New Creation

Lorri Frandsen

Photos by Gustave Doré

French illustrator and painter (1832–1883)

Copyright 2017 by Lorri Frandsen.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any form or by any means, without prior permission from the author, except in the case of brief quotations in articles and reviews.

THE WALKING DEAD

There is a Hollywood movie called 'The Walking Dead' about zombies who are reanimated corpses with an insatiable hunger for human flesh. Thankfully this book is not about them. It's also not primarily about death, although we will have to address that subject before we explain the New Creation. Most of us can agree that death is an ugly reality. Hollywood movies and the daily news with its reports on death and crime keep us fixated on the subject. Sickness and accidents bring thoughts of death to us on a personal level, strengthening our resolve to avoid giving up that last breath, making valiant attempts to extend our lives through proper nutrition, adequate sleep, medicine, and stress reduction. We prepare for death by making funeral arrangements, writing our will, buying a life insurance policy, and settling important documents. We try to be prepared, tying up all those loose ends before we make our earthly departure, taking time to think about our life's accomplishments and the legacy we wish to leave. For some of us, especially the old and suffering, death may be a welcome relief that is favorably anticipated. Whatever our situation, we all have thoughts about death. Yet often there is one notable omission in our considerations. We forget, or don't give much thought to the fact that physical death may be the least of our worries. There is another kind of death that reaches far beyond the grave and is of monumental significance because it is spiritual and eternal. This death doesn't start the moment we 'shuffle off our mortal coil' as Hamlet mused in his soliloquy. This death began the moment we emerged from our mother's womb, starting us all out, not as zombies per se, but as the walking dead, nonetheless. There is good news, however. We can escape this second death. God created us for eternal life, and He graciously prepared a way to make that happen. It's called the New Creation. But before

we talk about that, we need to know a few things about how death became a problem for humanity in the first place.

DEATH'S BEGINNING

Somewhere in the long distant past, something happened that brought death to all of us. It had to do with sin. We all know the story. God created the first man Adam, and then He made a woman, whom Adam named Eve. They were in the Garden of Eden and were given a test involving two trees – one was the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, and the other was the Tree of Life. They were not supposed to eat the fruit of the former or they would die. God warned them that their rebellion (sin) would kill them. Their souls would be cut off from His Life, plunging them into darkness.

You must not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die. (Genesis 2:19)

For the wages of sin is death… (Romans 6:23)

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins. (Ephesians 2:1)

It is sin that condemns each one of us to death, as stated by the verses above. In the beginning Adam and Eve were created without sin so they were able to enjoy God's presence, but when they rebelliously decided they wanted to go their own way and make their own decisions, sin entered their souls. They chose to be independent of God, and that decision affected us all. Bible scholars talk about something called 'federal headship' which means Adam's actions, as head of all humanity, counted for the rest of humanity.

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, so also death was passed on to all men, because all sinned. (Romans 5:12)

When Adam and Eve rebelled against God, after being tempted by the devil, they died spiritually and physically, and that sentence of death passed on to all of us. There was a change inside their souls that filled them with guilt and fear. They could not even look at one another without shame. Their minds became filled with wicked thoughts and ideas, and they ran to cover themselves, sewing fig leaves to hide their nakedness from one another. Their souls were now poisoned and they were destroyed spiritually. Before this, they had walked with God in the garden and enjoyed friendship with Him. Now they were afraid of Him.

In the Hebrew and Greek, the word 'sin' means to miss the mark. That definition may not sound too serious, but sin is a major transgression against our Creator with terrible results. Adam and Eve's sin involved ignoring God's commandment concerning the fruit of a certain tree. We sin in a different capacity, but it still involves rebellion. Sin includes such things as lying, lust,

cheating, deceit, anger, evil thoughts, immoral behavior and more. The Bible says that every one of us has sinned.

There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away; they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good; not even one. Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit. The poison of vipers is on their lips. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know. There is no fear of God before their eyes." (Romans 3:10-18)

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. (1John 1:9)

God gave us a conscience to condemn us when we sin so that we would be reminded of His righteous commands. Besides our conscience, God gave the 10 commandments to Moses to further explain what is required of mankind to be accepted by Him. These commandments comprise the Law, which must be obeyed in its entirety to count as righteousness. Even one transgression nullifies the whole.

'Therefore, you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.' (Matthew 5:48)

'For whoever keeps the whole Law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. '(James 2:10)
Therefore, no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the Law; rather, through the Law we become conscious of our sin. (Romans 3:20)

The Law silences every mouth and holds the entire world accountable to God. Because no one can keep it perfectly, it declares us guilty and deserving of judgement. This is a dilemma because God is just and must punish sin.

(God says) "I will by no means clear the guilty (Exodus 34:7)

'The soul who sins shall die.' (Ezekiel 18:4)

But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear." (Isaiah 59:2)

Fortunately, there is another side to God. His nature is motivated by love. In fact, He is called LOVE because of His mercy and compassion.

'Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love'. (1John 4:8)

'I have loved you with an everlasting love". (Jeremiah 31:3)

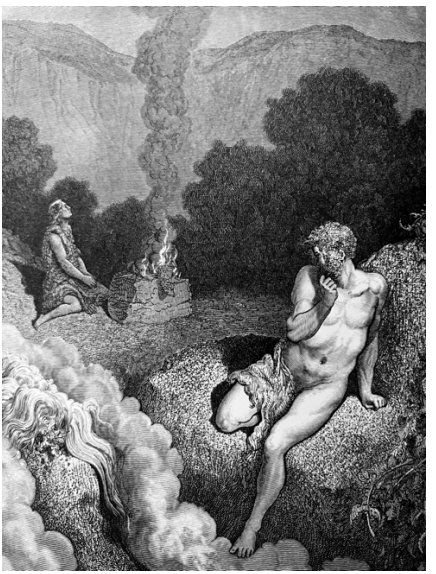
From all the scriptures in both Old and New Testaments, God is portrayed as desiring to have His people in a close, intimate relationship with Himself. Right from the beginning, immediately after Adam and Eve plunged humanity into destruction, God mercifully instituted animal sacrifices to cover man's iniquity, promising to send a Supreme Sacrifice that would take sin away forever.

WHY DID GOD LET IT HAPPEN?

God is all knowing so one might wonder why God permitted Adam and Eve to be tempted in the first place. Why did He allow His human creation to make a decision that would separate them from the God who loved them and wanted to have a relationship with them? The answer is that God could not do otherwise if He was to have a true love relationship with Adam and Eve. They had to be given the choice to obey Him...or not. Without choice they would have remained in a neutral state, innocent of sin, but not confirmed in the righteousness of God, and therefore not able to enter into a deep relationship with Him. God wanted a deep and

passionate union with humanity, and this necessitated giving them a conscious choice. We too must make a choice for or against God, even as Adam and Eve did.

THE FIRST SACRIFICE



God had no intention of casting away humanity, so He did a strange thing after Adam and Eve sinned. He made clothes from animal skins to cover their nakedness. He would have had to kill an animal to do that. It would have been the first animal sacrifice to cover the guilt of sin. But why was a sacrifice needed? God gives the reason in Leviticus 17:11:

'For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.'

Blood represents life. When a person sins, they forfeit life before a holy God. Atonement therefore requires

the surrender of a life in the place of the guilty. The blood on the altar is the visible sign that a life has been given.

Indeed, under the Law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. (Hebrews 9:22)

God is just so He cannot simply overlook sin without violating His nature. The penalty must be paid. The animal that God slew in the Garden of Eden died in Adam and Eve's place. They were identified with the sacrifice, and guilt was symbolically transferred to it. The poured-out blood was the exchange for their lives, and it removed their defilement, covering them temporarily. It was not a permanent solution, however. Later, when God rescued His people out of Egyptian bondage, God instructed the Israelites to build a Temple and by Law instituted animal sacrifices to be continually offered. They had to be, because they were only a temporary expedient.

For this reason, (the Law with its sacrificial system) can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. Otherwise, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshippers would have been cleansed once for all and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. But those sacrifices were an annual reminder of sins. It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. (Hebrews 10:1-4)

God promised in His Word that one day He would provide a true and eternal blood sacrifice. That Sacrifice would be the God/man, Jesus Christ, who entered the world as an infant, representing all of humanity. Federal headship would apply to Him as it did to Adam.

For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. (1Corinthians 15:22)

For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous. (Romans 5:19)

He would be the Savior and Deliverer who would conquer death, take away the sins of the world, and give eternal life to all who came to Him for salvation.

