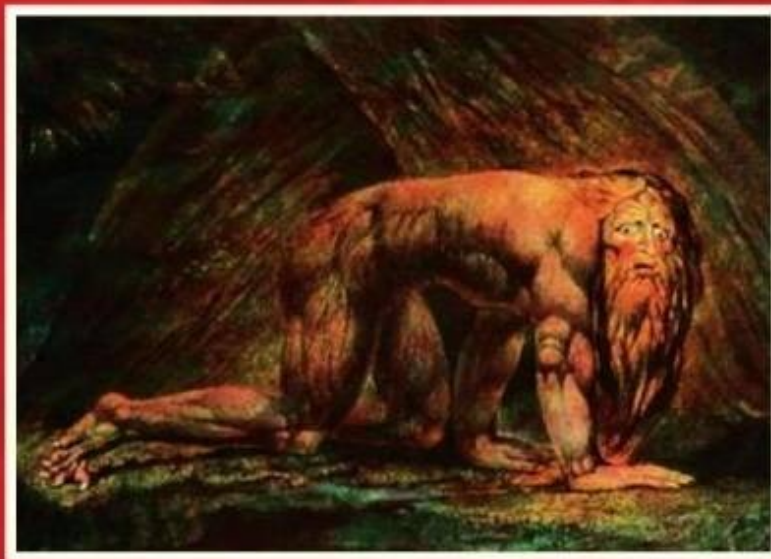


THE MARK OF THE BEAST



Joseph Herrin

The Mark of the Beast

by Joseph Herrin

The Mark of the Beast

Copyright © 2011 by Joseph Herrin

Permission of the author is hereby granted for copying, printing and distributing this book to others, either in part or in whole. However, no charge may be associated with the distribution.

Heart4God Publishing

website: <http://www.heart4god.ws>

blog: <http://www.parablesblog.blogspot.com>

Cover artwork

“Nebuchadnezzar” by William Blake, c. 1795

Chapter Index

[Introduction](#)

[Shadow and Substance](#)

[Let Us Make Man in Our Image...](#)

[The Beast Nature](#)

[Nehustan](#)

[The Overcomers](#)

[Enemies of the Cross](#)

[Kings and Beasts](#)

[The End of Suffering](#)

[666 - The Number of the Beast](#)

[Beast Men of the Bible](#)

[The Mark of the Overcomers](#)

Foreword

A word of explanation is necessary at the start of this book. In this work you will find the writer using names in reference to God the Father and God the Son that are more faithful to their Hebrew original than the names and titles generally in use by the church today. The name Yah, or Yahweh, will be found in reference to God the Father, and the name Yahshua will be utilized when speaking of the Son.

This usage is not intended to be divisive, nor does it serve as a renunciation of the usage of titles such as Lord or God. Neither is it a condemnation of those who choose to call the Son of God Jesus. My intent as a teacher of the Bible is simply to illumine and instruct. There is great meaning in the Hebrew names of the Father and the Son, and these names are directly related to one another. Many of the people whose lives are portrayed in Scripture also serve as types and shadows of God, bringing to light truths that might otherwise be hidden.

For example, Joshua, the Israelite leader who led the people of God across the Jordan and into battle to take possession of the land of Canaan, bears the same name as the Messiah. They both were called Yahshua. Like Joshua in the Old Testament, the Son of God began His ministry at the Jordan River as He was baptized by John. Both men labored to establish a kingdom dedicated to Yahweh, the first external and natural, the latter internal and spiritual.

Yah is the name used in reference to the Father on forty-nine separate occasions in the Old Testament. Most Christians have utilized this name of God without knowing that they were doing so. Whenever the word *hallelujah* is uttered, the speaker is literally exclaiming “Praise Yah,” for this is the meaning of the Hebrew word from which it is derived. The longer name *Yahweh* is found an additional 6,828 times.

The name of the Son is likewise significant, for Yahshua is understood to mean “Yah’s Salvation.” The Gospel writer indicates that this is the meaning of the name given to the Savior at His birth.

Matthew 1:21

“And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Yahshua, for it is He who will save His people from their sins.”

It has been the practice of this writer for many years to use these names, which more clearly represent their Hebrew originals. It is my hope that their employment in this book might aid the reader by bringing forth light on relationships that are obscured, as well as promoting an increased intimacy with God the Father by calling Him by His memorial name, instead of a title which men have substituted.



