



A seed will serve Him . . . Psalm 22:30-31

The Planter

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Coming to Maturity in Christ

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Growing to maturity teaches us that the most important part of our belief system is in *whom* we believe and how we follow that One. We are Christ's ambassadors and since we are ambassadors of Christ, we no longer need to strive trying to convince ourselves that we qualify. It is now our function to do in the earth out from our state of being the representatives of Christ. (2Co. 5:20). In our doing and learning to give forth from the mind of Christ, we discover our destiny is to set creation free from its groan. God rewards us by establishing the life, light and promises of Christ for all to see. (Pr. 4:18; John 10:10; 2Pe. 1:4). As the righteousness of God goes before us there is no question as to who we are, because of who he is. Moreover, we have no need to tell anyone who we are, because we are recognized by our fruit. (Lk. 6:44).

Paul taught that the mind of Christ caused Jesus to take hold upon the inner quality and character of a servant. A servant is the greatest quality of God's character. (Phil. 2:7; Mat. 20:26-28). Have you ever stopped to consider how God, the Sovereign Creator, served the creation from its very origination? (John 1:1-3; Col. 1:15-17; Eph. 4:10). This is easily seen in that all God's works are known to him from the beginning. He chose to prepare the Lamb for redemption before the transgression took place. (Acts 15:18; 1Pe. 1:18-20; Rev. 13:8). The slain Lamb was not something that God wanted, needed or even required. It was not the Lord who needed to be appeased or satisfied, as so many in the church have supposed. Yet, it was God who graciously realized the burden of sin that

humanity would bear. So, he prepared the Lamb to appease humanities guilt and shame. (Psa. 40:16; Heb. 10:5-8).

Yes, in love God gave his son, not to condemn the world, but because the world was already condemned the son was given to deliver them from guilt consciousness. (John 3:17). It was God who manifested in flesh and at Calvary reconciled the world to himself, no longer imputing or charging humanity with fault or responsibility for transgression. (John 1:1-5, 14; 2Co. 5:19; 1Ti. 3:16). It was from the very origin of creation that God freely gave to all humanity, because he wants **ALL** to experience salvation and come to full recognition of the truth. (1Tim 2:4). God is continually serving and giving of himself and he pours out his Spirit upon all flesh. (Joel 2:28; Lu. 3:6; Ac. 2:16-17; 10:45). Yes, God gives of himself, as a servant, to the creation. (2Co. 5:19).

You ask, "Why?" It is because he loves his creation and his love is without requirement. This is the mind of Christ that we love all humanity, even as our Father in heaven does. (Mat. 5:43-48). If we truly are as he is in this world, we must *let this mind* and inner quality of God's character *be* in us. Instead of trying to make ourselves something or establishing that we are God's "*person of power for the hour*," let us love and serve our fellow human beings. (1Jo. 4:16-20). Rather than continually denying our true identity and reaching out to apprehend oneness with God, we need accept humanity and recognize we are destined to serve the creation and set it free. We have a good example, for Jesus took on the habits of a human, all the while serving fallen humanity. He said, "No greater

love has anyone than this, that a person lay down his life (*psuchē*) for his friends. That is, lay down one's soul, or the intellect, will, decision and emotions. (John 15:13; Phil. 2:7).

Servants are necessary and if we want to see the kingdom of God advance within the earth we must become servants. Let us make the adjustment and become that servant. (Mar. 9:35; 10:44). Servants are despised, sometimes hated and often taken advantage of, but the servant's reward is great in the heavenly realm. (Mat. 5:9-12; Lk. 6:35-38). I hear someone saying, "*God did not mean for Christians to be taken advantage of, did he? Jesus never let himself be taken advantage of, did he?*" Let me ask, "*How can anyone take away from you what you have already given?*" By becoming a servant you are going to have less according to this world's understanding. This is because what you have will be poured out and given until you are divested of all that the flesh counts valuable. You will no longer live for what you can get, but for others, so they can have. It is out of the servant heart that God brings forth his glory and fills the earth. (Isa. 60:2; Hab. 2:14). The Lord shines forth in light producing his own recognition by bringing all into the life of Christ. (John 1:4-5, 9; 1Co. 15:22).