He is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. (John1:29)

Christ entered the true Holy Place by means of His own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. (Hebrews 9:12-14)

By a single offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. (Hebrews 10:10-14)

It's not certain how much Adam and Eve understood God's plan for redeeming mankind, but His act of providing an animal sacrifice to cover sin revealed the Creator as a kind and gracious God.

THE PERFECT LAMB OF GOD

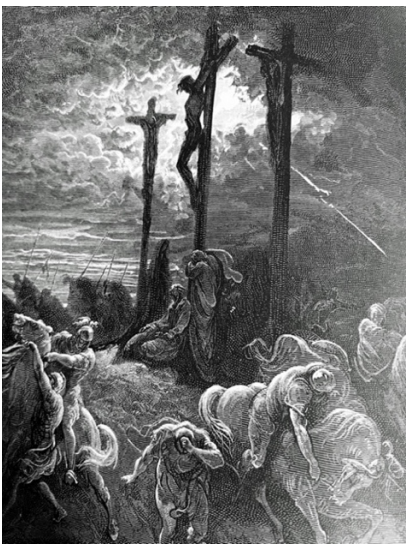
The Bible tells us clearly that the perfect Sacrifice is the infinite GOD-MAN. He existed as the Son of God within the Trinity from all eternity, without beginning or end, which is why He is referred to as the Alpha and Omega in the Book of Revelation. Revelation 22:13 states: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End." As the "Alpha", Jesus is foundational to all existence. Everything originates from Him.

In the beginning was the Word (Jesus) ... and the Word (Jesus) was with God ... and the Word (Jesus) became flesh and dwelt among us. (John 1:1,14)

The Bible tells us that the Word (Son of God) came personally to our world as a human being. He was in the likeness of sinful flesh, but He never sinned and didn't have the dead sin nature of Adam. The curse of death did not apply to Him, but Jesus willingly volunteered to represent sinful mankind, becoming the Second Adam. Being human was essential if the Second Adam was to take on Himself the penalty for sin. Being sinless and divine was essential if the Second Adam was to escape death and be resurrected into new life.

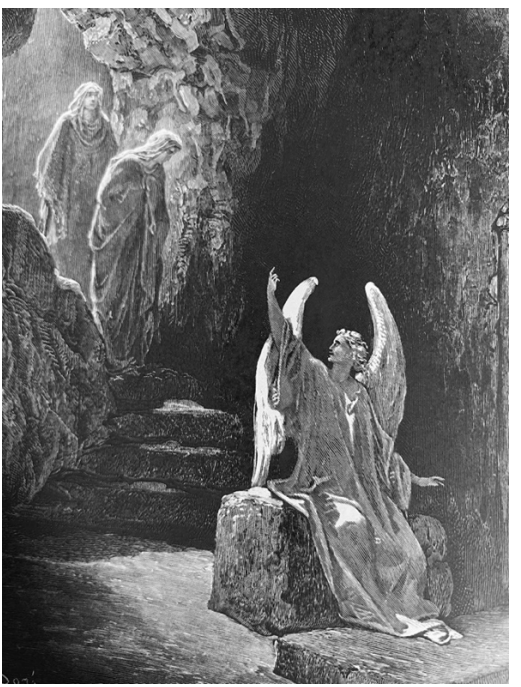
He was born in Bethlehem to Mary, a virgin, by the Holy Spirit. His birth fulfilled Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah from the line of David. He was raised in Nazareth in Galilee in a ordinary Jewish household. His public ministry began with His baptism by John the Baptist in the Jordan River, where the Spirit descended on Him and the Father's voice affirmed Him

(Matthew 3; Mark 1; Luke 3). After a period of testing in the wilderness, He preached the nearness of the kingdom of God, called disciples, taught with authority, performed miracles of healing and deliverance, and confronted religious hypocrisy and spiritual blindness. He revealed Himself as the Son of God, the promised Messiah, the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets, and the one who came "to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). He repeatedly predicted His coming suffering, death, and resurrection. In the final week of His earthly life, Jesus entered Jerusalem to popular acclaim (Palm Sunday), cleansed the Temple, taught, and shared the Last Supper with His disciples, instituting the Lord's Supper as a memorial of His body and blood given for them. That night He was betrayed by Judas, arrested, and subjected to unjust trials before Jewish and Roman authorities. Though declared innocent by Pilate, He was sentenced to death by crucifixion under pressure from the religious leaders and the crowd. Jesus was crucified outside Jerusalem at Golgotha. On the cross He bore the sins of humanity, endured the judgment that sin deserves, and cried out "It is finished!" in fulfillment of Scripture (including Psalm 22).



'All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned, everyone, to his own way, and the Lord has laid on Him (Jesus) the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:6)

The New Testament presents His death as a substitutionary atonement. He died in the place of sinners so that those who trust in Him might be forgiven, reconciled to God, and declared righteous. His blood establishes the new covenant, securing redemption, cleansing from sin, and giving access to God. On the third day God raised Jesus bodily from the dead, vindicating His claims and demonstrating the defeat of sin and death. Two angels told the disciples that Jesus had been resurrected. Then Jesus appeared to many witnesses over the next forty days, commissioned His disciples, before ascending to the right hand of the Father.



For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, (1Corinthins 15:3-4)

SAVED BY GRACE

The Bible says God provided salvation for humanity from a motive of grace.

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people. (Titus 2:11)

The term "grace" has its roots in the Latin word "gratia," which translates to "favour" or "blessing." It has been part of the English language since the 13th century and is often associated with the concepts of charm, beauty, and kindness. In the Bible it is defined as unmerited favour of God toward mankind, signifying kindness and mercy that cannot be earned.

But where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 2:20-21)

For of His fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. (John1:16-17)

The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. The Lord is good to all, and His mercy is over all that He has made. (Psalm 145: 8 -9)

This grace was bestowed on mankind at God's own initiative, through the means of faith. However, even that faith was instigated by God, and not humans themselves.

"For by grace are you saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves." (Ephesians 2:8)

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever <u>believes</u> in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

HOW DO WE BECOME PART OF THE NEW CREATION?

The key is FAITH. Faith is the key that opens the door to heaven. Many people mistake two things for saving faith:

1. Just believing certain historical facts. The Bible says the devil believes in God, but that is not saving faith.

2. Just trusting God for temporary crises such as financial, family, or physical needs. These are good, and we should trust Christ for these, but they are not saving faith! Saving faith is trusting in Jesus Christ alone for salvation.

Faith is like a beggar getting a gift from a King. We don't deserve the gift of eternal life. But we can have it, if we have faith. It is our faith that causes us to know that the One who raised the Lord from the dead also raises us to live forever in His presence.

'As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions... For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves,

it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. (Ephesians 2:1-9)

Faith is simply taking God at His word, believing what He has said and done.

'And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.' (Hebrews 11:6)

We are saved by faith and we walk by faith. The only works that have any eternal value are those born of faith. But this faith is not something we conjure up within ourselves or something we earn. It is given to us by God.

'... it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.' (Ephesians 2:8-9)

The Law could rightfully condemn the old humanity because it was guilty of sin, but the Law can find nothing to condemn in the New Creation.

'Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. (Romans 8:1)

'You were taught to stop your old way of life. Your old way was full of deceitful desires. Now you are to be made new in the attitude of your minds. '(Ephesians 4: 20-23)

. '...with the heart one believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation, for whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.' (Romans 10:10, 13)

If we have become reborn, Christ's righteousness is now our own. We have His nature, His heart, and His mind and are in complete unity with Him. It is impossible for us to be

condemned for sin anymore. We have passed out of death into eternal life. We have come out of the Old Man and into the New, released out of bondage into freedom. We are no longer separated from God but have been brought into close intimacy with Him. What Jesus has accomplished for us is truly beyond what we could ever have thought or imagined! This was the great gift Jesus came to bring to all of us, and it does not depend on human effort. Only God's gracious kindness can rescue humanity. God offers salvation as a gift, not as something earned by His creatures.

'For by one sacrifice He has made perfect forever those who are being made holy. (Hebrews 10:14)

This is the message of the gospel that God wants the world to know.

God is saying: TRUST in what Jesus Christ has done for you on the cross, that He has died for YOU. If you are willing to be placed spiritually into Christ, it will mean that your old life (who you were before) will lie dead in the grave, and you will become a part of the New Creation, or New Humanity in Christ. Listen to what Jesus is saying....