Introduction

This book presents a focus on the spiritual understandings of the imagery found throughout Scripture that relates to the beast, the mark of the beast, his image and the number of his name. This writing gives attention to the truly important spiritual understanding of these things, understandings of which the church has almost no perception. So dull have the eyes of the church grown in this late hour that she does not realize the great peril that is everywhere around her.

Many carnal interpretations of the Scriptures which relate to the end times are being declared in this day, and it is these carnal interpretations that have consumed the attention of the church. Yet these teachings are of no real benefit in preserving the saints in this hour, and in leading them to victory over the beast, his image, and the number of his name (Revelation 15:2).

Throughout this book I will speak of these “carnal interpretations,” but I do not use this phrase in an entirely negative way. Rather, I am employing it in the same sense that Paul meant when he wrote the following:

Hebrews 9:8-10

The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that **could not make him that did the service perfect**, as pertaining to the conscience; which stood only in meats and drinks, and diverse washings, and **carnal ordinances**, imposed on them until the time of reformation.

KJV

The apostle Paul referred to the ordinances found in the Law, particularly those relating to the tabernacle and its service, to offerings and sacrifices, as carnal ordinances. Paul was not declaring the Law to be an evil thing, but he stated that the things it used as types and symbols to signify spiritual truths were incapable of making anyone perfect. It would not benefit man at all to merely observe these fleshly ordinances if he did not perceive that to which they pointed. If the symbolism of the tabernacle and its sacrifices did not lead the worshiper to Christ, who was the fulfillment of all the types being presented, then the man would never arrive at God’s true desire.

In the same way, a great number of prophecy teachers are focusing upon carnal interpretations of those things written in the book of Daniel, in the book of Revelation, and elsewhere, but they are almost universally neglecting the spiritual truths to which they point. This is not wisdom, for it will lead no man to perfection. These carnal signs exist for the purpose of leading the saints to the spiritual realities that are signified in them, but for the most part there is no discerning of these greater things.

It is not my intent to deny that there will be a physical fulfillment to many of the things described in the apocalyptic Scriptures, though certainly much that is taught today is spurious and results in much injury to the church by leading the saints to focus upon false notions of man’s imagination rather than directing them to that which could be of real spiritual benefit to them. I am not denying that there will be a physical mark, or implant, that will be given one day soon which will be required for men and women to

buy and sell. What I do want to stress is that such a carnal fulfillment of the Scriptures is not nearly as important as the spiritual truth to which it points.

In the history of the church during the past 2,000 years there has not yet existed a physical mark of the beast which has been required to buy and sell, yet there have been innumerable saints who have received the imprint of the beast nature to which it points. In receiving this mark many men and women have been able to trade in all of the things of a fallen and corrupt world. Many more saints stand in danger of receiving this mark, and of bringing the wrath of God upon themselves, and they have no clue as to the true identity of this mark.

This book seeks to illumine the saints to the greater meaning of those things relating to the mark of the beast that they might arrive at the perfect will of God and escape the wrath that comes upon the children of disobedience.

May you be blessed with peace and understanding in these days,

Joseph Herrin

Shadow and Substance

The church is fascinated with matters relating to the last days prior to the return of Christ. The teachers of end times prophecy are legion, and their message goes forth over the airwaves, while their books fill the shelves of bookstores and major shopping centers. Movies are made out of many of these books and teachings, and Internet chat rooms are dedicated to the discussion of various end times doctrines, prophecies and scenarios.

A particular prophecy that has captivated many is that relating to the mark of the beast. The Scriptures reveal the following about this mark:

Revelation 13:16-18

And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead, and he provides that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six.

A myriad of teachings have gone forth to the body of Christ with the effect of causing the saints to focus upon the number 666 and to be wary of new and upcoming technologies that will allow mankind to be imprinted with some type of physical mark, or computer chip, that will be required in order to buy or sell. Speculation concerning what this mark will be has changed over the years as technology has advanced. I remember years back when bar codes were just becoming popular, and many theorized that men and women would be given some type of bar code as a mark. More recently, with the advent of technologies such as Digital Angel, and smart chips, and RFID tags that can be scanned from a distance, opinion has shifted to these more advanced technologies.

