

Ascent to Truth

by

John Louis

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Foreground - Harbour Road in Ancient Ephesus. Photograph taken by John Louis.

Background – Faint image of Ancient Codex.

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Preface

The title of this work, *Ascent to Truth*, embodies our commitment to know the fundamentals of God's teachings in the Bible, starting in the Old Testament. As followers of Jesus, we are under the New Covenant. This, however, does not imply that the Old Testament is not important - it is still the word of God. In addition, by studying the Old Testament, we gain a fuller appreciation of the New Testament, i.e., the teachings of the New Covenant. A good grasp of the Old Testament will help us appreciate and deepen our understanding of the New Testament. In the first century, as the New Testament was in the process of being written by the early Apostles, the Scripture of the early Christians was the Old Testament.

Following the truth of God's word is not always a popular notion, firstly because "the message of the cross is foolishness to the perishing" (I Corinthians 1:18), and secondly, because it sometimes challenges our long held traditions and beliefs, which then demands that we go against the grain of our own emotions. It makes us walk on the road less travelled. God's way is available to those who are dedicated to searching through His word, and, more importantly, putting His word into practice. It is a steep climb, like the climb the Pilgrims made as they travelled to Jerusalem annually. It is an ascent, like the climb Jesus made on the road to Golgotha. In essence, it is the only way to the Father, as Jesus himself says, "I am the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6).

In no way am I professing that, as a church, we have all the truth. However, we want all to know what we believe to be true about the fundamentals of Christianity without coming across judgemental. Certainly this ancient prayer which I came across puts it aptly:

*From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth,
From the laziness that is content with half-truths,
From the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth,
O God of truth, deliver us.*

As followers of Jesus, we are grateful for being enlightened on the fundamentals that we believe are clearly taught and supported by the scriptures. And, where such teachings are clear, we believe that no human authority has the power to ignore God's word, or take it out of context, or replace it with traditions.

Three books in particular helped me to come up with fresh material from the Old Testament, which enabled me to put together this series. Although I do not agree with the authors' viewpoints on every issue mentioned in these books, they did help me to go deeper and think from a different angle; for this, I owe the authors a big thank you. They are referred to in places in the material, but I would like to acknowledge them at this point: *None of These Diseases* by McMillen and Stern (2005), *Secrets of Golgotha* by Ernest Martin (1996) and *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction* by Eugene Peterson (2000).

It is my hope that this book will help us to ascend towards God's truth as a family together in our endeavour to deepen our convictions on the fundamental truths of the Bible.

John Louis

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Writing a book, however small, is usually the work of more than one person. This is also true for this book. I would like to thank the following:

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9. Dr Shirlena Huang for her valuable editing and feedback.

Finally, my biggest thanks to my wife, Karen Louis, for her excellent editing skills and for giving me some slack as I devoted my time to this project.

About the Author

John Louis moved to Singapore shortly after being married in London. He and his wife officially began the Central Christian Church of Singapore in 1988. They are currently overseeing about 20 churches in Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia – now known as the South-East Asian Region of Churches (S.E.A. churches; see www.seachurches.org) and through God's grace have helped the region to grow to a membership of over 4,000.

In addition to his pastoral work, John is also Founder and President of HOPE *worldwide* (Singapore). Apart from his Bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering, he also holds a Master's Degree in Counselling from Monash University, and is a Professional Member of the Australian and American Counselling Associations. He and his wife reside in Singapore with their two teenage children.

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CHAPTER ONE:

The Word of God – The Bible

Introduction

The first author attributed by the Bible with writing inspired documents is Moses. Historically, he is believed to have lived around 1500 BC, and to have written the first five books of the Bible, also known as The Torah, or the Law of Moses, from Genesis to Deuteronomy. Jesus himself (in Luke 24: 44) mentioned him as being the author! Other men followed suit and wrote the inspired message down as they taught God's people the decrees and laws that they were to follow (I Samuel 10: 25, Jeremiah 36: 2). Later, men like Daniel followed the writings of the prophets before them; for example, Daniel believed in and referred to the words of Jeremiah in Daniel 9: 2.

The last book of the Old Testament (Malachi) was completed around 400 BC. For the next four centuries, no prophet came into the picture, and during that period the people became thirsty for God's revelation. Four centuries was a long time to go without hearing the voice of a prophet. With no actual inspired books being transmitted during that time, pretenders arose, and many false scriptures, including most of the books known as the Apocrypha, were written at this time. Finally, just before Jesus began his ministry in approximately AD 27, John the Baptist broke the silence. Jesus took over until around the year AD 30, the year most recognized as the year of his death. The church began about fifty days after his resurrection, on the day of Pentecost that year, under the leadership of the Apostles. These men had walked with Jesus for about three years. Several of them were credited with having written some of the scriptures, along with Paul who came later into the scene. It is believed that all the inspired books were completed in a comparatively short period of time, between the years AD 50-100. This section of the Bible is known as the New Testament, as opposed to the writings from the time of Moses till Malachi, known as the Old Testament. In Greek, the word "testament" would be better rendered as "contract" or "covenant", which brings out the idea that God made two basic covenants with his people throughout history.

The books of the bible can be categorised in various ways, and one popular arrangement of the Old Testament places the books in three broad categories (Jesus mentions these categories in Luke 24: 44) known as:

1. Five books of Law – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy
2. Twenty-one books of the Prophets –
 - 2.1 Former prophets - Joshua, Judges, I and II Samuel, I and II Kings
 - 2.2 Latter prophets – Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the twelve books of the minor prophets
3. Thirteen books of Writings – Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, I and II Chronicles

The New Testament may be grouped into three parts as well:

1. Five books of History – Matthew to Acts
2. Twenty-one books of Doctrine – Romans to Jude
3. One book of Prophecy – Revelation.

The Bible was written originally in three languages: Hebrew (language spoken in Israel), Aramaic (language spoken in Syria) and Greek. Aramaic characters are the same as the Hebrew ones, but they are distinctly two languages.

The New Testament

The earliest copies of the New Testament are known as manuscripts, which mean anything written by hand before the age of printing. How are the manuscripts dated? Here are some general factors which are considered:

1. Are the words all written together or are there spaces between them?
2. How many columns are there to a page?
3. Are there any marks of punctuation or divisions into paragraphs?
4. What is the form of the letters?

The earliest and most important manuscripts are written in large capitals known as *uncials*. The later manuscripts use a smaller “font” and are known as *cursives* or miniscule. To illustrate uncials writings, we could use the following example:

**PAUL CALLED TO BE AN APOSTLE OF CHRIST JESUS BY THE
WILL OF GOD AND OUR BROTHERS SO THENES**

The breakdown between Greek uncial and miniscule manuscripts is shown below in Table 1:

Table 1

Distribution of Uncial and Miniscule Greek Manuscripts

Manuscripts Catalogued	Uncial Script	Miniscule Script
Papyri P1-P88	88	
Uncial MSS 01-0274	274	
Miniscule MSS 1-2795		2795
Lectionaries 11-12209	245	1964
Total	607	4759

Total number of N.T. lectionaries: 2,209

Total number of N.T. manuscripts: 5,366

Note. Table adapted from Metzger, B., “Appendix III: Statistics Relating to the Manuscripts of the Greek New Testament,” in *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible*, pp. 54-56, 1976

All in all there are over 5,000 Greek manuscripts and over 10,000 Latin ones, as well as 9,300 in other early languages (like 2,000 in Ethiopic, 4,000 in Slavic, etc). This brings the total to over 24,000 manuscripts of the New Testament today.

The Significant New Testament Manuscripts

Of all the different manuscripts that are available to us today, the three most important ones (uncials) are:

1. ***Codex Vaticanus*** – Known as Codex B. It is a fourth century uncial, written on vellum (also known as “parchment”, was made from animal skins, replacing papyrus) because it was more durable. The Vatican Manuscript is acknowledged as being the most important text of the New Testament. It is presently located at the Vatican Library in Rome and it has been there since 1475. A photographic facsimile was only allowed to be made of it in 1889-1890 and another in 1904. This ancient document contains most of the LXX (Septuagint) version of the Old Testament and the New Testament in Greek. Some parts of it are lost, from the beginning up to Genesis 46: 28, some psalms (106-138) and the ending of Hebrews from 9: 14 to the end, as well as Timothy, Titus and Revelation. It consists of 759 leaves and each page is about 10 inches square of the finest vellum. This manuscript also does not include Mark 16: 9-20.
2. ***Codex Sinaiticus*** – Known as Codex Aleph (*aleph* is the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet). Of almost equal importance to Codex Vaticanus is the Codex Sinaiticus, discovered by Constantine Tischendorf at St. Catherine’s Monastery on Mount Sinai in 1844. In 1933, the Soviet authorities sold part of it to the British Museum for £100,000 and it is now in the British Library, London. It is a fourth or fifth century uncial. Only parts of the Old Testament are available in Septuagint (LXX) version. The New Testament is also in Greek.
3. ***Codex Alexandrinus*** – Known as Codex A. This is a fifth century uncial. It has both the Old and New Testaments. Originally, it was to be presented to King James I, but he died before the manuscript reached England (on its journey from Constantinople – previously it was in Alexandria where it was kept for a long time) and so it was given to Charles I in 1627. It is now in the British Library, London.

These three are considered the most important New Testament Greek uncial manuscripts.

Two other manuscripts that are considered important are:

4. ***Codex Ephraem*** – Known as Codex C. It was brought to Italy and purchased by Catherine de Medici, who ended up being the wife and mother of several French Kings, in 1533. It has two layers of writing on it. The top layer dates from the twelfth century, the bottom is a fifth century one. This is known as a *palimpsest*, which means that the old writing was washed and the ink scraped off, and was then rewritten over the old handwriting. It is laid in the National Library of Paris. Much of the Old Testament is missing but the New Testament is intact except for II Thessalonians and II John.
5. ***Codex Bezae*** – Known as Codex D. This manuscript is a fifth century uncial and was written in two languages, Latin and Greek, and is the earliest known bilingual manuscript of the New Testament. The Greek and Latin texts face each other, with the Greek on the left side and the Latin on the right. It has some unique additions that others do not have. It was found in 1562 by Theodore Beza at St. Trensac Monastery, Lyons, France. In 1581 Beza gave it to Cambridge University. It contains only the Gospels and Acts, and a portion, in Latin, of III John.

Other ancient documents worthy of mention are:

6. ***Chester Beatty Papyri*** - Known as P45, P46, P47. Found in 1931, Sir Frederic Kenyon examined these twelve manuscripts, which turned out to be from the third century or earlier. These manuscripts are located in Vienna, Dublin and Michigan.
7. ***John Rylands Fragment*** – Known as P52. Dated to AD 125, it is the earliest known copy of any part of the New Testament. It is about 3.5 inches by 2.5 inches and is stored in the John Rylands Library, Manchester, England. It contains John 18: 31-33 and 37-38.

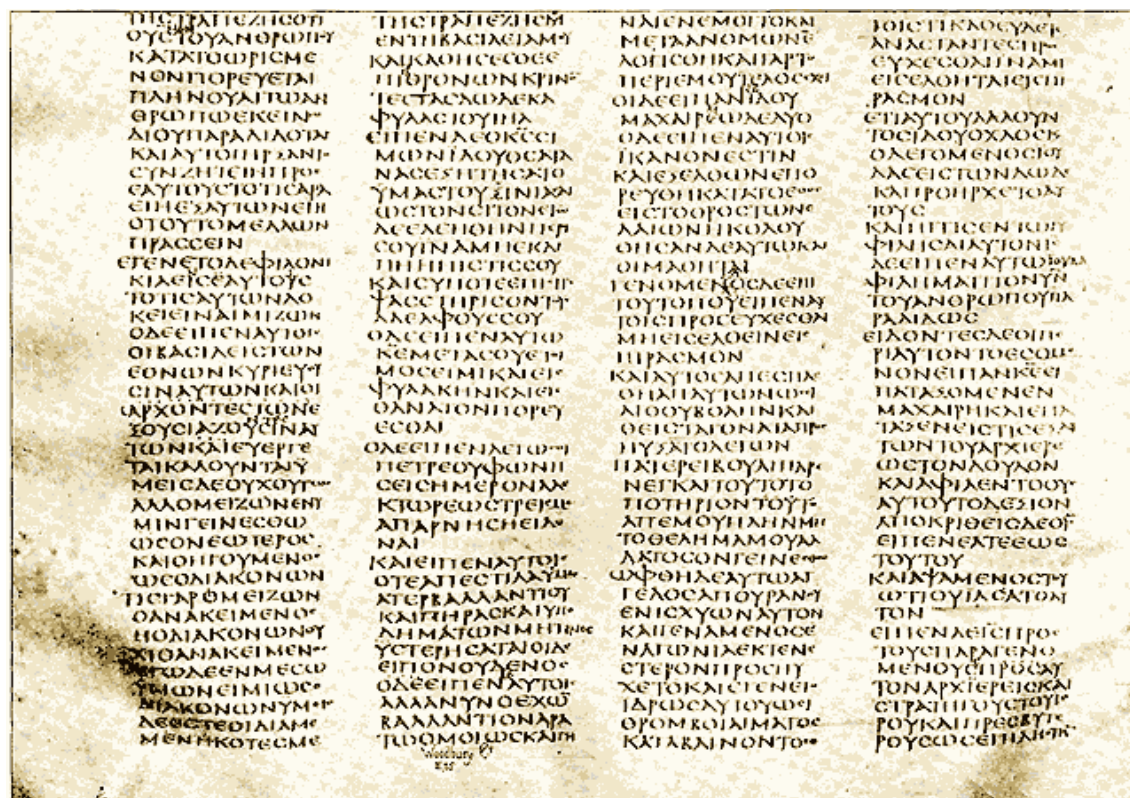
A summary of the characteristics of the above codices are provided in Table 2 in page 98 of this book.

Another important event to note is that in AD 384, Jerome, a great scholar of his day, was credited with translating the Bible from Old Latin into a revised version. This Latin translation, known as “The Vulgate”, became the authoritative version of the Western world, while the Greek manuscripts were the authority for the Eastern world.

P⁵² - Rylands Papyrus



Ⲭ— Codex Sinaiticus



Significance of the Textual Variations

What would your response be if you were told that there are 200,000 variations among the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament? (Lightfoot 1986, Geisler & Nix 1986).

You may think that all those variations mean that there are many differences and many mistakes, probably made when the manuscripts were copied over the centuries, and this might shake your trust in the bible and your faith. However, nothing could be further from the truth. Instead, it should be realized that this large number is a result of counting all the variations in all the 5,000 different New Testament Greek manuscripts. For example, if one word is misspelled in 4,000 different manuscripts, then that amounts to 4,000 errors. Therefore, the larger the number of manuscripts available, the more errors there will be. For example, what if there were only five manuscripts? The number of variations would be very small, but this would give rise to the notion that our text may not be so reliable since only five manuscripts were discovered. So, the more manuscripts there are, the better to check on the reliability of the early text, but then more variations will naturally arise.

What are the causes of these variations?

1. Spelling over the years changed, just like in the English language
2. Variations in grammar also occurred over the years
3. Slips of the pen during the copying process (miss a word here, insert a word from the wrong line there, etc)

Examples of the Most Significant Variations

1. John 7: 53 - 8: 11 – This is the story of the adulterous woman. Almost all recent translations do not include this account in the main body. An early translation that contains this passage is Codex Bezae, which is known for unique readings. None of the other early manuscripts mentioned above contains this passage.
2. I John 5: 7. Only two manuscripts contain it. These two are of very late dates, one from the fourteenth or fifteenth century and the other from the sixteenth century.
3. Mark 16: 9-20. This one is a bit more complicated. It appears in the Alexandrian manuscript, Codex Ephraem and Codex Bezae, other early uncials, all late uncials and miniscule, five old Latin authorities, the Vulgate and several others. Besides there was a statement from Irenaeus (AD 130-202) which showed the existence of the passage (Lightfoot,

1986). However, the Vatican and the Sinaitic Manuscripts do not have this text and these are the very best manuscripts. Having said this, the event mentioned in this text is recorded in other gospels.

On the whole, the number of variations is so small that the effect on the overall text is negligible.

Scholars take all the manuscripts and put them together to help them verify what was in the original texts. The act of reconstructing text from the original using all the different manuscripts is both an art and a science and is known as *Textual Criticism*.

Sir Frederic Kenyon (1863-1952), Director of the British Museum for twenty-one years, wrote: “The Christian can take the whole Bible in his hand and say without fear or hesitation that he holds in it the true word of God, handed down without essential loss from generation to generation throughout the centuries” (Kenyon, 1958).

The Old Testament Text

The manuscripts of the Old Testament are not as vast as those of the New Testament for this reason - the Jewish scribes, known as Massoretes, would destroy any copies that were old or worn out, after replacing them with new copies. When the older manuscripts were destroyed, the scribes even gave them a ceremonial burial! Their motive was to prevent the improper use of the older, possibly damaged scriptures. Before burial they were stored in a “genizah” (an Aramaic word, which means to hide) – a type of storeroom. As a result not many of these manuscripts survived.

These Jewish scribes looked upon the art of copying with almost superstitious respect. This group of scribes came into being around AD 500, so their Hebrew texts were known as the Massoretes texts. However, they were by no means the earliest scribes that developed the fine art of copying.