'Behold, I stand at the door and knock at the door of your life. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him.' (Revelation 3:20)

'For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. (Colossians 3:3- 4)

<u>Believe</u> on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved – you and your household. (Acts 16:31)

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

Jesus said" 'The work of God is this: to believe in the One He has sent.' (John 6:29)

However, belief is more than simply recognizing Jesus as the Son of God or giving mental assent to some doctrinal statements about Him. It requires a personal relationship and reliance on Him for salvation that is rooted in deep trust and commitment. Ultimately it means a spiritual rebirth that transforms us from being spiritually dead to being alive in a relationship with God. It is an unseen event that happens on the inside, deep in our souls.

Jesus explained rebirth to a Pharisee called Nicodemus who asked how anyone could be accepted by God if no one could keep the Law. Jesus went straight to the point and told him that no one could approach the Father unless he was born again. Nicodemus asked: *"How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter his mother's womb and be born a second time, can he?"*
Jesus told him that unless a person had a spiritual rebirth, making him a new creation, he would not be able to enter the kingdom of God. He added: "*What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. So, it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."*
Nicodemus was confused and asked how someone could be born when they are old. *"They can't go back inside their mother! They can't be born a second time!"* he exclaimed.
Jesus then explained that He was speaking in spiritual terms. No one could enter God's kingdom unless they were born with water and the Holy Spirit. The 'water' Jesus was speaking of was spiritual cleansing. Throughout the Old Testament, water was used to symbolize cleansing, such as in Ezekiel 36:25: *I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, I will cleanse you.*
Nicodemus would have been familiar with this idea of physical water representing spiritual purification, and as a Pharisee and student of the Law, he should have been able to grasp Jesus' meaning when He spoke of the necessity of a new birth.

There were Old Testament scriptures which prophesied about this, such as Ezekiel 36:26:
'I will also give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh'.

Later, in the epistles of the New Testament, new birth (or regeneration) was again linked to water as a "washing" brought about by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God at the moment of salvation.

Such were some of you, but you were washed. But you were sanctified. But you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and in the Spirit of our God. (1 Corinthians 6:11).

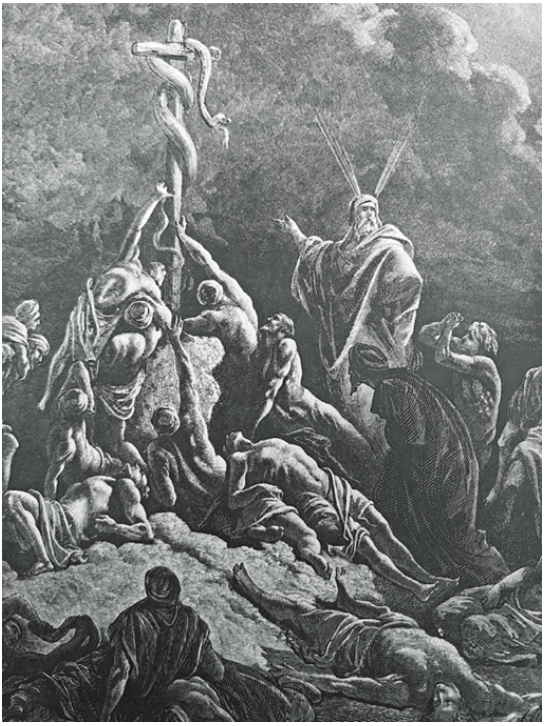
But poor Nicodemus didn't get it. *"How can this be?"* he asked. Jesus replied with a question of His own. How was it that a teacher of the Law didn't understand these things? After all, He was speaking plainly, using symbolism, yet Nicodemus was deaf to His meaning. Jesus explained that He had taken him as far as He could. He could give Nicodemus heavenly explanations, but he wouldn't be able to receive them. Then Jesus added that He had come down from heaven, something no other man could do. He had been in heaven with the Father, and He came down. And just a Moses had lifted up the snake in the desert, the Son of Man would also be lifted up. Then everyone who believed would receive eternal life.

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:14,15)

It was kind of shocking for Jesus to compare Himself to a snake because snakes are thought of as evil. The snakes in Exodus were killing people and the snake on the pole was a picture of God's curse on the people. But this picture was completely accurate because Jesus would also become a curse.

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us. For it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree," (Galatians 3:13)

In becoming like the snake, Jesus became both sin and the curse for us, and in doing so He was able to take them out of the way so that those who believed in Him could have eternal life. That was what Jesus was meaning when He spoke of 'believing' in Him. He was teaching Nicodemus that he needed to look to Him in faith, just as the dying Israelites in the desert had looked up in faith at the pole with the snake on it. Their act of faith resulted in healing for their bodies. Similarly, looking to the risen Christ for spiritual healing would bring eternal life through the new birth.



Jesus added some important words to His message:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God didn't send his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged. He who doesn't believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God. This is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light, for their works were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light, and doesn't come to the light, lest his works would be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his works may be revealed, that they have been done in God." (John3: 16-21)

Nicodemus, like the rest of the Pharisees, had always believed that obedience to the Law was the way to acceptance with God. But Jesus taught that the Law was never able to save humanity because everyone broke it. The Law demanded perfection. Animal sacrifices offered in the Temple also couldn't save anyone because they were only reminders that fallen humanity needed a Saviour, a perfect sacrifice without blemish or flaw - a Lamb of God without sin. Jesus was now here, the fulfillment of what the animal sacrifices were all about. Believing in that divine Sacrifice would bring about the rebirth experience that Jesus talked about. Rebirth alone could do what the Law never could. God had never intended to clean up the old fallen humanity. It was dead. Rather, He always intended to create a new humanity that would have His heart, mind, and spirit. This new humanity would be His own "holy seed" birthed from the Seed of God, which is Jesus. Out of Him, others would be birthed with His nature and heart. God had told this to Abraham, promising an inheritance of countless descendants. Later, the Mosaic Law was introduced, but it did not annul the promises made to Abraham or to Abraham's Seed (Christ). These promises were for a new

genus - a new creation - which would live with Him forever and would share in His very own Life.

LIKE A BUTTERFLY

The butterfly has been called a winged flower or flying gem because of its ethereal beauty. But a butterfly doesn't start out beautiful. A butterfly's life begins as an ugly caterpillar that hatches from an egg. These caterpillars have ravenous appetites and eat almost constantly, sometimes destroying crops and damaging trees and shrubs. After going through this destructive phase, the caterpillar is next wrapped in a cocoon which looks like a tomb or coffin. In its sealed chamber it is broken down and dissolved., becoming liquid. This phase lasts for several weeks during which it appears lifeless and dead. The third and final stage is when the cocoon breaks open and a beautiful butterfly emerges, spreading its wings to fly off into the sky. It is not an improved caterpillar because its old form has passed away. Something new has come. The chrysalis is therefore a quiet parable of the gospel; the old life ends in union with Christ's death, and by the creative power of God, a new life emerges – free, beautiful, and oriented for the heavens.

Rebirth (also called regeneration) is moving from a dead spiritual state to one that is alive and eternal - from the old humanity (old man in Adam) to the new one (new man in Christ). It changes a person at the deepest level of his being. He becomes someone entirely different from who he was before, like the pupa changing from what it was before to become a butterfly.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. (2Corinthians 5:17)

"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

This miracle of rebirth into a new creation was foreshadowed in the Old Testament.

Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold I am doing a new thing... (Isaiah 43:18)

And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. (Ezekiel 36:26)

And He who was seated on the throne said: "Behold, I am making all things new." (Revelation 21:5)

WHY DO WE STILL SIN?

If we are no longer in the old man of Adam and now are new in nature, mind and spirit, why do we still sin? The answer is that even though our old life (old man, old nature) was crucified with Jesus Christ on the cross and is no longer who we are, we are still in our physical body, and within our bodies there are still the sinful urges that used to operate in our old nature. These urges continue to work through our physical bodies, but they don't control us like before. They are weakened because as Christians, we do NOT have a sin nature, and we are not IN the flesh. We have a NEW nature, and we walk by the Spirit, not the flesh. This gives us confidence and assurance to overcome sin because of our faith in God's love and His complete acceptance of us. Our

new identification with Christ (having His righteous nature) enables us to say 'no' to fleshly urges. It was condemnation from our guilty conscience and from the Law that enabled sin to strip us of power and cause us to cringe in shame. Our guilt crippled us and set up a barrier between ourselves and God. Jesus has now taken that barrier down.