In Paul's last writings he did not consider himself to have fully attained what was available to him. Moreover, he did not count his maturity to be final perfection. He did *continue* pressing on to lay hold of that for which he was taken hold of by Christ Jesus. He said, "*I do not count myself to have taken possession, but one thing I do, forgetting the things behind and reaching forward to the things before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*" He went on to say, "*Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, be of this mind.*" (Phi 3:12-15). Yes, Paul considered himself among the "*perfect*" or "*mature*" of his day, but he did not think he had arrived at the goal set before him. In fact, as a man, he was difficult to live with, just about everyone who traveled with Paul found it difficult to live with him. He

displayed a temperament that ran everybody off. You see, we need to get our eyes off of "*perfection*," because we can get so stuck on it that we forget just what we **BE**. Remember. We **BE** one with Christ. We **BE** one with God. We **BE** perfect, because God's word declares it. (Col. 2:10; Heb. 10:0-10, 14). We do not have to do anything more about perfection, except start **BEING** who and what we are. We cannot **BE** as long as we are grasping after what is already ours. We must become what God called us to **BE**, a bond slave, to serve creation and set it free. That is, a bond servant or love servant. That is one who is bound by love to serve. One that is bound by love to remain and continue to abide among the earthy so that change can be brought to creation.

God picks a person like Job and says, "*Job is a man, who is perfect and upright. He fears God and hates evil.*" (Job 1:8, 2:3). Then, we read about Job and how God sics Satan on him to tear his comfortable life apart. Next, we see how Job's friends considered him to be self-righteous, because he questioned why God allowed his righteous servant to be so adversely effected. What does God say? This man is perfect. So, let me ask, "*What is your definition of perfect?*" Now, take a look at Noah. Did you know that Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations for he walked with God? (Ge. 6:9). Yet, what is the first thing Noah did after he got through the crisis? He planted a vineyard, ferment some grapes and got drunk. Perfection? Yes, **PERFECTION!** Now please don't get me wrong, I am not promoting getting drunk. But we need to realize that Noah's perfection did not rest in what he did or did not do, but in what God declared concerning him.

Many of us were told, by our religious training, that the human habits are something to run from, or rebuke. However, about ten years ago, God spoke to me and instructed me to be the person that I am. I discovered I could be myself, it is okay with my Father. Since the time of my Father's directive I have been learning to be myself. The problem has been my Christian brethren, who have been

misguided with legalistic teaching, often have more difficulty accepting who I am than the world does. This is because many have become bigoted, narrow-minded and intolerant of anything outside of *their* norm. Many hold to Pharisaical concepts of what God wants of his people. Yet, anyone who is not himself is really the hypocrite (Gr. *hupokritēs*), which in the English translates **ACTOR** and the church is filled with "actors."

Identifying With Humanity

Christ is "*found in fashion as a man.*" (Phil. 2:8). That is, Christ *discovered* he was fashioned like other human beings. I like this word **FASHION**. It comes from the Greek word "*schēma*," which means "*the outer habit*" or "*the outer form.*" Most often a habit is an unconscious pattern of behavior that is repetitious. It becomes the established disposition of the mind or character of the person. Some in their religious habit shout, "*Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, thank you Jesus, thank you Jesus*" in the crowd of saints. By doing this the saints hear and become convinced that all is well. Yet, look at Jesus. How did he behave himself in a crowd? While in the earthen state he lived in the nitty gritty, nasty now and now, he got down where humanity lives and established himself as one of them. It might bother some to think that Jesus gathered with the drinkers and winos of his day. (M't. 11:18-19). He could talk their language and was accepted among them. He even had a glass of wine now and then. However, we know he never drank himself into a drunken state, because drunkenness causes a person to forget who they really are. We know Jesus never missed the mark by forgetting or mistaking his identity. Jesus lived a life of righteousness or fairness that drew men and woman away from their sinful conditions and they desired to become just like him. He became a friend of sinners and the deceptive tax collectors. He got close enough to the harlots, never partaking of their sin, to be accused by the hypocrites. However, his life was such that he enabled the harlot to transform and pursue truth. Also, he got so close to the demon