Tragically, in leading the saints to focus upon the danger of receiving a physical mark, these end time prophecy teachers have lulled the church to sleep and have failed to warn them of the real danger. The book of Revelation is highly symbolic, and the physical and tangible things described in the book are most often employed to speak of spiritual realities, and it is these spiritual realities that are most important. The mark of the beast spoken of in the passage above is in fact a type and shadow of mankind receiving the imprint of the beast nature so that mankind can traffic in the things of a corrupt and fallen world.

I have never heard a teacher on end time prophecy speak of the spiritual substance of which the physical mark is but a shadow. There is endless speculation about physical technologies which will be required to buy and sell, and the world is surely rushing forward to implement this control of all mankind. Yet, as so much of that which is physical in the Bible, this mark serves as a parable of much deeper spiritual substance. By focusing ONLY on the physical shadow, and ignoring the spiritual substance, prophecy teachers have done much harm to the understanding of the saints.

That the things in this passage are symbols of spiritual realities is evident if one looks at the context of the letter. Below are the first eight verses of Revelation chapter 13, followed by a list of the physical symbols described in these verses.

Revelation 13:1-8

And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore. Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names. And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority. I saw one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast; they worshiped the dragon because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?" There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him. And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven. It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him. All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.

Look at some of the symbols here:

- a beast
- a sea
- ten horns
- seven heads
- ten diadems
- blasphemous names
- body of a leopard
- feet of a bear
- mouth of a lion
- a dragon granting power and a throne and authority
- a wounded head that is healed
- a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies
- authority to act for 42 months
- blasphemies against Yahweh, His name, His tabernacle
- the Lamb
- the Lamb's book of Life

All of these things are symbols that stand for some truth. We would be wrong to think that these things are all to be understood literally. In fact, out of all the things listed, we would most certainly declare that the majority of them cannot be taken literally. The book of Revelation is highly symbolic, and everything is revealed in signs and types. Thus we see Christ as a Lamb that was slain, we see the overcomers referred to as virgins, and the churches are themselves represented by candlesticks. We read of a great harlot riding on the back of a beast, and we see revealed all types of fantastic creatures with multiple heads

and horns. We should not take these things literally, for they are merely prophetic types that represent truth. Those things that do have some literal fulfillment, also serve as prophetic types of spiritual truth.

In the opening words of Revelation we are told that what is written is conveyed in signs and parables, and these things are shadows of spiritual realities.

Revelation 1:1-2

The Revelation of Yahshua Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants -- things which must shortly take place. And He sent and **signified** it by His angel to His servant John...

The word rendered as 'signified' is the Greek word 'semaino' and it occurs 23 times in the New Testament. Of these 23 occurrences, 16 times it has been rendered as the word 'signs' by the KJV translators. Following is one example:

Luke 21:25

And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars...

Now a sign is something that points to something else. The sign is not the reality of a thing. A sign in the sun, moon, or stars is something that gives warning of some spiritual truth of the kingdom of God, some act of God, such as a coming judgment. Suppose some heavenly sign, such as a great solar flare, was given that indicated that a great judgment was coming, but all men wanted to talk about was the solar flare. If they were to focus upon the physical sign, while ignoring the spiritual truth it represented, they would have fallen far short of God's will and their actions would not represent godly wisdom. What folly it would be for the church to go around speaking endlessly about solar flares while never mentioning the judgment for which the sign was given to warn them.

Revelation is a book whose message is delivered in signs. Consider for a moment the purpose of a road sign. A road sign might tell you that there is a stop ahead, or that a winding section of road is upcoming. The sign, although a tangible physical reality, is not to be confused with the substance to which it points. It would be calamitous for the driver and passengers of a car to speak incessantly of the signs they are seeing while they drive right through the intersection at which they were supposed to stop. The mark of the beast may truly make an appearance as some technology employed to regulate those who can buy and sell. As such it is real and tangible, even as road signs are real, and the sun and moon and stars are real, but this physical mark serves as a sign pointing to a much deeper spiritual truth.