For sin will not have dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. This indicates that believers are guided by grace rather than the strict requirements of the law. (Romans 6:14)

When describing the acts of the flesh, we mean sexual immorality, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, etc. Of course, those who consistently evidence this kind of life will not inherit the kingdom of God. But Christians don't live in the flesh, even though they sometimes succumb to its temptations. When the flesh rises in our bodily members to tempt us to sin, we are not forced to obey it. When our physical body dies, the flesh will then be eradicated. But even now we are to consider ourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. That's why it's ridiculous for us to let sin reign in our physical body so that we obey its evil desires. Permitting sin to reign in our body is 'living in the flesh' and before we were saved, we could live in no other way. However now, as born-again believers, we surrender every part of our being to Jesus. Sin is no longer our master. Also, we are not under the Law anymore, which is where sin gets its power. No Law. No condemnation. No shame. And no enslavement to sin. When sin entices us and we temporarily give in to it, we can simply stop doing it and accept the forgiveness that is always there for us in Christ. By accepting God's correction and agreeing with it (essence of repentance) we are able to turn away from temptation and walk in victory.

WHAT ABOUT THE LAW?

Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. So, the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. (Galatians 3:23-24)

The Law was instituted for the Old Adam, to restrain the lusts of the flesh and to condemn sin. It was to act as a guardian until we came to faith in Christ.

'Now the law is holy, and the command is holy and right and good. Does this mean that something that is good brought death to me? No, it was sin that used the good command to bring me death. This shows how terrible sin really is. It can use a good command to produce a result that shows sin at its very worst. We know that the law is spiritual, but I am not. I am so human. Sin rules me as if I were its slave. I don't understand why I act the way I do. I don't do the good I want to do, and I do the evil I hate. And if I don't want to do what I do, that means I agree that the law is good. But I am not really the one doing the evil. It is sin living in me that does it. Yes, I know that nothing good lives in me—I mean nothing good lives in the part of me that is not spiritual. I want to do what is good, but I don't do it. I don't do the good that I want to do. I do the evil that I don't want to do. So, if I do what I don't want to do, then I am not really the one doing it. It is the sin living in me that does it. So, I have learned this rule: When I want to do good, evil is there with me. 22 In my mind I am happy with God's law. But I see another law working in my body. That law makes war against the law that my mind accepts. That other law working in my body is the law of sin, and that law makes me its prisoner. What a miserable person I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! (Romans 7:12-25)

From Romans 7 we learn that without the Law, we would not have known what sin was. But we also see that the Law enslaves us.

We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. We also know that <u>the law is made not for the righteous</u> but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for the sexually immoral, for those practicing homosexuality, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine. (1Timothy 1:8-10)

The Law was never meant to justify us or make us righteous.

Yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. (Galatians 2:16)

For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. (Romans 3:20)

Thankfully we have been released from the Law.

But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit. (Romans 7:6)

For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. (Romans 10:4)

Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. (Romans 7:4)

The Law only has authority over someone for as long as that person lives. Take for example how a married woman is bound to her husband by law if he is alive. However, if her husband dies, she is released from the law that binds her to

him. If she has sexual relations with another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress, but if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress if she marries another man. That's like what happens to us when we die to the Law through Christ's death on the cross. Using the analogy of the married woman, we were released from our former husband (the old man) and are now free to be married to another (Jesus, the New Man). By dying to what once enslaved us, we have been released from the Law so that we now live in the new way of the Spirit, instead of the old way of the written code (Law).

But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. (Galatians 5:18)

For the Law brings forth death: where there is no Law, there is no sin. (Romans 4:15)

The New Creation is free from the Law! No new creature in Christ can be condemned for sin because Christ has perfected the believer forever.

For by one sacrifice, He has made perfect forever those who are being made holy. (Hebrews 10:14)

So, if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. (John 8:36)

Now the Lord is the Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. (2Corinthians 3:17)

INSEPARABLE FROM THE LOVE OF CHRIST

As Christians, our minds are governed by the Spirit, so we have life and peace. God is well pleased with us, and even though our physical bodies will die like everyone else's because of sin's effect, the Holy Spirit inside us has given us resurrection life and made us immortal. So, since we are alive because of the Spirit, our only obligation is to live by the Spirit. As children of God, we can live without fear of

condemnation or death. God is our loving 'Papa' and we are His heirs, even co-heirs with Jesus Christ. Whatever Jesus receives in glory, we do too. Even though we will share in Christ's sufferings, they are nothing compared with the glory we have in Christ. We have the Spirit, who guarantees our redemption and divine adoption. Everything that happens to us in the meantime is used by God to work out for our best.

It is important to realize that our new reborn spirit is being conformed to the image of God's Son. As God's children, we bear a resemblance to our older Brother, Jesus. God predestined us to this, and those He predestined, He also called; *...those He called, He also justified; those He justified, He also glorified. (Romans 8:30)*

What then shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also, along with Him, freely give us all things? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is there to condemn us? For Christ Jesus, who died, and more than that was raised to life, is at the right hand of God—and He is interceding for us. (Romans 8:31-33)

These are the things the Bible states cannot separate us from the love of Christ.

- Tribulation
- Distress
- Persecution
- Famine
- Nakedness
- Danger
- Sword
- Death
- Life
- Angels
- Demons

- Present or future worries
- Any powers
- Height or depth
- Anything in all creation

The message is clear: regardless of the circumstances we face, nothing can diminish or sever the love of Christ for us. This profound truth offers comfort and hope, reinforcing the belief that God's love is unwavering and eternal.

CHOSEN BY GOD

We are chosen by God. He is the initiator of our faith from start to finish.

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. (john 15:16)

No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day. It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard the Father and learned from Him comes to Me." (John 6:44-45)

We cannot come to God on our own, because as sinners we are dead spiritually. Our mind is darkened and we are enemies of God. It cannot depend on a person's human desire or effort because the Bible says that no one is righteous, understands, or seeks after God. Nobody - not even one person - does good. All are worthless.

Romans 9:16 emphasizes this: 'It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God's mercy'.

As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become

worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." (Romans 3:10-12).

So, unless God has mercy and changes the human heart, no one comes to the Lord on his own. Every saved person must be 'drawn' to Christ by the Holy Spirit.

'Everyone who has heard the Father and learned from Him comes to Me. (John 6:45)

MEMBERS OF CHRIST'S BODY THROUGH HOLY MARRIAGE

When we come to Christ in faith, we become members of Christ's Body with Christ as the Head. The apostle Paul described it this way:

"... because we are members of His body. Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and His Church." (Ephesians 5:30-32)

And he is the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything He might have the supremacy. (Colossians 1:18)

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. (1Corinthians 12:27)

After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body. (Ephesians 5:29-30)

Paul was stating that God designed marriage to symbolize the relationship that would develop between Jesus and Christian believers. This idea links back to God's creation of Adam and Eve. God purposed from all eternity that

humanity would be comprised of a male and female who would come together in a physical union that would make them one in body and soul. Sexuality (which was to be exclusive to married individuals) would bond a man and woman together, and a covenant promise (oath) would maintain that commitment. This idea of marriage between a bride and bridegroom foreshadowed a spiritual reality of a relationship between Jesus, the Son of God, and His Bride (later called the Church). This is why it was no accident that the first miracle Jesus performed in public was at a wedding feast where the wine ran out, and Jesus saved the day by transforming vats full of water into excellent wine.

On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."
"Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come."
His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so, they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now." (John 2:1-11)

In totality Jesus made 1500 bottles of high-quality wine, a miracle that not only saved the reputation of the wedding party organizers, but also showed the glory of Jesus, causing His disciples to increase their faith in Him. However, Jesus explained the real reason that this miracle was so important.

"No one puts new wine into old wineskins, or else the new wine will burst the skins, and the wine pours out, and the skins will be destroyed; but they put new wine into fresh wineskins." (Mark 2:22)

Wine expands when it ferments over time, stretching the wineskins and making them brittle. Using them again by pouring new wine into them would risk bursting them. Jesus used this analogy to proclaim that the New Covenant, which He was bringing in, could not exist with the Old Covenant, which was passing away. Under the Old Covenant God had 'married' the physical nation of Israel, but that marriage was soon going to end, and a new one would be introduced.

"Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, "Know the LORD," for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." (Jeremiah 31:31-34)

This concept of marriage between God and His people was not new to the Israelites. In the Old Testament Scriptures, God had referred to Himself as Israel's Husband many times.

"For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is His name..." (Isaiah 54:5)

"...As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you." (Isaiah 62:4-5)

"And in that day, declares the Lord, you will call Me 'My Husband'...I will betroth you to Me forever...in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy." (Hosea 2:16, 19-20)

I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. (2Corinthinas 11:2)

Now Jesus was making a formal announcement that God was going to make a new covenant, unlike the one He had made with their fathers in the day that He led them out of Egypt. In the Person of Christ, God was coming for the Bride He had told Jeremiah and the other prophets about.

