we do it, what we see and how we see it, and what we hear and how we hear it. Glory engenders respect. Those who have glory recognize and respect it in others, and that creates oneness, for they esteem others more highly than themselves.¹¹

Those who seek their own glory¹² show that they have none, for the glory of Yahshua is only given to the humble, and is only recognized by the humble. True leaders are the most humble of all, and have the most glory, which fosters the *increase* of unity:

And he gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-13)

Ironically, it is always the *leaders* in the churches of Christianity who start the new denominations, seeking to make a name for themselves. That is why there are 44,000 denominations today, and 44,002 tomorrow, and 44,004 the next day... *Ichabod*. It means the glory has departed... long, long ago. ❄

**“Well,
you may say,
“that’s all fine and good.
But he was the
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⁵ Luke 3:22 ⁶ John 14:9 ⁷ John 6:68 ⁸ Romans 6:1-5 ⁹ Romans 8:15; Hebrews 2:10-11

¹⁰ Hebrews 5:7; Proverbs 2:3-5 ¹¹ Philippians 2:1-3 ¹² John 7:18



The Gospel: Good News *or* Bad News?

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

Everyone remembers the promise of eternal life, but who remembers what Yahshua,² the Son of God, said it would take to receive that life? What is eternal life, anyway? Is it just going to heaven when you die? Why then does the Apostle John write of having or not having that life in the “here and now”? In fact, the whole letter we call “1 John” is about how you can tell whether you have passed out of death and into life, based on how you

are living right now. And if, by reading 1 John, you discover that you have not yet passed out of death and into life, then you can do something about it. Look at the next verse:

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may believe in the name of the Son of God. (1 John 5:13)

It may seem as if John was unnecessarily repeating himself in this verse,³ but he was actually trying to make a point. Many people “believe” in a certain way, but their belief does not result in *the life* that John describes in his letter. When they read 1 John

¹ This verse is quoted from the New American Standard Version of the Bible. Most modern translations merely say *life* rather than *the life* in this verse, but the original Greek text explicitly includes the definite article *the*, because the apostle was writing about the particular kind or quality of life that true disciples live together. ² *Yahshua* is the original Hebrew name of the Savior; see also *The Name Above All Names* on page 30. ³ Most modern translations omit the last clause, or insert in the words “continue to” before the second occurrence of “believe in the name of the Son of God,” since the translators entirely miss the point John was trying to make.

and are honest with themselves, they don't *know* that they have eternal life.⁴ Having come to that conclusion, they have the opportunity to *truly* believe in the Son of God.

John's gospel records an example of the kind of belief that doesn't result in the believer actually receiving eternal life:

Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs that He was doing. But Jesus on His part did not entrust Himself to them, because He knew all men and needed no one to bear witness about man, for He Himself knew what was in man. (John 2:23-25)

Many believed in Him, but He would not entrust Himself to them, for He knew their "belief" was shallow and fleeting. They were not ready to entrust their lives to Him, so He could not entrust His life to them. That explains what John is saying in the verse at the beginning of this article: "*He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son does not have the life.*"

So then, what does it take to "have the Son" so that you can "have the life"?

It takes nothing less than your utter surrender to Him, as to a conquering king who is offering you terms of peace.

*Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks terms of peace. **So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.** (Luke 14:31-33)*

If you receive and obey those terms of peace,

then you will have peace with Him. He will be your king, and you will have the privilege of serving Him all the days of your life, shoulder to shoulder with all the others who have utterly surrendered to Him.

Is that good news to you? Or is it bad news?

It was bad news to this man, often called the rich young ruler:

And as He was setting out on His journey, a man ran up and knelt before Him and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the

commandments: 'Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.'"

And he said to Him, "Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth."

And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. (Mark 10:17-22)

Apparently this man believed in Yahshua, for he had run after Him and with deep respect asked Him what he needed to do to inherit eternal life. But his belief stopped short of the utter surrender that Yahshua demanded of him. The good news was bad news to him.

What Yahshua said on another occasion could well have been spoken to the rich young ruler:

And He said to all, "If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.

His belief stopped short of the utter surrender that Yahshua demanded of him. The good news was bad news to him.

⁴ This conclusion comes from the realization that they have no power over their besetting sins (1 John 1:6; 3:4-10), that they love the world and the things of the world (1 John 2:15-16), and that they are not truly loving and laying down their lives for their brothers, making sure they have what they need (1 John 3:14-18,23,24).

For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?" (Luke 9:23-25)

"Whoever loves his life will lose it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life." (John 12:25)

What wonderful words to someone who *hates* his life in this world! This alone is the reversal of the fall of man, releasing the grip of self and the sentence of death. This shows us what we must do in order to be saved from this world system, which is under the power, sway, and authority of its evil prince.⁵ He has his attachment to every man's spirit, thereby controlling his mind, will, and emotions.

The education of the mind of man does not release him from Satan's control, but merely sinks the hook in deeper. Satan thrives upon man's vain philosophy and religions, the chief among them being Christianity. Satan controls over one third of the world's population by this one vain philosophy alone. Christianity is a mere philosophy because it does not accomplish the purpose of the "Christ" it professes to follow. It does not produce a witness of His kingdom⁶ — a people who no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died, and went into death, and rose again on their behalf,⁷ a people who are of one heart and soul, who share all things in common⁸ because they love one another just as their Savior loved them,⁹ a people who prove by their lives of selfless devotion that they are no longer under the sway of the evil ruler of this present world.¹⁰

To be a follower of Yahshua, to be His adherent so as to be one who is included in the salvation He came to give mankind, you must first of all *give up*

your life. You must deny yourself, give up all of your own possessions, forsake your career, your unwilling family members, your loyalties to anything other than Him alone.¹¹

In today's Bible schools and seminaries, which are devoted to the "study of the Word," they search the Scriptures, for they think that in them they have eternal life, but they refuse to come to Him in order that they might have life.¹² They misapply and misinterpret His words *because* they love the world and

the things of this world, and they love to receive glory from men, therefore the love of the Father is not in them.¹³ They do not hate their life in this world, therefore they do not have the life that Yahshua only gives to those who obey Him.¹⁴

You have to *obey* Him if you want life. You will not get anywhere by merely *studying* the Scriptures, or even coming to *command* them, if you do not let them

slay you. There is no *painless progress* on the road to salvation. There is no local anesthetic that can be applied to where it hurts the most. Many try to protect certain areas of their lives, but Yahshua, who brought forth these words of the gospel from His own spirit and soul, taught that it is not merely *areas* of one's life that one must forsake, but *SELF!*

Yes, *self* is what must be denied in order to be a follower of the Son of God. His so-called "hard words" are *Good News*, sweet to our ears, for they are the words of eternal life, the way by which we may be *saved from death!*

Listen once again to Yahshua's *Good News*, these lovely and most wonderful words of joy and happiness and eternal life:

**They misapply and misinterpret
the Master's words
because they love the world
and the things of this world,
and they love to receive
glory from men,
therefore the love of the Father
is not in them.**

⁵ 1 John 5:19 ⁶ Matthew 21:43; 24:14 ⁷ 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 ⁸ Acts 4:32 ⁹ John 13:34-35; 15:12 ¹⁰ Colossians 1:13-14 ¹¹ Luke 9:23; 14:26,33; Mark 10:28-30; Matthew 10:34-39 ¹² John 5:39-40 ¹³ John 5:42; 1 John 2:15 ¹⁴ Hebrews 5:9

"If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it." (Luke 9:23-24)

Is this good news to you, or bad news?

Those who hear His words and do not obey them are like the man who built his house upon the sand. When the storms of life come, it will crumble, for it is not built on the rock of obedience to His words.¹⁵ Where are you going to run, O sinner, on that day, if you haven't built your house squarely upon the rock, the words of Yahshua, and His good news of how to be saved? You will surely perish.¹⁶

This Good News is the narrow road of the self-denying way to sweet fellowship with God and with your brothers and sisters. To suffer outside of what makes for the building up of your brothers and sisters in Messiah's body is *vain pain*, useless suffering, worthless deeds, dead works. Such suffering is for

self-glory and not for the sake of Yahshua and His kingdom. To deny yourself for the sake of Yahshua and His kingdom is the only cause that will bring an end to Satan's tyranny over the human soul, and the resulting misery in the world today.

No end of war, hatred, jealousy, hunger, abuse, or environmental disaster will ever come if no one will suffer for the sake of Yahshua and His kingdom alone. No one has eternal life today who does not give up all his own possessions for Yahshua's sake, denying himself, and taking up his own cross. No one has eternal life who does not follow Him on this narrow road. How could they? How could one who is in flagrant disobedience to His commands have the promise of His word?¹⁷

"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe the Good News!" (Mark 1:15)

Who, then, is willing to deny himself for this cause? Then come and follow Him, and you will know eternal life! That life begins right now for those who serve Him where He is,¹⁸ where all who believe live together and share all things in common.¹⁹ ✠



¹⁵ Matthew 7:24-27 ¹⁶ Matthew 7:13-14 ¹⁷ John 14:23-24 ¹⁸ John 12:26 ¹⁹ Acts 2:44; 4:32



A heron flew across the still lake, flapping its wide wings for an awkward landing in some reeds by the shore. Its reflection in the water could be seen by a single figure on shore, reading at a picnic table. Tim's Bible and notebook were open, and had been open for hours. Tim was the new program director at Camp Pocono Plateau, and he had come up three weeks before his new job started to take walks in the woods and pray and study. It would have been easier to just read some camp books from the Christian bookstore about how to reach kids' lives for the Lord, but Tim had a deeper mission, and one that he wasn't about to start talking about yet.