I would like to shout it out loud where every saint could hear it that there is a spiritual reality that this sign points to that is far more important than a physical mark. If the saints focus only on the sign (and they are doing so), and they fail to heed the message of the sign, they will be met with disaster. Multitudes of saints are in danger of being imprinted with the spiritual mark of the beast, and this mark has nothing to do with technologies now being developed. If they should receive the spiritual imprint of the beast they will fall under the judgment of God more surely than if they receive a physical mark in the forehead or on the hand. The consequences of receiving this mark are terrible.

Revelation 14:9-11

"If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up to the age of the ages; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."

We should not believe that such a judgment is doled out simply because men and women utilize a new technology to be able to buy and sell. Something much more sinister is referred to in this mark. If a man or woman should receive the imprint of the beast nature to which this sign points they would be in grotesque opposition to the will of God who desires that His children should bear the image of the divine nature.

If Bible prophecy teachers would compare the words relating to receiving the mark of the beast to similar words that lie in close proximity in the text of Revelation they would understand that this physical symbol serves as a prophetic foreshadowing of a deep spiritual truth. In Revelation 13, verses 16-18, we read about the mark of the beast being given on the forehead, or the right hand. IMMEDIATELY after these words we read of another mark that is given to a different group of people which also goes on the forehead.

Revelation 14:1

Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, ***having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads.***

Isn't it amazing that the church doesn't spend as much time trying to decipher what form this mark will take that goes on the foreheads of the overcomers? They have not theorized that God will use permanent ink, or that God will implant a chip in the forehead of the saints that bears the names of the Father and the Son. No one is speaking about smart chip technology, or bar codes, or discussing what language these names will be written in, or how big the letters will be, or what color they will be. Why? Because most of the church realizes that what is written is spiritual truth conveyed through symbolic means.

When we say that the overcomers will have the name of the Father and the Son written on their foreheads, we understand that they are being sealed with the mind of Christ. Their minds have been renewed, and even as the High Priest of the Old Covenant wore a band of blue with letters of gold across his head with the words "Holy to Yahweh" written on it, so these saints have separated themselves unto Yahweh to live for His purposes and to be conformed to the image of Christ.

In this text of Revelation we read that the overcomers will have the names of God "written" on their foreheads. The actual Greek word is "grapho" which means "to grave" and it is the same word that would be used of a sculptor who carves an image out of wood or stone. Similarly, the word that is rendered as "mark" when referring to the mark of the beast is the Greek word "charagma," and Strong's Dictionary defines it in this way:

NT:5480 charagma (khar'-ag-mah); a scratch or etching, i.e. stamp (as a badge of servitude), or sculptured figure (statue).

The choice of words that the apostle John employed reveal that what is spoken of is not something superficial, such as taking a marker and writing something on a person's forehead, but it is permanent, indelible and deeply formed. John is describing two types of people. One group has been altered until they bear the image of the beast nature, and the other group has been transformed until they bear the image of the divine nature. These images are so deeply formed that it is as if a sculptor has chiseled an image out of stone and the image is permanently set.

The scriptures employ similar imagery in other places, for Paul writes:

Ephesians 2:10

For we are His ***workmanship***, created in Christ Yahshua for good works...

The word rendered as “workmanship” is the Greek “poiema” and this word speaks of something that has been fashioned into a masterpiece. What is it that God seeks to fashion? As the first chapter of this book reveals, God determined that man should be formed in His image, after His likeness, and when John writes that there are a group of overcomers who have the names of the Father and Son engraved in their foreheads he is indicating that there will be a firstfruits company of believers who come to a fulness of expression of the image of God. There will be those who are full stature saints who have attained to the image of Christ (Ephesians 4).

We read earlier about the terrible judgments of God to be poured out upon those who receive the mark of the beast. God's wrath comes upon the children of disobedience (Colossians 3:6), and this mark of the beast is merely a sign that points to men and women who have given themselves wholly over to disobedience. They have sold themselves to serve the natural appetites. Their god is their belly and their end is destruction. Those who receive a physical mark will be those who have already been stamped with the spiritual mark of the beast nature. It is those who will trade the blessings of God away in order to satisfy their belly, imitating the error modeled by Esau.

In this book we will explore God's desire for men to bear His image and His likeness, and we will also examine the enemy's plan to form within man his own corrupted beast nature. As the end of the age approaches we will see both of these plans coming to a fulness as the light seen in the overcomers grows brighter, and the darkness of a fallen world grows darker. Both the divine nature and the beast nature will come to fuller expressions until one group is sealed in their foreheads as being a mature expression of the divine image of God, while a much larger group are sealed in their foreheads as being a mature expression of the beast nature.