This intimate love relationship with His Bride had always been God's deep desire. John the Baptist would have been aware of all the scriptures prophesying it. When He saw that Jesus was the promised Messiah (the Holy Spirit had shown him this by a dove landing on Jesus at His baptism), John told his followers that Jesus was the Bridegroom foretold in the Bible. He asserted that he, John, was merely the friend who stood up for the Bridegroom (as a best man).

"He that has the bride is the bridegroom, but the friend of the bridegroom who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. This my joy therefore is filled." (John 3:29)

BECOMING ONE WITH CHRIST

The marriage analogy goes even further. In Genesis God describes the marriage union as involving a man and woman becoming one flesh. The apostle Paul elaborated on this.

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify her (to make free from sin; to cleanse from moral corruption and pollution; to purify), having cleansed her by the washing of water by the Word, so that He might present the Church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she may be holy and without blemish. (Ephesians 5:25-29)

'Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the Church. (Ephesians 5:25-32)

Becoming one flesh is not temporary or casual but involves leaving behind primary loyalties and forming a new, permanent household unit. This union is meant to be lifelong and exclusive, which is why Jesus prohibited divorce. Husband and wife are called to share life, resources, purpose, and mutual care. A wife will usually take on her husband's last name as a sign of this joining of two entities into one. Husband and wife remain distinct persons, but they now relate in love and a unified mutual submission.

The apostle Paul also explained that sexual union outside of marriage still united two bodies to become one flesh, but in a negative way, which is why sexual sin is a serious matter. Cohabitation outside the marriage covenant forms a damaging bond.

Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her. For as it is written, 'The two shall become one flesh.' (1Corinthians 6:16)

This joining of bodies to become one flesh is a picture of what happens spiritually between Christians and the Lord. Jesus had much to say to His disciples about becoming 'one' with Him.

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, just as you, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they may also be in Us, so that the world may believe that You have sent Me...I in them and You in Me, that they may become perfectly one. (John 17: 20-23)

But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with Him. (1Corinthians 617)

In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you are in Me, and I in you. (John 14:20)

THE NEW CREATION IS BORN OF THE SPIRIT

Jesus told Nicodemus that no one could enter the kingdom of God unless he was born of water and the Spirit. Washing of water refers to the spiritual cleansing and purification that occurs when we are renewed and transformed in Christ. This is the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit.

He saved us, not because of righteous things we have done, but because of his mercy He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holt Spirit. (Titus 3:5)

Without this rebirth it is impossible to enter the realm of the Spirit. The kingdom is barred to those who have not been radically changed and made righteous with Christ's life (i.e. cleansed and purified).

You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your

mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you. (Romans 8:9)

THE NEW CREATION IS SEALED BY THE SPIRIT

A seal creates an impression on materials such as wax, clay, or paper, leaving a mark of authenticity or security. Seals have been used by people throughout history. In the Bible, the presence of the Holy Spirit is referred to as a seal, authenticating a believer as belonging to God, indicating God's ownership, and providing security for salvation. It also acts as a guarantee of the promises God has made to them, ensuring their inheritance in Christ.

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory. (Ephesians 1:13-14)

He anointed us, set His seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. Now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. (2Corinthians 1:22; 5:5)

The seal of God is described in the Song of Solomon as the profoundly intimate spiritual bond between Christ and His Beloved Bride (the New Creation). It implies mutual belonging and passionate devotion to one another; a commitment where true love is safeguarded and defended from outside influences. This love between God and His people is powerful and unbreakable, strong as death and as jealously unyielding as the grave.

Unfortunately, God is often portrayed as a distant Divinity who makes strict demands on His followers and is ready to punish severely for every infraction. Some, even in the

Church, have said that the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New are entirely opposite in nature. The Song of Solomon exposes this as false. The God of the Old Testament, as described in this beautiful Song, is seen to be every bit as fiery and 'emotional' as Jesus was when He wept with compassion for the lost, empathized with the poor and suffering, turned over the money tables in the Temple in righteous anger, denounced the cruelty of religious leaders, lovingly defended women, and adored little children. Christ said He and the Father were One, so the unity of their nature should be an obvious deduction.

Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm; for love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame. (Song of Solomon 8:6)

Just as Christ was passionate in His emotions while He walked the earth, He revealed that this was how the Father is. God is passionate. His love for us is consuming. He is possessive and fiercely jealous, intense in His protection, and completely faithful and committed to us. He is the Divine Lover of His Bride, and His Holy Spirit sets our hearts ablaze with adoration for Him.

I am my Beloved's and He is mine. (Song of Solomon 6:3)

NEW CREATION IS TRANSFORMED BY THE SPIRIT

In marriage, a husband and wife's relationship with one another ideally brings them closer, strengthening their bond as they learn to understand one another over time. Quite often they share ideals, perspectives, and character traits. This is what the Holy Spirit does in a spiritual relationship between Christ and His Church. We become increasingly like Him, living out the righteous nature He has given us.

And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. (2Corinthians 3:18)

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. (Galatians 5:22-23)

1. Love is a selfless, unconditional affection.

2. Joy is a deep-seated happiness in God.

3. Peace is a sense of tranquility and calmness.

4. Patience is the ability to endure difficult situations.

5.Kindness is a disposition to be friendly and considerate.

6. Faithfulness is loyalty and reliability.

7. Gentleness is a humble, meek attitude.

8. Self-control is the ability to control impulses.

Paraphrasing this:

The fruit of the Spirit in these passages reveals that when God gives us His divine nature through His Holy Spirit, He floods us with His unconditional love, and we experience that love in our inmost being. Having His presence in our hearts fills us with joy and peace, for we know we are completely accepted by Him. This causes us to trust Him so that outer circumstances cannot cause us to panic or fear. Because God is kind to us, we have a similar desire to be kind to others. Being so loved by Jesus causes us to feel overwhelmingly grateful. We love Him in return with great fervor and are loyal to Him and faithful to do all we can to please Him. Because He is so gentle with us, we become gentle and humble when dealing with others. All of this

produces within us a determination to walk in His ways and obey Him in all things. The confidence we have in His support and devotion steels our will so that we are fixed on Him as our greatest Desire and subjugate all our emotions and thoughts to honoring Him above everything else.

The Holy Spirit works these character traits in us through the renewing of the mind as we read Scripture and engage in prayer. He convicts us of sin, leading us to see His perspective and to agree with Him. This is the essence of repentance, an abiding attitude motivated by a desire to please Him in all we do and think. The Spirit also emboldens us to share our faith with others; enables us to face challenging situations; make difficult decisions; and face life's complexities with wisdom and discernment.

The Spirit also enables us to put to death the deeds of the body. This is called sanctification in the Bible.

If by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. (Romans 8:13)

Sanctification is never separated from justification or from the finished work of Christ on the cross. It is not based on human merit, law-keeping, or self-effort. It is the Spirit's work to root us in His grace and outwork the new identity we have in Jesus, rather than striving to attain one.

Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. (Philippians 1:6)

In summary, The Holy Spirit is the permanent power and presence in the New Creation. He is the One who creates new life within us that it may indwell, transform, and empower us, and ultimately, He guarantees its consummation.

Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. (John 17:17)

THE NEW CREATION IS LED BY THE SPIRIT

The Son of God is called the Word. This implies that He is a Communicator who reveals Himself to His creation. This communication is effectively transmitted to us through the Holy Spirit who guides and leads us through a variety of means. One is the **written Word**, the Bible.

All Scripture is God-breathed, and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, (2Timothy 3:16)

God often communicates through **visions**.

After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward. (genesis 15:1)

- Abraham received a vision about God's covenant (Genesis 15).
- Jacob saw stairs reaching to heaven. (Genesis 28:12-13).
- Samuel received a vision as young boy (I Samuel 3).
- Ezekiel had many visions, including God's glory and the valley of dry bones (Ezekiel 1, 37).
- Joseph had dreams about his future leadership. (Genesis 37:5-11)
- A Midianite soldier had a dream that a barley cake rolled into the camp and overthrew it. The dream foreshadowed Gideon's victory) (Judges 7:13-15)
- Daniel saw visions of world empires and end-time events (Daniel 7,8,10).

- Nebuchadnezzar dreamed of a great statue made of different metals, which Daniel interpreted to as the rise and fall of kingdoms. (Daniel 2:31-45)

- Peter had a vision of clean and unclean animals (Acts 10).

- James saw the transfiguration of Jesus (Matthew 17;1-9).

- John saw visions and recorded them in Revelation (Revelation).