possessed that the demons cried out, because his very presence brought release. You see, we need to get down to the nitty gritty, where men live and where folks are, to bring true release. We do not need to go out, as so many have through the age of Christendom, passing out tracts with a message of condemnation to influence people to join our religious persuasion. Simply, we need to become servants of creation, real human beings, so special in our humanity, that humanity says, "*I want to be like that person.*" When sons put on this thinking they will draw creation to the Servant of servants. For Jesus said, "*I will draw ALL humanity to me.*" (Joh 12:32).

An Example of Serving

I remember a time when I was in Zaire, Africa, (now the Democratic Republic of Congo), and all I could do was be myself. An uprising was taking place and we had to enter the country after dark. We stayed with some brethren on the outskirts of Bukavu and the following morning went into town to report that we were in country. On the way we heard a deafening sound coming from all directions and getting closer. As we looked around there were children and people running toward us, who were making this sound. The missionary that we were with told us not to be frightened. He was not sure what was going on but it was "*a happy sound.*" Before I knew it there was a crowd around me, as far as the eye could see and they were all chattering the "*happy sound.*" The missionary told me that he'd figured out why they were so happy. It was because a "*blessed white man had come to their village.*" By "*blessed*" they were referring to my obesity. They knew the God I was serving was taking care of me, because I was fat. Now, that is not only a "*spiritual*" fact, but very much a human reality. I noticed that if I stepped toward any of them they began to scatter in the attempt to get away from me. I asked the missionary, "*If they are so happy to see me and believe I am blessed why is it that they are afraid of me?*" They remained around me but just out of my reach. I had a

difficult time believing what he told me, but that which followed pretty well convinced me. He told me about an old wives tale that the Zairean parents in that area would relate to their children when they were misbehaving. It was said that if a child was bad the god's would send a blessed white man to eat them. Now with my size I am sure they were convinced I must have been that blessed one and I obviously could eat a few of these little ones. Then the opportunity to serve became apparent as a group of boys began to push, at arms length, a tiny boy, who was the victim of malnutrition. His hair was sandy, belly bloated, and skin scaly and blotched with white spots. As the older, stronger boys pushed him toward me he was crying and trying his best to get away, but he did not have a chance against his adversaries. They were offering him to me to see if I would fulfill their suspicions and eat one of them. As is the tendency of man they offered the most dispensable child among them. They finally managed to push this young boy tightly against my leg, themselves remaining a safe distance from my reach. He was clearly terrified, but as I reach down and lovingly embraced him I told him it was alright and he did not need to be frightened. What happened next was amazing. This young boy stood as tall as he could and tried to throw out his shrunken chest. Clearing away his tears he was proud to be the first brave enough to touch the *"blessed white man."* Little did I realize what this would mean in this little boys life. I learned that he was an orphan. The custom of the village was for everyone to take responsibility for an orphan. This left a little one like this pretty much on his own, because everyone reasoned that he was being cared for by someone else. The next day I left that area and traveled by pickup (a story in itself) for thirty-fives mile to a Bible school where I would teach for a week. The trip took twelve hours and we covered some rough terrain, decaying bridges, and forged rivers. Finally arriving at our destination where we were put up in what was called the *"white house."* It was a white washed mud shack with a thatched roof that was filled with bats. The

next morning, as I stepped outside, who did I see? It was my little orphan friend. He had followed me on foot and slept outside by my door. It was from that point that I made sure he ate every time we did and that he was taken care of while we were in country. He followed along with me listening to my every word.

It was after we left Africa and returned home that I became blessed for serving my little brother in Zaire. A pastor from Bukavu wrote me almost a year later and told me about *"my young Zairean son."* He said, *"You need to see your son now. He is the fattest African boy I have ever known. This is because everyone now feeds him and watches out for him, because he is the son of the "blessed white man." Also he travels all over the region preaching and sharing the gospel. He has become a mighty workman of the Lord."*

Union With Father

The only quality or character Jesus took on himself was that inner quality of being a servant. (Phi 2:7). A servant who bore fruit. Notice. It does *not* say, he took on the quality of being righteous, holy, perfect, as the religious mind thinks. This is because he recognized his union with the Father, who is righteous, holy and perfect. Jesus took upon himself the character of a servant. A servant is one who walks in a place to serve and help humanity not causing anyone to stumble.

