

Chapter XVI

THE SPIRIT OF THE PROPHECY

The facts and the circumstances that would necessitate the redemption of man were known unto God from all eternity. God is Omniscient (Acts 15:18; Psalm 139). Therefore the Scriptures declare that the Lamb (Jesus Christ) was slain from before the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8). This means that God's grace and mercy abounded in His redemptive purpose before God created man, before the circumstances arose in which the woman was deceived and Adam wilfully sinned (I Timothy 2:14). This eternal plan of redemption, then, found opportunity for historical expression immediately after they sinned, when God judged the serpent and said that the seed of the woman would bruise his head and the serpent would bruise His heel (Genesis 3:15).

On that occasion God quickened His promise to Adam's heart by His Holy Spirit so that he believed it. This was manifested by the fact that Adam applied the promise of the Seed of the woman to the only woman who then existed. He called his wife's name *Eve, the mother of all living* (Genesis 3:20). This implies that he believed that God would fulfill His promise through

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her. It is evident then that Adam's understanding of God's prophetic promise was not perfect. Even so he believed the promise and his faith was counted unto him for righteousness.

The manifestation of Adam's faith was not too different than the faith of generations of believers throughout the history of the world. Their faith was genuine (providing salvation), but their understanding of how God would fulfill His promises was not always complete. For example, after our Lord was risen from the dead His disciples asked: *Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6)?* This lack of understanding is further illustrated by the fact that before our Lord died, the disciples did not understand that it was necessary for Him to die (Matthew 16:21-22). They believed that He was the Christ, as witnessed by Peter's testimony (Matthew 16:13-18), but they lacked understanding of all that the Christ would have to do and to suffer. The prophet Daniel was greatly used of the Lord to record many prophecies of the last days, but he did not understand all that he prophesied. On one occasion he mourned and was ill because he understood (Daniel 10:1-2, 8), and on another occasion he was told to shut the words of a prophecy up and seal it until the time of the end because the prophecy was not for his time (Daniel 12:4). This reveals a Biblical principle: prophecy may or may not be understood with respect to the details of its fulfillment, but this does not alter the fact that believers are to be fully persuaded that God always keeps His promises (Romans 4:21), whether they know or do not know how God will accomplish them.

A more complete understanding of prophecy, as we have seen, often requires partial fulfillments or further revelations from God before a particular prophecy can be understood. This means that Adam's name for his wife was merely an expression of his present-tense conviction

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regarding God's promise. Even so, in terms of fulfillment, it was not a reference to the natural progeny that would be produced by her, as is often assumed, for by natural generation it could hardly be said that she would be *the mother of all living*; because the New Testament reveals:

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive (I Corinthians 15:22).

Consequently *the mother of all living* was not Eve; it was Mary (Luke 1:27-35):

But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. (Galatians 4:4-5).

We have seen that Adam believed the promise of God. His wife also believed it. This is revealed by the fact that God clothed both of them with a covering of skins to replace their feeble attempts (which they had exercised before they believed) to cover their nakedness with fig leaves. The covering provided by God speaks of the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, whereas the fig leaves speak of the works of the flesh. The works of the flesh could not make them or anyone else of subsequent generations acceptable to God. This was immediately revealed (after they believed the promise of God) by the fact that God provided a covering of skins to replace the unacceptable covering they had made for themselves. Thus the faith of Adam and Eve was counted unto them for righteousness, like the faith of Abraham and all believers of subsequent generations (Romans 4:3).

The provision of these skins was the next allegorical step in this historical incident (Genesis 3:21); and the acquisition of these skins, though it is not stated in the account in Genesis, required the death of a vicarious sacrifice (probably a lamb) on behalf of each of them. This provision of an acceptable covering revealed the Scriptural principle: *without the shedding of blood, there is*

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no remission (Hebrews 9:22). It also revealed the principle: *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him* (II Corinthians 5:21).