The pages were filled with verses about topics that he had heard all his life — baptism, salvation, belief — but he was looking up the verses to find out what was actually written about these things. Tim plugged in his music and put on some Larry Norman

tunes. "Good ol' Larry wasn't afraid to say the truth," Tim thought to himself. Tim's findings were both exciting and frightening to him. It was like finally solving a cryptogram; the conclusions were coming quicker and easier. But now he was left with the next question: What do I do now?

His job as the program director would be to give the "campfire talks," leading the young people to the Lord who came to summer camp. Salvation, he realized, was a whole lot more than asking Jesus into your heart and going back to your same old life. There was baptism, which was done after you believed, not sprinkled as a baby. That belief alone made him a heretic in the United Methodist church, which owned the camp. But even this concept of salvation seemed like more than just going to heaven when you die. Tim resolved to be a hidden heretic that summer, not to deny the truth, but also not rock the boat too much too soon.

Fall leaves fell on the path leading from the dorm to the science center. Tim was late to his 8 o'clock, creating a wake of leaves as he ran. His junior year was starting nice — good friends, interesting classes, lots to do. The guys on his dorm floor played lots of basketball, but also gathered around in rooms and talked about their lives and the problems they saw in their churches, and how we were going to change it all. It was a Christian college, and Tim's friends were all Christians, too, but with a variety of plans and aspirations. Kevin wanted to become a college professor with a PhD, hoping to drive out liberal thought from the seminaries. Charlie and John were studying business, and were content to get married and support a local church. Tim wanted to be a missionary doctor. Mike was going to spend a quarter in Washington, DC, getting involved in politics.

Tim's first class today was Christian Apologetics. It was a mixture of philosophy and logic, learning to defend their faith in rational and logical ways, in hopes that someone could be persuaded to follow Jesus. Tim knew that "faith" didn't work that way, but all the students had experienced the ridicule from non-believers for believing things that weren't factual, so this class was giving them some ammunition to fight back. Tim always enjoyed engaging people of different beliefs in conversation, and trying to persuade them to the truth. He learned the errors of the Muslims, the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Mormons, and the atheists. He hoped to meet one of them this weekend, when his drama group was planning a trip to Indianapolis to do their evangelistic skits right on the streets.

The van drove down the interstate, passing the exit sign for downtown. Driving down one of the streets, Tim and his friends prayed out loud, asking God to show them where they should go. The street opened up to a large stadium where thousands of youth were standing around. Along the street were protesters, carrying signs. This was the place!

Salvation, Tim realized,
was a whole lot more than
asking Jesus into your heart
and going back to your
same old life.

The protestors' signs carried shocking messages: "Ban the Bible!" "Christians are Bastards!" "How Much Sin Can I Get Away with and Still Get to Heaven?" Tim sized them up as some kind of anti-Christian, probably Satanists or something. These were the kind of people that Tim liked to talk to. He went up to one of the protestors, took a paper, and asked a question: "Why do you want to ban the Bible?"

The man replied provocatively, "The Bible is used as a license to sin," and handed him a paper titled "Satan Worship." Tim listened intently, looking for a chink in the armor, groping for some open door to this man's soul, but no door opened. The protestor must have found the conversation too calm, but he excused himself and went on passing out his papers. Tim looked down at the paper, reading it closely. He couldn't figure it out. These men were using verses in the Bible to expose Christianity, even the words of Christ, but weren't Satanists. Tim shoved the paper into his pocket, determined to develop a response to its bleak message.

The gym closed at 10 PM and the guys returned to the dorm for Kool-Aid and showers. Homework could be done also, for those who needed to. Kevin crashed on the couch. Tim threw him the Satan Worship paper. "What do you think of this?" Tim asked.

Kevin browsed through it, sizing it up. "Ugly graphics, lousy layout," and threw it back.

Tim continued, "Yeah, but did you read it? What do you think of what it says?"

"It's got the error of sinless perfectionism. Your dad's church promoted it for a while, but now they have women bishops, even homosexual pastors. John Wesley would hang his head if he were alive today. Yeah, this paper says you're not saved until you're sinless. Pretty depressing situation; not much chance of a winning church softball team."

Tim thought for a moment. He grabbed his Bible, looking up one of the verses. "So what does this mean, Kev?" he asked. "*No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.*" (1 John 3:6)

"You gotta read the NIV to get the right interpretation." Kevin said smugly.

"Alright, that was the NASB." Tim picked up a different Bible. "Here is the NIV. '*No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.*'" Tim read it again. "Are they just watering it down because it's too hard the other way?"

Kevin took the offense, "So are you saying that you don't sin anymore?"

Tim shook his head. He waited a few more seconds, then got up to take a shower. "I don't know — I just don't know."

The chapel was empty, except for Tim sitting in the balcony. In an hour, the student body would fill it up with the normal routine. For now, there was time to read. He was reading through the book of 1 John again. Each time he read it, he was more and more convinced that it described a different kind of life than he was experiencing. "Salvation," he thought, "what does it mean? Is it just making it to heaven, or being changed in this life to be like your Savior?" He wrote down a verse in his notebook: "Anyone who claims to know Him but does not keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in Him?" (1 John 2:4) He asked himself, "But keeping His commandments is being under the law, isn't it? No one can keep all the commandments, right?"

Tim scribbled next to the verse: "The Great Conundrum." If 1 John 2:4 was true, it seemed to

eliminate a vast number of people from the flock of two billion souls. That itself was a stunning thought, but the Savior did say that the way was narrow and few would find it. But then, what about everyone else who didn't make the cut? With the standard so high, God was cruel and unfair, almost menacing, casting almost all of humanity into eternal hellfire? Shouldn't the test have a curve, if it was so hard to get right? So then, you let more people into heaven, and you've lowered the standard to lukewarm, and obeying His commandments becomes a nice option.

The whole book had verses that seemed to contradict the typical sermons he had heard all his life. A little further in chapter 2, he copied another verse: "*The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.*" (1 John 2:6) It all pointed to the fact that a saved disciple would have the power to obey His commandments. He felt more and more like a spy in enemy territory. He alone carried the knowledge in a hostile land that might call him a heretic.

The whistle blew and the lifeguard yelled, "Everybody out of the water for buddy check!" Summer camp was in full swing, with a hundred screaming children splashing around. The counselors were having their afternoon meeting at a picnic table in the shade.

Part of Tim's job was to set the tone for the other counselors in the daily devotions and Bible lessons with the children. It was easy to talk about the fruits of the Spirit or putting on the whole armor of God. Such topics made for easy art projects and lively

Each time he read 1st John,
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skirts. But today at the meeting there was division.

Across the table, Jack and Robin were obviously troubled. They hadn't spoken for several meetings, and Jack looked off in the distance. Today, Camp Director Mike was at the meeting to restore order.

"Tim, you've really brought a heavy spirit to the staff. Your questions about 1 John and the pamphlets you've been passing around are causing people to doubt. You're affecting others. It needs to stop."

Tim looked at Jack. He felt as if Jack was only just beginning to understand, even though they had many great conversations. Why is this happening? Camp Director Mike looked at Tim for a response. He was waiting.

"I don't want to bring a heavy spirit. I just want to find salvation, whatever that means. I'll stop talking about the Bible."

"No, just your *interpretation* of the Bible," he said and continued on for another few minutes with some hermeneutical monotony. Tim wasn't listening.

The meeting dismissed, and Tim walked by the camp van. There in the window was a publication that someone had picked up when the van went to some Billy Graham event in Philadelphia. Tim

grabbed the paper and put it in his pocket.

The airplane turned a steep angle and prepared to land at the second most dangerous airport in the world — Tegucigalpa, Honduras. Passengers on the left side who looked out their window could see a woman hanging out her T-shirts to dry.

Tim was in Central America as a teacher. His plans of being a missionary doctor weren't working out. Medical school didn't accept him, but more importantly, Tim was sure he couldn't tell people about salvation. He wanted to. With all his heart, he wanted to, but he had to *have* salvation before he could share it. And before that, he had to know what salvation was.

And so when the call came from his roommate, Steve, inviting him to come and teach high school in Honduras, it was as good an idea as any. Secretly, he thought he might find the answers to his questions if he just got away from his materialistic American culture. As the months went by, he found himself more and more alone and without hope. Life was more simple in Honduras. You could ride buses anywhere

in the country for a couple of coins. A bag of fried plantains with shredded cabbage on top was a great treat. But the country was bound up in centuries of Roman Catholicism. People wore rosaries and crossed their hearts in front of statues of Mary, but had the same selfishness within as Americans.