Apart from some of the manuscripts that were discovered fairly recently, like the Dead Sea Scrolls, the following are the oldest and most credible Hebrew manuscripts we have available:

1. ***The Leningrad Codex*** – This is the oldest and most complete manuscript of the Hebrew bible. It was written in Cairo around AD 916 and resides in the National Library of St. Petersburg, Russia, not in Leningrad.

2. **The Aleppo Codex** – This codex derives its name from a city in Syria where the manuscript was placed for a long time. It dates to around AD 900. It used to be complete, but parts of it were destroyed during the riots of the Arabs against the Jews in 1947. Eventually, it was smuggled out of Syria into Jerusalem where it remains today.
3. **The Cairo Codex** – This manuscript contains the Former and Latter Prophets, written by a Massorete scribe, Moses bin Asher, in AD 895. It is in Cairo today.
4. **The Codex of the Pentateuch** – This contains most of the Pentateuch (first 5 books of the Old Testament written by Moses). It dates to the tenth century and is kept in the British Library, London.

To copy was no easy matter. As stated above, the Massoretes took their work seriously, almost like a religion itself. Here were some of the guidelines, found in the Talmud, to which they adhered: (Lightfoot 1986 & Kenyon 1958):

1. They numbered the verses, words and letters of each book.
2. They counted the number of times each letter was used in each book.
3. They noted verses which contained all the letters of the alphabet.
4. They calculated the middle verse, the middle word and the middle letter of each book (e.g. the middle verse of the Pentateuch is Leviticus 8: 7, while the middle verse of the Hebrew Bible is Jeremiah 6: 7).

Bear in mind that the Hebrew language has no vowels, only consonants. The scribes were concerned that should the Hebrew language become obsolete, or no longer be spoken, there was the danger that the proper pronunciation would likewise disappear. So, to prevent this problem from arising, the scribes inserted vowel points above and below the lines of the text but did not alter the text at all.

The strict set of rules that was meticulously followed by the Massoretes was the reason for the accurate transmission of the Old Testament Hebrew scriptures.

Other Old Testament Versions (non Hebrew) are the *Latin Vulgate*, which was translated directly from the Hebrew by Jerome around AD 400. The Greek version of the Old Testament is known as the *Septuagint*, which was done around 250 BC. The other important Old Testament Greek translation is the *Samaritan Pentateuch*, translated around 200 BC.

The Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS)

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls was first reported in 1948 by a shepherd boy. The caves were situated in the ancient ruins of the Qumran community (around the north-west area of the Dead Sea), which had copied these scrolls and kept them in the caves for safekeeping. Archaeological evidence shows that this community lived between the second century BC to the first century AD, which fits with the dating of the scrolls. The first seven scrolls of the DSS contain the following:

1. A complete version of the book of Isaiah
2. An incomplete version of the book of Isaiah
3. The “Charter of a Jewish Sectarian Association”
4. A Commentary on the Old Testament book of Habakkuk
5. “Tales of the Patriarch”
6. The “War Scroll”
7. “Thanksgiving Hymns”

All seven scrolls are preserved in a museum in Jerusalem known as “The Shrine of the Book.”

Since the first discovery of the DSS, many other scrolls have been found. In 1956, in different caves in the same region, scrolls were found which contained some other parts of the Old Testament, among others. A book entitled, “The Dead Sea Scrolls” (Wise, Abegg & Cook, 2005) explains that initially in 1948 the Qumran community was in the territory of the government of Jordan. At that time the scrolls were kept in the Palestine Archaeological Museum and only a small team of people were allowed to inspect the texts. Although the first seven scrolls were more or less intact, the other ones were damaged and considerable time was spent determining which fragments belonged to which scroll. In 1967, after the Six-Day War in June, the Palestine Archaeological Museum was transferred to its new owner, the State of Israel. Obviously, there were political differences between members of the team and the government of Israel, which did not make it easy for the work to continue smoothly. Further, the small circle of scholars enjoyed their “power” and did not allow others to have access, contributing further to the delay in the publishing of these texts. This monopoly was broken in 1991 when Emanuel Tov took over as editor-in-chief of the team. He announced that all biblical scholars all over the world would have free access to all the photographs of the DSS. Only at that time was the complete set of texts published for the rest of the world to see.

If we split the texts into biblical and non-biblical writings, then the biblical ones make up about one-quarter of the total number of scrolls. The vast majority of all the scrolls were written in Hebrew though about one-sixth of the scrolls are in Aramaic and a few are in Greek.

By comparison with the standard biblical texts that we have today, some of the biblical texts of the DSS differ in “editions”. For example, two forms of the books of Jeremiah appeared, one agreeing with the traditional texts, another being about 15 percent shorter and with its contents in a different order. Likewise, with the book of Psalms, some of the psalms appear in a different order. Some manuscripts contained a few additional psalms. Like the variations found in some New Testament manuscripts (see section on “Examples of the Most Significant Variations”), these are relatively insignificant additions or changes and have a negligible effect on the reliability of the Old Testament texts.

By comparing the text of the DSS with the Massoretic Text, there is remarkable accuracy even though the two are separated by almost 1,000 years (comparing the dates of the Leningrad codex, Aleppo codex and Cairo codex which are from the ninth to tenth century AD, while the DSS dates to the second or first century BC). Most of the variations are no more than spelling differences and the others are not that insignificant. These differences are reflected in some of the English translations. It is astounding how accurately these scriptures have been copied through the ages. What is more exciting is that, now that we have access to the complete collection of the DSS, it is thrilling to find that the biblical texts of the Old Testament in the DSS include a copy of every book in the Old Testament except the book of Esther (Wise, Abegg & Cook, 2005), which means that the DSS, as such, are the oldest biblical Old Testament manuscripts ever found to date!

Given these facts, we can attest to the words of Jesus, quoted in Matthew 5:18,

¹⁸ I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

The English Bible – A Brief History

When Christianity began to spread, Christian writings were in Greek. Once the faith reached Egypt on the African continent, most of the writings were translated into the Coptic language. As mentioned earlier, when Jerome translated the Bible into an official Latin translation, known as The Vulgate (which means “common”) in the late fourth century, it became the Authorized Version for all of Europe, including England. In fact, it remained the dominant version for over a thousand years.

With the collapse of the Roman Empire in the fifth century, Latin was no longer the universal language of Europe. As it faded into oblivion, all the different territories re-established their own languages. Although the Latin language was losing its influence, the church still used this version of the Bible, which resulted in only the educated religious scholars being able to read and interpret the scriptures. For the ordinary people, Latin was a foreign language which was read aloud in church services. This all began to change when John Wycliffe came onto the scene.

John Wycliffe (1320-1384), an Englishman educated in Oxford, was the first to translate the bible from Latin into English in 1382. This posed a real threat to the church as this meant the establishment would lose its monopoly on the Bible and the church’s more shaky practices would be exposed as fraudulent. The church would not be able to justify its unbiblical finance centred doctrine of selling the forgiveness of one’s sins or of receiving donations to purchase souls out of purgatory. The strength of the church’s hatred for Wycliffe was evident in the fact that fifty years after Wycliffe died, Pope Martin V (1417-1431) commanded that his grave be dug up and his bones crushed and dumped in the river. Wycliffe’s brave work paved the way for other men to translate the Bible into their languages.

Some fifty years after Wycliffe died, a German businessman known as Johann Gutenberg (1396 – 1468) invented the printing press. Prior to that, documents had to be copied by hand. With the advent of the printing press, what would have taken months would now only take a few days to copy. Gutenberg’s first project was the Latin Bible (also known as Gutenberg Bible), which took him six years to complete and was finally published in 1456. Over the next twenty years, the printed Bible came out in Italian, Dutch, Catalan (Spain) and German, but there was yet to be an English version directly from the original Greek and Hebrew.

Enter William Tyndale (1494 – 1536), who is known as the true father of the English Bible. Educated in Cambridge, he worked from the Greek and Hebrew texts, and finished translating the New Testament into English by 1534. At that time in England, translating the Bible into English was still seen as heretical, so he moved to Germany, where he met up with Martin Luther at the University of Wittenberg, who was working on his own German translation of the New Testament. Copies of the English Bible were then smuggled into England. These books were forbidden, and heavy punishment (imprisonment or public execution) was imposed on those who were found with an English bible in their possession. So passionate was Tyndale about translating the Bible into English that during one of his arguments with a learned religious leader, he said these words in the English of his day:

“If God spared my life, ere many years I wyl cause a boye that dryveth the plough, shall know more of the scripture than thou dost.” (If God lets me live long enough, I will make sure that farmers know the scripture better than you.) This statement would later become one of his most famous quotes (Moynahan, 2002).

In 1535, while hiding out back in England, and working on his translation of the Old Testament, Tyndale was arrested and found guilty of heresy. In 1536, he was strangled and burned at the stake while he purportedly prayed, “Lord, open the eyes of the King of England.”

Finally Miles Coverdale (1488 – 1569), who headed for Germany in 1528, used Tyndale’s work and published the first full English translation of the entire Bible known as the *Coverdale Bible* in Zurich 1535. After that, the *Thomas Matthew Bible* was the first English Bible to be printed in England in 1537. By 1540, the church reversed its position and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, commissioned Miles Coverdale to produce the first officially sanctioned English Bible, known as the *Great Bible*. It was literally huge in size and was placed in every church, chained to the lectern. People flocked to churches to see the Bibles, which were set out for reading (rather than attending church and just listening to sermons being preached with no idea if the teachings were biblical). Following on from the death of King Henry VIII, Queen Mary took over and had both John Rogers and Thomas Cranmer burned to death at the stake. Many scholars escaped and took refuge in Europe. The Swiss city of Geneva became home for Miles Coverdale, who together with other scholars came out with what was known as the *Geneva Bible* in 1560. The *Rheims New Testament* in 1582 and *Douay Old Testament* in 1610 followed.

The King James Translation (KJV)

Several years later, God answered Tyndale's dying prayers, as it became the desire of King James I to have a copy of a Bible both for public and private use in the land. This provided him an opportunity to be a peacemaker among the religious factions in his newly acquired regime and to replace the current English versions available at the time. The two most popular versions of the English bible then were the *Bishop's Bible*, which was used in churches, and the *Geneva Bible*, which was used in homes. King James regarded the Geneva Bible as a poor translation and so he ordered a version that could be used both publicly and privately. He decreed that this be done in 1604 at a gathering known as the Hampton Court Conference. In 1611, the Authorized Version, known eventually as the *King James Version*, was completed.

It is interesting that many of the English bibles at that time, namely Coverdale's Bible (1539), the Geneva Bible (1560), and the Bishop's Bible (1568), were based partly on Tyndale's work, as his was the first to be translated from the Greek and Hebrew texts. Therefore, it would come as no surprise if much of the King James Version were also based on Tyndale. The writings of scholars like Nielson & Skousen, Moynahan and Geisler & Nix all point to the fact that the KJV was not translated directly from the original biblical languages; rather it was translated from Latin and compared with the other English versions at that time, including Tyndale's. In fact, John Nielson and Royal Skousen (1998) analysed all the early versions on a computer program and found that 83.7 percent of the KJV New Testament and 75.7 percent of the KJV Old Testament is found in Tyndale's translation! Since we know that the proper definition of a *version* is that it must be translated directly from the original languages of Greek and Hebrew, therefore, the King James Version is not in the strict sense of the word a *version* at all, but rather a *translation* (Geisler & Nix, 1986).

The original title page of 1611 supports this point, as it says:

THE HOLY BIBLE, Conteyning the Old Testament, and the New:
Newly Translated out of the Originall Tongues:
And with the former Translations diligently compared and revised,
By his Majesties speciall Commandement.

Appointed to be read in Churches.

IMPRINTED at London by Robert Barker,
Printer to the Kings most Excellent Maiestie
Anno Dom. 1611
Cum Privilegio

The fact that it is a translation rather than a version is further supported by Myles Smith, who wrote the preface of the KJV. He noted that the work rested on immediate predecessors rather than being a new translation from the original languages:

But it is high time to issue them, and to shew in briefe what was proposed to our selues, and what course we held in this our perusal and suruay of the Bible. Truly (good Christian Reader) wee neuer thought from the beginning, that we should eeds to make a new Translation, nor yet to make a bad one a good one, (for then the imputation of Sixtus had bene true in some sort, that our people had bene fed with gall of Dragons in stead of wine, with whey in stead of milke :) but to make a good one better, or out of many good ones one principall good one, not iustly to be excepted against; that hath bene our indeauour, that our marke.
(Myles Smith, “The Translators to the Reader,” *The Holy Bible, an Exact Reprint* Page.)

Incidentally, the King James Version was never “authorized” (in the sense that it was to be the only recognized version forever), although it is known as the *Authorized Version*. (Apparently there were many in the 20th Century who felt it was the only authorized bible - “If it was good enough for Jesus and Paul, it’s good enough for me.”) The idea that the KJV is “*The Authorized Bible forever and ever Amen*” may have stemmed from a printer’s claim on the title page that contained a clause also found in earlier Bibles as well (namely the Great Bible and the Bishops’ Bible), “Appointed to be read in Churches.” It should be noted that “authorized” was a synonym for “recognized by various churches as accepted for use in public worship” (Goodspeed, 1956). As it turns out, the KJV was actually the third “Authorized” version, after the Bishops’ Bible and the Great Bible. As we know from the earlier sections of this chapter, when the King James Version was being translated/compiled, the most significant New

Testament codices were either not yet discovered (such as Codex Sinaiticus) or available (such as Codex Vaticanus, Codex Alexandrinus and Codex Ephraem). For this reason (not to take away from the role it played in history), we must admit that the KJV and its predecessors are actually based on manuscripts that are inferior to the ones now available.

Three editions of the King James Version appeared during its first publication (Geisler & Nix, 1986). Many misspellings and errors were made. For example, in 1631, the word “not” was accidentally omitted from the seventh commandment (reading “Thou shalt commit adultery”) and so that edition was coined “The Wicked Bible”. The 1717 edition was lovingly referred to as “The Vinegar Bible” because the chapter heading of Luke 20 read “vinegar” instead of “vineyard”. In 1795 the Oxford edition misspelled “filled” in one verse and accidentally printed “killed” instead, prompting the nickname, “The Murderers’ Bible.” Following other revisions, eventually these errors were rectified to give us the King James as we know it today.

One and a half centuries later, in 1870, a motion was passed by the Convocation of the Province Canterbury for a new translation to be done using better Greek and Hebrew Manuscripts. By May 1885, it was completed and the work was known as the *English Revised Version*. Since there were linguistic differences, the Americans followed with the *American Standard Version* (ASV) in 1901.

Thereafter, many other translations followed, such as:

1. Revised Standard Version (RSV, 1952)
2. JB Philips New Testament (Philips, 1958)
3. New American Standard Bible (NASB, 1963)
4. New English Bible (NEB, 1970)
5. Living Bible (LB, also called The Book, 1970)
6. Good News Translations (GNT, 1976)
7. New International Version (NIV, 1978)
8. New Living Translation (NLT, 1996)
9. Today’s New International Version (TNIV, 2005)

The Different English Translations

Generally the different types of translations can be put into three different categories:

1. Word-for-word translations – This does well with textual accuracy but not so well when it comes to ease of reading and meaning. An example of this would be the American Standard Version.
2. Meaning-for-meaning translations – Some Bibles, rather than transferring word-or-word, prioritize meaning-for-meaning. An example of this would be the New International Version.
3. Paraphrased translations – These are free translations which attempt to keep the original sense of a text while expressing its meaning more fully than could be done by a literal translation. e.g. J. B. Philips, The Message, Living Bible.

God's word has survived through many centuries of persecution, heresy and peace, with many twists and turns. It is available to us today, more readily than in any other century before, including a plethora of on-line formats. What a day we live in! The Bible survived from times of persecution to become what is now the best seller of all time.

I Peter 1: 24-25 says,

²⁴ For, "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, ²⁵ but the word of the Lord stands forever." And this is the word that was preached to you.

Having the word at our disposal means we should be even more careful to adhere to all the fundamental teachings. There is room for variations, on matters where the Bible is silent, but we should not compromise on the fundamentals, as it says in Proverbs 30: 5-6:

⁵ "Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. ⁶ Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar.

The story of Uzzah and the ark, which appears in both II Samuel and I Chronicles, should serve as a serious reminder to all of us to take obeying the word of God seriously. See I Chronicles 13: 1-14, 15: 1-15.

Please refer to Appendix IV for the List of Scriptures and brief notes.

CHAPTER TWO:

Obey the Laws and Decrees – God Knows Better

In the Old Testament, God gave Moses many laws and decrees. These laws can be placed into three broad categories: moral, civil and ceremonial laws. The total number of laws in the Old Testament numbers 613 (http://www.hisglory.us/documents/613_biblical_laws.htm). Obviously that is a huge number of requirements but a devoted Jew would have been familiar with most, if not all, of them. Some people hold the view that God burdened the Israelites with unending laws in the Old Testament, and that in the New Testament, God “repented” of his mistake and introduced grace through Jesus Christ. However, this clashes with the idea that we worship an unchanging God, who is the same yesterday, today and forever. In fact, in the Old Testament, God *clearly* makes known his reasons for commanding His people to obey so many laws and decrees - not to make life more burdensome, rather quite the opposite. In Deuteronomy 10: 12-15, God says:

¹² And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, ¹³ and to observe the LORD's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good? ¹⁴ To the LORD your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it. ¹⁵ Yet the LORD set his affection on your forefathers and loved them, and he chose you, their descendants, above all the nations, as it is today.