Thus as we progress through the Scriptures, the promise that was given in the judgment of the serpent was subsequently confirmed to Noah, to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, and to the nation of Israel through the various covenants and revelations that God gave them. It is interesting to observe that the Old Testament Scriptures and these covenants were progressive and prophetic in their revelation of the Bible's central theme, the redemption of man that is in Jesus Christ.

It is important for us as students of the Scriptures to recognize that the redemption of man has been presented in the Scriptures in two phases. The first phase presented the prophecies of the Old Testament Scriptures that promised the first advent of our Lord Jesus Christ. The fulfillment of this phase has been recorded in the New Testament Scriptures. The second phase has been presented in the prophecies of the Old and the New Testament Scriptures that relate to the second advent of our Lord and the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon this earth. Both phases were included in the promise of the Seed of the woman, because at the coming of our Lord the Seed of the woman will restore man to the image in which he was created (I John 3:1-2; Genesis 1:26). When this occurs, the redemption of man will then be complete (Romans 8:23-25). Therefore all prophecy is related to the redemptive purpose of Jesus Christ: *for the [witness] of Jesus is the spirit of [the] prophecy* (Revelation 19:10). It should be noted in this text that the definite article precedes the singular word prophecy in the Greek text of the New Testament. We have indicated this by enclosing the definite article in brackets. Thus *the prophecy* regarding the redemption of man is at the root of all of the prophecies of the Old and New Testament Scriptures,

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and these are connected directly or indirectly to the Person and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The first phase of redemption then has been manifested in the life and ministry of our Lord, when He became a Man by means of the virgin birth (Luke 1:31-32); when, as a Jew (John 1:11), He fulfilled every jot and tittle of the law (Matthew 5:17-18); when He also fulfilled all righteousness (Matthew 3:15); when, having no cause of death in Him, He willingly offered Himself (John 10:17-18) as a ransom for sin (Matthew 20:28; I Timothy 2:6), *the Just for the unjust* (I Peter 3:18); when He was crucified, buried and arose again the third day (I Corinthians 15:3-4); when He showed Himself alive after His resurrection to the apostles and to above five hundred brethren at one time (I Corinthians 15:5-6); when He ascended into heaven from the Mount of Olives, to be seated at the right hand of the Father (Romans 8:34) where He ever lives to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25), and from whence He will return to the earth to bring to completion the second phase of the redemption of man (Acts 1:10-11); when the redeemed will be resurrected (I Thessalonians 4:16-17), glorified (Romans 8:29-30) and adopted (Galatians 4:5) into the family of God (I John 3:1-2); when the Lord's feet shall touch upon the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4), and Israel shall look upon Him Whom they pierced and be saved (Zechariah 12:10); when the Lord will judge the earth and cast the antichrist and the false prophet into the lake of fire (Revelation 19:17-20); when the Lord will judge the sheep and the goat nations (Matthew 25:31-33); when Satan will be bound for one thousand years (Revelation 20:1-2); when the Lord shall establish His Kingdom and reign with the saints over all of the earth (Revelation 20:6); when Satan will be loosed a little season and will deceive the nations (Revelation 20:7-9); when the Lord will judge Satan and cast him into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10); when the

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Lord will resurrect the unsaved and judge them at the great white throne judgment seat (Revelation 20:11-15); when the Lord will create a new heaven and a new earth in which He will dwell with the saints forever and forever (Revelation 21:1-3), which has been the hope of the redeemed ever since God promised that the Seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent, and the serpent would bruise His heel.

It should be evident then that the first and second advents of our Lord Jesus Christ are inseparably related to the promise of the Seed of the woman. Our Lord's heel was bruised in His first advent, and the serpent's head will be crushed in the final judgment of Satan at the end of the millennial reign of Christ. The redeemed will have experienced the redemption of their bodies, so that they no longer will be subject to sin, and the hope of the gospel will no longer be a hope (Romans 8:23-25); it will then be a reality.