To add to Tim's isolation, he had come to the conclusion that his own salvation was not real. He continued to read his Bible, and began seeing verses he had never seen before. Beliefs he had been taught



started unraveling, and a whole new understanding of the Scriptures was forming. Salvation, as the early church understood it, was not going to church one day a week until you die and go to heaven. It was a life together, a full-time life of discipleship. Disciples learned to walk just like their Lord, actually overcoming sin in their lives and being set apart from the world.

Tim counted the \$100 bills onto the table. It was half of what he had saved during a whole year in Honduras, and the full tuition for summer school at Linguistics School in Eugene, Oregon. By paying in cash, Tim wanted to feel the weight and value of the courses he was taking.

The linguistic classes were run by missionaries, mostly of Wycliffe Bible Translators, known to go into far-away places where there wasn't even a language, and produce a Bible for the people.

One missionary sat down next to him at lunch. He had taken note of Tim's motivation, and hoped Tim might join his organization. "Tim, have you considered what you might do after the summer?"

Tim was glad to open his heart to anyone who asked. He wasn't worried now about appearing as a heretic. He knew it was the truth. He knew he wasn't saved.

"I'm really looking for salvation; that's the main thing I want to do," Tim started.

"Well, if you're here, you must already be saved. That's a funny thing to say," said David.

"No, I have read certain things in the Bible that show me that I'm not experiencing in my life what the first disciples did. I don't know how to get there, and honestly, I don't know if anyone here does either. I know the verses about calling on Jesus' name and you'll be saved. I know Ephesians 2:8-9 about being saved by grace through faith. But there are other

verses — many other verses — that say our lives should be different once we're saved. The life of a disciple is not just staying the way you are. It's being changed into the likeness of your Savior. Whoever claims to know Him must walk as He did. Can I show you some verses?" Tim asked.

David was nearly blown-away. "Sure."

"1 John 4:17 — *'As He is, so also are we in this world.'* It means now. He cared for the poor, and we need to care for the poor. He overcame temptation, and we need to overcome temptation. He was always with his brothers and sisters, and we need to always be with our brothers and sisters. Do you see it? 1 John 3:2 — *'When He appears, we shall be like Him.'*

Does that mean we are changed beforehand or in that instant?"

David replied, "It must be then, when He appears."

"Wrong," Tim sprung back, "look at the next verse. *'All who have this hope in Him purify themselves, just as He is pure.'*

The purification happens now. That's what I'm saying. Look at verse 7. *'Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, the one who does what is sinful is of the devil.'* We've all been led astray! I've been taught that we are positionally righteous, and forgiven, even if our external deeds are full of sin, but it's not true!"

David was getting uncomfortable. "Yes, but we are saved by grace."

"Right, but what is grace?" Tim pleaded. "Is grace just being able to be forgiven, or is it actually having the power to overcome sin, and to love as our Savior did? Couldn't God give us the power through the Holy Spirit to live as the disciples did in the New Testament? Isn't that expected?"

"So, it sounds as if you've found the truth. You're saved and we're all not," David turned on the offensive. "I don't know of any denomination that is going to agree with what you are saying."

Is grace just being able to be forgiven, or is it also having the power to overcome sin and to love as our Savior did?

"I know, I know. And that's my whole problem. No, I don't believe I'm saved. I believe that if I die, I will go to the Lake of Fire. My life doesn't line up with the life of a normal disciple in the Bible. But I'm not going to stop until I find what I'm looking for. That's why I can't join your missionary group."

"Well, I respect your decision, but I can't say that I agree with you. Let me know how your life goes." David said farewell.

The traffic whizzed by the biker riding down Route 30 towards York, Pennsylvania. Tim had finished Linguistic Classes and returned home to his parents' house to get a job and figure out what to do next. The bicycle was now his transportation to and from work, as well as the transportation on his continuing search.

The paper he had retrieved from the van at camp years ago was still in his files. Their big message was that a person needed to be baptized to be saved. Maybe that's why he wasn't experiencing true salvation. He called the number and asked if he could come and visit. The church in York was a simple collection of zealous and strict Christians. Several families lived together in a large house, and met together often. There was a lot that appealed to Tim.

Tim sat in his basement, reading over the book, trying to weigh his decision to join or not join. On one hand, he wanted to be saved and know that he was cleansed of the guilt he felt. On another hand, he was afraid of compromising and joining another lie, another misrepresentation, after coming so far. He decided to join the church in York.

A freezing wind blew around the stadium in Urbana, Illinois. Tim and others from the church in York were at an event, passing out papers and preaching their gospel. Lots of col-

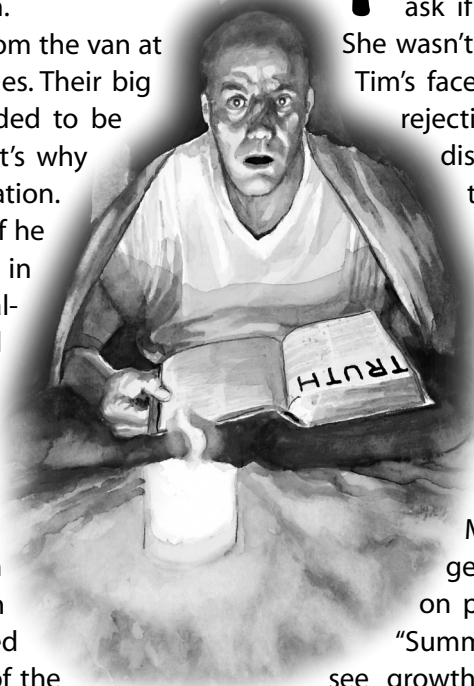
lege students were walking around. But there were other groups there, too, passing out their literature. Tim grabbed one of their papers and put it in his pocket to read later. The cold was intense, and he pulled his coat up tighter to his neck and kept walking and passing out papers for the church in York.

Later that evening, Tim emptied his pockets and looked at the other paper he had received. It was from the "Twelve Tribes" and talked about loving God with all your heart. For whatever reason, the paper didn't interest Tim and he threw it away. He had been saved for three weeks now. Tim really thought his life was different now.

Tim knocked three times on the front door. A woman answered. "Could I ask if you know Jesus as your Savior?" She wasn't interested, and closed the door in Tim's face. It didn't matter. Persecution and rejection were expected for a normal disciple of Jesus. Tim looked back at the row of houses that he had just visited. Some had taken papers, but no one had really responded. This only increased his determination. He walked back to his car.

Tim had just returned from a large event in Toronto. Their church traveled all over the place to events to witness to people. Most of the income from their meager collection was used on travel or on printing. Tim had called it his own "Summer of Evangelism." Determined to see growth and new people come to the church in York, he had stepped up his own personal determination to limit his personal projects and hobbies to maximize evangelism time. There were others in the church who were just as zealous, if not more.

Persecution and closed doors didn't bother him. But other things did, like the lack of clarity about doctrines, the lack of new people for years, despite tremendous effort, the lifelessness of many of the



congregation, the depressed hopelessness of some of the mothers, and the undercurrents among the leadership in the church. Those undercurrents were churning, getting ready to explode in a blast that would shatter the church in York.

Ronn slid open the filing cabinet. In the very back, there was an unlabeled folder. Ronn opened it and took out some of his papers from "The Twelve Tribes." The church in York frowned heavily on Ronn's interest in this outside group, and Ronn was often in trouble for disagreeing. So this private stash of papers was kept private. But in the recent months of increasing trouble in the church, Ronn had opened this folder many times. He wondered whether there was something wrong at home, and something very right with this other group.

Tim knocked and came right into the room, as Ronn looked up nervously. "Oh, it's you." He relaxed.

"Are you reading your Twelve Tribes freepapers again, you heretic?" Tim teased.

Ronn smiled. They'd had many talks about the pros and cons of this other group. He knew that they thought alike about the problems in the church in York, as well as in Christianity in general.

"I'm going, by the way," Tim dropped the bomb. "I'm even going to go to the leaders and ask for their permission to go and visit."

"They won't let you go," Ronn said. "They'll never approve of that."

"They have to. I'll say it's a matter of my conscience to go and check it out. The Queen of Sheba came to King Solomon to see if the stories were true. Jesus said that. So there's no harm in going for a visit to see if the freepapers are true."

Ronn shook his head and warned, "Our pastor says that they are a bad group and will deceive you. They say they are a cult."

Tim quipped back, "Yes, and? Everybody's in a cult. The Catholic church is a cult. Christianity is a cult. I'm going to visit the Twelve Tribes."

Driving under the silvery glow of moonlight, Tim cruised along the dark interstate that runs the entire height of Vermont. At the very north was Island Pond, home of one of the oldest communities of the Twelve Tribes. In the morning, he sat down for breakfast with Ehud.

Ehud opened up his Bible to 1 John 3 and started talking about the basis for the community. He explained how when a person is truly saved, the love of God is poured into his heart, and he will obey the

**The result of obeying
the gospel is community,
and community is the place
where you can do the deeds
you were saved to do.**

Master's greatest commandment to love one another. This means sharing all of your material goods, all of your time, all of your life. The result of obeying the gospel is community, and community is the place where you can do the deeds that you were saved to do.