In Exodus 15: 26, God even says that obedience to His laws will keep them safe from diseases:

²⁶ He said, "If you listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you."

In Jeremiah 32: 39, the same message was preached:

³⁹ I will give them singleness of heart and action, so that they will always fear me for their own good and the good of their children after them.

What a promise! No need for Moses to be educated in medicine when help was needed - just obey God, who is the physician of all physicians! Through history, we are able to see the wisdom of His laws, especially when we examine the medical break-throughs that were “discovered” after major outbreaks of disease took place. In all of these cases, the world learned the hard way before proper measures, often preventative, were taken. Yet, God’s law prescribed these measures almost 3,500 years before! For many of us, we take these things for granted and they have now become part of our routine, but this wasn’t always the case, as we will see in the pages to come.

The following are some Old Testament laws that seemed weird or pedantic but have eventually proven to be conventional wisdom, proven to be effective through trial and error, and in the end, God’s law reigns supreme.

Laws Concerning Leprosy

Leviticus 13:46 contains a law commanding that lepers be segregated from the community:

⁴⁶ As long as he has the infection he remains unclean. He must live alone; he must live outside the camp.

It was a simple law. No special treatments, no herb extractions, or casting of demons - just simple quarantine of the inflicted individual. Over the centuries, many may have seen that as draconian, or harsh. However, God’s word was proven right in the 1800s. Consider the following story:

During the 1700s, a leprosy epidemic raged in Norway. Fortunately, by the mid 1800s the epidemic was starting to be more under control, but officials were not sure why the spread started to diminish. In 1873, Dr. Armauer Hansen noticed tiny leprosy bacteria (McMillen, Stern, 2005). It was then that they realized that it was an infection and was passed from person to person, and can even be caught from a simple sneeze (Desikan, 1977). Finally Norway enacted the Norwegian Leprosy Act, which required strict quarantining of patients. In less than sixty years, Norway's leper count dropped from 2,858 to 69 (McMillen & Stern, 2005). Read a medical specialist's comments below (Seiglie, 2003):

Dr. George Rosen, a professor of public health at Columbia University, wrote about the horrors of these plagues: "Leprosy cast the greatest blight that threw its shadow over the daily life of medieval humanity. Fear of all other diseases taken together can hardly be compared to the terror spread by leprosy. Not even the Black Death in the 14th century or the appearance of syphilis toward the end of the 15th century produced a similar state of fright" (p. 62).

Physicians tried everything, but failed to control these terrible plagues. Some medical doctors thought they were a result of eating hot food, garlic or sick pigs. Others believed they were a result of an evil conjunction of the planets.

How were these devastating plagues halted? "Leadership was taken by the church," adds Dr. Rosen, "as the physicians had nothing to offer. The church took as its guiding principle the concept of contagion as embodied in the Old Testament. This idea and its practical consequences are defined with great clarity in the book of Leviticus. Once the condition of leprosy had been established, the patient was to be segregated and excluded from the community... It accomplished the first great feat in methodical eradication of the disease".

Dr. Rosen's comments can also be found in this website:
<http://www.gnmagazine.org/issues/gn47/biblewasright.htm>)

God was right all along.

Laws Against Touching the Dead

Numbers 19:11-13 reads:

¹¹ "Whoever touches the dead body of anyone will be unclean for seven days. ¹² He must purify himself with the water on the third day and on the seventh day; then he will be clean. But if he does not purify himself on the third and seventh days, he will not be clean. ¹³ Whoever touches the dead body of anyone and fails to purify himself defiles the LORD's tabernacle. That person must be cut off from Israel. Because the water of cleansing has not been sprinkled on him, he is unclean; his uncleanness remains on him.

Here it is clear that God taught that whoever touches the dead would be unclean and that they would have to be set apart alone, away from the rest of the community, for a specific time. Dr. Ignaz Semmelweis (1818 - 1865), during the mid-1800s, was working in a hospital in Vienna when he realized that one out of every six women delivering babies in his hospital ended up dead. Since they were in the hospital to give birth, it was said that they were dying of something they took to be “labour fever”. Dr. Semmelweis eventually put two and two together when he realised that the medical students he was training were helping with autopsies in one section of the hospital and were also being summoned to deliver babies in the delivery rooms. The idea of hygiene as we know it today had not yet been established, and the medical students’ hands and clothes would have been covered with germs from the autopsy tables as they went in to help deliver a baby. They were literally bringing the germs from one table to another, from the dead to the living, but were not aware that *they* were the very reason that the mothers were catching the so-called disease of “labour fever”.

Even though it sounds bizarre to us now, up to that time, no one had ever heard of the existence of bacteria! They blamed such dire conditions on the atmosphere. In the beginning, doctors and nurses did not take heed to Semmelweis’ theory nor to his advice that they should wash their hands with soap, but eventually, out of desperation, once hand washing was practiced, the authorities could no longer deny the positive results nor the validity of his hypothesis. Dr. Semmelweis was so haunted by the needless deaths of countless mothers (which he witnessed before his measures were implemented), coupled with the fact that it was taking years for others to wake up to his warnings, that he had a breakdown and was sent to a mental institution. There he died at the age of forty seven from blood poisoning (McMillen, & Stern, 2005). If only his colleagues had remembered what God

had said back in the book of Numbers in chapter 19, which outlined the following steps for those who had come into contact with a dead body:

1. The cleansing water was showered from a hyssop plant (Numbers 19: 18).
2. The cleansing was repeated on the third and seventh day (Numbers 19: 12).
3. The person being cleansed should then bathe himself by immersing in water on the seventh day (Numbers 19: 19)
4. The hyssop contained the antiseptic “thymol” (McMillen & Stern, 2005), used as an ingredient mentioned in Numbers 19: 17-19
5. Hyssop was to be mixed with cedar oil, a skin irritant to encourage scrubbing.
6. Over a period of seven days, and in between the washings, the sun and drying would kill the germs.

¹⁷ "For the unclean person, put some ashes from the burned purification offering into a jar and pour fresh water over them. ¹⁸ Then a man who is ceremonially clean is to take some hyssop, dip it in the water and sprinkle the tent and all the furnishings and the people who were there. He must also sprinkle anyone who has touched a human bone or a grave or someone who has been killed or someone who has died a natural death. ¹⁹ The man who is clean is to sprinkle the unclean person on the third and seventh days, and on the seventh day he is to purify him. The person being cleansed must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and that evening he will be clean.

Today washing and scrubbing with soap of a doctor's hands after examining a patient is standard practice. Of course it is, because God wrote the manual!

Laws Commanding Sanitation

God thinks of everything! Just read Deuteronomy 23: 12-13:

¹² Designate a place outside the camp where you can go to relieve yourself. ¹³ As part of your equipment have something to dig with, and when you relieve yourself, dig a hole and cover up your excrement.

The man who is credited with publicising the need for sanitation is Edward Chadwick (1800 – 1890), of the city of London. Bear in mind that in the 1800s, London was the only city in the world, outside China, with a population of around one million (Abu-Lughod, 1991). The average age at death for professional persons, gentry, and members of their families was 38,

whereas it was only 17 for mechanics, labourers, and their families (Briggs, 1970, p. 101). Living conditions for the poorer people were filthy. In 1802, the English Parliament passed an act governing the “Health and Morals of Apprentices” to protect the poorer sections of the community, and promised shorter working hours (12 hours) one set of new clothes yearly, an end to the night shift, separate male and female quarters, and not more than two sleepers per bed. However, in practice much of this was ignored and living conditions in the densely populated city of London grew worse. In fact, Hammond and Hammond (1968) presented data saying that pauper children as young as seven years old worked 14 hours a day, six days a week. Further, on Sundays, which was their day off, they had to clean machines from 6 a.m. till noon!

Not only were living conditions pathetic, underground streets ran massive sewer tunnels. In many parts of London, especially around the poor areas, these began to overflow. Every five to ten years the workers would dig up the tunnels and send the rubbish to farms for fertilizer. The crops grown on these farms, containing the filth of human waste, would then be brought back into the city for consumption. Further, London used the Thames River as both its sewer main and its water main. The sewer from London flowed into the river, which was then used again for drinking. A wide spread outbreak of cholera ensued in 1848 and the epidemic went on for one year, *when over 72,000 people died!!* In 1853, under Chadwick’s leadership, four-inch sewage pipes were installed in 27,000 homes in London. Death rates were cut in half. Chadwick will always be a hero in modern medical history, but millions of deaths across Europe from cholera, typhoid and dysentery *could have been prevented* if ancient sanitation measures from God’s word had been implemented.

Law for Burying the Dead

Deuteronomy 21: 23 tells us:

²³ you must not leave his body on the tree overnight. Be sure to bury him that same day, because anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse. You must not desecrate the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.

In the Old Testament, God did not want the bodies of executed criminals to be left lying around for days, let alone the bodies of other people. Generally, among the Jewish people, burial was done on the same day.

Once more, the world had to learn this the hard way. Chadwick, yet again, came to a conviction that there should NOT be burial grounds within the London city limits. He therefore outlined a plan to convert fields outside the city limits into burial grounds to meet this need.

Chadwick, cited in McMillen & Stern (2005), said the following regarding the sad state of living conditions during that time:

Homes for most families were a single room. Chadwick noted: "(One room) is their bedroom, their kitchen, their wash-house, their sitting-room, their dining room and ...frequently ...their shop. In this one room they are born, and live, and sleep, and die."

Diseases were passed on from the dead to the living, with germs passing from the corpse to the rest of the family in their limited space.

Again, God was right about what to do with those that have passed away.

Law Against Drunkenness

Every year the number of Americans who die in road accidents equals the number who died in the twelve-year Vietnam War. And sadly, of this number, two-thirds are a result of alcohol. God warned us both in the Old and New Testament of the danger of alcohol. Besides listing drunkenness as one of the obvious sins in Galatians 5, Paul also specifically mentioned it in Ephesians 5: 17-18:

¹⁷Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. ¹⁸ Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.

An older wise man wrote many warnings against too much drink in the book of Proverbs. One example is Proverbs 23: 19-21, which reads:

¹⁹ Listen, my son, and be wise, and keep your heart on the right path. ²⁰ Do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat, ²¹ for drunkards and gluttons become poor, and drowsiness clothes them in rags.

The following are damages to health resulting from alcohol consumption which have been proven medically (McMillen & Stern, 2005):

1. Nerve Damage – Alcohol poisons our nervous system. One in five alcoholics develops partial paralysis or permanent pain.
2. Liver Damage – Alcohol poisons the liver by turning it rock hard with cirrhosis. Blood can hardly squeeze through. Blood bypasses the dammed-up liver by going through other veins, which can rupture.
3. Heart Damage – Alcohol also poisons the heart. Over time the heart will lose its capacity to pump blood.
4. Brain Damage – Alcoholics frequently lose their memory and often invent wild stories to fill in the gaps.
5. Withdrawal Agonies – Alcoholics tend to hallucinate.
6. Damage to Unborn – When a mother drinks, the unborn baby also drinks. Babies born to alcoholic mothers are prone to mental retardation and poor coordination.
7. Sexual Disorders – Alcoholics tend to have impaired sexual function and drive.

How nice for those who became disciples as teens and didn't feel the need to drink their way through college – they actually remember the parties! And what they were studying! God knows what's best for us – sobriety is not just spiritual, it is smart!

Law to Circumcise

During the time of Abraham, thousands of years ago, God instituted the law of circumcision. In Genesis 17: 12, God told Abraham:

¹² For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner—those who are not your offspring.

This is a practice that Jews and Muslims follow till this day and, for years, doctors in America circumcised all baby boys, no matter their religion, unless the parents specifically requested that it not be done. However, in the 1960s and 1970s, many doctors in America questioned why boys were automatically circumcised if they did not need to do so for religious purposes, and so a movement against circumcision arose. (Their questioning was not without logic - Why perform surgery on an infant when it is not required?)

Dr. Thomas Wiswell made a discovery in the 1980s. While reviewing hospital records, he saw that uncircumcised boys were ten times more likely than circumcised boys to suffer urinary tract infections (Wiswell & Roscelli,

1986). Prior to this, Dr. Wiswell himself had advocated against circumcision. However, upon noticing his findings, he changed his mind. Unfortunately, few people have taken his findings seriously, nor have his findings received much publicity.

Another startling report has shown that uncircumcised men are up to eight times more likely to become infected with AIDS (Marx, 1989). A doctor named Fink reported (1988) that the thin foreskin found on an uncircumcised male is much more susceptible to all kinds of sexually transmitted diseases (STD), implying that the removal of the foreskin is a sure way to reduce the likelihood of such illnesses. Even as recently as 2006, an international conference on AIDS organized by Singapore Management University (The Straits Times, Friday, December 8, 2006) confirmed this evidence.

God's wisdom is beyond our understanding!

The Miracle of the Eighth Day

Remember the verse we read above from Genesis 17 about circumcision?

¹² For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner—those who are not your offspring.

Many parents react negatively to the idea of circumcision as they think it is too painful for their young to undergo at such an early age, or that something may go wrong during the procedure. However, the following paragraph will increase your faith!

Studies done as far back as the early 1900s have shown that newborn babies need vitamin K to make clotting proteins (so that they will not bleed to death when wounded). However, babies' systems do not begin to produce these proteins until they are five days old. According to one medical journal, the greatest risk is between Days 2-7 of the newborn's life (McMillan, Weis & Johnson, 1972). However, by Day 8, the baby's clotting protein, known as prothrombin, jumps up to 110 percent of the eventual adult level. Thus the safest day to circumcise is on the eighth day.

Who was the wise guy who picked the eighth day to circumcise baby boys?

God is always right.

Laws Against Homosexuality

In Leviticus 18: 22, God commands:

²² Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable.

It would be extremely unfair if God allowed some people to just be born “gay” while at the same time insisting that homosexuality is a sin. However, while a relatively new concept, the idea of being born as a homosexual is now commonly accepted by many people today. Ann Landers, a famous “Agony Aunt” in America whose newspaper column was read by millions for years and whose wisdom was taken as authority, did not hesitate to record her opinion in writing, “Human sexual orientation is determined at birth” (Landers, 1993).

On the other hand, it is also true that few people wake up and say, “Today, I am making the decision to be gay”. Sexuality is more subtle and complex. This is not in any way meant to denigrate those who have made this choice. As bible believing Christians, we believe that the sin of committing homosexual acts is no more – or less – wrong than having an affair, cheating on your taxes and hating your neighbour. To be rude to someone or look down on someone for “being gay” is as hypocritical as the Pharisees wanting to stone the woman caught in adultery in John 8! However, we must call sin, “sin”. Aside from breaking God’s commands, there are many other reasons why choosing a homosexual lifestyle is undesirable. Statistically speaking, some of these reasons are: an increase in chances of being lonely, being depressed, attempting suicide, and contracting HIV. Nobody has all the answers but at least five factors seem to favour the development of homosexual orientation (Aardweg, 1985):

1. Genetics – This may influence homosexual tendencies. Genes may fix eye color, hair color, and skin color, but they do not fix sexual preferences. Genes may produce leanings towards homosexuality (just like they produce a predisposition to alcoholism or obesity), but genes do not *cause* homosexuality (McMillen & Stern, 2005)
2. Confusing Sexual Experiences – This may influence homosexual tendencies in a major way. For boys, early homosexual encounters may cause sexual confusion, though all of these boys can go on to develop normal heterosexual drives. In addition, during puberty, some children sense vague same-sex attractions. Superficial and fleeting, these twinges usually fade as soon as the child begins to notice the opposite sex. When

school counselors or their friends label them as “gay” at this stage, it confuses them.

3. Breakdown of Social Fabric – More and more children complain of loneliness, and lonely and insecure people are prey to becoming involved in homosexuality. Many young people experiment with homosexuality now the way that young people experimented with free sex and drugs in the 1960s. The increase in homosexuality exists only because society allows and makes it easy for the opportunity to exist.
4. A Distant Father – For both boys and girls, fathers are a most important factor in determining sexual orientation (Bieber et al., 1962, Stephan, 1973; Siegelman, 1974). More than 80 percent of gay men refer to their fathers as “emotionally distant” (Saghir & Robins, 1973). Every minute a father spends with his children is important. In Proverbs 4: 3-4, the Bible says:

³ When I was a boy in my father's house, still tender, and an only child of my mother, ⁴ he taught me and said, "Lay hold of my words with all your heart; keep my commands and you will live.

This is an example of the father directing the children, which is also implied in Deuteronomy 6 and in many other places (for instance, when the father would explain the reason behind the Passover meal, etc). In the New Testament (see Ephesians 6: 4), fathers are again given instructions to raise their children in the Lord.

5. A Smothering Mother – Mothers that tend to “baby” and restrict their boys by discouraging sports, preventing dates and forcing them into girlish activities often unintentionally lead their sons to a homosexual lifestyle (McMillen & Stern, 2005). Smothering mothers also tend to despise their husbands in front of their children. When it comes to gay men, three out of four have mothers who talked about sex as dirty and disgusting (Bieber et al., 1962). However, God’s take on sex is quite different – he invented it! The book of Song of Songs in the Old Testament describes the sexual relationship as something beautiful and pleasurable, within the boundaries of marriage, of course.