When the redeemed are raised according to the truth of the gospel, they will be judged at the judgment seat of Christ. It is unclear whether this judgment takes place at one time, or whether it takes place in the three phases of the first resurrection (firstfruits, harvest and gleanings). Whenever it takes place it will not involve the judgment of sins as has been erroneously sermonized by so many legalistic preachers. God has already judged the sins of the believer in Jesus Christ. Consequently the new covenant relationship declares: *This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more* (Hebrews 10:16-17, emphasis mine). This new covenant relationship is beautifully illustrated in the New Testament by the fact that not one sin of an Old Testament saint is recorded in the New

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Testament.

This means that as soon as our Lord had put the new covenant into effect by His crucifixion, burial and resurrection from the dead, He made it effective to all believers of all time. Consequently in the New Testament Abraham is seen as having been strong in the faith and fully persuaded that what God had promised He was able also to perform (Romans 4:20-21). Not one act of unbelief on his part is seen in the New Testament. The only things that are seen are those things which he did by faith. Likewise the believers in the eleventh chapter of the book of Hebrews do not have any of their sins recorded in the New Testament. All that is recorded of them is what they had done in their lives by faith. This makes the eleventh chapter of Hebrews a portrayal of the judgment seat of Christ. Everything that is remembered of the lives of those recorded in this chapter is what they had done by faith; and since *whatsoever is not of faith is sin* (Romans 14:23), the differences between the historical record of their lives in the Old Testament and the record in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews are not contradictions, as has been supposed by some, but are confirmations of the believer's new covenant relationship: the relationship by which he shall be judged at the judgment seat of Christ.

In the fifth chapter of second Corinthians the apostle Paul wrote of the judgment seat of Christ in context with the interim condition of believers between the times of their deaths and the time of their resurrection from the dead. He made it clear that when believers die they are not disembodied, even though their bodies will sleep in the grave until the day of the resurrection. Our Lord also spoke of this when He promised the disciples, *I go to prepare a place for you* (John 14:2). Thus, with our Lord's resurrection from the dead, He did indeed prepare *dwelling places*

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in which believers will abide, awaiting the day of their resurrection. Unfortunately the translators translated the Greek word for *dwelling places* as *mansions* in their translation of the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel of John. These *dwelling places* are not mansions. They are interim bodies in which believers will dwell until the day of their resurrection. This agrees with Paul's experience on his first missionary journey into Asia, when he was stoned to death at Lystra. It also agrees with his testimony in his second epistle to the Corinthians, which he wrote over fourteen years later using the third person to describe himself: *I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter (II Corinthians 12:2-4).* On that occasion the transition of Paul's soul from its earthly home to its heavenly home was so smooth and so rapid he could not tell whether he was in his body or out of his body. Thus based upon this experience and upon further revelation from God, he wrote the following to the church at Corinth:

For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

Wherefore we [eagerly desire], that, whether present or absent, we may be [well

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pleasing to] him [see Hebrews 11:6]. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in [the] body [i. e., the body of Christ], according to that he hath done, whether it be [beneficial] or [worthless]. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences. (II Corinthians 5:1-11)

The believer has the treasure of salvation in an earthen vessel, his body (II Corinthians 4:7). While this earthen vessel is subject to sin, to sickness and to death, the redeemed soul and spirit which reside within this earthen vessel (with the Holy Spirit) are declared to be holy, righteous and just. The believer has this judicial standing by virtue of the one sacrifice for sin forever that was made by our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. In keeping with our Lord's promise of eternal life, the blood of Jesus Christ continually cleanses the believer from all sin (I John 1:7). This raises the question, then: How is the believer to live his life?