We Have Died To Sin

Some have suggested that teaching like this gives license for believers to live undisciplined, sinful lives. God forbid! It will not come to that, because true believers, who are saved by grace through faith have died to sin. (Ro. 6:2, 11, 22; 2Co. 5:21; Col 2:20-23). It is *impossible* for them to *habitually* continue in sinful ways. (1Jo. 3:9). I am not giving a license to go out and sin, because if you are a true servant you will not. Remember. The works of the flesh prevent one from inheriting the kingdom of God. (Gal. 5:19-21). Believers need to recognize they can walk in places of sinfulness and remain sinless. This is how groaning creation will be

set free. (Ro. 8:19-22). The way of wickedness or lawlessness is an abomination to the Father, because it is a snare on **ALL** mankind. (Prov. 6:16-19, 8:13, 12:22, 15:9). Let us become true servants of creation and not be a snare to anyone.

The Value of Understanding Symbols

Let us now look at the perfecting of the soul and the changing of our character. We will use some shadows found in the law to accomplish this part of our study. However, we need to understand a little bit about symbolism in the Bible. We know that the Law was a shadow of good things to come, but not the very image of those things. I was given a great example of this truth one afternoon in the Arizona desert. When walking with my back toward the setting sun, I noticed a shadow of myself on the ground. I could make out the legs, arms, torso and head of a person. If I took what I saw as actuality it meant a person who was very thin and about twenty feet tall was walking in the desert with me. However, the only one walking in the desert in that location was of a truth six feet tall and about four hundred pounds. Thus, we see a shadow must be interpreted to what it is actually pointing toward. (Heb. 10:1).

The Feasts Were But Shadows

The shadows that we want to examine at this time are contained in the three major feast seasons of Israel. Participation in all three of these feasts was not a suggestion, but a requirement upon the life of every *son* in Israel. (Deut. 16:16). The three seasons consisted of seven total feasts, three and seven are significant numbers. Three speaks of completion and seven represents fullness, perfection or maturation. We will now look at these feasts as shadows that need interpretation to see what God has in store for his people. I want to remind you that Israel functioned with two different calendars, a civil calendar and an ecclesiastical or sacred calendar. All the feasts were determined by the sacred calendar, just as the Lord appointed.

The Feast of Passover

The first feast season was called Passover or Unleavened Bread, and it consisted of three individual feasts; Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Firstfruits. All three of these feasts were perfectly fulfilled in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. (1Co. 5:7, 15:1-8). The first Passover took place when the Lord slew the first born in Egypt, but passed over the houses of the Israelites. (Ex. 12:27). It is celebrated on the fourteenth day of the first month, between the evenings. (Lev. 23:5). The first month is also significant in that the number *one* depicts unity, God, supremacy, independence, beginning and inauguration. This shadow, and its fulfillment, clearly reveals the experience of redemption and reconciliation, which is the beginning of the salvation experience. (Lev. 23:2, 5-12; Rom. 5:10; 2Co. 5:18-19). It also speaks of our liberation from our captivity to limitation. We understand this because Egypt means "*limit*." We were limited by the power of sin that produced death within our lives, until we experienced Passover, which brought liberation. (Rom. 6:3-7). All creation was subjected to frailty, futility, and frustration, not because of some intentional fault on its part, but by the will of God, who subjected it in the hope of its liberation from corruption. (Rom. 8:20-22). The feast of Passover marks the first day in the year, on the sacred calendar, depicting a new beginning. In the Passover experience one recognizes the death of the Lamb, Jesus Christ, to be their personal Passover. (John 12:32-33; Rom. 6:6-7; 1Co. 5:7; 2Co. 5:14).