Laws Against Sexual Immorality

In Deuteronomy 22: 22-24, God was clear about the sins of sexual immorality before marriage:

²² If a man is found sleeping with another man's wife, both the man who slept with her and the woman must die. You must purge the evil from Israel.

²³ If a man happens to meet in a town a virgin pledged to be married and he sleeps with her, ²⁴ you shall take both of them to the gate of that town and stone them to death—the girl because she was in a town and did not scream for help, and the man because he violated another man's wife. You must purge the evil from among you.

Further, in Deuteronomy 23:17, God wisely commanded:

¹⁷ No Israelite man or woman is to become a shrine prostitute.

God ordained laws against sex before marriage both in the Old and New Testament. The consequences of having sex with more than one person (the Bible allows sexual union only between husband and wife) may result in at least one of the following sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

1. AIDS
2. Herpes
3. HPV (Human Papilloma Virus)
4. PID (Pelvic Inflammatory Diseases)
5. Gonorrhea
6. Syphilis

Herpes – The Centres of Disease Control and Prevention cited on their current website (www.cdc.gov/std/trends2000/herpes.htm) in 2006 that one out of every five Americans is infected with herpes. What is staggering is that most of them do not even know that they have it. Herpes is the most common cause of genital ulcers and there are more than one hundred different strains of herpes (McMillen & Stern, 2005, p121). The following is a saying that should be taken to heart: “Love may last for only one night, but herpes is forever.”

HPV – About 30% of young adults carry the venereal wart virus (HPV). From 1969 to 1988, annual doctor visits for genital warts jumped tenfold, from less than 0.2 million to over 2 million (Aral & Holmes, 1991). HPV

causes the most common form of cervical cancer (McMillen & Stern, 2005, p122).

PID – Scientific American says this is the most common cause of infertility among women and it increases susceptibility to HIV (Aral & Holmes, 1991).

Where did all these Sexually Transmitted Diseases come from? Most people would agree that massive proliferation of these STDs began during the sexual revolution of the 1960s. In Bible times, the Canaanite religion practiced sexual rites. There is no saying how many people were infected with all kinds of STDs then. The Israelites were expressly forbidden from adopt such vile practices in the Old Testament. Wonder why?

Can a Condom Protect the Heart?

According to research, men and women think very differently about sex. Volk & Hyde (1985) found the following:

Sixty out of 130 men as opposed to 0 out of 119 women would never miss a chance to have sex. Further, among women, 91 percent felt that a one night stand would leave them “guilty” in contrast with 50 percent of men who thought they would feel “relaxed or satisfied.”

Women

I want to feel loved and needed
It is a wonderful way to express love
I feel love and commitment for my partner
I want to share myself with someone

Men

I need it
I want to gratify myself
I want to satisfy my needs
I’m tired of masturbation

In casual sex, a man gets what he desires, but a woman does not feel the same. In fact, she usually gets nothing. “Sophisticated” women have learned how to protect themselves during casual sex by making use of modern birth control methods, but scientists will never be able to develop a method that can protect the heart. Not without reason does Hebrews 13: 4 say:

⁴ Marriage should be honoured by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.

In the early twentieth century (only 100 years ago!), 97.5 percent of brides had never had sex with another man. For most men, it was also true that the first night with their newly wedded wife was their first sexual encounter (Klassen, Williams, Levitt et al., 1989). Wow! What a statement! This would

be unheard of today and even scoffed at as naïve and just for prudes who have been poisoned by religion. However, people then had a healthy respect for marriage. The Bible says that if a man is burning with sexual passion, then he should marry (I Corinthians 7: 9):

⁹ But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

Today we have teenagers, let alone adults, engaging in frequent sex! A startling research published in America by the National Academy Press back in 1992 revealed that 40 percent of high school boys that year had sex with at least four different girls! It is surely worse now!

The Children Aid Society says that one in every four sexually active American teenagers catches an STD every year, a statement released by the US Department of Health and Human Services in 1990.

Think of what women (and men too) get when they have the conviction to say no to sex:

- No worries about who to have sex with
- No worries about getting an STD
- No worries about being used because of her physical appearance

Refrain from casual sex: save it for marriage and be righteous. Follow God, not men. The Message translation of I Corinthians 6: 16-20 says:

There's more to sex than mere skin on skin. Sex is as much spiritual mystery as physical fact. As written in Scripture, "The two become one." Since we want to become spiritually one with the Master, we must not pursue the kind of sex that avoids commitment and intimacy, leaving us more lonely than ever – the kind of sex that can never "become one." There is a sense in which sexual sins are different from all others. In sexual sin we violate the sacredness of our own bodies, these bodies that were made for God-given and God-modeled love, for "becoming one" with another. Or didn't you realize that your body is a sacred place, the place of the Holy Spirit? Don't you see that you can't live however you please, squandering what God paid such a high price for? The physical part of you is not some piece of property belonging to the spiritual part of you. God owns the whole works. So let people see God in and through your body.

A condom used during the sexual act to prevent disease does not protect you spiritually. It may protect you physically (though even that is not foolproof), but your purity is compromised and it will affect you more than you realize. Trust God; he knows better.

Speaking of physical protection, according to one source, no one has shown that condom education slows the STD epidemic (McMillen & Stern, 2005). Much evidence suggests that it actually boosts the spread of STDs, since it makes the users more cavalier. When the *Medical Tribune* challenged the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the CDC could not cite a single good study “demonstrating significant HIV risk reduction due to prevention” (*Medical Tribune*, 1993).

Too many people talk about “safe sex” rather than “saying no to sex”. Abstinence is responsible, intelligent, fulfilling, loving, safe and biblical.

Family Health International studied 850 couples and found that during marital sex, less than 2 percent of condoms break, but during casual sex about 5 percent break. Some highly energetic men break about 20 percent of their condoms (Rolance, 1992). Weller (1993) found out that condoms may reduce risk of HIV infection by only approximately 69 percent. *This is a lot less than what is taught commonly in schools. In other words, one third fail to gain any form of protection whatsoever. Abstinence will work better. It is 100 percent safe!*

In I Thessalonians 4: 3-5, the Bible says:

³ It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; ⁴ that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, ⁵ not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God;

Proverbs 5: 15, 17, 18

**¹⁵ Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well.
¹⁷ Let them be yours alone, never to be shared with strangers. ¹⁸ May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth.**

God is not a party pooper!! He knows best...

Laws Against Worrying

In his excellent book *How to Stop Worrying and Start Living*, Dale Carnegie (1984) cites the opinion of Dr. G. Canby Robinson of the John Hopkins hospital, one of the most notable medical centers in the world. Carnegie quotes Dr. G. Canby Robinson as having declared that four out of five patients admitted to John Hopkins Hospital were suffering from conditions brought on in part by emotional strains and stresses. This was often true even in cases of organic disturbances. “Eventually,” he declared, “these trace back to maladjustments to life and its problems.”

Dr. Edward Podolsky (1944) wrote about the following topics in his book, *Stop Worrying and Get Well*:

- What Worry Does to the Heart
- High Blood Pressure is Fed by Worry
- Rheumatism Can Be Caused by Worry
- Worry Less for Your Stomach’s Sake
- How Worry Can Cause a Cold
- The Worrying Diabetic

It is true that worry is not spoken of as a sin in the law per se, but there is certainly a principle seen in the poetic writings which imply that a man who is close to God will have peaceful sleep and be given rest on all sides, and that he will have nothing to worry about. (See Psalms 112: 7 and 127: 2). Jesus took this a step further. What did he say about being anxious? In Matthew 6: 25-34, he simply says (three times!),

“Do not worry about your life...”

There is a difference between ‘being concerned’ and ‘worrying’. For example, when we are crossing a road, it is a good thing to be concerned for safety and look both ways, but it would not be very helpful to be worried to death about falling down or getting run over each time we started to go from one side of the road to another!

What about the need to have rest and time off and not overwork? Why did God institute the Sabbath (Exodus 20: 8)? To make us rest at least one day a week! Overworked individuals render themselves vulnerable to all kinds of disease. One study showed that 26 percent of men who had suffered heart attacks had been working over seventy hours a week (Theiel, Parker & Bruce, 1973).

Laws Against Uncontrolled Anger and Rage

The Bible says in Proverbs 29:11,

¹¹ A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control.

Ephesians 4: 26-27 says:

²⁶ "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷and do not give the devil a foothold.

In 1981, scientists at the University of North Carolina found evidence that anger in people had a major effect on people's lives. Research was done on 255 medical students. Over the years, they were watched and by middle age, 13 percent of the high-hostility men had died. In contrast only two percent of men with low hostility had died (McMillen & Stern, 2005).

Most of the time when we feel angry, we need to stop and analyze what just happened. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred it was because someone hurt our ego. Perhaps our idea was not superior enough, we did not get appreciated enough, we were not good enough, etc.

Instead, the Bible says in Romans 12: 3:

³ For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

Philippians 2: 3 tells us:

³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.

So, what is the conclusion at the end of the day about sin and repentance? God knows better...

We should take God at His word and repent. God will get close to us when we are in a repentant state, as it says in Psalms 34: 18:

¹⁸ The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

From the days of Noah until the time of the prophets the Old Testament is filled with commands to repent. If anyone thinks that repentance is a ‘new’ idea found only in the New Testament, they are greatly misinformed. Read the whole of Deuteronomy and the Minor Prophets - see for yourself God’s desire for his people to repent.

Look also at some of the scriptures telling us from which sins God wants His people to abstain. These are mentioned in Leviticus 18 – Leviticus 19: 1-19. This is, in essence, a list of sins that is also applicable to us in the New Testament. The question for all of us is: are we going to trust him?

Please refer to Appendix IV for the List of Scriptures and brief notes.

CHAPTER THREE:

The Crucifixion of Jesus – Outside the City Gate and Outside the Camp

In this study we will examine some of the evidence that strongly supports the approximate geographical location of Jesus' crucifixion being on the Mount of Olives. One may wonder why this would be of any use, and argue that the knowledge that Jesus died for our sins is all that is needed. Of course, this knowledge alone is sufficient to grasp God's love for us as mentioned in the scriptures! (Amen!) However, a study to determine the location will bring light to the following:

1. It will show God's consistency throughout His word; in this case, regarding a specific place where he commanded that certain sacrifices take place.
2. It will further deepen the parallels between the sacrifices under the Old Covenant and how they were fulfilled by Jesus for the New Covenant.
3. It will illustrate how easy it is to hold on to traditions that have not been seriously questioned or substantiated by credible or biblical support.
4. It will further enlighten us in the area of the shame and disgrace that Jesus endured during his crucifixion and hopefully make us appreciate his sacrifice even more!

The following arguments are put forward to support the conviction that Jesus was crucified on the Mount of Olives, East of the Temple. We shall reason through each of them in turn and shall begin by examining the sacrifice of Isaac.

The Argument on the Site of the Sacrifice of Isaac

Many Christian traditions have linked the sacrifice of Isaac and the crucifixion of Jesus, and it is not difficult to see the parallels between the sacrifice of Isaac and Jesus. We outline some here:

1. Both were “only sons”. Jesus was God’s only Son and Isaac was Abraham’s only son (Genesis 22: 2, John 3: 16)
2. Both carried the wood upon which they would be sacrificed (Genesis 22: 6, John 19: 17)
3. Both were examples of God providing the sacrifice (Genesis 22: 14, Rom 5: 8)
4. Both sacrifices ended up with a resurrection of sorts (Hebrews 11: 19, Luke 24: 46)
5. Through both Isaac and Jesus, God would raise up their descendants (Genesis 21: 12, Galatians 3: 26).

If indeed a parallel exists between the two, then it follows that both the sacrifices may very likely have taken place on the same physical location.

In Genesis 22: 2, we read:

² Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."

This scripture says that Moriah is a region of mountains, and that God would point out a specific mountain in this region upon which Abraham would offer Isaac as a sacrifice.

In II Chronicles 3: 1-2, our investigation moves further:

**¹ Then Solomon began to build the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD had appeared to his father David. It was on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, the place provided by David.
²He began building on the second day of the second month in the fourth year of his reign.**

The above passage shows that the temple was built on Mount Moriah, but the exact location was on the threshing floor of Araunah.

Genesis 22: 4 records:

⁴ On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance.

It took three days to reach the place that God had assigned for him to go among the Mountain of Moriah and he had to look up to see the place. This was clearly a summit of some sort, which would not qualify as a threshing floor. Ernest Martin (1996) says,

“Threshing floors in the region of Palestine are almost always associated with sites that are bare of trees or thickets.”

When Abraham reached the place, he saw that a ram was caught in a thicket. The highest point of Mount Moriah was the Mount of Olives. It was around here that Abraham placed Isaac on the altar, but this is different from the threshing floor where the temple was built. Scholars make a distinction between the two areas – Lower Mount Moriah where the temple was built and Upper Mount Moriah where Isaac was almost slain by Abraham.

The site of the temple and the sacrifice of Isaac were at two different places, though in the same region, known as Mount Moriah.

The Argument over the Relationship between Golgotha and the Mount of Olives

An important passage that will shed great light into locating the site of Jesus' crucifixion is II Samuel 15: 30-32, which says:

³⁰ But David continued up the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went; his head was covered and he was barefoot. All the people with him covered their heads too and were weeping as they went up. ³¹ Now David had been told, "Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom." So David prayed, "O LORD, turn Ahithophel's counsel into foolishness." ³² When David arrived at the summit, where people used to worship God, Hushai the Arkite was there to meet him, his robe torn and dust on his head.

This shows that during the time of David a place of sacrifice was already established on the Mount of Olives. It was also at a summit and that was the

place where the sacrifice was offered. Today there is a small Muslim shrine built over this site. In the Septuagint version of the Old Testament, translators call this place of the summit, “The Head”. This is interesting, since the meaning of the word head is also found in the meaning of the word Golgotha. Jacoby (2001) puts it this way:

“The Greek word *kranion* (Matthew 27:33, Mark 15:22, Luke 23:33, John 19:17), meaning skull or head, comes from the Homeric Greek *kara*, meaning head, top, or summit. Often *kranion* translates the Hebrew *gulgoleth*, while *kephale* translates the Hebrew *ro'sh* - but not always! *Ro'sh* is Hebrew for head, as in *Ro'sh hashanah*, or Head of the Year. (Not "skull" of the year!) The point is that Golgotha can just as well signify Head as Skull. Once again, while skull is (usually) a perfectly good translation of *kranion* in the N.T. and in the LXX,²⁵ the word can equally well be rendered *head*. This makes the identification of Golgotha with the summit or head of 2 Samuel 15:32 much more convincing.”

This is a very persuasive argument to show that the place where Jesus was crucified, called Golgotha in the New Testament, was near the summit of the Mount of Olives, about half a mile east of the Temple Mount, referred to in II Samuel 15.

Today, thousands of tourists visit a site that is located to the West of the Temple Mount as the site of Jesus' crucifixion. This is the where the church of the Holy Sepulchre is standing at the present time. History reveals that Constantine's mother, Helena, was responsible for choosing this site. Eusebius, a great historian who lived in Palestine, expressed surprise when this site was chosen. In his written work called the *Life of Constantine*, he said that this site was contrary to “expectations”. Not surprisingly, Constantine's mom picked a site that had been where the Shrine of Venus was located (Martin, 1996). See Map 1.

The Argument Based on the Sacrifice of the Red Heifer

A heifer is a young female cow which has not yet delivered her first calf. To show the connection between the sacrifice of the Red Heifer and the Cross of Jesus, we shall begin with the passage in Hebrews 13: 12-13, which says:

¹² And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. ¹³ Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore.

The bible says that the crucifixion occurred “outside the gate” and “outside the camp”. It also implies that the bodies were burned outside the camp. Within the temple, as it was with the tabernacle, there were already two altars – the Altar of the Golden Incense and the Altar of the Burnt Offering. Since reference was made to the idea of being “outside the camp”, hence outside the temple, this must be an “altar” outside the boundaries of the camp when sacrifices were made. What types of sacrifices were made outside this boundary? The only significant sacrifice that took place outside the camp was the sacrifice of the Red Heifer, which was the sacrifice that the writer of Hebrews connects to the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. The sacrifice of the Red Heifer was the only one that the Talmud says that Solomon himself did not quite comprehend. Be that as it may, we shall try to get as much understanding as is possible from the resources available to us.

During the time of Jesus, there was a double-tiered arched bridge supporting a roadway that led from the eastern gate of the temple to the top of the Mount of Olives. It was built by the High Priests at their own charges to span the Kidron Ravine and it was called the Causeway (or Bridge) of the Red Heifer in the Mishnah, Shekalim 4: 2 (Danby, 1933). Perhaps this was the path Jesus took as recorded by John the Apostle in John 18: 1, which says,

¹ When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was an olive grove, and he and his disciples went into it.

Hebrews 13: 10-11 later says:

¹⁰ We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat. ¹¹The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp.

In the Old Testament there was a place outside the camp where sacrifices were made, seen in Leviticus 4: 12:

¹² that is, all the rest of the bull—he must take outside the camp to a place ceremonially clean, where the ashes are thrown, and burn it in a wood fire on the ash heap.

Notice the mention of a “clean place” outside the camp. In Leviticus 6: 10-11, the same “clean place” outside the camp was mentioned.