The Scriptures are very clear on this matter. The life of the believer is a life of faith, not of law: *But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for the just shall live by faith, and the law is not of faith* (Galatians 3:11-12). This should be evident, but the influence that came from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (a way which seemeth right unto a man) has been constantly used, by those who do not understand salvation by grace, to compel the believer to endeavor to live a life of law works. Such a life beguiles the believer of his rewards (Colossians 2:4-8), because *whatsoever is not of faith is sin*. Therefore Paul wrote to Timothy about the lawful use of the law:

As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine [other than salvation by grace] neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do. Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: from which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; desiring to be teachers of the law;

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understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.

But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine; according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust. (I Timothy 1:3-11, emphasis mine)

Since Christ's righteousness is the believer's righteousness by faith (II Corinthians 5:21), it is evident from this Scripture that the law was not made for those who have their faith in Christ, but it was made for the *ungodly and for sinners*.... *Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster* (Galatians 3:24-25, emphasis mine). So while the believer agrees with every precept of the law, he knows that his relationship with God is not predicated of law (Romans 7:22-25). Therefore the good works of a believer are not generated from the motive of fear and punishment that were under the law, they are generated of thanksgiving for the marvelous grace that God has bestowed upon sinners by faith. Therefore all of the things that are available for the believer to do (through the gifts of the Spirit) are done willingly and not of necessity (II Corinthians 9:7). Thus the apostle Paul wrote:

But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; and many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: the one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds; but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. For I know that this shall turn to my [preservation] through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all

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boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. (Philippians 1:12-24)

Paul was in prison when he wrote these words to the Philippians. He knew this was part of his lot in life. He knew from the time of his salvation that he would suffer many things in his efforts to do what the Lord had called him to do (Acts 9:15-16): to faithfully preach the gospel whenever and wherever the Lord would give him the opportunity. He knew that if his life was taken from him, he would be instantly in the presence of the Lord. Yet he knew that while this was the desirable thing, it was more needful for those to whom he ministered for him to remain alive, to teach and to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ.

While only certain ones are called to preach, we all have a ministry within the body of Christ. This is to be performed until the Lord takes us into His presence, either by life or by death. As long as we are in our earthly bodies, then, we are to operate in the gifts that God has given us for the furtherance of the gospel. This is the life of faith to which every believer is called and for which every believer will be rewarded at the judgment seat of Christ. One believer is not counted above another in this labor of love. Each has his own gift(s) to be exercised within the body of Christ by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit and to the benefit of the body (I Corinthians 12:4-11). Thus Paul instructed the Corinthians:

I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me,

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as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. (I Corinthians 3:6-15)

Therefore, from the foundation of salvation in Jesus Christ, each believer is to labor within the body of Christ by faith with the gifts that God has given him. Since Paul likened the gifts of believers to the different parts of a human body in his first epistle to the Corinthians (12:12-26), a good deal of the work that is done by the members of the body of Christ is not seen by the other members of the body, but this does not alter the essential nature of these gifts and services to the overall welfare of the body. In this respect it should always be remembered: *man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh upon the heart* (I Samuel 16:7). Consequently every believer has something to contribute to the ministry of the local church, which for him is the body of Christ, until he is raised in resurrection and the whole body of Christ is assembled in heaven.

Paul referred to this manner of working, in the above portion of Scripture, as building with gold, silver and precious stones. Since gold was used to cover the Ark of the Covenant and other parts of the tabernacle in the wilderness, and the tabernacle represented the dwelling place of God, building with gold is used by Paul to represent those gifts and works performed by the believer that bring honor unto the Person and the work of the Father. Likewise silver was used in the tabernacle to denote redemption or the price of redemption, so in the typology of Scripture silver represents the Son. This means that if one is building with silver, these are the gifts and works

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of the believer which bring honor unto the Person and the work of the Son. Similarly there were two stones upon the ephod of the high priest, by which the high priest was able to discern God's will for the nation of Israel. They were called the Urim and the Thummim. In the typology of the Scripture these represent the Holy Spirit. So building with precious stones upon the foundation of Christ are those gifts and works of the believer that bring honor unto the Person and the work of the Holy Spirit of God.