The Feast of Unleavened Bread

Following Passover the Israelites would take a lamp and diligently search every nook, crack and cranny; sweeping and cleaning out all the leaven from their houses. This was done in preparation for the feast of Unleavened Bread which began on the fifteenth day of the same month in the evening. In this feast all leaven was put out of the house and they ate unleavened bread for seven days. (Lev. 23:6). Anyone who partook of leaven during this time would be

cut off from the congregation of Israel and counted among the heathen of the world. (Ex. 12:18-20, 13:7; 1Co. 5:1-5). Leaven is very expressive of the former or "old" condition of life. That is, it represents the corrupting passions of our fleshly nature, before we experienced Passover. This feast typifies ridding our lives of the leaven of malice and wickedness. Malice is the moral corruption and evil habit of the mind that keeps a person from being ashamed of breaking the law of God. Wickedness is the outcome and expression of malice in word and deed. (Eph. 4:22-24). We are to replace the leaven bread of malice and wickedness with the unleavened bread of sincerity, clearness, purity and truth. (1Co 5:6-8). Note. The life of a Christian must be a continual feast of unleavened bread, for they cannot have, or give, evidence of sincerity if they are not willing to put away all malice and wickedness.

The Feast of Firstfruits

The last feast in this season is the feast of Firstfruits. This feast was instituted by God for Israel to keep after they entered the land of promise and began to harvest the fruit of the land. The people would bring a sheaf of the first fruits of the barley harvest to the priest, who would offer it as a wave offering before the Lord. (Lev. 23:9-14). It was fulfilled through Jesus Christ, who rose from the dead, and became the firstfruit of those who slept. (1Co. 15:20). The uniqueness of Jesus' resurrection is not in his personally raising from the dead, because others have also raised from the dead. However, when he raised there was a firstfruit gathering of saints that resurrected with him and were seen by others, as they went about Jerusalem. (Mat. 27:52-52; Rom. 1:4). Thus, we see the whole gospel revealed through the first three feasts, for they reveal the effect and power of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. (1Co. 15:1-8).

The Feast of Pentecost

The Feast of Weeks or Harvest follows fifty days or seven full weeks after the completed Passover season. This feast is in the third month of the religious year and stands by

itself. It is a celebration of the beginning of the wheat harvest. In this feast loaves of leavened bread were waved by the priests before the Lord. These loaves were a part of Israel's daily diet and after waving them before the Lord the priests kept them as a portion of their provision. (Ex. 23:16, 34:22; Lev. 23:15-22; Deut. 16:10). The fulfillment of this feast is recorded in the book of Acts, which tells us, when the Day of Pentecost (*Gr. the fiftieth day*), was fully come the promised Holy Spirit came upon those believers who were gathered in the upper room. (Ac. 2:1-4). This day became the start of harvesting the seed planted by our Lord Jesus Christ. (John 14:16-20, 26, 15:26, 16:7-15; Ac. 1:8, 41-47; Eph. 1:12-14). Moreover, the experience of Pentecost was the fulfillment of Joel's prophetic promise. (Joel 2:28-32; Ac. 2:15-21). Note: Peter quoted Joel's prophecy and then said, "*The promise is to you and to your children, and to ALL those afar off, AS MANY AS the Lord our God shall call.*" (Ac. 2:39). In the fulfillment of Pentecost the believer experiences being buried in baptism and being enlivened together with Christ. (Rom. 6:4; 1Co. 12:12-13; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 4:4-6; Col. 2:12-13). This is where one acknowledges the old man has fully passed away, for they are now a new creation. Burial signifies the final step in dealing with the death of the first Adam. (2Co. 5:15-18; Gal. 6:14-15; Eph. 4:20-24).

The Feast of Ingathering

Finally, we come to last feast season which is called the Feast of Ingathering, or Tabernacles and it also consists of three feasts, Trumpets, Atonement and Tabernacles or Booths. (Ex. 23:16; Deut. 16:16). It began on the first day of the seventh month of the sacred calendar, which on the civil calendar is the first day of the new year. The significance of the seventh month is that it speaks of perfection, spiritual maturity, divine accomplishment, completion and rest. The Feast of Ingathering required the Israelites to give God thanks for the harvest-mercies they had received, and their dependency upon him for the next harvest.