Only in community can you obey His commandments.

"So the community is the visible Body of Christ?" asked Tim. He was trying to process all of these new things, looking for errors, trying hard not to be deceived. But his heart was telling him that this was the truth he had been looking for.

"Yes, well, we would say Messiah instead of Christ, because we use the Hebrew words for things, like Yahshua instead of Jesus. It's what the angel said to Mary. He spoke Hebrew, you know, and Yahshua is a Hebrew name," Ehud said.

"One of the things that I saw early on was that the book of 1st John exposed a false concept of salvation. Being saved didn't just mean going to heaven when you die, but it meant becoming like Yahshua *in this life*," Tim explained his heart-felt conviction that no one ever agreed with. "I want to do his will, and I believe other people do, too. But there's really no

way to obey Yahshua in the system of Christianity as it presently is.”

Instead of bristling as so many others had, Ehud nodded his head saying, “Exactly! That’s because Christianity is not what Yahshua started. It’s something else that started later. The Bride of Messiah is the Twelve Tribes. Here look at this verse in Revelation 21:10 and 21:14. In the next age, there isn’t heaven with people floating around on clouds. In the next age, there is Israel and there are the nations. In this age, it is Israel and the nations. Israel is the Bride of Messiah, who will truly be a spotless bride made up of those who are completely devoted. Disciples spend their time preparing themselves to be the Bride of their King.”

Tim and Ehud talked for hours. Tim realized that if what Ehud was saying was true, it all made sense. The light turned on. The Bride of Messiah would be a spotless bride, formed of completely devoted people who obeyed His commandments. And then there were the nations, composed of people who never had a chance to hear the gospel. It answered the Great Conundrum. If these things were true, then the implications were far-reaching. In spite of his efforts, he was still in a deception. Now the choice was whether to humble himself again, and admit he was still lost, in hopes of finding the true salvation that was here in the Body of Messiah. The reason he never experienced salvation is because he never had the place where he could put the words of Christ into practice.

Ehud said, “Here, look at this verse in 1 John 5:13. The King James says it best,

“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye believe on the name of the Son of God.” Ehud continued, “I don’t doubt your sincerity or your experience, but you don’t have faith. Faith comes by hearing the good

news spoken by a disciple who is already living the message.”

Tim longed to believe, but he didn’t yet believe to the point of completely trusting his entire life, surrendering all his possessions, aspirations, time, and money. Nor could he really do so until he encountered the good soil where all the disciples were

together and obedient to His commands. Only in the Community, like the life described in Acts 2:44, can disciples do the works that were prepared for them to do, in order to build up the Body of Christ in a visible and tangible way. Only in the Community can disciples

give up everything and still have a place to live. Only in the Community can disciples obey the commandments of Jesus and the directions of the New Covenant Scriptures, such as “encourage one another daily.” Tim believed in the name of the Son of God, yes. But he did not know that he had eternal life, because he did not fully believe in Him to the point of utter surrender. But he wanted to believe. He wanted to do God’s will. And so the question — should he hold on to his old life, or give it up?

The choice wasn’t hard. Tim returned home for a few weeks to pack his bags and tie up loose ends, and then traveled back to the Twelve Tribes to move in. Within two weeks, he had surrendered his whole life to be a disciple of Yahshua. Through a great search, Tim finally found his heart’s desire.

This story began in 1996. My life here in the Twelve Tribes Communities continues to be a means of salvation as I learn to walk like our Master Yahshua, the Son of God. Please come and visit, I’d love to meet you and talk with you.

~Tim

P.S. Ronn is here, too!

**The Bride of Messiah
must be a spotless bride,
formed of completely
devoted people who obey
His commandments.**

**DOCUMENTARY
EVIDENCE**



An ancient manuscript of the beginning of John's gospel

Why the Son of God came to Earth

A documentary presents facts; it gives the objective evidence for the case it presents. A case must be made for why the Son of God came to earth because of the rampant confusion that surrounds Him and His message. Although the New Covenant is clear, an overlooked but supremely important reason stands behind all the confusion. No amount of evidence will ever overcome a person's unwillingness to do God's will.

If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself. (John 7:17)

The gospel does more than present us with the knowledge of our sin and the atoning sacrifice He made to extinguish our guilt. It rightly informs us that we will *not* be forgiven if we do not trust Him

with our whole lives and do His will. That is the stark reality that sent the rich young ruler away sad — he would not obey the Savior.¹ Those who were willing to do His will, however, experienced forgiveness and the abundant life that goes with it.² Salvation made a home in their hearts that day in Jerusalem — the Day of Pentecost in 30 AD.

Thus, Yahshua began to fulfill His prophecy that He would make a place for them. That place was only available to those who hated their lives in this world.³ Those who loved the world and the things of the world, like the rich young ruler, found no home there. Those who loved Him rejoiced *and* willingly shared all things in common.⁴

They escaped the burden of the law their countrymen, and indeed, the whole world was under. They did so in the only way possible then or now: they loved the Lord their God with all their heart, all

¹ His gripping story is told in Mark 10:17-22. Yahshua explains it to explain His gospel in Mark 10:23-31. ² John 10:10

³ John 14:3 is the promise, or prophecy, which happens because of John 12:25-26 ⁴ Acts 2:38-44

their soul, and all their strength.⁵ They loved with the love He poured out in their hearts.⁶ There is no other way possible to obey His commandments — and so bring about His rule, His kingdom on the earth.

He gives His love, His Spirit to man for one specific purpose, which can only happen in community. We are to love one another as He loved us. This love is the witness disciples give the world. There is no other witness. His love and unity among a people are the witness of the kingdom, which must be given to all the nations before the end of the age can come.⁷

What if 1 John does not describe us?

What should we do if we read the first letter of John and realize that we do not love our brothers in deed and truth?⁸ A liar, according to John, is one who *does not* keep His commandments but still *claims* to know Him.⁹ And 1 John 2:15 tells us something very serious that we have to face. If we love the world — its culture, sports, and above all, money¹⁰ — the love of the Father simply cannot be in us. But John also gives us hope:

These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. (1 John 5:13)

Every honest and sincere person who truly wants to know Him and do His will can judge himself by First John. He can know whether he has passed out of death and into life by the assurance the Holy Spirit gives him when he is loving his brothers in deed and truth.¹¹ This is not something anyone can do in the world — not if the standard is First John. The love of God does not dwell among so-called “believers” who live separated, divided lives. One can only love with His love in true community.

The “Light” of History

There is a fascinating but deeply disturbing shift in the documentation when going from the New

Testament era to that of “church history.” The former presents the story of the Savior’s life, the acts of the apostles, and the letters written to the churches. The time frame is roughly the first century. All of these documents lay great stress on His foremost command: “Love one another.”¹²

Yet it is little noticed that the tone throughout the New Covenant is one of increasing concern. Something was obviously being lost. The words to the church in Ephesus in the book of Revelation, in contrast to Paul’s letter to them some forty years earlier, highlight this trend:

Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love. (Ephesians 6:24)

Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. (Revelation 2:4-5)

The change is shocking, and the way back to their first love is clear: “repent and *do* the deeds you did at first.” Did they go back to their first love? What does history say? You, dear reader, must be the judge. The verdict is significant.

Love is clearly the *height* the “city on the hill” is to be built on;¹³ it is the place from which the light emanates. Did the early church continue to build on the heights of love? What does the *documentary evidence* say? Many other examples of this growing, even ominous concern on the apostles’ part could be cited. Something was at work in the early church to extinguish the light of love. And love was the light of the world.

Long before the message arrived in Ephesus that they had left their first love, Paul had written a similar letter to the Corinthians. In it he caustically warned them that they were “bearing with” another Christ, another gospel, and another spirit “beautifully.”¹⁴ So

⁵ Matthew 22:37-40 ⁶ Romans 5:5, which is the culmination of Romans 5:1-4. ⁷ Matthew 24:14 ⁸ 1 John 4:20 and 3:14-18 ⁹ 1 John 2:4,6 ¹⁰ All that the world holds in high esteem God detests (Luke 16:15). ¹¹ 1 John 3:24 and 14, which also fulfills John 5:24. ¹² John 13:34, which is how the world would know who His disciples were (John 13:35). ¹³ Matthew 5:14 ¹⁴ 2 Corinthians 11:2-4, which was accomplished by the ministry of Satan’s messengers (2 Cor 11:13-15).

perhaps it is not surprising that when we get to church history, the love of the brothers, living together, and everyone being outspoken in the assemblies were not topics of concern. They were barely even discussed:

Out of the fifty "Early Church Fathers" whose writings remain, only two make even a passing reference to the commandment of our Master to "love one another as I have loved you." Obviously, beginning in the second century, creeds and catechisms of faith assumed the dominant roles they still play in the Christian faith. Surprisingly, none of these "fathers" contains a single reference to the Master's "new commandment" or the two greatest commandments on which hang all the Law and the Prophets. In fact, even the words, "love one another" are strangely absent from all but two of them.¹⁵

The strange shift away from spiritual life and toward doctrine in those documents is astonishing. The whole of church history from virtually the second century on is concerned with doctrines, creeds, controversies, and finally church councils. Greek philosophy and even *politics* begin to play a part in the "life" of the church. Something had profoundly changed — a paradigm shift in what faith *was* and what faith *did* in the lives of believers. A world religion was being born. This trend is more than puzzling. It is the documentary evidence of darkness covering the earth again.