- Paul had several visions, including being caught up to third heaven. (2Corinthians 12:2)

- Solomon had a dream where God offered him anything he wanted and Solomon asked for wisdom, after which God blessed him beyond measure. (1Kings 3:5-15)

- Joseph, Mary's husband, was told in a dream to take Mary as his wife and later he was told to take her and Jesus to Egypt for safety. (Matthew 1:18-25)

- The Magi were warned in a dream not to return to King Herod, which protected the baby Jesus. (Matthew 2:12)

- Pilate's wife had a dream about Jesus and warned her husband not to harm Jesus because He was innocent. (Matthew 27:19)

Dreams must be weighed against the truth of Scripture of course. If they glorify Christ, encourage obedience, produce holiness, expose darkness, or draw one closer to God, they are probably truly from God.

Look to God's instructions and teachings! People who contradict his word are completely in the dark. (Isaiah 8:20)

God speaks to His people in an **audible voice**.

- Adam and Eve: The first humans to hear God's voice, receiving direct commands and warnings.
- Noah: Received specific instructions for the ark, demonstrating God's guidance.
- Abraham: His call marked the beginning of a covenant relationship with God.
- Moses: Experienced a profound encounter that transformed his life and mission.
- Samuel: His story illustrates the importance of recognizing and responding to God's voice.
- The disciples heard God speak on the Mount of Transfiguration.
- Paul heard Jesus speak to him when on his way to persecute Christians.

Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him. Jesus said, "This voice was for your benefit, not Mine. (John 12:28-30)

He speaks through **prophecy.** The Bible features a total of at least 92 prophets, in the Old Testament and the New Testament. These prophets were chosen by God to deliver His messages to the people.

Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing His plan to His servants the prophets. (Amos 3:7)

Jesus used **nature** to describe His father, such as the parables about soils, mustard seeds, fig trees, etc. The Holy Spirit does the same, using lessons from nature to increase our understanding of His character.

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. (Romans 1:20)

Angelic visitations have come to many in the Bible - Abraham, Lot, Hagar, Samson's parents, Jacob, Joshua, Moses, Mary, Philip, Cornelius, and Peter. (Genesis 16, 18,19, Judges 6, 13, Luke 1, Acts 8:26-40; 10:1-8; Acts 12)

God often speaks through **music** as He did through David's Psalms.

After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the Lord and to praise him for the splendor of His holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying: "Give thanks to the Lord, for His love endures forever." (2Chronicles 20:21)

The Holy Spirit guides through the **wise counsel of others** to encourage, correct, and build us up.

Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom in the future. (Proverbs 19:20)

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom. (Colossians 3:16)

Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another. (Proverbs 27:17)

Oil and perfume make the heart glad, and the sweetness of a friend comes from his earnest counsel. (Proverbs 27:9)

THE NEW CREATION IS THE TEMPLE OF GOD

Israel has historically referred to physical descendants of Jacob, through whom God established His covenant. However, a faith covenant was made with Abraham earlier on that spoke of God's people being identified more by their hearts than by ancestry.

For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his

offspring, but 'Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.' This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring. (Romans 9:6-8)

This means that ethnic (natural) Israel and the true Israel are not identical.

For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. (Galatians 6:15–16)

The New Creation constitutes the people of God, whose faith in Christ makes one a child of Abraham – believing Jews and Gentiles together.

A true Jew is one inwardly; circumcision is of the heart by the Spirit. (Romans 2:28–29)

Those of faith are the sons of Abraham; if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. (Galatians 3:7, 29)

We are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh. (Philippians 3:3)

Language that once applied to national Israel (a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation) is applied to the church.

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (1 Peter 2:9–10)

In Romans 11, mention is made of an olive tree with natural branches (unbelieving Jews) being broken off, and wild

branches (Gentiles) being grafted in. This means that a spiritual reality fulfills the identity of God's people beyond ethnic boundaries. The New Creation is being built up together, united by a common Saviour. The promises of God are fulfilled in Christ for people of all ethnicities who come to faith in Jesus. Physical descent from Abraham does not automatically grant salvation. It is spiritual Israel, the New Creation, that shares in the New Covenant blessings. Coinciding with this reality, God no longer dwells in a physical temple in Jerusalem as He did with ethnic Israel. He now dwells in the New Creation as His Temple.

Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple. (1Corinthians 3:16-17)

Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies. (1Corinthians 6:19-20)

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of His household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. (Ephesians 2:19-20)

Believers are living stones built into God's spiritual house, to offer praise and worship to Him.

As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1Peter 2:4-5)

Because God dwells in the New Creation, it is holy, called to purity, holiness, and unity.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and He will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. (Revelation 21:3)

NEW CREATION KINGS & PRIESTS

Believers in Christ have an elevated status as royal kings and priests in the Kingdom of Christ. We embody God's authority and holiness as we reign with Him. This status empowers Christians to represent God to others and to declare His praises, emphasizing their role in worship and service within the community of faith.

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. (1Peter 2:9)

And has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! (Revelation 1:6)

You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth." (Revelation 5:10)

Kings and priests serve God with dedication and reverence. They embody holiness in their lives and guide others toward doing the same. They act as intermediaries between God and His people, mostly through praying in faith for God's will to be done in situations, and in the lives of others. They proclaim God's Word. They know their spiritual authority and how to exercise the power of God, which is essential for reigning with Christ. This authority is rooted in the

understanding of their identity as a child of God, enabling them to stand against spiritual challenges and fulfill their God-given potential.

THE NEW CREATION WARRIOR

The apostle Paul gave a powerful metaphor about Christians engaged in spiritual battle in Ephesians 6:10-18, showing that the New Creation is comprised of warriors in Christ's kingdom who actively advance His rule on the earth. To accomplish this, the Lord has given believers powerful spiritual weapons to vanquish powers, principalities, and every obstacle and foe aligned against Christ and themselves.

HELMET OF SALVATION - The first essential piece of armor for a soldier is a helmet, without which he would be susceptible to blows from the enemy that could fell him. The physical helmet protects his head, and the spiritual helmet in a Christian's armor protects his mind. One of the first things that assail most new Christians as they start out on their journey with Christ is doubt concerning their salvation. Salvation comes the moment we place our trust in Jesus to save us, but that salvation is worked out through our minds, the primary place where spiritual battle is fought. Jesus works His freeing truth into our hearts but Satan fights to put up strongholds to bind us.

The apostle John had written "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life. And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him." (1John 5:13)

BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS - The breastplate of a soldier's uniform shielded the most vulnerable and essential parts of the body. Spiritually it symbolizes protecting the believer's heart which is the center of

emotions, will, and conscience. These areas are the prime targets of Satan when he slings his arrows of temptation, accusation, condemnation, and doubt at the believer. Christ's imputed righteousness is the breastplate. When a Christian trusts in Christ, God sees him clothed in Jesus' righteousness, not his own flawed efforts (which Isaiah 64:6 describes as "filthy rags.")

2 Corinthians 5:21 says: "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

This divine shield repels Satan's accusations that the believer is not good enough and God therefore doesn't love him. Wearing this breastplate means resting in Christ's finished work on the cross. In Isaiah 59:17, God Himself is pictured as a warrior putting on righteousness as a breastplate to bring justice. Ultimately, the breastplate is a reminder that our protection doesn't come from self-righteousness or our own human moral perfection, but from relying on God's righteousness, provided through Jesus. This piece of armor equips believers to remain secure and victorious! It is often illustrated as God draping us in a spotless robe that belongs to Christ, covering our guilt completely.

"To the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness" (Romans 4:5).

Our sins have been imputed to Christ on the cross and His perfect righteousness is imputed to us by faith. The apostle Paul was once a self-righteous Pharisee but after his encounter with the Lord, he wanted only to be found in Christ, *"not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness from God based on faith." (Philippians 3:9)*

THE BELT OF TRUTH - Truth holds together the fabric of the Christian's faith. Historically, Roman legionaries used belts to carry swords, pouches, and support armor. Losing a belt could seriously limit access to life-saving tools or weapons. Metaphorically speaking, the belt of truth wraps the Christian in integrity and honesty, the necessary tools to walk in confidence, providing support to shield him from false accusations of being unworthy, deceiving doctrines, spurious and misleading ideas, and other misconceptions. It recognizes temptation's lures and guards him from being tripped up by fleshly lusts. Truth keeps the believer's faith grounded in reality. Otherwise, the supernatural can easily become distorted by fantasy and deception until what is believed no longer resembles what is real. This is why truth is black and white and exclusive by its very nature. If something is true, then anything else is a lie.