The Feast of Trumpets

This season begins with a memorial of blowing of trumpets or the feast of Trumpets. (Lev. 23:24; Num. 29:1). God told Moses to make two silver trumpets that would be used for two basic purposes, to call the people to assemble and to cause the people to move forward in their journey. The trumpets were to be an ordinance or a ruling principle throughout all their generations. The trumpets were also blown in times of war, in the day of gladness, in solemn days, and in the beginning of months. (Num. 10:2-10). This feast is believed by some to commemorate the experience of the voice of the trumpet at Mount Sinai that was so exceedingly loud that all the people in the camp trembled. (Ex. 19:16; Heb. 12:18-21). Thus, it represents a memorial or remembrance of God's covenant with his people. Others say it represented a memorial to the creation of the world, when God saw everything he made, and behold, it was very good, so he entered into rest. (Gen. 1:31, 2:1-2). It was at this time that the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy. (Job 38:7). To us the Feast of Trumpets embodies both of these ideas. First, it depicts a memorial to the revelation that God declared with the New Covenant. This feast helps us to identify how far the dogma of religious tradition has taken us from the truth that liberated us. (John 8:32). We need to recognize the teachings that crept into our thinking displacing and supplanting the truth of justification by faith, not works; the teaching of holiness and overcoming, not licentiousness; the teaching of ruling and reigning with Christ, not escape rapture. (1Co. 15:22-28; 2Co. 12:20-21; Gal. 3:1-4; Eph. 4:19; Jude 1:4; 2Ti. 2:12; Rev. 5:10). We are reminded to tirelessly press toward the goal, putting on incorruptibility, so we might experience immortality. (Rom. 13:12; 1Co. 15:53, 54; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 4:24; 6:11; Col. 3:10, 12, 14; 2Ti. 1:9-10).

The Feast of Atonement

After the celebration of trumpets is completed there is a time for preparation for the Day or Feast of Atonement that begins on the tenth

day of this seventh month. To the Israelites this was the most important event of the year. God told his people to afflict or humble their souls in preparation for the Day of Atonement. (Lev. 23:27-28). It is in the fulfillment of Atonement that sins were cancelled, making them unaccountable until the next Day of Atonement, a year later. However, there was a continual remembrance of sin, because it is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. (Heb. 9:9, 10:3-4).

Go with me for a while to the prophet Isaiah, chapter fifty eight. In this passage Isaiah is dealing with the fast that prepared God's people for this feast. Isaiah chapter fifty eight and verse one says, "*Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet and show my people their transgression and the house of Jacob their sins [The Feast of Trumpets]. Yet they seek me daily and delight to know my ways as a nation that did righteousness and forsook not the ordinance of their God. They ask of me the ordinances of justice or righteousness. They take delight in approaching unto God.*" Can't you hear God speaking to the church in this passage? This verse fits most believers. It is the very heart that God placed within his people, and there is nothing wrong with any of it. The prophet is told to lift up his voice and proclaim the rebellion and continual sin, or missing of the mark, of God's people. However, we are reminded that these same people seek the Lord daily wanting to know the ways of God and not just the works he performs among them. (Psa. 103:7). Moreover, as a whole, they have not forsaken the judgments of their God. They recognized the need to walk correctly and holy before the Lord their God. They even ask for the righteous judgments, because they desire to know **WHAT THEY CAN DO**, to draw nearer to God. It was after reading this passage, I asked, "*God, this is the Church, as I know it, in this hour. What do we lack?*"

Let us continue to read what God says through his prophet, "*They say, 'Why have we fasted, and you do not see?' 'Why have we afflicted our soul, and you take no*

knowledge?' Behold, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, and exact all your laborers. Behold, you fast for strife and debate, and to strike with the fist of wickedness; you shall not fast as you do today, to make your voice to be heard on high. Is it such a fast that I have chosen? A day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head like a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast and a day pleasing to the Lord?" (Isa 58:3-5).