Look at the sacrifice of the Red Heifer, mentioned in Numbers 19:1-3:

¹ The LORD said to Moses and Aaron: ² "This is a requirement of the law that the LORD has commanded: Tell the Israelites to bring you a red heifer without defect or blemish and that has never been under a yoke. ³ Give it to Eleazar the priest; it is to be taken outside the camp and slaughtered in his presence.

This clean place outside the camp mentioned in Leviticus was the place where the Red Heifer was sacrificed.

The Red Heifer had to be a young female cow which had never given birth, and therefore had never been mounted by a bullock (i.e., was a virgin cow). The Red Heifer was one of the holiest offerings of Israel.

(How sad that, even though the Red Heifer was considered so special and holy and valuable by the religious establishment of the day, the New Testament version of the Red Heifer, Jesus, was treated so badly by the same people. You probably remember that thirty pieces of silver was the price that Judas was paid for betraying Jesus - the price of a female or male slave (Zechariah 11: 12-13). It is also interesting to see that Exodus 21: 32 talks about thirty pieces of silver as being the price to be compensated for a male or female slave who is gored to death by a bull.

³² If the bull gores a male or female slave, the owner must pay thirty shekels of silver to the master of the slave, and the bull must be stoned.

Not a very encouraging comparison for our Lord, but certainly one that underlines the humility of Jesus.)

Its ashes were kept for long periods of time. Periodically, parts of the ashes were mixed with pure water in a large container. The early rabbis noted that the Red Heifer was taken through the eastern gate of the outer walls surrounding the temple.

"There were five gates to the Temple mount: the two Huldah Gates on the South, that served for coming in and going out; the Kiponus Gate on the West, that served for coming in and going out; the Tadi Gate on the North that was not used at all; and the Eastern Gate on which was portrayed the Palace of Shushan. Through this (Gate) the High Priest that burned the (Red) Heifer, and all that aided him, went forth to the Mount of Olives" - Middoth 1: 3. (Danby, 1933)

This was also attested to in Parah 3: 6-7 (Danby, 1933) of the Jewish records. In addition, the Mishnah also talks about an arched bridge that was built onto the western slopes of the Mount of Olives. The roadway on the slopes of the Mount of Olives which led westward into the Temple was referred to in Luke 19: 37 as “the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives”. The bridge that was used to take the animal out was called the “causeway (or bridge) of the Red Heifer” - Shekalim 4: 2 (Danby, 1933).

From this summit area of the Mount of Olives, one could look westward over the Eastern wall of the Temple directly into the sanctuary itself. Another reason to support this lies in Matthew 27: 51-54, which says:

⁵¹ At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. ⁵²The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. ⁵³ They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people. ⁵⁴ When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!"

What did the centurion see that convinced him? Amongst other things, it may have been the tearing of the curtain, which could only have been viewed from the slopes of the Mount of Olives, Eastward from the Temple. This could not have been seen from the South, North or the West direction to the temple. This curtain was about 80 feet tall and 24 feet wide according to Josephus, (Whiston and Maier, 1999).

It was necessary for the priest to face the Holy of Holies when he sprinkled the blood seven times from the spot on the Mount of Olives. From here he would have been able to see the curtain that was hanging in front of the East entrance to the Holy Place. This was one of the main reasons that the Eastern wall of the Temple was lower in height than the other walls. Middoth 2: 4 (Danby, 1933) says:

“All the (Temple) walls were high, save only the eastern wall, because the priest that burns the (Red) Heifer and stands on the top of the Mount of Olives should be able to look directly into the entrance to the Sanctuary when the blood is sprinkled.”

The place where the ashes were burned was called the Beth ha-Deshen (the House of Ashes). The altar was called the *Miphkad Altar*, after the name of the Eastern gate from which the animal was led from the Temple, known as the

Miphkad Gate. In Nehemiah 3:31 *The Miphkad Gate* is known as *The Inspection Gate*.

It was located on the slope of a hill as is clearly implied in the Mishnah. This Ash Pit was attached to a conduit that allowed the ashes to descend into the valley below (rain water or other waters were used to cause the ashes to descend into the valley). A similar conduit existed on the Temple mount to allow blood from the sacrifices to descend into the same area of the Kidron Valley. This Miphkad Altar is known also as the third altar, arguably the most important one. All in all, there were three altars, which were called:

1. The Altar for Burnt Offering found in the Temple
2. The Altar for Burning Incense found in the Temple
3. The Altar for the Red Heifer, the Miphkad Altar, located outside the Temple

At this point, we can note some similarities between the sacrifice of the Red Heifer and the sacrifice of Jesus.

1. Both were done outside the Camp.
2. The ashes of the Red Heifer which were to be used in the water of cleansing were to purify the people of sin (Numbers 19: 9). Likewise, God uses the blood of Jesus to purify us of our sins.
3. Anyone not sprinkled with the water of cleansing (the ashes mixed with water), after touching a dead body for example, was deemed unclean. Likewise, those not in contact with the blood of Jesus are also deemed unclean in the sight of God. Hebrews 9: 13-14 says:

¹³ The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. ¹⁴ How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

4. The Red color of the Heifer connects with the red colour of the blood of Jesus.
5. The sacrifice of the Red Heifer was a rare one. In Parah 3: 5 (Danby, 1933), one account says that only nine red heifers had been sacrificed since the time of Moses (Moses prepared one, Ezra prepared the second and there were seven after the time of Ezra). Refer to Appendix II on the discovery of a Red Heifer in Israel in 1997 – Holy Cow! This, according

to a group of Jewish Rabbis, had very important political ramifications. The sacrifice of Jesus was also rare – done only once and for all.

Therefore to connect the two sacrifices, with the Red Heifer being the shadow of the greater sacrifice of Jesus on the cross and with both having taken place outside the camp, is very compelling.

The Argument over the Boundary of the Camp

A note on the boundary of the camp – The Temple was patterned after the Tabernacle and so arrangements were also made to determine a “Camp area” surrounding the Temple and the city of Jerusalem in a circular fashion that Moses had ordained around the Tabernacle. This circular area extended 2,000 cubits since this was mentioned in Joshua 3: 4 and so the Jewish leaders chose 2,000 cubits as the camp limit.

It was just outside this 2,000 cubits boundary of the “Camp” that the Red Heifer was sacrificed, which leads to it being located on the Southern Summit of the Mount of Olives (see Map 1). This Camp limit was an imaginary circle that surrounded the central part of the Temple which extended outward with a radius of 2,000 cubits as recorded in Rosh ha-Shanah 2: 5 (Danby, 1933). This turned out to be about half a mile east of the east wall of Jerusalem. We learn from the Mishnah, Sanhedrin 6: 1, that all capital punishment was to take place outside the camp. Jesus was crucified under the hands of the Jewish leaders who found Jesus guilty and worthy of capital punishment. They followed the Mishnah and took him outside the camp. Unbeknownst to them, they were fulfilling the Scriptures by crucifying him outside the camp. Bear in mind that this circular boundary was not to be confused with limits of a Sabbath’s Day walk. A Sabbath days’ walk was measured 2,000 cubits from the outer walls of the city. The square gave the common Israelites more room than a circle.

When we read Hebrews 13:13,

¹³ Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore,”

we may ask ourselves, “How do we practice that?”

Certainly, at the very least, it means sacrificing for others, going outside our own boundaries and serving and pouring our heart for others. This should be the natural outflow of our response to Jesus’ death on the cross for us. How far are

we willing to be disgraced, abused for the sake of saving others? How much are we willing to sacrifice?

The cross of Jesus was prophesied in the Old Testament. There are tens of such prophecies - the following are just a few:

1. Isaiah 53
2. Psalm 22
3. Zechariah 9: 9
4. Zechariah 11: 12-13

The cross was an event planned and orchestrated by God since the beginning and it finally came to fulfillment about 2,000 years ago.

Let us, like Paul, seek to glory only in the cross (Galatians 6:14) and let us have his same conviction, that we have been crucified with Christ, nevertheless we live; yet it is not we ourselves, but Christ, who lives in us (Galatians 2:20).

Please refer to Appendix IV for the List of Scriptures and brief notes.

CHAPTER FOUR:

Baptism and the Sacrifice of the Red Bird in Leviticus

Hebrews 9: 5 says:

⁵ Above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the atonement cover. But we cannot discuss these things in detail now.

While discussing the set up of the tabernacle, the writer of Hebrews gave a brief description and mentioned that he did not want to go into more detail then. However, at this point (in 2006), it is appropriate and *important* to go into greater detail in order to understand how these two covenants are very much connected! We will see the doctrine of baptism in a new light and will appreciate it in a new way.

In the days of Moses, when a person was infected with a skin disease, such as, leprosy, he was to be kept in isolation, in accordance to Leviticus 13: 46, which states:

⁴⁶ As long as he has the infection he remains unclean. He must live alone; he must live outside the camp.

Should healing take place by the power of the divine, it was insufficient and unacceptable for the leper to examine himself and, after being convinced of his own healing, make his way back to the camp to mingle with the rest of the community. He had to be pronounced clean by a priest and then undergo a cleansing process himself, followed by some sacrifice.

The actual process of being pronounced clean by a priest is described in Leviticus 14: 1-9, which states:

¹ The LORD said to Moses, ² "These are the regulations for the diseased person at the time of his ceremonial cleansing, when he is brought to the priest: ³ The priest is to go outside the camp and examine him. If the person has been healed of his infectious skin disease, ⁴ the priest shall order that two live clean birds and some cedar wood, scarlet yarn and hyssop be brought for the one to be cleansed. ⁵ Then the priest shall order that one of the birds be killed over fresh water in a clay pot. ⁶ He is then to take the live bird and dip it, together with the cedar wood, the scarlet yarn and the hyssop, into the blood of the bird that was killed over the fresh water. ⁷ Seven times he shall sprinkle the one to be cleansed of the infectious disease and pronounce him clean. Then he is to release the live bird in the open fields. ⁸ "The person to be cleansed must wash his clothes, shave off all his hair and bathe with water; then he will be ceremonially clean. After this he may come into the camp, but he must stay outside his tent for seven days. ⁹ On the seventh day he must shave off all his hair; he must shave his head, his beard, his eyebrows and the rest of his hair. He must wash his clothes and bathe himself with water, and he will be clean.

We shall approach our study by focussing on the nature and characteristics of the two birds that were used in this ritual.

A Captured Bird

For this process to begin, the priest was to capture two live, clean birds. The bird to be sacrificed was an innocent, live, clean bird. This represents Jesus, who himself was "captured" and made to bear our sins by dying on the cross for us. In Philippians 2: 5-7, Paul asserted that Jesus gave himself up to be "captured" by leaving his place in heaven.

⁵ Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

The live bird, which was totally innocent, did not even know what was to happen to it. It was to be sacrificed. Then the other bird was dipped in the blood of the first bird, and set free in the open field. This second bird represents us, set free after having been washed in the waters of baptism, our sins done away with as we are pronounced clean by the blood of Jesus.

A captured bird in a cage does not sound like a bird free in the wild. The captured bird is always eager to fly off and be freed from captivity. That is its dream, so to speak, to be free. A cage is not its home, which is why birds will fly away from the cage to the wild, not the other way round.

A Clean Bird

This was not just any bird, but one that must be clean, to symbolically represent the cleanness of Jesus. It could not be a sparrow or any other bird, but a dove or a pigeon. In John 8: 46

⁴⁶ Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me?

Ask Jesus' enemies if he was guilty of sin and they will say "no".
Ask the thieves at the cross, if he was guilty and they will say "no".
Ask the Roman centurion who saw how he died and he will say "no".
Ask his own family if he was guilty of sin, and they will say "no".

A Defenceless Bird

This bird could not defend itself. If the bird's wings were held, it would not be able to tell you its pain. It could not even present to you its case for why it should not die. It just had to die innocently, without rhyme or reason, so that the leper could be clean. Was this unfair?

Did Jesus present his case? Did he tell any of us his pain? Did he say how unfair it was?

Did he demand any explanation? Did he have the power to do so? Yes, but as if he were a defenceless bird, he willingly submitted. There was no attempt to get himself released. When Peter wanted to use the sword, Jesus told him to put it away. Why? Like the bird in Leviticus 14, he wanted to die alone. He had to die alone. It was God's will.

Not one sword in the entire Roman army was used against him. Not one person who stood at the cross came to his defence. Yes, there were some women who cried, but nothing more. At most, a few felt sorry. His best and most trusted disciples deserted him. Jesus was a type of defenceless bird. The fury of the devil and the wrath of God were focused on this one captured, clean, defenceless bird.

A Free Bird

The free bird represented the clean leper, but it could not be freed in the open field until something significant had happened - it first had to be dipped into the blood of the first captured, clean and defenceless bird. In the words of the hymn sung so many times during the communion service:

“What can wash away my sins?” “Nothing, but the blood of Jesus.”

“What can make me whole again?” “Nothing, but the blood of Jesus.”

“Oh, precious is the flow, that makes me white as snow. No other fount I know, nothing, but the blood of Jesus.”

Freedom, freedom, freedom!!! This can only happen with the blood of Jesus.

Freedom in the Bible has always been bought with the price of blood. Think of the Passover in Egypt – God’s people were freed only by blood. Think of the millions of people who came to the temple – they were only freed by the blood of animals. During festive seasons, the Kidron valley was filled with the flowing blood of sheep and cattle because it was the only way to feel redeemed!

After being dipped in the blood of the dead bird, the free bird was then free to go to any branch, drink water from any cistern or river, free to fly, free to rest. The bird could go to any landscape it desired. But the bird was now *stained* with the blood of the first bird. It was now red and it would stay red. If it had been a grey-coloured bird before, it was now red. It was stained by the blood of another bird. Likewise our souls are stained by the blood, not our own, but the blood of another, the blood of Jesus. And they will be forever stained, unless we decide to leave him and be entangled with the world again.

Does the fact that we are freed from sin mean that we are free to do whatever we please? No, it means that we are free from “death” and are now free to do God’s will. God’s will is now our will. God tells us in 2 Corinthians 5: 14-15:

¹⁴ For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. ¹⁵ 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.

We have been bought at a price. He bought us with his blood. We are now his.

The free bird will fly up, up and up. It may be swept by an air current and it will come down momentarily, but it will fly up again.

Likewise, we need to fly up and up, no matter what trials we are facing.

“Some glad morning, when my life is over, I’ll fly away...”

Could the leper be cleansed without this process? How important was this to the community, to the leper? Was he free to invent another method? Would God hold him accountable? The Jews faithfully followed this method, which is why it was mentioned in The Mishnah, Negaim 14: 1-13, (Danby, 1933).

The striking parallels between sin and leprosy are not something new. Many articles and sermons have been delivered to create awareness between sin and leprosy. Here are some of the parallels:

1. Leprosy results in separation. The person inflicted with this disease must be separated from his community and family and live in isolation. One spot on his skin is enough to warrant the label, “unclean”. Likewise, sin makes us unclean and separates us from God.
2. The person inflicted with this disease must have his skin inspected by a priest and be pronounced unclean. He cannot justify his own cleanness or pronounce himself “unclean”. He cannot make a case about whether or not he should be quarantined. It is a humbling process. In the same way, sin makes us unclean. We should accept our state of uncleanness and go through the process of being cleansed according to the prescription outlined in God’s word, rather than trying to justify ourselves or coming up with our own man made teachings.
3. Leprosy spreads slowly and is contagious. Sin also spreads, sometimes covertly, and is certainly “contagious”.
4. Leprosy is not always apparent at first glance. An inspection is necessary to determine if one has leprosy. Likewise with sin, it is not always apparent from the outside, but upon inspection we see the real state of our uncleanness before God.
5. Leprosy (in biblical times) was incurable without the help of God; sin is always incurable except by divine intervention.

Having seen the parallels between leprosy and sin, the process of being cleansed from both also is closely related. For leprosy, the person had to undergo the process outlined above. Therefore it should come as no surprise that the process of being cleansed before God involves the spilling of the blood of Jesus, immersion or dipping in water through baptism (to be preceded by repentance),

and being set free and pronounced clean by God through Jesus Christ, our high priest. In baptism, the water itself does not take our sins away. Rather, the act of baptism, by faith, is the point WHEN the blood of Jesus washes away our sins. It is at that point when our souls are united with his death and are sprinkled with his blood and we are cleansed before God of all our sins. We see this in Hebrews 10: 22:

²² let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water...

So let's be clear that it is not the ACT of baptism, but the BLOOD OF JESUS that is reached at baptism that takes away our filth before God. When we are baptized after making the decision to trust in Jesus' saving grace and repent of our past life, our sins are washed away.

Could we come up with our own method of how to have our souls cleansed? Do we have that right? Notice even Jesus adhered to the law when he cleansed a leper in Luke 5: 12-15. Let's look at this narrative:

¹² While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." ¹³ Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" And immediately the leprosy left him. ¹⁴ Then Jesus ordered him, "Don't tell anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them." ¹⁵ Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses.

Here we see that Jesus, after having cured the leper, still insisted that the leper show himself to the priest and carry out the necessary sacrifices commanded in the Law of Moses, which would undoubtedly include the ceremony of the two birds. If Jesus showed such respect for an obscure law about a skin disease, would he not expect us to follow His commands on how to have our sins forgiven and receive the Holy Spirit? Would he allow us to invent our own practices to replace specific commands in the bible that are applicable to us? Yet there are many who justify themselves, saying that like the leper they have already been cleansed of their leprosy and fulfilling the other part of the commandment is simply a matter of formality, thereby negating the importance

of obeying a command. In fact the leper could not be made free unless he was pronounced clean by a priest.