Nightfall

As long as it is day, we must do the work of Him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world. (John 9:4-5)

Night had fallen; love was extinguished. All love? No, men still loved their wives, families, and close

friends. *Phileo* love lived on. But the love of God, *agape/ahavah* love, was gone. God's love had no home. No more was that love being shed abroad in believers' hearts.¹⁶ No one received the Holy Spirit at baptism once the candlesticks were removed. How could they after Love had left the church? He was obviously not welcomed when they stopped encouraging one another daily,¹⁷ stopped having the same care for one another,¹⁸ when there were both rich and poor in their midst.¹⁹ In other words, when the commands of the Savior such as "You must give up all your own possessions in order to be My disciple,"²⁰ became optional and inconsequential, then the Spirit left the church, too. For what reason could or would He possibly stay?

Messiah stopped being head over *that* house. The people stopped being outspoken and the preachers began to dominate the gatherings.²¹

But Christ was faithful as a Son over His house whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end. (Hebrews 3:6)

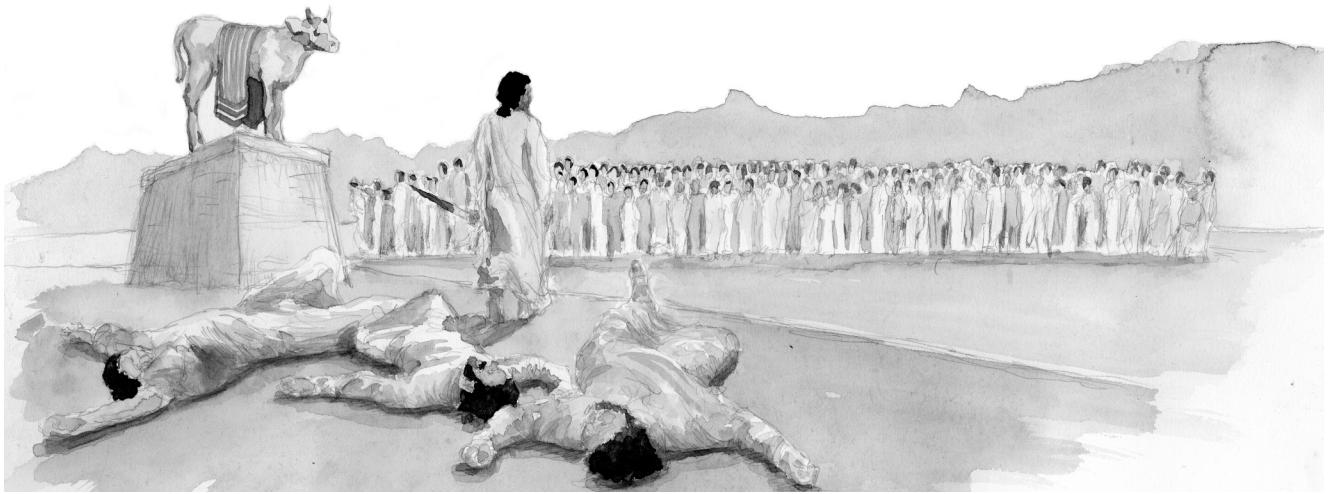
We have to know this: in the house over which Christ is head, the people have confidence to speak.



¹⁵ T. Kroehler, "The Rise and Fall of the Early Church," in *Constantine: Servant of God* (2010), p. 34. ¹⁶ Romans 5:5

¹⁷ Hebrews 3:13, which is impossible to do when you don't live together. ¹⁸ 1 Corinthians 12:25 — The lack of having the same care Paul identifies as the source of division (schism) in the Body. ¹⁹ James, chapters 2 and 5. ²⁰ Luke 14:31-33

²¹ Earle E. Cairns writes in *Christianity Through the Centuries*, p. 83, that as early as the middle of the second century [around AD 150], worship consisted of several readings from epistles and the prophets, a homily [sermon] by the "president," responsorial prayer by the people, the Lord's supper, and collection of the offering, which was followed by dismissal of the people to their homes. (Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan) The people were silenced, conquered, as it is to this very day.



All are free to share, according to Paul — not just the leaders.²² And in the Greek language, *confidence* means “freedom in speaking, unreservedness in speech, openness, frankness, boldness, and assurance.”²³ When that confidence was lost, all was lost. The early church, then, must have become someone else’s house. The light in it became darkness, and how great was that darkness! The fall of the early church, then, gave a name to an entire era of the world’s history: “The Dark Ages.”

A Kingdom of Priests

Messiah gave new Israel the new commandment of John 13:34. It expressed the heart and purpose of the New Covenant. Certainly, old Israel had a great calling: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”²⁴ But the newness and the greatness of the New Covenant expressed itself in its foundational law: “Love one another as I have loved you.”

The divine Word was incarnate in Messiah as He walked the earth, and that same love was incarnate (“made flesh”) in the Community of Jerusalem as well.²⁵ This new commandment signaled a momentous spiritual change. It inaugurated a new kingdom of priests, a new holy nation. This new Israel was a twelve-tribed priesthood, just as old Israel was meant to be.²⁶ They were charged to be no less than

a witness of God’s love to all the earth.²⁷ When this love ruled in their lives, the fulfillment of all prophecy was at hand.²⁸

This happened one thousand four hundred years after the disaster of the golden calf.²⁹ Idolatry in Israel put an end to the priesthood of the original twelve tribes,³⁰ yet Israel as a nation of priests is dear to God’s heart. He had to look beyond the borders of natural Israel, though, to get it. He had to gather a people from among the nations.³¹

Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it. (Matthew 21:43)

This new, spiritual Twelve Tribes was drawn from the many nations of the Roman world. They earnestly served God night and day, *doing it on behalf of old Israel*, the seed of Abraham, with whom God had made a solemn covenant long before.³² Thus, the New Covenant priesthood has a “Servant Theology,” not a “Replacement Theology.”

And now it is for the hope of the promise made by God to our forefathers that I stand here on trial, which promise our twelve tribes, by devotedly worshipping day and night, hope to see fulfilled for them. It is for this hope, your Majesty, that I am accused by some Jews. (Acts 26:6-7, Williams NT)

²² 1 Corinthians 14:22-26 ²³ #3954 in *Strong’s Greek Concordance of the New Testament*. ²⁴ Leviticus 19:18 ²⁵ Acts 2:36-47 and 4:32-37 make this very plain. Messiah identified with them, too — see Acts 9:4-5. ²⁶ Exodus 19:5-6 ²⁷ Matthew 24:14 ²⁸ Matthew 22:37-40 ²⁹ Exodus 32:26-34 ³⁰ We get the briefest of glimpses of this priesthood in its commission (Exodus 19) and its offerings (Exodus 24). ³¹ Malachi 1:5, 11 ³² Genesis 15:1-18

So with this heart in the tribes, Peter didn't simply "quote" the Old Testament in 1 Peter 2:9-10. He wasn't spouting doctrine. His words described an actual "royal priesthood" that existed and served night and day during his lifetime. This priesthood was what Messiah suffered and died for, what He paid for with His blood. Israel's God will never rest until He has such a priesthood again.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (1 Peter 2:9-10)

This is the work of God in the last days of this age. The message of the gospel which the thousands heard on Pentecost must be restored.³³ The "apostles' teaching" of Acts 2:42 consisted of "teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you" during His life on earth:

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen. (Matthew 28:19-20)

No strange, dysfunctional kingdom was born that day. The members of this kingdom obey their King! The apostles' teachings produced a new social order, even a true *counter-culture*. They brought forth a new *lifestyle* altogether. A new life is what the Great Commission always produces, not pointless evangelistic crusades that perpetuate the same worldly cultures their converts came from. Billy Graham has been the premier example of this.

You Can't Serve Two Masters

No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to

the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money. (Matthew 6:24)

His blunt words deny even the possibility of what so many have tried to do: serve two masters. But you *cannot* serve God and Mammon. You cannot serve the Savior and the evil spirit that is behind the love of money.³⁴ Teaching that you *can* do so is the lie which the popular religions of this world actually preach, including Christianity. The worship of Mammon is the most well-attended and enthusiastic religion on the planet. Wherever self-seeking and selfish ambition is found, Mammon is sure to be there.

Millions patiently toil through universities, eagerly awaiting the lifelong rewards of ease and prosperity promised them since childhood. Mammon is the spirit behind the glory of human culture, behind the exalted ones the world idolizes. They are even *called* idols. Mammon loves and stands for the things God detests, as do all His true followers.

Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things, and they were scoffing at Him. And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God." (Luke 16:14-15)

With His sharp words in Matthew 6 and Luke 16, our Master was warning His followers that it *would not be* through their beliefs that their life would be seen by God. He knows our hearts, it is true. That is why He sees our beliefs through our *life*, and that is why He said that *your heart is where your treasure is*, and not the other way around.³⁵ If our treasure is on the earth, so is our heart! God sees what we love and trust in *by what we do*. He doesn't pretend that what we *do* is what we *claim* to love and trust in.