In this passage we see God's people felt like they had given up much and benefitted very little, by "afflicting their soul." That is, they humiliated and browbeat themselves in an attempt to deal with the sin issue in their lives, but it never produced an enduring remedy. (Col. 2:20-23; Heb. 10:1-4). The annual fast and blood sacrifice was not accomplishing an effective or lasting work, because every year the worshipers were reminded of their past issues and that stirred within in them an evil conscience. This resulted because it was never possible for the blood of bulls and goats to remove sin. (Heb. 10:1-4). This continual disappointment caused the people to question that God even took notice of the special effort and sacrifice they were making. In turn the Lord questions the validity of Israel's effort. Was their fast what he had chosen for them? They took great pride in letting everyone know what they were doing and how much loss they were experiencing because of this sacrifice. He reminds them that the pleasure they found in fasting placed a greater expectancy on everyone that labored for them. Moreover, their fasting produced disputing, controversy, even to the extent that they would strike one another with the fist and make wicked accusations, pointing out each other's guilt, or missing of the mark. (Sound familiar?)

In this time of preparation for the Day of Atonement the Israelites fasted for twenty-four hours, because it was required of them. The day of fasting was from sun down to sun set the next evening. This was not bad, because they could eat before the sun went down and they would eat again the next day

after the sun set. So they were actually eating at least one meal each day. The meal following the Day of Atonement was a literal feast of celebration. However, this was not a fast of choice. It was a mandatory fast for all of Israel (Lev. 23:26-33). Atonement was the high and most important feast of the year, because this was the one day of the year that the high priest would take the blood of sacrifice into the Most Holy Place. There the blood would be sprinkled for the setting back, removal or covering, of sin. (Heb. 9:7). This was the only expiatory sacrifice offered throughout the entire year. It was this sacrifice, each year, that amended an Israelite's sin and the guilty charge was wiped clean. However, the charge was never erased, it was still on their ledger and next year, at the Feast of Atonement, sacrifice would again be made to atone for past sin and any newer sinful activity that took place throughout the year. Thus, there was an annual reminder of their sin condition. In the church we have a similar practice of dealing with the sin issue. The Catholic goes to confession and acknowledges sin whenever the guilt gets too heavy. Fundamentalists are lead to make weekly rededication of their lives, because of sinfulness and the Pentecostal prays daily for forgiveness and that they might "hold on to the end." The point being that little has changed and sin conscientiousness is heralded throughout the church at every level. Thus, keeping God's people aware of their missing of the mark, as they come short of the glory of the Lord. (Rom. 3:23). This keeps even the believer in a continual need for forgiveness and appeasement of sin.

It is in this feast season that God deals with the thinking of human tradition, because it has made the word of God ineffective in our live's. (Mat. 15:3-6; Mk. 7:13). Today, those who prepare for the day of atonement often sound like this, "Why have we sacrificed so much? We gave up all of our friends and those who accepted us when we received this revealed word of the kingdom." It is true that the word of the kingdom costs a person something. (Lk. 14:25-31). It can cost

relationships, family and brethren, as well as, position and the recognition of the religious institution. The brethren *cannot understand* the changes that take place in one's thinking.

This kind of thinking liberates us from the established religious norm. This rejection by the establishment often tugs on one's sanity, disrupting even the desires and pleasures of a normal life.

More to Come . . .

January 2005 Update

It has been a good year, very difficult at times, but good. We know, because of what each of us have gone through this last year, it will have an effect on all creation. I am just so glad that our Father loves and cares enough for us to let us go through the difficult times. He does not *"wimp out"* and make things easy. He is all about sons growing up and becoming as he is.

Speaking of which, let me say that I find Christmas an amazing season. It comes and goes so rapidly. It seems like every January, I have all the time in the world to prepare, but the next minute Christmas day is upon me and it's too late to implement all my good intentions. I guess I should learn a lesson from the old adage, *"Never put off until tomorrow what you can do today."* When we put things off for another day it is called, *"procrastination"* and I am certainly guilty. I don't know about anyone else, but every year I hope to do better at getting everything done earlier. However, the year comes and goes before I realize it.