SWORD OF THE SPIRIT - The sword of the Spirit in Ephesians 6:17 describes it as the Word of God. “Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” This part of a soldier's equipment enables believers to stand firm against spiritual attacks from the devil and evil forces. Unlike the other pieces of armor which are primarily defensive, the sword is the only offensive weapon mentioned. The apostle Paul likely had in mind the Roman gladius—a short, sharp, double-edged sword used by soldiers in close combat for quick, decisive strikes. It was practical, deadly, and always close at hand. The Word of God is like that - living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword, able to pierce soul and spirit, joints and marrow, discerning thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12) This means that it can cut through deception. Jesus modelled this when He resisted Satan's temptation in the wilderness by quoting scripture (which was wielding the sword of the Spirit). Jesus answered

Satan with the Scriptures and the devil could make no rejoinder. It decisively ended the Adversary's argument because the Word of God is the final authority when backed up by faith, and Satan knew that Jesus had absolute faith. Three times the devil tried to defeat the Lord by twisting scripture and tempting Him, but every tactic failed. Jesus was without sin, and He stayed that way because He was an expert in wielding the sword. On His lips, the Word was lethal to deceptive stratagem and cunning subterfuge. Christians, like Jesus, have this same weapon at their disposal to combat all the wiles of the enemy. In the same way that Jesus used the Word, believers are encouraged to memorize and meditate on Scripture, speak it out in prayer against temptation, and allow the Holy Spirit to bring specific verses to mind in moments of need.

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

"Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him." (Proverbs 30:5)

"No weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and this is their vindication from me," declares the Lord." (Isaiah 54:17)

To keep the Sword of the Spirit sharp, it is necessary for the Christian to believe in its authority. Knowledge of what the Word says will avail nothing if faith is not backing it.

GOSPEL OF GRACE - Ephesians 6:15 describes a very important part of a Christian soldier's battle gear, this time

having to do with what he wears on his feet. "*...having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace."*

Isaiah 52:7 also mentions feet: *"How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"*

The gospel is the revelation of God's grace to humanity through the provision of salvation in Christ Jesus. It is the glad news that God no longer holds a believer's sins against him. There is now peace between God and those who have been reborn in Christ. This is why the gospel is called a 'gospel of peace', or as Kell and Lorri liked to call it - 'the grace gospel'.

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

As Paul said: *"For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. So, from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who*

had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:14-21).

NEW CREATION OVERCOMERS

Trials are unpleasant and they will test our faith, but through them we learn to persevere and this leads to maturity. Besides, amid difficulties and challenges, we have God's wisdom which He gives generously without finding fault, as long as we believe and do not doubt. But if we doubt, we are like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed around by the wind. Doubters are double-minded. They have the mind of the flesh and do not receive anything from the Lord. But those with faith have open doors to God's power and might.

A double minded man is unstable in all his ways. (James 1:8)

Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ. (1 Corinthians 2:15)

One area in which our faith is often tested is in finances. Some of us live in humble circumstances and this can bring hardships and temptations that the wealthy do not have to contend with. However, the poor should remember their high position in the Lord and glory in the fact that they are deeply loved by God. The rich, meanwhile, should remember that their wealth will pass away like a wildflower, wilting in the scorching heat of the sun. Riches are unpredictable and can easily fade away. But whether we are rich or poor by this world's standards, we can be encouraged by the fact that all who persevere under trial will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

When trials come and we are tempted, it is never God tempting us. Our fleshly desires can entice us to desire wrong things so that we are led into sin. Sin always leads to

death, but believers do not consistently live evil lives. They walk by the Spirit.

...if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. (Romans 8:13)

The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God. (Romans 8:6-8)

You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death (because of sin's curse), the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. (Romans 8:9-10)

God may use trials and temptations to mature us, but He never lays snares for us, and He never acts as the tempter. Rather, God gives good and perfect gifts, all of which have come to us through Jesus Christ. We have the courage of Jesus Himself as we face dangers and opposition in the world. As new creations in Christ, fearfulness and timidity are foreign to our new natures.

"God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7)

You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. (1John 4:4)

The way to overcome fear is to have complete trust in God, even in the darkest times. This trust comes from knowing that God is good and is always on our side, and this is why we love Him. Of course, loving the Father means loving His

child as well. This is the Royal Command - to love God above all, and to love our neighbor as yourself. These two commands are not burdensome. The world may oppose us and present all sorts of challenges, but everyone born of God is an overcomer of the world. Christians live in this world, but we are not of the world. It is not our home, and we are in fact 'aliens' on this earth. One day the world will be no more.

Jesus said:" If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. (John 15:18-19)

"They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. (John 17:16)

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;(Philippians 3:20)

All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. (Hebrews 11:13-16)

Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. (1 Peter 2:11)

When we are in trouble, we know we can pray. When we are happy, we can sing songs of praise. If we are sick, we can call for the elders of the church to pray and anoint us with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer offered in faith will make us well and the Lord will raise us up.

Jesus said: Truly I tell you, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete...John 16:23-24)

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if

we know that He hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of Him. (1John 5:14)

NEW CREATION CITY OF GOD

The New Jerusalem is presented as a heavenly city of God, identified with the New Creation Bride.

But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. (Galatians 4:6)

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, (Hebrews12:22-23)

The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and My own new name. (Revelation 3:12)

I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride and adorned for her husband. (Revelation 21:2)

And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:6)

John next saw a new heaven and a new earth. The first heaven and earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. "Heaven and Earth' is metaphorical language referring to an age, or eon. The Old Covenant was the 'heaven and earth' that passed away with the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the physical Temple. The 'new heaven and earth' is the New Covenant age with God's people now called the New Jerusalem or Bride of Christ.

The apostle John had a revelation of the New Jerusalem, a spiritual and symbolic picture.

"I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth have passed away, and the sea is no more. I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband. I heard a loud voice out of heaven saying, "Behold, God's dwelling is with people, and he will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; neither will there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, anymore. The first things have passed away." (Revelation 22:1-5).

John was describing the New Creation realm, a spiritual kingdom wherein the heart and soul of every believer in Christ resides.

"One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls that were loaded with the seven last plagues came, and he spoke with me, saying, "Come here. I will show you the wife, the Lamb's bride." He carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, as if it were a jasper stone, clear as crystal; having a great and high wall; having twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. On the east were three gates; and on the north three gates; and on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them twelve names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb. (Revelation 21:9-18)

The number 12 is associated with God's Covenant people. The 144 cubits symbolize the fullness of God's faithful Old and New Covenant people. These numbers are not describing the blueprint of an actual city, but rather the

spiritual realities behind the New Jerusalem, God's redeemed people.

"The foundations of the city's wall were adorned with all kinds of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; and the twelfth, amethyst. The twelve gates were twelve pearls. Each one of the gates was made of one pearl. The street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb, are its temple. The city has no need for the sun or moon to shine, for the very glory of God illuminated it, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk in its light. The kings of the earth bring the glory and honor of the nations into it. Its gates will in no way be shut by day (for there will be no night there), and they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it so that they may enter. There will in no way enter into it anything profane, or one who causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life." (Revelation 21: 19-27)

The New Jerusalem is comprised of believers in Christ only.

"You also, as living stones, are built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." (1Peter 2:4-5) " So then you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God, being built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone; in whom the whole building, fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit." (Ephesians 2:19-22).

However, John mentions earthly kings and nations bringing their glory into the New Jerusalem. This is referring to the

Kingdom's presence while Christians are living physically on the earth. Believers carry the Kingdom inside their spirits, so wherever they are, the Kingdom is manifested.