He commanded all His disciples to give up everything on earth.³⁶ If they did so, they could have treasures in heaven. Then they would know, the world would know, and God would know where their heart

³³ Matthew 17:11-12 ³⁴ This is what the desire for riches does: "But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition." (1 Timothy 6:9)

³⁵ Matthew 6:20-21

was. Otherwise, they would be deceiving their own hearts. James said it so clearly. His words go along perfectly with what John said in 1 John 3:14-18 about whether or not we have the love of God in our hearts, as James also says:

What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. But someone may well say, "You have faith, and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." (James 2:14-18)

Does the Savior Deserve Our Leftovers?

As human beings we only have so much emotional energy. Can we give the Savior our leftovers? Is that what He is worth? We have our life, yes; it is all ours. Our time, our energies, and our possessions make it up. After we have spent ourselves, and given our souls over to our passions, do we really think He is pleased with what is left over? Maybe on Sunday mornings?

People who think so have no idea what God's purpose and will for their lives is. They certainly have no idea that He said they have to *hate* their lives in this world!³⁷ He speaks a lot about how people live their *lives*, but He makes no mention of their *beliefs*. Does God have any purpose for His people? Is it just to be good people and go to church on Sunday? Is that all there is?

If you enjoy too many "bad things" during the week you feel guilty at church. Wednesday Bible studies make it worse — another feel-bad day. Does this describe you? It described my life as a young Christian pretty well. Often I exceeded my "allowable" quota of bad things (how much I could do before I felt really bad about myself). My life was full of such defeats. It took me a long time to realize that I was in the kingdom of defeats. Tasting death was part of my

daily fare. I wanted a new menu to choose from.

Going to college, going to church, going to work... nothing helped. What did it matter to know that the American culture was degrading when *I* was degrading? If I didn't do something about it pretty soon, I knew I would cease to care. Eat, drink, and be merry after all, for tomorrow I would die. It was hard to face, but I loved my selfish, passing pleasures. Being in or out of the "Church" made no difference. I was serving one master — both in deed and in truth, just not in word, and it wasn't the One I heard about on Sunday morning. My whole life made that very clear. No one can be saved until he admits that.

Fact or Fiction?

What we invest in the culture of this world is used up and unavailable for God's Kingdom. Every person reaps a "reward" from what he emotionally invests himself in. The Savior put it this way: "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."³⁸ Religions preach, however, that wherever your heart is (or so you think), that is where your treasure is. This lie is for those who deceive their own hearts. I was such a one. As long as I didn't do any *really* bad things — things that even "the world" saw as bad — I was okay.

But a disciple does more than acknowledge that the words of his teacher are true. He *lives* by them. He extols and praises them. He tells others about them. And this is what a disciple of Yahshua knows: *You cannot serve God and Mammon*. You only have enough emotional energy to invest in the things of God. No one has enough for both God and the things of this world. It's one or the other. The great question must be faced, then, by all who claim Him as their Lord and Savior: *Is Colossians 1:13 fact or fiction in your life?*

For He has delivered us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of His beloved son. (Colossians 1:13)

My years of believing fiction are over. My "talents" — the grace and faith I have — activate the gifts I have.³⁹ They are put to use doing the works set apart

³⁶ Luke 14:33, Mark 10:29-30 ³⁷ John 12:25, which leads to John 12:26. ³⁸ Matthew 6:21 and Luke 12:34

for me in His kingdom. I live as part of a covenanted people, and we are all deeply immersed in the true values of this new life and this new culture. No longer are we wasting our time and emotional energy on the things of the world. We wake up each morning determined to obey our constitution. Its preamble tells us how all our needs will be met:⁴⁰

But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. (Matthew 6:33)

This goes along with not serving two masters — you can only serve in one kingdom. You cannot drink from two cups, either.⁴¹ Our Master demands exclusive loyalty. If we are His bride, as Paul taught, how could we think He would “share” us with any other spirit? That is called *adultery*. With Yahshua, it is all or nothing. The Christian *Jesus* seems to tolerate a large middle ground with many shades of gray.

Serving Him Where He Is

Those who have died with Him rise to new life with Him in baptism.⁴² He died on the cross, which is where His gospel leads us to as well — *daily*. And it is at the cross that our “old self” is crucified. A person going to his execution has invested all he has — his wealth, reputation, and his life — in the cause for which he is dying. There is no future separation from that cause. The matter is settled in his heart. This is the total commitment to which Yahshua calls *all* of His followers.⁴³ He will never leave or forsake such committed ones.⁴⁴ They serve Him where He is.

He who loves his life loses it; and he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall My servant also be; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him. (John 12:25-26)

Such service is the investment of all your abilities, by the grace that He supplies, to do all your works to build up His kingdom. The world’s king-

doms are not even in the picture. Such a servant constantly attends his Master, the One who resides in His people. He follows and serves Him *there* — where He is — and *there* he is honored by the Father. These are the kind of disciples who make Acts 26:6-7 fact and not fiction.

And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers. To this promise our twelve tribes, earnestly serving God night and day, hope to attain. For this hope’s sake, King Agrippa, I am accused by the Jews. (Acts 26:6-7)

This earnest service, where He is — in the communities where all who believe are together and share all things in common⁴⁵ — is a portrait. It is a picture of the human beings who are highly esteemed by God. They are bondslaves⁴⁶ — free to go, but choosing to stay. They refuse to leave their Master, whom they love. This service cannot be done independent of the Body, and must consist of the works prepared for us to do.⁴⁷ Such a man has riches in heaven because “he is rich toward God.”⁴⁸

But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. (Matthew 6:20-21)

The Judgment to Come

Nor do we wish to leave you hanging about the fate of those who trusted Billy Graham. It was natural for people to trust the one whom the world presented as a “great man of God.” Those who did so will be judged fairly by the God, who shows no partiality.⁴⁹ That judgment will be based on their *deeds*, as many Scriptures attest. It will not be based on their faith, as Billy Graham falsely taught them, because their faith did not produce the same life of love — the same works of love — as when the gospel was first preached.⁵⁰ Their faith was based on *another gospel*.⁵¹

³⁹ Talents are not natural abilities, as Matthew 25:15 makes clear. Talents are given according to a disciple’s natural abilities. ⁴⁰ Our constitution is the New Testament and its preamble is the Sermon on the Mount! ⁴¹ 1 Corinthians 10:21 ⁴² Romans 6:3-6 ⁴³ Those who separate themselves from His cause but prove they were not ever a part of us. (1 John 2:19) ⁴⁴ Matthew 28:20 ⁴⁵ Acts 2:44 ⁴⁶ 1 Peter 2:16 ⁴⁷ Ephesians 2:10 and 4:16 ⁴⁸ Luke 12:21 ⁴⁹ 2 Chronicles 19:7, Job 34:19, Acts 10:34, Romans 2:11, Ephesians 6:9, Colossians 3:25

Here is a Scripture about that judgment, both for those who trusted Billy Graham and for him, the man in the limelight:

He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality. (Romans 2:6-11)

The glory, wealth, and fame he sought was revealed to the world when he received his star on the Hollywood sidewalk in 1989. What he refused in 1959 as “self-aggrandizing” he accepted in 1989, proclaiming that it would forever be his hallmark.⁵² The “gospel” that brought him a constant audience with the rich and powerful of this world is and will be what he is known for.

Yes, Billy Graham was a star and deserved a star among all the other stars of Hollywood. He rightly allowed Hollywood to recognize him as one of its own. Like the stars of Hollywood, he promised what he could never deliver — an image to fall in love with, but one without substance. His life was far away from the ordinary lives of his hearers. They innocently supposed the image to be real.

But there is hope for those who listened to him and took hope in his message — if they lived good lives, were honest and hard-working. May they be numbered among those who “by patience in well-doing sought for a godly glory, honor, and immortal-

ity.” To them the God who is just and fair will give eternal life. This will be, as Paul’s gospel teaches, on the basis of their deeds.⁵³

In death they will pay for their own sins, since they never “reached His blood” by obeying the gospel.⁵⁴ He only grants forgiveness to His disciples, who make a covenant with Him on his terms. Luke 14:26-33 is a bold and precise summary of the terms of peace Messiah offers all who hear the gospel from a sent one. This gospel no Christian preacher, including Billy Graham, has ever preached.

And what of those who came forward at the altar call and sincerely “accepted Jesus into their heart,” but continued to do the evil deeds the Bible condemns? For them there will “be wrath and fury.” Those footsteps down the stadium stairs made no lasting change in their lives. They went on to lose, deliberately, the human worth they were created with. Their sins could not be atoned for by their own suffering. So their judgment, too, will be based on their deeds.