The sacrifice of the Red Bird may be viewed a little differently by some to infer the following:

1. That the two birds represent Jesus.
2. The dead one represents his sacrifice.
3. The dipping of the live bird into the water represents his burial.
4. The live one represents his resurrection.
5. The bathing of the leper represents the baptism.

Even if this view is preferred, the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, in turn, is very closely connected to the death of one's old life, the water burial in baptism, and the raising to lead a new life, mentioned in Romans 6: 3-4:

³ Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

Either view connects one's spiritual cleansing before God to the process of baptism.

There are two other passages containing parallels with baptism in the New Testament – I Corinthians 10: 1-5 and I Peter 3: 18-22, and we shall touch on each of them briefly.

I Corinthians 10: 1-5

¹For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. ²They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. ³They all ate the same spiritual food ⁴and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. ⁵Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert.

Paul makes the comparison here between our journey into salvation and that of our forefathers:

1. Slavery in Egypt and Slavery to Sin - All through the bible, Israel's slavery in Egypt was used as a symbol to our own slavery to sin. Jesus explicitly says that when we sin, we are held in slavery to sin, John 8: 34 (print). When God saw his people crying out in Egypt, he sent Moses to rescue them. Likewise, we are slaves to our own sins and God sent Jesus as our savior.
2. The Waters of the Red Sea and the Waters of Baptism - The passing through the Red Sea is one of the most stunning events in the Old Testament. When Pharaoh realized that he was about to lose his free labor, he sent a vast army to capture them again. It was a fight till the end. All the other plagues did not turn Pharaoh's heart from desiring to "own" the Hebrews. The army was pursuing them vigilantly as Israel was at the waters edge. They thought it was a trap, but God was about to unveil one of his greatest miracles of all time. As Moses raised his hand, the Red Sea parted. God's people were able to escape 400 years of slavery by simply passing through these walls of water. Likewise, when we go through the waters of baptism we bid goodbye to our "Egypt", to our old life, and move into a new era of reunion with God. It is not a coincidence that waters were present in both Israel's defining historical moment and ours. Both involve the crossing through water from death to life.
3. Moses as their Savior and Jesus as Ours - Throughout the New Testament, Moses is presented as a pre-figure of Jesus – Moses being the savior of Israel in the Old Testament and Jesus being the savior of the spiritual Israel in the New Testament.

There is a definite pattern here. Following on from the passage we read above, in I Corinthians 10: 6, Paul says that these things happened as examples for us, to warn us from following their footsteps of unfaithfulness. Paul was admonishing us to stay faithful to God even after our rescue, through Jesus Christ, and to not fall back into our old life of slavery to sin.

I Peter 3: 18-22

¹⁸For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, ¹⁹through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison ²⁰who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, ²¹and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²²who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

The flood that took place during the time of Noah also has tremendous parallels to baptism. Peter, the Apostle, mentions it explicitly in 1 Peter 3: 18-22 and refers to the floodwaters again in his second book, writing that they represent the judgment that will fall on all the earth, II Peter 2: 4-9:

⁴For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment; ⁵if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; ⁶if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; ⁷and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men ⁸(for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)— ⁹if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.

Just as the people mocked Noah about the building of the ark, so today people mock Christians for believing in the saving gospel. However, when Jesus comes back, just as during the time of Noah when the flooding rain began, it will be too late. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, as Jesus himself says. Notice the passage above, which says that Noah and his family, only eight in all, were saved by their *obedience* to God's command. Likewise, in the second judgment, it is likely that only "a few" (percentage-wise, that is) will be saved. Jesus himself uses the phrase "a few" in Matthew 7: 14. Rather than getting troubled by the number of people that may or may not be saved, we need to take to heart what Jesus said to the person that asked the very

same troubling question, “Lord, are only a few people going to be saved? ” Our Lord’s reply, “Make every effort to enter through the narrow door.” (Luke 13:23)

Just as the waters of the flood separated Noah from the polluted world, likewise the waters of baptism separate us from the pollution of the world. In Noah’s days, men could only be separated from the polluted world through water. Likewise, we can only be separated from the sinful world today only through water. This again, is no coincidence. Water, water everywhere, in the Old Testament and in the New. Water was present whenever there was a transition from a sinful, enslaving polluted world to freedom into God’s loving, gracious hand as he guides us into the promise land.

In Acts chapter 2, we see the church being established. What must the people who heard the message do in order to enter the kingdom and be saved?

In Acts 2: 38, the Holy Spirit told the listeners through Peter that they should:

1. Repent (after believing of course)
2. Be baptized

Further implications throughout the scriptures make it plain that our initial repentance is not a one time thing, but that we must stay faithful until death, living as disciples our whole lives.

Passages like Romans 6: 3-4, Colossians 2: 12, Galatians 3: 26-27, Mark 16: 15-16, Matthew 28: 19-20, Acts 22: 1-16, Acts 8: 26-39, Acts 16: 25-34 and many examples in the book of Acts talk about the same plan of salvation ordained by God and practised by the early church.

Where is grace in all this? God called us to get reconciled to Him when we do not deserve it – that is grace. What have we done to impress Him? Nothing. The Old Testament contains some great passages that teach us about God’s grace and His desire to forgive us of our sins.

Psalm 102, Psalm 103, and Jonah 2: 8 are but a few of the examples.

⁸ Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs.

Without God's grace, God himself would not have even outlined a plan to save us. Should we allow traditions to rule the day and adhere to something outside what the Bible teaches? Does God expect complete obedience? Yes! The example of Naaman in II Kings 5: 1-15 should serve as a good reminder to us all.

The Bible is very clear about the steps we have to take in order to be cleansed from our sins. The New Testament unequivocally teaches that we need to believe, repent, be baptized and stay faithful until death. It is that simple. The Old Testament, as Paul says, is a shadow of the New Testament and we see striking parallels between the cleansing of a leper and the cleansing of our sins. This parallel is no accident. It is all part of God's sovereign plan. It should not be replaced by human teaching or tradition.

Much of Christendom is filled with false doctrine and advocates many "cheap" unbiblical alternatives. Perhaps one of the most common answers when posed with the question, "How can one be saved?" is "*The Sinner's Prayer*". Although anyone who wants to be saved should certainly pray, and there is no harm in praying, and we should all cultivate the good habit of praying regularly, praying the *Sinner's Prayer* is NOT how we move from darkness to light. The *Sinner's Prayer* is not how we have our sins forgiven. Steven Staten, teacher and evangelist for the Chicago Church of Christ, researched the origins of the *Sinner's Prayer*. His article can be found in Appendix 1. The bible teaches that we enter the kingdom of heaven only one way: by believing, repenting, being baptized and staying faithful. It was the way of the New Testament, it was the way of early Christians, and it should be the way we teach salvation today.

Please refer to Appendix IV for the List of Scriptures and brief notes.

CHAPTER FIVE:

Discipleship in Our Pilgrimage

One way to see discipleship in the Old Testament is to focus on the pilgrims who made their journey annually to Jerusalem. In his book entitled *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*, Eugene Peterson (2000) depicts the pilgrims demonstrating their day to day discipleship before God, illustrated in their songs as they made their way to Jerusalem. This is a unique way to look at discipleship and we shall approach the study of discipleship in the Old Testament using these songs, found in Psalms 120-143, which are known as the *Songs of Ascents*. However, it is important to note that no matter how we approach this study, discipleship has its roots in Deuteronomy 6: 5 and Leviticus 19:18, which respectively say:

⁵ Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

¹⁸ Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbour as yourself. I am the LORD.

These verses are quoted by Jesus as the two greatest commandments, in Matthew 22:37-39; Mark 12:30-31 and Luke 10:27.

It is helpful, before beginning the study, to get used to a term that will be used repeatedly in this chapter - *pilgrim*. “Pilgrim” is a word that should be distinguished from the word “disciple”. Disciples are people who spend their lives apprenticed to their master; for us, it would be Jesus Christ. A disciple is a learner, not in the academic sense but as one would learn at the work site of the craftsman. Pilgrims, on the other hand, are people who go on a journey either to a place that is very important to them or to a holy place for a religious reason. In the context of our faith, our pilgrimage is our spiritual journey on earth as we strive to become more like Jesus and make our way to heaven.

Psalms 120 - 134, as mentioned, are known as the *Songs of Ascents*. The dictionary defines *ascent* as “an act of travelling upwards” (Collins Cobuild Dictionary, 1993) and given that meaning, most scholars hold the view that these psalms were sung by the pilgrims when they made their way *up to Jerusalem* to celebrate the Jewish festivals. (Jerusalem was located at a high point, about 650-800 meters above sea level, one of the highest cities in the region, and so when people made their way there, it was a slow journey up a mountain.) Bear in mind that the Jews were periodically sent into exile, beginning from the time of the invasion of the Assyrians in 721 BC. As centuries went by, large communities of Jewish people were concentrated all over the world. So, when the Jewish festivals were celebrated, Jews from all over the world would make their way to Jerusalem. See Appendix III on a brief history of the dispersion of the Jews, known as *Diaspora*, from Palestine.

In Exodus 23: 14-17 and 34: 22-24, we are told that God commanded that three times a year, his people should make trips, or pilgrimages, to Jerusalem. There were seven Jewish festivals but the three main ones were the Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. Between these feasts they would live out their lives demonstrating their discipleship. In Acts 2: 9-11, there were Jews from all over the world present on the day of Pentecost, one of the main three celebrated feasts. Faithful Jews were serious about making their pilgrimage (See Map 2 – Probable Routes of the Pilgrims). Is it any surprise that God would choose the time that the most faithful Jews would be in Jerusalem to start his church? Other examples of this would include influential early Christians such as the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8: 26-40) and Simon of Cyrene (Mark 15: 21), who were both from Africa and who made their way to Jerusalem for their pilgrimage. It was during their pilgrimage that they were converted.

In Isaiah 30: 29, it says that these Jews would sing while making their way to Jerusalem. Their songs depicted their feelings, not just their thoughts about God. In a real sense, they sang these songs together and sent them up to God as prayers. As Christians, we also need to be serious about our present day pilgrimage. Our journey to heaven is very much like the pilgrims’ journey to Jerusalem. Here are some parallels between the two pilgrimages:

1. Both journeys are pilgrimages in search of a spiritual home – for the Jews, it was the temple; for Christians, it is certainly not earth.
2. Both journeys involve people who see their need for God as the central focus.

3. Both journeys see the destination as being “*up*” from the starting point.
4. Both journeys involve time, commitment, sacrifice and discipleship.
5. Both journeys involve trusting God for safety.
6. Both journeys have Jerusalem as their destination – for the Jews, their destination was the city of Jerusalem, for Christians, it is the New Jerusalem, heaven.
7. Both journeys are guided by a God who takes care of pilgrims.

God was aware of the challenges involved in their pilgrimage. We see this in Exodus 34: 22-24, which says:

²² "Celebrate the Feast of Weeks with the firstfruits of the wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the turn of the year. ²³ Three times a year all your men are to appear before the Sovereign LORD, the God of Israel. ²⁴ I will drive out nations before you and enlarge your territory, and no one will covet your land when you go up three times each year to appear before the LORD your God.

God promised that He would take care of the fields while the pilgrims were fulfilling their pilgrimage. Think of the worry and concern these pilgrims must have felt, having to leave their businesses (which were mostly agricultural in those days) for quite a few days and trust God to take care of them. For those from distant lands, this may have involved several weeks! The Jews at the time of Jesus who came for the Passover usually stayed until the Pentecost, which was about fifty days! They trusted God to look out for their welfare in Jerusalem and in their native land. It was during this pilgrimage that they heard the good news and were converted. God used a time of pilgrimage to introduce the long awaited kingdom (the church) to them. In other words, these pilgrims were the ones used by God to become the first generation of disciples in His church.

The pilgrims maintained their fear of God through thick and thin, faithful to their pilgrimage.

As we focus on these Psalms, we will be able to relate to, reflect on and apply these lessons while we journey to heaven together as a church and as individual disciples of Jesus.

Psalm 120 - Realizing the Lies of the World

Psalm 120 talks about the realization that the world is full of lies, Psalms 120: 2-3. The first line is about distress and the last word is about war. Think of all the lies we hear so often, from advertising, other media, politicians, corporate scandals - we even hear lies from our own bosses. The first step towards God is saying “No” to the world. This is when we will be able to begin our repentance process. Repentance is not a feeling; it is a decision.

Do you believe the lies of the world? Have you been listening to those lies? Do you see the faithfulness of God?

Meschech and Kedar are places that were foreign to faithful Jews. Meschech was in Eastern Anatolia (modern day Turkey) and Kedar was one of Ishmael's sons and he fathered a tribe that bore his name (Genesis 25: 13), (Harmon, 1998). In other words, the psalmist felt so distressed that he likened it to living among hostile people in a foreign land.

People who are not repulsed by the world will never be drawn to God in repentance.

The pilgrims were exposed to the lies of the world, yet they were faithful to their pilgrimage.

Discipleship means knowing that the world lies, and being repulsed by it, and pursuing the more faithful God instead.

Psalm 121 - God Guards Us from Evil

Here in Psalm 121: 2-8, the Bible says clearly that God will take care of us. A person travelling to Jerusalem by foot could step on a sharp stone or injure a knee. Under the hot sun, the pilgrims could become faint. Also, if they travelled for a long time they could get lonely. Still, they knew that God would take care of them and that God does NOT sleep. God was their shade under the hot sun, not the other way round!

Jerusalem is located on a mountain and so when they began their journey they started to climb uphill. From a distance they would have been able to see these mountains. These mountains may have seemed strong and unmovable but they knew their real help came from God. Mountains are not God. Only God is God. Five times the word “watches” is used. Do we really trust God or

do we trust the mountain *and* God? Sometimes we seem to have two religions - one religion on Sunday, another from Monday – Saturday.

The pilgrims took comfort in the protection of their invisible God and were faithful to their pilgrimage.

Discipleship means believing that God will take care of us and that we should be singularly focused on pleasing Him.

Psalm 122 – Going to the House of God

In verse 1, we see that David’s reaction to going up to God’s house was to rejoice, be excited, be happy and grab the opportunity. Likewise, we should see the desire to begin our pilgrimage with excitement, knowing that we will see God at the end.

In verse 2, David mentioned that they had finally arrived in Jerusalem, by being at the gates. The word Jerusalem means “foundation of peace” (Harman, 1998). It is interesting to see the play on the word ‘peace’ in verse 6-8.

In Psalm 122: 4-5, the tribes went up to Jerusalem to be reminded of the laws of God. They were excited to be reminded of these decrees that would then be used in their day to day discipleship.

In Psalm 122: 6-9, it is clear how much David cared for the peace in Jerusalem. He cared about how Jerusalem was doing. The pilgrims were faithful to their pilgrimage.

Discipleship means being excited to hear God’s message among His people and being eager to apply it in our lives as disciples.

Discipleship means caring about God’s kingdom, not just ourselves.

Psalm 123 – Enduring Much Ridicule

Here the psalmist was feeling vulnerable about the oppression that they were going through, seen in v3-4, saying that they had endured a lot from arrogant people. Life was obviously not easy for them; challenges from living with difficult people abounded. There must have been bitter words thrown at them that were very hurtful. It was tough to keep their sanity, but in the end they

journeyed to Jerusalem and looked up to God, who they expected to intervene in their affairs. This was summed up as asking for mercy from God.

Though they endured much, the pilgrims were faithful to their pilgrimage.

Discipleship means that we need to look up to God when we go through life's challenges, especially when we interact with unreasonable people.

Psalm 124 – God is Their Helper

They managed to look through their history and came to one conclusion – God has been with us. They did not just look at their own petty problems of the day, but at the big picture. Their conclusion was that God had always been and would always be their helper. They acknowledged that this God was the maker of Heaven and earth and that they were just humans. They never felt that they would be void of problems, but they believed that God would provide an escape for them.

By looking at the big picture, the pilgrims were able to be faithful to their pilgrimage.

Discipleship means looking at the big picture, not just at our “light and momentary” troubles, and believing that God will intervene and help.

Psalm 125 – God Surrounds Them Like the Mountains

Life as a Christian means walking by faith in God while being surrounded by His mighty love and power. We may not be able to see the mountains and hills that surround us, but He is there; i.e. God *is* our mountain. Like Jerusalem, which was protected by the surrounding mountains, so are we who fear God, protected by Him who surrounds us. We should not necessarily go by our feelings about God, but rather by facts about God. What does history reveal about God's guidance of us?

The prayer offered in verse 4 was for God to bless those who are upright, not those leading double lives.

The pilgrims felt the guidance of God and they were faithful to their pilgrimage.

Discipleship means trusting that God's invisible guiding hands are on those who are upright.

Psalm 126 – We Are a People Filled With Joy and Laughter

When the exiles came back they were filled with laughter because of the joy they felt over God having restored them back into a relationship with Him. The experience of being in exile had been a bitter one. They dreamt of returning and when they did, they were filled with joy. The surrounding nations then acknowledged that God had done great things for them. Do you laugh together as a redeemed people? Is this common? Are you serious all the time, sullen and discouraged? Perhaps we sometimes forget to laugh and rejoice when we don't focus on our salvation and how God has brought us out of spiritual exile.