In contrast with these, the building materials of wood, hay and stubble all have their roots in the earth. So they speak of that which is *of the earth, earthy*. Since this was part of Paul's description of Adam (in his epistle to the Corinthians), building with these types of material speaks of those who are endeavoring to build upon the foundation of Christ with the works of the flesh. Since no flesh can glory in the presence of God (I Corinthians 1:29), the works that are described by wood, hay and stubble are all combustible materials. These cannot abide a trial by fire. Consequently Paul wrote: *If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire*. It must be remembered that this is a judgment of the believer's works, not whether he is saved, because he cannot be lost.

The admonition for all believers then, from this description of the judgment seat of Christ, is that we should do God's work God's way. This is by faith with the gifts that He has given us. We should not devise man-made schemes to serve God, which like Sarah's scheme produced Ishmael, a son of the flesh, and not Isaac, the son of God's promise. Thus Solomon wrote, *Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD,*

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and depart from [the evil one]. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones. Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine. My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: for whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth (Proverbs 3:5-12). This Old Testament quotation is the equivalent of Paul's New Testament instructions to the Galatians: *This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would (Galatians 5:16-17).*

After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.

And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath.

The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed. He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk. Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk? And he that was healed wist not who it was: for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place.

Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee. The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus, which had made him whole. And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day. But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also

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that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.

Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead [i.e., the spiritually dead] shall hear the voice of the Son of God [through the preaching of the Word of God and the quickening power of the Spirit of God]: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.

Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good [made the Good their own], unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil [practiced the evil], unto the resurrection of damnation. (John 5:1-29)

This is a very important incident in the ministry of our Lord. It illustrates the attitude of the religiously self-righteous in this world (in this case the Jews) towards those who are infirmed. God does indeed discipline His own, and this can be in the form of physical maladies (Hebrews 12:6). However the Jews of that day considered all of the poor, the crippled and the diseased to be such because of personal sins. They also considered their station in life to be such because they were holy, and if anything should befall them, it was merely the means of showing their spiritual superiority (James 1:2-3 in the Greek text). Consequently their attitude was a form of self-righteousness. So our Lord contrasted their response to His words with the impotent man's response to His words.

The impotent man heard the words of our Lord and was healed, both physically and

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spiritually, because he believed our Lord. Therefore Christ's righteousness became his righteousness by faith. However, in contrast to the impotent man's response to our Lord, the Jews refused to hear our Lord's words or to acknowledge by what Power He had done what he had done. They were steeped in the traditions of the Jews, and their traditions blinded their minds to the truth of the Word of God. This made it impossible for them to recognize Who Jesus was and by Whose power the impotent man had been made whole. All that entered their minds was that He had healed the man on the Sabbath day, which to their way of thinking negated everything else our Lord had said and done. So with our Lord's testimony as to how the impotent man was healed, the Jews considered Him a Sabbath breaker and a blasphemer.

Therefore our Lord told the Jews that the time was coming and now is when the dead would hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that would hear would live. This statement was not about the resurrection, as has been assumed by many, it was about salvation; because it is the spiritually dead, not the physically dead, that shall hear the voice of the Son of God (through the preaching of the Word of God and by the quickening power of the Spirit of God) and live. Consequently it was a direct reference to the impotent man, but it certainly extends far beyond him. After that He also spoke to them about the two resurrections. The first will take place before the millennial reign of Christ, and the second will take place after it.

Our Lord told the Jews that the participants in the first resurrection will be those who by faith have *done* good. This is another use of the Greek word *poieo* and, as we have seen, it is not about *doing good*. It is about *making the Good their own*. In other words, they have made Christ's righteousness their righteousness by faith. This was accomplished by the preaching of

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the Word of God and by the quickening power of the Spirit of God, whereas the participants in the second resurrection will be those who have rejected the righteousness of Christ for their own righteousness. Consequently they will not have heard the voice of the Son of God (with understanding) and will have *done evil*.