But Billy Graham is different from his hearers, good or bad. He claimed to see. He claimed to be able to lead many to eternal life. He claimed to know God and lead others to know God. He claimed publicly what he knew privately to be false, living in terror of sickness and death.⁵⁵ And rightly so, for in the Master’s words, “Woe to him,” as one of the rich, for he has received his “comfort in full.”⁵⁶ He will have none left over for the life to come. Billy Graham’s guilt will remain forever and ever as one who claimed to see. ✨

Jesus said, “If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.” (John 9:41)

⁵⁰ John 5:24 did not lead to 1 John 3:14-17. Such faith is dead according to James 2:14-17. ⁵¹ 2 Corinthians 11:4

⁵² Quote in box to side somehow: What Time said about 1959 and 1989 and his words at the star. ⁵³ Romans 2:6-16

⁵⁴ Hebrews 5:9; Acts 5:32 ⁵⁵ As Franky Shaeffer wrote in *Crazy for God* (Da Capo Press, 2008, p. 101), “But since Billy mentioned to Dad – at least half a dozen times over thirty or so years of knowing each other – that he was terrified of dying, maybe Billy’s moment of sublime revelation hadn’t quite done the trick.” Franky Shaeffer is the son of the famous evangelical Francis Shaeffer, and the “sublime revelation” he refers to is the moment, in 1949, when “Billy Graham was also suffering from doubts and had a similar re-conversion.” (p. 100) This terror of death – in one who claimed to preach salvation from hell – is what was behind the words of his biographer, William Martin, that Graham amused his staff by “racing off to the Mayo Clinic at the slightest hint of illness.” (“Pilgrim’s Progress,” *Newsweek Magazine*, August 13, 2006)

⁵⁶ Luke 6:24



Why Common Purse Community?

It would be simple but misleading to answer this question on a technical level, for the answer must go right to the heart of your personal definition of *gospel*.

The reason that our communities are common-purse is because our gospel makes no allowance for believers to retain their sovereignty over their finances. Notice it is stated that the *gospel* we preach makes no allowance, rather than stating that the *rules* of our community don't allow it. There is a tremendous difference in these two perspectives. The fact that we present a gospel that doesn't allow for personal sovereignty over one's money does not mean that we insist that all pocket change be turned over to a central fund for equal distribution (this is perhaps most people's concept). We merely emphasize that all of our resources be made available to and placed under the practical government of the Kingdom of God.

So the major ingredient of a successful common-purse community is a gospel that expects the surrender of your personal sovereignty over every aspect of your existence. This is a dynamic and boldly spiritual statement, perhaps, but when it boils down to the question of having an ice cream cone, the depth of our commitment to our gospel truly emerges. Will I give up ice cream for the Kingdom of God? If this sounds somewhat silly, let's consider the implications of this degree of discipling human be-

ings. We have seen people fall away from the hands of the living God for the sake of a thirty-cent cigarette. They left the care and protection of the Body of Messiah because we would not condone the habit, give them money for it, nor put them on a salary. So they were confronted with the practical decision of whom they would serve at that moment — God or Mammon.

Shall we teach our sheep to indulge in their selfish nature, or to live selflessly by the Spirit? The answer is obvious, of course, but weak believers need more than just encouragement; they need to be separated and insulated from the enticements of the world. Since we strongly urge young believers in our Master to forsake all ungodliness, especially starting with something as gross as cigarettes, and since we provide no financial means for them to obtain them, many have left. But some have later returned to serve wholeheartedly as non-smokers. The gospel we preached to them and the environment we placed them in were conducive to this training.

Now, in order to share all things in common with one another, prompted by the Holy Spirit, we must have a basis greater than mere doctrine extracted from the Scriptures. We must be obedient to the true

gospel that emphasizes the hard sayings of Yahshua, the Son of God. After all, the early disciples laid their resources at the apostle's feet apart from any explicit command in the New Testament, since there wasn't a New Testament yet written. They had, however, lived with the Master through most of His ministry, and it is indicated that they shared a common purse, since it is recorded that Judas kept their money bag (Jn 13:29). The New Testament had to be written from the practical experiences of these godly men, and their actions were based upon their interpretation of the gospel that the Master personally presented to them. Their interpretations were highly radical.

Today Christendom faces this dilemma: we have God's Word, we have terribly pressing problems, yet we balk at interpreting the gospel too radically. Common-purse community is radical — perhaps too radical for most Christians today.

Is the gospel that the Christians preach today the real thing, or is it a diluted and impotent facsimile of the one presented to us by the Master Himself? Have the rules of the race been tampered with so that the runners don't have to sweat, and have the soldiers become involved in civilian affairs?

At the risk of being discredited on the grounds of fanaticism, we emphatically say *Yes!* Someone has been messing with the rules of the game. They have glossed over the more difficult sayings and emphasized the easy ones to the extent that the race is unrecognizable from its origin. It doesn't take much to see that the modern church is an overweight shadow-boxer. Paul warned that he did not run aimlessly nor shadow-box, but diligently observed the rules and mastered his own body — a painful process. Those truly hearing from God in these last days will recognize that we, as Messiah's Body, have not been duped into following a "half gospel" that requires no

toil, no tears, and no death. The Christian gospel is a status-quo gospel that Christ Himself would be the first to disown.

The modern church barely acknowledges the following statements as even part of the Bible:

"If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it." (Matthew 16:24-25)

**Is the gospel that
Christians preach today
the real thing, or is it
a diluted and impotent
facimile of the one
presented to us by
the Master Himself?**

"In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be My disciple." (Luke 14:33)

"This is how we know what love is: that He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need, but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth." (1 John 3:16-18)

"Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus..." (Philippians 2:4-5)

"All who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." (Acts 2:44-47)

"The full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. With great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection

of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. (Acts 4:32-35)

Now there must be a practical way for true believers to meaningfully exercise such extreme statements. Just exactly how do you go about giving up all? We've seen many cults emphasizing the same points, to the extent that your first act as a new member is to empty your pockets, give up your new boots, and wear a funny white robe. But common-purse community is not synonymous with a harsh or abusive life-style. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it merely insures that the resources of the community are wisely utilized. Obviously, it promotes the sharing of material goods that you see your brother in need of, but it also exposes our selfish tendencies to hoard wealth. The benefits, both spiritual and economic, of common-purse community are many and varied, but we do not feel that anyone will be convinced by statistics or the reasonings of man. You must have a need for it, which will only come about if your gospel reveals this need.

Why did the early believers establish common-purse community after Pentecost? The apostles of Yahshua presented Him as the long-awaited Messiah, the Deliverer of Israel, crucified and resurrected: these men were closest to history's greatest event. The people who believed and received the Holy Spirit did so under the persuasion of the apostles' gospel that demanded their life's blood on the spot. Nothing was more important to them than the Kingdom of God in its fullness. The world in which they lived was the sworn enemy of God, hostile to His children, the very crucifier of their Master. They needed one another for support, fellowship, teaching — after all, they had met Messiah! Where is the importance of money after you have met Him? As is evident by Peter's attitude in Acts 5,

they were not coerced by a doctrine of common-purse. Instead, they willingly pooled everything together because they had a common vision. They clearly saw the great need of a dying humanity, and so they wanted to give all.

Now our problem, specifically in America, is that the Christian church promotes a lukewarm gospel that the world receives with no qualms; it doesn't rock the boat, therefore they aren't persecuted. There is no need for a strongly protective environment in a balmy climate, but you do need a storm-proof shelter in harsh weather. Since the rules of the race have been so drastically altered, it just doesn't matter who runs where or in what direction. They don't present a real race for them to run, and they don't have a place for them to be trained anyway.

Just exactly how is greed checked in the life of the individual Christian today? Who checks him, and how? Does their gospel even teach greed as sin anymore? Because of the great wealth in America there doesn't seem to be an economic need for common-purse community. And since Christendom now functions by a different gospel than first presented by the apostles, they don't see the spiritual need for common-purse community either. But revert to the *original* gospel and you will find that you must also revert to the same lifestyle as the early believers experienced. ✨



THE NAME ABOVE ALL NAMES



In the days of John the Baptist and the Son of God, the preserved language of the devout Jews was Hebrew. So, when the angel Gabriel brought the good news to the Hebrew virgin, Miriam (or Mary in English), that she would give birth to the Savior of the world, and told her what His name would be, what language do you suppose he spoke? Hebrew, of course! And certainly Miriam and Yoceph (or Joseph in English) named the child just as the angel had commanded them — Yahshua.

In Matthew 1:21, your Bible probably reads, "...and you shall call His name *Jesus*, for He will save His people from their sins." But the name *Jesus* is a modern English adaptation of the Greek name, *Iesous*, which is itself a corruption of the original Hebrew name *Yahshua*. The name *Jesus* or *Iesous* has no meaning of its own, but the Hebrew name *Yahshua* literally means *Yahweh's Salvation*,¹ which makes sense out of what the angel said in Matthew 1:21, "...you shall call His name *Yahshua* [Yahweh's Salvation], for He shall save His people from their sins."

If you look in an old King James Bible, you will find the name *Jesus* in these two passages:

Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Jesus into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drave out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David... (Acts 7:45, KJV)

For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. (Hebrews 4:8, KJV)

However, if you look in any modern translation of the Bible, including the New King James, you will find that in place of the name *Jesus* they use the name *Joshua*, for in the context it is clear that it is speaking there of Moses' successor and not the Son of God. But in the Greek manuscript the name in both of these verses is *Iesous*.