The pilgrims had a lot of laughter amidst their struggles and were faithful to their pilgrimage.

Discipleship means enjoying, in the present, the way God has redeemed us from the past.

Psalm 127 – The Right Balance of Working and Relying on God

Here, Solomon introduces the right balance of working and trusting. It does not say that the builders should not labour, nor should the builder labour without the help of God. There is balance. Without God, our work is futile. However, with God, we still need to build and he will work through us. Likewise, we need to watch but with God being the chief watchman. However, this does not mean that we slumber and allow God to do everything. Three things are mentioned here: building, security and family. Family is a blessing from God (Psalm 127: 5).

The pilgrims understood this balance and were faithful to their pilgrimage.

Discipleship means getting the right balance and doing our work diligently but also relying on God to work alongside with us.

Psalm 128 – Enjoying the blessings of God

Here they were reminded to enjoy the blessings of God (Psalm 128: 2). Do you take time to reflect on His blessings?

The pilgrims enjoyed the blessings of God and in joy were faithful to their pilgrimage.

Discipleship means taking time to reflect on God's blessings.

Psalm 129 – Getting Up When We Are Knocked Down

These pilgrims admitted that sometimes they were taken advantage of or ill treated. The words “greatly oppressed” were used. Still, they made it faithfully to pilgrimage. Life was not always easy or fun or a bed of roses. Tough times had come; they seemed to have been defeated. In verse 3, it seems that they have been at the mercy of their oppressors. They felt like someone had ploughed over their backs! However, they got back up and decided to fight on. And in the end, God ended up shaming their oppressors.

The pilgrims were ill treated and oppressed but were faithful to their pilgrimage.

Discipleship means never quitting even when the going gets tough.

Psalm 130 – The Meaning “To Wait”

The pilgrims knew that in their walk with God, sometimes there was nothing they could do. They stayed upright, gave their best and still nothing seemed to change. The early pilgrims understood that in those times, they had to wait. By waiting, they had hope. God's delays are not his denials. And God is not only a faithful God, but also a forgiving God (Psalm 130:3-4).

We, too, may feel that we have tried our best but sometimes God just wants us to wait.

While they waited patiently, they trusted their forgiving God and made their pilgrimage.

Discipleship means being willing to wait and wait...

Psalm 131 – Time to Get Weaned

David uses a metaphor - that when the time comes, weaning will take place. When a baby starts to be weaned he will initially not like it. He will cry and throw a temper tantrum but in the end, he will get used to it. The mother does what is needed. The pilgrims were humble. They did not act like they knew everything. They kept their feet on the ground and were faithful.

There were times when they did not get what they desired, but what they needed. Still they made their pilgrimage.

Discipleship means not always getting what you want, but getting what you need.

Psalm 132 – Working as One United People of God

At the beginning, they understood David's desire (Psalm 132: 1-5). David wanted so badly to be in possession of the Ark of God. The people, in Psalm 132: 6-9, were one in heart and soul with him. They acted as one united people and leaped forward. God blesses unity for a godly cause.

They remembered this covenant and faithfully made their pilgrimage.

Discipleship means working together with God's people.

Psalm 133 – The Taste of Living in Unity

This psalm talks about the value of living together in harmony. The pilgrims travelled in groups and as they went along, they enjoyed the company of one another and caring for one another. The joy of unity in their community and family knew no bounds. It was just awesome. It is the same for us today. Unity cannot be bought with gold or silver.

The Israelites may not have had an easy life, but their unity in the community and family was so encouraging that they faithfully made their way together in pilgrimage.

Discipleship means learning to get along and working until there is total unity.

Psalm 134 – Blessings at the End of the Road

The last song was one of praise; the word “bless” is in the last sentence. Do you pray for God to bless His people, especially those who work hard (Psalm 134: 3)? They would have been travelling for days, some weeks, some months to get to Jerusalem (see Acts 8, the Ethiopian Eunuch). Finally, when they got there, what became their focus? How tempting would it have been for it to be any of the following:

1. Making business contacts as thousands of other Jews flooded Jerusalem
2. Engaging in commerce and making a profit
3. Getting through their religious “to do” list
4. Touring Jerusalem
5. Shopping and getting gifts
6. Boasting about their sacrifices
7. Worrying about the homes and fields they had left behind
8. Complaining about their hard life

Instead, they focused on GOD. At the end of the road, they wanted to praise God and bring him glory. No matter what type of cards life dealt them, the faithful pilgrims came and celebrated together as one people of God. They were there during the good times; they were there during the difficult times. They were there when they were oppressed, and when in despair. They were there when blessings just arrived. They lived to bring glory to God, not to themselves. As mentioned earlier, little wonder that God used these pilgrims to start his church on the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter two!

Discipleship means living primarily to bring glory and praise to God.

Please refer to Appendix IV for the List of Scriptures and brief notes.

Appendix I: The Sinner's Prayer

– A Brief History of a Novel Practice

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C.S. Lewis used the term “a great cataract of nonsense” to describe how people use a modern idea to construe Bible theology. One such example, perhaps the best example, is a conversion method called the Sinner's Prayer. It is more popularly known as the Four Spiritual Laws.

Lewis used this term to describe what happens when someone looks backward at the Bible based only on what he or she has known. Instead, an evangelical should first discern conversion practices from Scriptures and then consider the topic in light of two thousand years of other thinkers. As it is, a novel technique popularized through recent revivals has replaced the biblically sound practice.

Today, hundreds of millions hold to a belief system and salvation practice that no one had ever held until relatively recently. The notions that one can pray Jesus into his or her heart and that baptism is merely an outward sign are actually late developments. The prayer itself dates to the Billy Sunday era; however, the basis for talking in prayer for salvation goes back a few hundred years.

Consider the following appeal:

“Just accept Christ into your heart through prayer and he'll receive you. It doesn't matter what church you belong to or if you ever do good works. You'll be born again at the moment you receive Christ. He's at the door knocking. You don't even have to change bad habits, just trust Christ as Savior. God loves you and forgives you unconditionally. Anyone out there can be saved if they ... Accept Christ, now! Let us pray for Christ to now come into your heart.”

Sound familiar? This method of conversion has had far-reaching effects worldwide as many have claimed this as the basis for their salvation. Yet, what is the historical significance of this conversion? How did the process of rebirth, which Jesus spoke of in John 3, evolve into praying him into one's heart? I believe it was an error germinating shortly after the Reformation, which eventually caused great ruin and dismay in Christendom. By supplying a brief documentation of its short, historical development, I hope to show how this error has served as “a great cataract of nonsense”.

The Reformation

Although things weren't ideal after the Reformation, for the first time in over a thousand years the general populace was reading the Scriptures. By the early 1600s, one hundred years after the Reformation was initiated, there were various branches of European Christendom that followed national lines. For instance, Germans followed Martin Luther. There were also Calvinists (Presbyterian), the Church of England (Episcopalian), various branches of Anabaptists and, of course, the Roman church (Catholics). Most of these groups were trying to revive the waning faith of their already traditionalized denominations. However, a consensus had not been reached on issues like rebirth, baptism or salvation--even between Protestants.

The majority still held to the validity of infant baptism even though they disagreed on its significance. Preachers tended to minimize baptism because people hid their lack of commitment behind sayings like "I am a baptized Lutheran and that's that." The influence of the preachers eventually led to the popular notion that one was forgiven at infant baptism but not yet reborn. Most Protestants were confused or ambivalent about the connection between rebirth and forgiveness.

The Great Awakening

The Great Awakening was the result of fantastic preaching occurring in Europe and the eastern colonies during the early to mid 1700s. Though ambivalent on the practice of baptism, Great Awakening preachers created an environment that made man aware of his need for an adult confession experience. The experiences that people sought were varied. Jonathan Edwards, George Whitfield and John Wesley furthered ideas of radical repentance and revival. Although there is much to be learned from their messages, they did not solve the problems of the practices associated with baptism and conversion.

Eventually, the following biblical passage written to and inspired for lukewarm Christians became a popular tool for the conversion of non-Christians:

"To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation.Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my

voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.” (Revelation 3:14-20)

This passage was written explicitly for lukewarm Christians. Now consider how a lecturer named John Webb misused this passage in the mid 1700s as a basis of evangelizing non-Christians:

“Here is a promise of Union to Christ; in these words, I will come in to him. i.e. If any Sinner will but hear my Voice and open the Door, and receive me by Faith, I will come into his Soul, and unite him to me, and make him a living member of that my mystical body of which I am the Head.” (*Christ's Suit to the Sinner*, 14)

Preachers heavily relied on Revelation 3:20. By using the first-person tense while looking into the sinner's eyes, preachers began to speak for Jesus as they exhorted, “If you would just let me come in and dine with you, I would accept you.” Even heathens who had never been baptized responded with the same or even greater sorrow than churchgoers. As a result, more and more preachers of Christendom concluded that baptism was merely an external matter--only an outward sign of an inward grace. In fact, Huldreich Zwingli put this idea forth for the very first time. Nowhere in church history was such a belief recorded. It only appears in Scripture when one begins with a great cataract of nonsense. In other words, it only appears in the New Testament through the imagination of readers influenced by this phenomenon.

Mourner's Seat

A method originated during the 1730s or '40s, which was practically forgotten for about a hundred years. It is documented that in 1741 a minister named Eleazar Wheelock had utilized a technique called the Mourner's Seat. As far as one can tell, he would target sinners by having them sit in the front bench (pew). During the course of his sermon “salvation was looming over their heads.” Afterwards, the sinners were typically quite open to counsel and exhortation. In fact, as it turns out they were susceptible to whatever prescription the preaching doctor gave to them. According to eyewitnesses, false conversions were multiplied. Charles Wesley had some experience with this practice, but it took nearly a hundred years for this tactic to take hold.

Cane Ridge

In 1801 there was a sensational revival in Cane Ridge, Kentucky that lasted for weeks. Allegedly, people barked, rolled over in the aisles and became

delirious because there were long periods without food in the intense heat. It resulted in the extreme use and abuse of emotions as thousands left Kentucky with wild notions about rebirth. Today it is generally viewed as a mockery to Christianity.

The excesses in Cane Ridge produced expectations for preachers and those seeking religious experience. A Second Great Awakening, inferior to the first, was beginning in America. Preachers were enamored with the idea that they could cause (manipulate) people into conversion. One who witnessed such nineteenth century hysteria was J. V. Coombs who complained of the technique:

“The appeals, songs, prayers and the suggestion from the preacher drive many into the trance state. I can remember in my boyhood days seeing ten or twenty people laying unconscious upon the floor in the old country church. People called that conversion. Science knows it is mesmeric influence, self-hypnotism ... It is sad that Christianity is compelled to bear the folly of such movements.” (J.V. Coombs, *Religious Delusions*, 92ff).

The Cane Ridge Meeting became the paradigm for revivalists for decades. A lawyer named Charles Finney came along a generation later to systemize the Cane Ridge experience through the use of Wheelock’s Mourner’s Seat and Scripture.

Charles Finney

It wasn’t until about 1835 that Charles Grandison Finney (1792-1875) emerged to champion the system utilized by Eleazar Wheelock. Shortly after his own conversion he left his law practice and would become a minister, a lecturer, a professor, and a traveling revivalist. He took the Mourner’s Seat practice, which he called the Anxious Seat, and developed a theological system around it. Finney was straightforward about his purpose for this technique and wrote the following comment near the end of his life:

“The church has always felt it necessary to have something of this kind to answer this very purpose. In the days of the apostles, baptism answered this purpose. The gospel was preached to the people, and then all those who were willing to be on the side of Christ, were called out to be baptized. It held the place that the anxious seat does now as a public manifestation of their determination to be Christians”

Finney made many enemies because of this innovation. The Anxious Seat practice was considered to be a psychological technique that manipulated people to make a premature profession of faith. It was considered to be an emotional conversion influenced by some of the preachers' animal magnetism. Certainly it was a precursor to the techniques used by many twentieth century televangelists.

In opposition to Finney's movement, John Nevin, a Protestant minister, wrote a book called *The Anxious Bench*. He intended to protect the denominations from this novel deviation. He called Finney's New Measures "heresy", a "Babel of extravagance", "fanaticism", and "quackery". He also said, "With a whirlwind in full view, we may be exhorted reasonably to consider and stand back from its destructive path." It turns out that Nevin was somewhat prophetic. The system that Finney admitted had replaced biblical baptism, is the vertebrae for the popular plan of salvation that was made normative in the twentieth century by the three Bills --- Billy Sunday, Billy Graham and Bill Bright.

Dwight Moody and R. A. Torrey

However, it wasn't until the end of Finney's life that it became evident to everyone and himself that the Anxious Bench approach led to a high fallout rate. By the 1860s Dwight Moody (1837-1899) was the new apostle in American evangelicalism. He took Finney's system and modified it. Instead of calling for a public decision, which tended to be a response under pressure, he asked people to join him and his trained counselors in a room called the Inquiry Room. Though Moody's approach avoided some of the errors encountered in Finneyism, it was still a derivative or stepchild of the Anxious Bench system.

In the Inquiry Room the counselors asked the possible convert some questions, taught him from Scripture and then prayed with him. The idea that prayer was at the end of the process had been loosely associated with conversion in the 1700s. By the late 1800s it was standard technique for 'receiving Christ' as Moody's influence spread across both the United States and the United Kingdom. This was where a systematic Sinner's Prayer began, but was not called as such until the time of Billy Sunday.

R. A. Torrey succeeded Moody's Chicago-based ministry after his death in 1899. He modified Moody's approach to include "on the spot" street conversions. Torrey popularized the idea of instant salvation with no strings

attached, even though he never intended as much. Nonetheless, "Receive Christ, now, right here" became part of the norm. From that time on it became more common to think of salvation outside of church or a life of Lordship.

Billy Sunday and the Pacific Garden Mission

Meanwhile in Chicago, Billy Sunday, a well-known baseball player from Iowa, had been converted in the Pacific Garden Mission. The Mission was Chicago's most successful implementation of Moody's scheme. Eventually, Sunday left baseball to preach. He had great public charm and was one of the first to mix ideas of entertainment with ministry. By the early 1900s he had become a great well-known crusade leader. In his crusades he popularized the Finney-Moody method and included a bit of a circus touch. After fire and brimstone sermons, heavy moralistic messages with political overtones, and humorous if not outlandish behavior, salvation was offered. Often it was associated with a prayer, and at other times a person was told they were saved because they simply walked down his tabernacle's "sawdust trail" to the front where he was standing. In time people were told they were saved because they publicly shook Sunday's hand, acknowledging that they would follow Christ.

Billy Sunday died in 1935 leaving behind hundreds of his imitators. More than anything else, Billy Sunday helped crusades become acceptable to all denominations, which eventually led to a change in their theology. Large religious bodies sold out on their reservations toward these new conversion practices to reap the benefits of potential converts from the crusades because of the allure of success.

Both Dwight Moody and Billy Sunday admitted they were somewhat ignorant of church history by the time they had already latched on to their perspectives. This is highly significant because the Anxious Seat phenomenon and offshoot practices were not rooted in Scripture nor in the early church.

Billy Graham, Bill Bright

Billy Graham and his crusades were the next step in the evolution of things. Billy Graham was converted in 1936 at a Sunday-styled crusade. By the late 1940s it was evident to many that Graham would be the champion of evangelicalism. His crusades summed up everything that had been done from the times of Charles Finney through Billy Sunday except that he added respectability that some of the others lacked. In the 1950s Graham's crusade counselors were using a prayer that had been sporadically used for some time. It began with a prayer from his *Four Steps to Peace with God*. The original

four-step formula came during Billy Sunday's era called in a tract called *Four Things God Wants you to Know*. The altar call system of Graham had been refined by a precise protocol of music, trained counselors and a speaking technique all geared to help people 'accept Christ as Savior.'

In the late 1950s Bill Bright came up with the exact form of the currently popular *Four Spiritual Laws* so that the average believer could take the crusade experience into the living room of their neighbor. Of course, this method ended with the Sinner's Prayer. Those who responded to crusades and sermons could have the crusade experience at home when they prayed,

"Lord Jesus, I need You. Thank You for dying on the cross for my sins. I open the door of my life and receive You as my Savior and Lord. Thank You for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life. Take control of the throne of my life. Make me the kind of person You want me to be."

Later, in 1977 Billy Graham published a now famous work entitled, *How to Be Born Again*. For all the Scripture he used, he never once uses the hallmark rebirth event in the second chapter of the book of Acts. The cataract (blind spot) kept him away from the most powerful conversion event in all Scripture. It is my guess that it's emphasis on baptism and repentance for the forgiveness of sins was incompatible with his approach.

The Living Bible and Beyond

By the late 1960s it seemed that nearly every evangelical was printing some form of the *Four Spiritual Laws* in the last chapter of their books. Even a Bible was printed with this theology inserted into God's Word. Thus, in the 1960s, the Living Bible's translation became the translation of choice for the crusades as follows:

"Even in his own land and among his own people, the Jews, he was not accepted. Only a few welcome and received him. But to all who received him, he gave the right to become children of God. *All they needed to do was to trust him to save them. All those who believe this are reborn!* -- not a physical rebirth resulting from human passion or plan--but from the will of God."(John 1:11-13, Living Bible, italics mine)

The italicized words have no support at all in the original Greek. They are a blatant insertion placed by presuppositions of the translator, Kenneth Taylor. I'm not sure that even the Jehovah's Witnesses have authored such a

barefaced insertion in their corrupt Scriptures. In defense of Taylor's original motives, the Living Bible was created primarily with children in mind. However, the publishers should have corrected the misleading verse in the 1960s. They somewhat cleared it up in the newer LB in the 1990s, only after the damage has been done. For decades mainstream evangelicals were using the *LB* and circular reasoning to justify such a strong 'trusting moment' as salvation, never knowing their Bible was corrupted.