This translation makes us think that only the very evil (i.e., the wicked) will appear at the great white throne judgment. However the word translated *done* in this text is a Greek word which means to practice, and the word *evil* is preceded by the definite article. This means that these individuals will have practiced *the evil* by trusting that the deeds they have wrought by their knowledge of right and wrong will have given them an inheritance in heaven. This was the lie of the devil. This lie has been at the root of all that man calls good, whether it is in the realm of moral ethics or in the realm of the religions of this world. This means that both the religious and the irreligious will be resurrected to stand before the great white throne judgment:

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: *and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.*

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: *and they were judged every man according to their works.* And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. *And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.* (Revelation 20:11-15, emphasis mine)

With the judgment seat of Christ and with this judgment, we have been faced with two judgments in this chapter. These judgments are associated with the two resurrections, the resurrection of the just and the resurrection of the unjust. However, contrary to common opinion, neither of these judgments is directly about sin. Both are about works. At the first resurrection

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it will be the works of believers and at the second resurrection it will be the works of unbelievers that shall be judged. In the first resurrection, as we have seen, the works that are judged are fruits from the tree of life; whereas at the great white throne judgment the works that are judged are fruits from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Our Lord spoke of these in His sermon on the mount, when He said:

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. *Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.* Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out [demons]? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: *depart from me, ye that work [the] iniquity.* (Matthew 7:13-23, emphasis mine)

The strait gate refers to salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, thus it refers to the tree of life; while the wide gate is *a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death*, thus it refers to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Since in His sermon on the mount, by the lawful use of the law, the Lord had thoroughly proven the Jews to be guilty before the law, our Lord warned the Jews of false prophets who would come to them in sheep's clothing. The false prophets would be those who would have exchanged the truth of the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ for the lie of the devil. Consequently they would still be trying to involve man's corrupted sense of right and wrong in his relationship with God. This is

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the reason our Lord spoke of a good tree and an evil tree, and contrasted the fruits of each of them.

As we have seen in previous studies, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was a counterfeit (through the lie of the devil) of the tree of life. It is the counterfeit nature of the evil tree that is so destructive. Therefore our Lord warned: *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out [demons]? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work [the] iniquity.* This warning is necessary because there are so many under the canopy of Christianity who profess to know the Lord, but by their insistence upon works for salvation, they deny him (Titus 1:16).

The fruit of the evil tree always involves man's morality in his relationship with God, whereas the fruit of the good tree always rests in the completed work of Jesus Christ for a right relationship with God (Hebrews 4:10). This is well illustrated in the relationship between Cain and Abel. Abel believed God and brought of the firstlings of his flocks, a sacrifice unto the Lord. His sacrifice showed his faith in the promise of the Seed of the woman. Whereas Cain brought of the fruits of the ground, a bloodless offering unto the Lord. He rejected the promise of the Seed of the woman for the works of his own hands. Thus Cain believed he could have a relationship with God on the basis of what seemed right to him, but Abel recognized himself a sinner and rested in the promise of God.

This brings us back to the great white throne judgment. Those who will stand in judgment

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there will be judged according to their works. This is right because they believe, like Cain, that they can have a right relationship with God by the fruit of the evil tree, a way which seemeth right unto a man. Consequently at this judgment there are two sets of books. One set of books is the record of the lives of all who will be judged at this judgment. It is a record of the very best that they have done in their lives, the things which they expect to give them an inheritance in heaven. Yet the best that they have done will leave them short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). Therefore the book of life will be opened to see whether their names are listed with the redeemed. Failing this, they will be cast into the lake of fire with the devil and his angels. Thus what began in Genesis has found its completion in the book of the Revelation. God cannot lie. Truly, Jesus (the Seed of the woman) is the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Him (John 14:6).