So, as always, I turn to the Word to find an example to encourage me. This passage came to mind, *"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."* (Phil. 4:8). You might ask, *"What does this have to do with procrastination?"* Well, we are admonished to do these things and it does not say, *"Do them some time in the future."* This means that we must *practice* lifting our minds above the mundane, everyday stuff that goes on in our lives. More importantly when we exercise our minds with such positive thinking it produces a change within our lives.

Remember. We can not put off until tomorrow manifesting as a son of God. Our day is here, it is now, and unless we act on the revelation that God has given, our day will slip away completely. There are those who say, *"I thought God was doing something."* Others continue to ask, *"When will creation be set free."* All the while God is waiting on us to practice being the sons that we are. Let us move into the fullness of God **TODAY**.

Let me share with you about our trip to Florida. We traveled to Tarpon Springs, FL, in December, to minister at New Beginning Ministries. Michael & Mary Lou Hollis have a wonderful ministry to the saints in that area. Stacy went to dialysis on Wednesday morning before starting toward Florida. He drove about 250 miles or four hours and we stopped in Tifton, GA, for the night. That made a very full day for the two of us. The next morning we drove to Chiefland, Florida, where we spent a second night. Only a few hours of travel because Stacy was extremely tired. Then on Friday we drove into New Port Richie, where we would be staying with our good friends, Marvin and Norita Smith. However, we went directly to the DaVita Dialysis Center where Stacy had his appointment for dialysis. From there we went immediately to New Beginning for our first meeting. After a nights rest we gathered at the Jacobsen's home, on Saturday evening, with some saints for fellowship. Again, Stacy tired out before the night was totally finished and wanted to go back to the Smith's so he could get rested for Sunday morning. We did so and learned a valuable lesson, Stacy just

cannot handle the constant going that he used to do. We believe that restoration is coming to Stacy, but until it manifests we will need to take things a little more slowly. The next morning he was fully rested and ready to go back to New Beginning's to minister the word. After the meeting we broke bread together and shared one on one with the saints. 'One on one' has always been Stacy's favorite time of ministry. This time of fellowship was sweet in the Lord and we look forward to our return visit in the near future. We have included a picture of the Sunday morning fellowship. Our trip back home took two days and we stopped for dialysis at the Ellijay Clinic on our way. Over all, everything went very well and we hope to do more traveling as the door opens and the Lord directs.



A time of Corporate Worship

Stacy and I send you best wishes for a happy Next Year. We pray that 2005, brings an increase in every area of your life. We look forward to a great year and an increase in kingdom life throughout this year.

Pamla

Current Tape of the Month

We are currently sending out Stacy's teaching on the book of Revelation, as the tape of the month (TOM). If you want to receive these studies let us know. Now there is more than one way to receive these materials. If you have access to the Internet you can go to our web page and listen or download the TOM in a MP3 format. The Implanter is also available on the Internet and you can read it or print it for your keeping. Let us know if you want to receive the TOM and Implanter by way of the Internet and we will discontinue sending hard copies. Donations to Promised Seed Ministries can be made through our Alhambra office and also through our web site on the Internet. This site is located at www.promiseed.com or www.sigler.org./wood. We have placed PayPal on our site and by clicking on the "donate" button you will be taken to a **secure** site where a bank transfer or credit card donation can be made. This is a great way to clear up the "paper clutter" and still have access to ministry materials. You can also email us at: PSM@promiseed.com or Pamla@promiseed.com. We thank each of you for your continued and generous support of this ministry. We do not put a price on God's Word because we believe the Word to be invaluable or priceless and we cannot put a price on the teacher, because this will vary with every individual's need and relationship. Pamla and I are thankful for your helping us to defray the costs of sending out this publication. We are so grateful for those of you who find value in the word and the messenger and have sent a "love offering" to help in the support of this ministry.

If you would like to remain on our mailing list please clip the following and mail back to us in the enclosed envelope: (Just a note, the address on the front of this publication is *now* correct. Sorry for the mix up last month). We look forward to your letters and cards informing us how things are going in your lives. We love you all and miss being with you bodily, we *are* certainly connected in the Spirit and you are each important to us.