A whole international enterprise of publishers, universities and evangelistic associations were captivated by this method. The phrases, "Receive Christ," and "Trust Jesus as your personal savior," filled airwaves, sermons, and books. James Kennedy's *Evangelism Explosion* counselor-training program helped make this concept of conversion an international success. Missionaries everywhere were trained with Sinner's Prayer theology. Evangelicalism had the numbers, the money, the television personas of Graham and Kennedy and any attempt to purport a different plan of salvation would be decried as cultic and "heresy."

Most evangelicals are ignorant of where their practice came from or how Christians from other periods viewed biblical conversion. C.S. Lewis regarded it as chronological snobbery when we don't review our beliefs against the conclusions of others:

"Most of all, perhaps, we need intimate knowledge of the past. Not that the past has any magic about it, but because we cannot study the future, and yet need something to set against the present, to remind us that the basic assumptions have been quite different in different periods and that much which seems certain to the uneducated is merely temporary fashion. A man who has lived in many places is not likely to be deceived by the local errors of his native village; the scholar has lived in many times and is therefore in some degree immune from the great cataract of nonsense that pours from the press and the microphone of his own age." (Learning in Wartime, 1939)

While most do this unknowingly, evangelicals are skewing church auditoriums all over the world from a clear picture of conversion with a nonsensical practice.

Stephen Francis Staten

This article is an overview of an ongoing research project.

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Appendix II: Discovery of a Red Heifer in 1997

RED HEIFER BORN - OPENS WAY FOR THIRD TEMPLE

3/16/97 - *Sunday Telegraph* (London)

According to London's *Sunday Telegraph* of March 16, 1997, a team of rabbinical experts have confirmed the birth of a red heifer. Such an animal is necessary for the purification of the temple site according to Numbers 19: 2-7.

Rabbinical teaching states that, since Herod's Temple was destroyed in 70 A.D., no flawless red heifer has been born in Israel.

According to the article, the heifer, which is 6 months old now, must be at least 3 years old before it can be used in a ritual sacrifice. [Arutz Sheva article below says 2 years old.]

HOLY COW!

“The birth of a red heifer (cow) in a farm in the religious youth village of Kfar Hasidim (near Haifa) has excited sectors in the religious community. A delegation of some 25 experts, including Rabbis Yisrael Ariel and Yoseph Elboim, visited the farm last week to examine the six-month old cow, and concluded that it is in fact an acceptable red heifer, according to Torah requirements. However, the cow must be at least two years old before it can be used. Until then, the cow will be carefully watched to ensure that nothing occurs to invalidate its status. According to Biblical law, the cow's ashes are used for purification from certain forms of impurity, and is therefore a prerequisite for the renewal of Holy Temple service.”

Arutz Sheva News Service Tuesday, March 18, 1997 / Adar Bet 9, 5757

Sources cited in above articles:

DAILY NEWS FROM ISRAEL - ISSUE 237 - 16 March 1997 and Arutz-7, 8 March 1997

Source: <http://www.bible-prophecy.com/redheifer.htm#Temple3>

Appendix III: The Origins of the Jewish Dispersion

The New Testament clearly indicates that during the first century there were Jewish communities scattered all over the world, mentioned, for example, in Acts 2:5-12 and Acts 6: 9. The movement of the Jews from their homeland was known as the *Diaspora*, which *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (2000) defines as:

Di·as·po·ra (n.)

1. The dispersion of Jews outside of Israel from the sixth century BC, when they were exiled to Babylonia, until the present time.
2. often *diaspora* means “The body of Jews or Jewish communities outside Palestine or modern Israel.”.
3. diaspora
 1. A dispersion of a people from their original homeland.
 2. The community formed by such a people: “the glutinous dish known throughout the [West African] diaspora as... fufu” (Jonell Nash).
4. diaspora A dispersion of an originally homogeneous entity, such as a language or culture: “the diaspora of English into several mutually incomprehensible languages” (Randolph Quirk).

(Source: The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, 4th Edition, 2000)

History records that the Jews were dispersed during the times of the following Empires:

1. Assyrian, mentioned in II Kings 17 in 721 BC
2. Babylonian, mentioned in II Kings 24-25 in 605-586 BC
3. Greek, which ruled, specifically under the rule of Ptolemy I Soter (323-285 BC), Seleucus I Nicator (312-280 BC.) and Antiochus II the Great (223 BC -187 BC)
4. Roman, specifically under Pompey in 63 BC

The main centres of Jewish dispersion were:

1. Rome
2. Asia Minor
3. Babylon
4. Egypt
5. North Africa

Appendix IV: Scriptures and Brief Notes

Brief Notes

The notes below do not imply that these are the only insights that can be obtained from these scriptures. However, they bring out the points that are being emphasised in these lessons.

Word

Scriptures and Notes from New Testament Guard the Gospel Lesson:

1. II Timothy 3: 16-17 – The entire bible is inspired by God and this Holy Scripture alone is sufficient to thoroughly equip us for our Christian life.
2. Hebrews 4: 12-13 – The word of God is relevant today, not outdated. It exposes our inner secrets and convicts of us sin while we still have time to repent before we are held accountable by an all-knowing God.
3. II Peter 1: 20-21 – The process of inspiration involved men chosen by God to write down the Scriptures and to pass it on. These prophets were not allowed to put their own spin on their writings; they were led by the Holy Spirit and didn't try to "interpret" it in their own way.
4. I Timothy 4: 16 – We have to hold on to life and doctrine as both are equally important in saving ourselves and those whom we teach.
5. John 12: 47-48 – We will be judged on the last day by the Word of God, not by our "good intentions".
6. Acts 17: 11 – The Bereans examined the Scriptures daily with great eagerness and took responsibility for knowing the bible and for their own salvation.

Scriptures and Notes from The Ascent to Truth Lesson:

1. Jeremiah 23: 29 – God's word should be like fire in our bones.
2. *Matthew 5: 18 – His word will never pass away.
3. Proverbs 30: 5-6 – We are not to add to His words.
4. Deuteronomy 4: 2 – We should not add to or subtract from His commands.
5. I Chronicles 13: 1-14; 15:1-2, 11-15 – Uzzah was struck down because he unlawfully touched the Ark of God.
6. *I Peter 1: 24-25 – The word of God will stand forever, but man's glory will not.

* Memory Scriptures

Sin/Repentance

Scriptures and Notes from New Testament Guard the Gospel Lesson:

1. Romans 3: 23 – All have sinned; no one is righteous.
2. Isaiah 59: 1-2 – Sin separates us from God.
3. Mark 7: 20-23 – A list of sins
4. Galatians 5: 19-21 – Another list of sins
5. Luke 13: 1-3 – Repentance is necessary for salvation; without it we perish.
6. Acts 26: 20 – Actions follow true repentance. Repentance is not lip service.
7. II Corinthians 7: 8-11 – There are two types of sorrow - godly and worldly. Godly sorrow produces a big change.
8. I Peter 2: 22-25 – Our response to the cross should be a desire to live a righteous life.
9. Mark 9: 43-45 – We should have a radical attitude towards getting rid of sin.
10. Acts 3: 19 – Repentance brings times of refreshing.

Scriptures and Notes from The Ascent to Truth Lesson:

1. *Deuteronomy 10: 12-13 – God’s commands are for our own good.
2. Exodus 15: 26 – God promised the Israelites that if they obeyed his decrees, he would keep them free from disease.
3. Leviticus 13 – Lepers must be isolated.
4. Numbers 19 – Those who touch a dead body must undergo a ritual cleansing.
5. Deuteronomy 23 and Lev 19: 1-19 – Other specific decrees that people had to obey in the Old Testament.
6. *Hebrews 13: 4 – Marriage should be honoured and God will judge the adulterer.
7. Leviticus 18 – Laws against all sexual relationships outside marriage.
8. Ezekiel 18: 20 – We are responsible for our own sins.
9. *Psalm 34: 18 – God is close to those who are broken about their sins.

* Memory Scriptures

The Cross

Scriptures and Notes from New Testament Guard the Gospel Lesson:

1. Matthew 26: 36-27: 66 The crucifixion story.
2. Romans 5: 6-8 Jesus died for us while we were still sinners.
3. 2 Corinthians 5: 14-15 – We live for Christ, not for ourselves. Jesus is the Lord of our lives.
4. 2 Corinthians 5: 20-21 – We are Christ’s ambassadors. We should evangelize and tell others about God’s love through Jesus. Why? Because one who never sinned became sin for us, so that we could become righteous.
5. I Peter 2:21-24 Jesus suffered on the cross without retaliating, setting an example for us, who are healed by his wounds.

Scriptures and Notes from The Ascent to Truth Lesson:

1. Isaiah 53 – Prophecy of Jesus suffering for our sins.
2. Psalm 22 – Prophecy of Jesus crying out to God while on the cross.
3. Zechariah 9: 9 – Prophecy of Jesus riding on a donkey.
4. Zechariah 11: 12-13 – Prophecy of Jesus being betrayed for thirty pieces of silver.
5. Deuteronomy 21: 23 – Cursed be the person who hangs on a tree.
6. *Hebrews 13: 12-13 – Jesus was crucified outside the camp.

* Memory Scriptures

Baptism

Scriptures and Notes from New Testament Guard the Gospel Lesson:

1. Acts 2: 38-41 – Would-be Christians were commanded to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins and to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
2. Romans 6: 3-7 – Baptism is when we meet up with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus and reach the blood of Christ.
3. Colossians 2: 12 – The “act” of baptism isn’t what saves us *per se*, but rather our faith in what God is doing at baptism as we are buried and raised with him.
4. Acts 22: 16 – Baptism is when our sins are washed away.
5. Galatians 3: 26-27 – We are clothed with Christ at baptism, as God pours down His Holy Spirit.
6. John 3: 3-5 – We have to be “born of water and the Spirit” to enter the kingdom of God – “water” implying baptism, “Spirit” implying the indwelling Holy Spirit when we get baptized.
7. Matthew 28: 19-20 – Jesus commands his followers to baptize as they make disciples.
8. Acts 8: 36-38 – Baptism should not be delayed. Notice the joy produced, presumably because of knowing one’s sins are forgiven.
9. Acts 16: 33-34 – This passage also speaks for urgency and joy.
10. I Peter 3: 21 – Baptism saves us. The floodwaters which carried Noah and his family to safety were precursors or symbols of New Testament baptism.
11. Revelation 3: 19-21 – Although “famous” for being the verses which teach the “Sinner’s Prayer”, this passage was actually written to a church (i.e., they were already baptized Christians who had received the Holy Spirit and had had their sins forgiven) who had become lukewarm (see v14-18) and were in need of repentance.

Scriptures and Notes from The Ascent to Truth Lesson:

1. Leviticus 14: 1-7 – The cleansing of the leper. Think of the similarities between leprosy and sin.
2. II Kings 5: 1-15 – The need for total obedience to the word of God.
3. Psalm 102 – We are saved by God’s love.
4. *Jonah 2: 8 – When we don’t respond, we forfeit the grace that could be ours.

* Memory Scriptures

Discipleship and Church

Scriptures and Notes from New Testament Guard the Gospel Lesson:

1. Acts 11:25-26 – This was the first time that disciples were called Christians, implying that “disciple” and “Christian” are interchangeable terms.
2. Luke 9: 23 – Discipleship means daily denial and carrying the cross.
3. Luke 14: 25-27 – Discipleship means putting God above all in our lives, including family and our own selfish desires.
4. John 8:31-32 – Disciples should be known for holding to Jesus’ teaching.
5. John 13: 33-34 – Disciples should be known by their love for one another.
6. John 15:8 – Disciples should be known for bearing fruit for the Father.
7. Colossians 1: 18-20 – Jesus is the head of the church. The church is the body of Jesus.
8. I Corinthians 12: 12-13 – We become part of the church at baptism.
9. I Corinthians 12: 14-27 – One body, many parts. We all need each other.
10. Hebrews 3: 12-13 – We all need help and daily encouragement from others. We should love each other enough to speak up and help each other to not become hardened by the deceitful messages of the world.
11. Hebrews 10: 24-25 – Disciples should make sure that they do not miss meetings of the body so that they can meet together to encourage one another.
12. Matthew 28: 19-20 – Jesus commands all his followers to preach to others and make disciples of all nations. This passage is known as The Great Commission.
13. Mark 1: 17 – The calling of Jesus’ first disciples to be fishers of men; this calling is also for us.

Scriptures and Notes from The Ascent to Truth Lesson:

1. Psalms of Ascent, 120-134 – These fifteen psalms were probably sung by the pilgrims at different times in the Hebrews’ history as they made their pilgrimage.
2. Deuteronomy 6: 5; Lev 19: 18 – The most important commandments, reiterated by Jesus in the New Testament in all the synoptic gospels; such as Mark 12: 30-31.
3. Malachi 1: 10 – God does not want useless fires or sacrifices without the heart.
4. *Jeremiah 48: 10 – We are not to be slack in our commitment.

* Memory Scriptures

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Glossary

Mishnah/Midrash/Talmud

The *Mishnah* is a compilation of the Jewish Oral traditions of four centuries that began during the earlier half of the second century BC and ended at around AD 200. In Hebrew the word Mishnah means “Repetitions”. For centuries, the rabbis deliberately did not write these oral laws down as they felt it would be better for them to be passed by word of mouth from teacher to student, thereby maintaining a close relationship between them. Teachers, they considered, were the best way of passing down Jewish traditions. Writing them down would alienate the students and cause them to not rely on the Teachers, but on written material.

However, over a million Jews were killed in two uprisings, known as the *Great Revolt* (66-70 AD) and the *Bar-Kokhba rebellion* (132-135 AD). As a result, many of the teachers died and so a certain Rabbi known as Rabbi Judah the Patriarch decided to write it all down less it be forgotten.

The *Midrash* is different from the Mishnah in that the Midrash comprises teachings that are related to the text of the Bible, while the Mishnah comprises teachings that are not related to the text of the Bible.

The *Talmud* on the other hand comprises the Mishnah and *Gemara*. The Gemara deals with the discussions on the Mishnah. There are two versions of the Talmud, one compiled in Jerusalem in 4th century AD and another in Babylon in the fifth century AD, which is regarded as the more authoritative.

Torah

The word *Torah* means “teaching” in Hebrew and it consists of two parts, the Oral Torah and the Written Torah. The written Torah is often just called the Torah, and it comprises the first five books of the bible. According to Jewish beliefs the Torah consists of 613 commandments.

Septuagint

Septuagint is the name for the Greek translation of the Old Testament, and this version was made in the second and third centuries BC in Alexandria, Egypt. The word 'Septuagint' is often denoted by LXX, which in Latin means seventy and refers to the seventy or seventy two scholars that were involved in the translation.

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Table 2
Significant New Testament Manuscripts and their Features

Codex	Name	Date	Where displayed now	When found/ history	Type	Remarks
א Aleph, (1 st letter of Hebrew alphabet)	Sinaiticus	Mid 4 th C	British Library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1844 Constantine Tischendorf found it at St Catherine's monastery on Mt Sinai - 1933 Soviet authorities sold to British Museum for £100,000. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Uncial on Vellum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Almost equal importance to Vatican manuscript - No Mark 16: 9-20
A	Alexandrinus	5 th C	British Library (side by side with Sinaitic Codex)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1627 Given as a gift to King Charles 1 by a Greek church 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Uncial on Vellum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Has both Old Testament & New Testament - Has Mark 16: 9-20
B	Vaticanus	4 th C (300-450 AD)	Vatican Library, Rome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Been in the Vatican Library in Rome since 1475. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Uncial on Vellum - 759 leaves each page 10 inch square Greek 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Most important/valuable text of New Testament - No Mark 16: 9-20 - Some parts lost, from beginning to Genesis 46:28, Psalms 106 - Psalms 138, ending fm Hebrews 9:14 to end including I & II Timothy, Titus, Revelations
	Ephraem	5 th C	National Library of Paris	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brought to Italy & purchased by Catherine de Medici who was the wife and mother of French Kings in 1533. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Uncial on Vellum - Palimpsest, 2 layers: Top → 12th C copy of works Ephraem of Syria Bottom → 5th C copy of scriptures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Has Mark 16: 9-20 - Only 145 leaves of NT from original 238 are left - Include parts of every book except II Thessalonians & II John, but none complete
D	Bezae	5 th C	University Library at Cambridge, England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1581 Presented to University of Cambridge by Theodore de Beza. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Uncial on Vellum - Greek (left); Latin (right) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Known for unique writings - Earliest known biblical copy in 2 languages - Contains Mk 16:9-20 - Only manuscript that contains John 7: 53 –8:11(story of adulterous woman) - Contains all four Gospels, Acts, & III John 11-15, with some omissions in them

Map 1: Location of the Crucifixion of Jesus - "Outside the Camp"
(Hebrews 13:12)

Map 2: Probable Routes



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of the Pilgrims