You see, *Joshua* is the popular English transliteration of the original Hebrew name *Yahshua*. Joshua of the Old Testament had the same name as the One called *Jesus* in the New Testament, for Joshua was the prophetic forerunner of the Son of God, bringing Israel into the Promised Land and leading them to victory over their enemies. But since the translators obviously know this fact, why do they only translate *Iesous* as *Joshua* in these two verses, and as *Jesus* everywhere else?

The NIV New Testament even has a footnote supporting this fact under Matthew 1:21: "*Jesus* is the Greek form of *Joshua*."

But the fact is, the name of God's Son was not even written or pronounced as "Jesus" in English until the 1600s, simply because there was no "J" sound or letter in English before then.² The modern letter "J" developed from the letter "I" which began to be written with a "tail" when it appeared as the first letter in

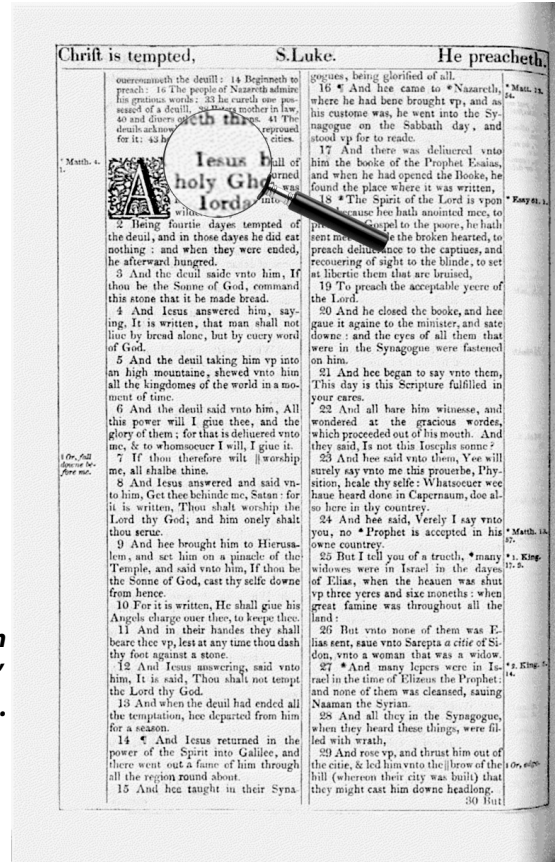
¹ *Yah* is the personal name of God, and *shua* is from a Hebrew root word that means "to save." God identified Himself to Moses as YAH (meaning "I AM") in Exodus 3:14, as in Psalm 68:4 ("whose name is Yah"), and as most familiar in the word Halleluyah ("Praise Yah"). And in John 5:43 and 17:11, Yahshua says that He came in His Father's name, "the name which You have given Me" (NASB), so it is not surprising that the Father's name would be incorporated into the Son's name, *Yahshua*. ² *Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 1496, 1507

a word. So in old English the name now written as *Jesus* was actually written and pronounced much like the original Greek *Iesous*. Eventually the hard “J” sound crept into the English language to accompany the different way of writing the initial “I” in the name.

You may also find it interesting that in Acts 26:14-15, it says that the apostle Paul heard the name of the Son of God pronounced “in the Hebrew tongue” by the Son of God Himself, so he certainly didn’t hear the Greek name *Iesous* or the English name *Jesus*, but rather the Hebrew name, the name above all names, *Yahshua*.³ ❁

³ Philippians 2:9; Acts 4:12

A page from the 1611 Authorized Version (King James Bible). Note the lack of a “J” in the Savior’s name.



Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death and into life. (John 5:24)

Have you passed out of death and into life? How can you be sure?

We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. (1 John 3:14)

Do you love the brothers? How do you know?

By this we know love: that He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. (1 John 3:16)

What if you don't lay down your life for your brothers?

Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word, he will never see death. (John 8:51)

What if you don't keep His word?

Where To Find Us

CALIFORNIA

Community in Vista, 2683 Foothill Drive, Vista, CA 92084 ☎ 760-295-3852

Yellow Deli, 315 East Broadway, Vista, CA 92084 ☎ 760-631-1888

Morning Star Ranch, 12458 Keys Creek Road, Valley Center, CA 92082 ☎ 760-742-8953

Yellow Deli & Farm Stand, 32011 Lilac Road, Valley Center, CA 92082 ☎ 760-742-2064

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Maté Factor, 966 Manitou Ave, Manitou Springs, CO 80829 ☎ 719-685-3235

Community in Boulder, 908 Pearl Street, Boulder, CO 80302 ☎ 303-974-5097

Yellow Deli, 908 Pearl Street, Boulder, CO 80302 ☎ 303-996-4700

MISSOURI

Community in Warsaw, 1130 Lay Avenue, Warsaw, MO 65355 ☎ 660-438-2541

Common Ground Café, 145 E. Main Street, Warsaw, MO 65355 ☎ 660-438-2581

Stepping Stone Farm, Route 2 Box 55, Weaubleau, MO 65774 ☎ 417-428-3251

TENNESSEE

Community in Chattanooga, 900 Oak Street, Chattanooga, TN 37403 ☎ 423-752-3071

Yellow Deli, 737 McCallie Avenue, Chattanooga, TN 37403 ☎ 423-468-1777

Community in Pulaski, 219 S. Third Street, Pulaski, TN 38478 ☎ 931-424-7067

Yellow Deli & Bakery, 219 S. Third Street, Pulaski, TN 38478 ☎ 931-363-8586

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Stoneybrook Farm, 15255 Ashbury Church Rd, Hillsboro, VA 20132 ☎ 540-668-7123

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Community Conference Center
471 Sulphur Springs Road,
Hiddenite, NC 28636 ☎ 828-352-9200

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Community in Brunswick, 927 Union Street, Brunswick, GA 31520 ☎ 912-264-2279

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Community in Boston, 92 Melville Avenue, Dorchester, MA 02124 ☎ 617-282-9876

Community in Plymouth, 35 Warren Avenue, Plymouth, MA 02360 ☎ 508-747-5338

Blue Blinds Bakery, 7 North Street, Plymouth, MA 02360 ☎ 508-747-0462

Common Sense Market, 53 Main Street, Plymouth, MA 02360 ☎ 508-732-0427

Community in Hyannis, 14 Main Street, Hyannis, MA 02601 ☎ 508-790-0555

Common Ground Café, 420 Main Street, Hyannis, MA 02601 ☎ 508-778-8390

NEW YORK

Common Sense Farm, 41 North Union Street, Cambridge, NY 12816 ☎ 518-677-5880

Community in Oneonta, 81 Chestnut Street, Oneonta, NY 13820 ☎ 607-267-4062

Yellow Deli, 134 Main Street, Oneonta, NY 13820 ☎ 607-431-1155

Community in Ithaca, 119 Third Street, Ithaca, NY 14850 ☎ 607-272-6915

Maté Factor Café, 143 East State Street, Ithaca, NY 14850 ☎ 607-256-2056

Journey's End Farm, 7871 State Route 81, Oak Hill, NY 12460 ☎ 518-239-8148

Yellow Deli, 7771 State Route 81, Oak Hill, NY 12460 ☎ 518-239-4240

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Yellow Deli & Hostel, 23 Center Street, Rutland, VT 05701 ☎ 802-775-9800

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Canada ☎ 204-453-5156

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South Slocan, BC V0G 2G0, Canada
☎ 250-359-6847

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Nelson, BC V1L 4E2, Canada ☎ 250-352-0325

Fairfield Farm, 11450 McSween Road,
Chilliwack, BC V2P 6H5, Canada
☎ 604-795-2225

Yellow Deli, 45859 Yale Road, Chilliwack, BC
V2P 2N6, Canada ☎ 604-702-4442

New Sprout Farm, 7191 Howard Rd, Merville,
BC V0R 2M0, Canada ☎ 250-337-5444

Common Ground Café, 596 Fifth St,
Courtenay, BC V9N 1K3, Canada
☎ 250-897-1111

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1056, 83601-980 Campo Largo, Paraná, Brazil
☎ 55-41-3555-2393

Café Chão Comum, Caixa Postal 75,
86828-000 Mauá da Serra, Paraná, Brazil
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Batallon Norte 120, 1748 General Rodriguez
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Devon EX14 4RW, England ☎ 44-1823-
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20003 San Sebastian, Spain
☎ 34-943-43-31-03

Comunidad de Irún, Caserío Barracas 88,
20305 Irún, Spain ☎ 34-943-63-23-16

AUSTRALIA

Peppercorn Creek Farm
1375 Remembrance Dr, Picton, NSW 2571,
Australia ☎ 61-2-4677-2668

The Woolshed
1510 Remembrance Dr, Picton, NSW 2571,
Australia ☎ 61-2-4677-0600

Community in Katoomba, 196 Bathurst Rd,
Katoomba, NSW 2780, Australia
☎ 61-2-4782-2131

Yellow Deli, 214 Katoomba Street, Katoomba,
NSW 2780, Australia ☎ 61-2-4782-9744

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