"He showed me a river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. On this side of the river and on that was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruits, yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. There will be no curse anymore. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His servants will serve Him. They will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. There will be no night, and they need no lamp light or sun light; for the Lord God will illuminate them. They will reign forever and ever." (Revelation 22:1-5)

The living waters are not literal water, but rather a symbol of Life of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus told HIs disciples: "Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." (John 7:38)

John wrote that Jesus said to him: "*These words are faithful and true. The Lord God of the spirits of the prophets sent his angel to show to his bondservants the things which must happen soon. Behold, I come quickly. Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book." Now I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. When I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who had shown me these things. He said to me, "See you don't do it! I am a fellow bondservant with you and with your brothers, the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God." He said to me, "Don't seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand (very soon). He who acts unjustly, let him act unjustly still. He who is filthy, let him be filthy still. He who is righteous, let him do righteousness still. He who is holy, let him be holy still. Behold, I come quickly. My reward is*

with Me, to repay to each man according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the Tree of Life and may enter in by the gates into the City. Outside are the dogs, the sorcerers, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify these things to you for the assemblies. I am the root and the offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star. The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come!" He who hears, let him say, "Come!" He who is thirsty, let him come. He who desires, let him take the water of life freely. I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book, if anyone adds to them, may God add to him the plagues which are written in this book. If anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, may God take away his part from the Tree of Life, and out of the Holy City, which are written in this book. He who testifies these things says; "Yes, I come quickly." Amen! Yes, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with all the saints. Amen." (Revelation 22:1-21)

NEW CREATION REWARDS

Revelation is called the 'The Apocalypse of John'. 'Apocalypse' is a Greek word meaning the unveiling of things not known before and which needs a revelation to be understood. The Book of Revelation was written while the apostle John was imprisoned for his faith on the island of Patmos around 68 or 69 AD. His remarkable vision explained many marvelous things that would happen soon. It was very important to the early Church because although the believers were already facing persecution, even greater trials awaited them. They would need added encouragement to comfort them as they faced the coming trials. The apostle John encouraged the believers by showing how the crisis they were in was not really the true picture. God was doing amazing things that the Christians couldn't see because it

was happening in the spiritual realm. Revelation pulled back the curtain so that they could see the reality. This involved seeing Jesus as He now is, as King of kings and Lord of lords, seated with the Father in heaven in the full splendor of His divinity.

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

This statement is saying that the Son of God has always existed and always will exist. It refers to Christ, as God incarnate, existing from everlasting to everlasting. Isaiah described this aspect of God in several places in the Old Testament.

"I, the Lord, am the first, and with the last I am He" (Isaiah 41:4).

"I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God" (Isaiah 44:6).

"I am He; I am the first, I also am the last" (Isaiah 48:12).

Jesus also gave reassuring promises of His love and grace to those who remained true to Him. He promised them the right to eat from the tree of life in the paradise of God; they would receive a victor's crown; be immune from the second death; receive hidden manna; have authority over the nations; be given the morning star; have the privilege of walking with Him, dressed in white to show they were worthy; have Jesus acknowledge them before the Father and the angels; their names would never be blotted out from the Book of Life; a crown of victory would be theirs; they would be raised up as a pillar in the temple of God; they would receive a white stone with a secret name on it; Christ's new name would be written on them along with the name of the city of God, the new Jerusalem; and amazingly, they would have the right to sit with Jesus on His throne! All of these wonderful things belonged to them as children of God

and members of the New Creation. And they also belong to us today!

1.Tree of Life - signifies immortality. When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, they lost access to immortality, but in Christ, we have been given eternal life.

2. Victor's Crown - The apostle Paul encouraged Timothy to live out his Christianity like an athlete running a race to gain a victor's crown. Through Jesus Christ we have victory over sin and death, and over the power of the enemy. This crown belongs to every believer. (2 Timothy 2:3-10)

3. Second Death - The first death is a physical death when a person dies on this earth. The second death is spiritual and permanent, when a person is condemned to eternal destruction in a 'lake of fire'. Those who belong to Jesus are immune from the second death.

4. Hidden Manna - The manna given to the Israelites in the wilderness provided for their physical needs. This symbolizes Jesus as the Bread of Life. Those who eat of Christ's Body (receive His life into themselves) receive eternal life and are sustained spiritually.

5. Authority Over Nations - Jesus rules over all the nations, and those who are His, rule with Him. We do this by praying in faith for our governments and for the salvation of unbelievers, but especially when we advance Christ's kingdom over the face of the earth through the preaching of the gospel.

"If we endure, we shall also reign with Him" (2 Tim. 2:12).

And to the one who is victorious and continues in My work until the end (70AD) I will give authority over the nations. He will rule them with an iron scepter and shatter them like pottery—just as I have received authority from My Father. (Revelation 2:26)

6. Morning Star - Jesus Christ is described as the 'morning star' in 2 Peter 1:19 and He identifies Himself as 'the bright morning star' in Revelation 22:16. Just as the dawn star breaks forth out of darkness, bringing light to the earth, so Christ breaks the chains of darkness over His people by rising in their hearts as the Light of Salvation.

7. Dressed In White - It was given to her (the New Jerusalem) to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. (Revelation 19:8)

8. Book of Life - "If anyone's name was not found written in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." (Revelation 20:15) The names of all Christians are written in the Book of Life, and they will never be erased.

9. Temple Pillar - Christians are established (pillars) in the Temple of God.

10. White Stone with a New Name - A Jewish high priest's breastplate contained twelve stones, each with a name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel engraved on it. The high priest bore the names of God's people into God's presence in this way. Similarly, the "white stone" with our name (or Christ's name) written on it could refer to our standing in God's presence. '

You have been raised up with Christ. So, think about things that are in heaven. That is where Christ is. He is sitting at God's right hand... Your life is hidden with Christ in God. Christ is your life. ...You have started living a new life...Christ is everything and He is in everything. You are God's chosen people. You are holy and dearly loved. (Colossians 3:1-14)

There are also at least 6 crowns mentioned in the Bible.

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may

obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is disciplined in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown" (1Corinthians 9:24,25)

For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?" (1Thessalonians 2:19)

Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. (2Timothy 4:8)

And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. (1Peter 5:4)

Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown (Revelation 2:10)

Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him. (James 1:12)

These crowns are also applicable to every believer in Christ. The Bible says that Jesus has made us kings and priests, righteous and perfect in the presence of God.

You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth." (Revelation 5:10)

But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You

have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks better word than the blood of Abel. (Hebrews 12:22-24)

"In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority" (Colossians 2:9–10).

In Revelation 4:10–11 we see a scene in heaven of twenty-four elders falling down before Jesus who sits on the throne. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: 'You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being." They indicate that, despite what they have done on earth to earn those crowns, only Jesus is truly worthy of glory and honor. In the presence of the Lord Jesus Himself, all good deeds we have done will pale in comparison. A crown will seem an insignificant gift to present to the One who gave His life for us. With such a high position and status, we can easily see why Paul urges believers to walk in a manner worthy of their calling.

THE NEW CREATION IS ETERNAL

The New Creation was never saved by works, so we can't be unsaved by works.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Salvation involves a spiritual transformation that can't be reversed.

For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— For you died, and

your life is now hidden with Christ in God. For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. (Romans 6:6, Colossians 3:3, 2Peter 1:5-7)

We are sealed by the Holy Spirit until the day of redemption.

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory... And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (Ephesians 1:13-14, 4:30)

God already declared us justified and glorified.

And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. (Romans 8:30)

Nothing can separate us from God's love.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:35-39)

Salvation is a gift.

For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. 12 It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, (Titus 2:11-12)

We are already saved, not waiting to be saved.

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God... For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. (1Corinthians 1:18; 1Peter 1:18-19)

Salvation involves a present reality, not a future possibility.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God. (Ephesians 2:8)

SUMMARY OF NEW CREATION REALITIES

I am forgiven.

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace. (Ephesians 1:7)

I am rescued.

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Colossians 1:13-14)

I am redeemed.

And all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. (Romans 3:24)

I am God's Masterpiece.

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10)

I am valuable.

Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. (Luke 12:6-7)

I am chosen.

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. (John 15:16)

I am justified.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. (Romans 3:23-24)

I am accepted.

Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. (Romans 15:7)

I am saved.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— (Ephesians 2:8,9)

I am courageous.

Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you." (Deuteronomy 31:6)

I am free.

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you [free from the law of sin and death. (Romans 8:1-2)

I am wonderfully made.

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful; I know that full well. (Psalm 139:14)

I am a new creature.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! (2Corinthians 5:17)

I am born of God.

For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. (1Peter 1:23)

I am adopted by God

He predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will. (Ephesians 1:5)

I am a child of God.

Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. (John 1:12)

I am Jesus' friend

I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. (John 15:15)

I am a member of Christ's body.

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, [21] who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. (1Corinthians 12:2)

I am a citizen of heaven.

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. (Philippians 3:20-21)

THE NEW CREATION WILL LIVE FOREVER WITH JESUS

We may not know exactly what our eternal home will look like, but we can be certain that it will be a wonderful place of great beauty and peace. Revelation underlines this fact. God's loved ones will see Him face to face and enjoy His close Presence forever. We will never suffer pain or privation of any kind. Past sorrows will be dissolved by the Lord's sweet comfort, and we will see our loved ones again. Sin will not exist there, so we will be safe from harm, violence, or anything that might hurt us. Revelation is Jesus'

message that something wonderful is awaiting His people. It is also His personal message of love and comfort to us.

The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come!" He who hears, let him say, "Come!" He who is thirsty, let him come. He who desires, let him take the water of life freely." (Revelation22:17)