The church at large does not realize the peril of the moment. The church of this hour is depicted as a great whore riding upon a beast, and this is but another sign given by our Lord to give the wise understanding of the days we live in. Rather than subduing and ruling over the beast nature, the church has made an unholy alliance with the beast. The sinful flesh is protected by the church, and the preaching of the disciple's cross has been so diluted, and in many cases removed, that even the grossest of sins are tolerated and embraced by the harlot.

It is my hope that in reading this book that you will begin to understand the peril of the hour, and the deep deception that has fallen upon the church. We live in an age of apostasy where sound doctrine is rarely tolerated, and men and women prefer to focus upon teachings which are unsound. Many are at risk of coming to a full expression of the beast

nature, for the One who restrains is shortly to be removed and then the beast nature will rise up uncontested in those who have failed to crucify the flesh. Many will be given over by God to an unrestrained slavery to the sinful flesh, and only those who have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts will be spared.

II Thessalonians 2:7-12

For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

Many are the saints who have been walking in sin. Many have been careless in their walk in this world, toying with temptation, and at times even fully embracing it. Few have labored to buffet their bodies and crucify the flesh, and as a judgment God will suddenly remove the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit in their lives and give them over wholly to their depravity, their sinful fantasies, and their selfish nature. The still, small voice that has been urging the children of God to repentance will suddenly be removed, while at the same time the beast nature will rise up in all its power, and multitudes of those who once professed Christ will fall away and no longer make any pretense of seeking to please God. They will live only to satisfy the carnal desires of a depraved world.

The hour is close at hand, and the Spirit is making a final appeal. It is time to take a decisive stand:

Revelation 18:4

“Come out of (the great harlot), my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues...”

Joshua 24:15

“And if it seem evil unto you to serve Yahweh, choose you this day whom ye will serve...”

I Peter 4:1-3

Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, ***so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.*** For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries.

One group of people live for the lusts of men, while another live for the will of God. One group are marked by the beast nature, the other with the divine nature. There is a vast group of people today who have sought out a middle ground. They pay lip service to God,

calling Christ 'Lord' and 'Master' while at the same time seeking to fulfill their own lusts, to satisfy the many desires of the flesh and the soul. Immense numbers of saints picture God as a divine assistant who will help them find earthly prosperity, ease and satisfaction. Their minds are not set upon the will of God, but upon their own will and desires. Many who are called to be pure virgins, devoted to Christ alone, have become harlots riding upon the beast.

We live in an hour when all things are coming to a fulness and a maturity. At this hour you are either increasing in your reflection of the image of God, or the image of the beast. All things must come to maturity, to a fulness of stature, either of Christ, or of the beast.

I urge you to read this book prayerfully while allowing the Spirit to search your inward parts and reveal if there be any wicked way in you. May many overcomers come forth who have been victorious over the beast, his image, and the number of his name.



Let Us Make Man in Our Image...

The Bible opens with the account of God's work of re-creating a world that has become subject to judgment, a world covered with darkness and made formless and void. A fall has already occurred as a third of the angels followed Satan in rebellion and they have been cast out of heaven down to the earth. Those who once stood in the presence of the One who is Light have been sealed up in darkness. Since they have rejected the Light, they have reaped the consequences of their choice. Even as Egypt once suffered the judgment of darkness, a darkness so deep that it could be felt, and no one dared move for the three days that it lasted, so too did the angels who abandoned their first estate know a time when darkness was their portion.

The day came, however, when God began to work to re-create the shattered earth which had fallen under the curse of darkness. In the span of six days God completely refashioned the Earth from a chaotic and formless void into something that He declared was "good." What occurred on each day holds great spiritual truth that relates to the same process that man must go through in order to become a complete spiritual man fashioned after the image of God. On the sixth day we are told that God created man.

Genesis 1:26-27

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness..." God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him...

It is the false understanding of many that Adam bore the image of God, and that prior to the fall in the Garden he was perfect. Many assume that Christ came to restore man to the condition Adam knew before his fall. The truth, however, is that Adam was not a perfected man. He had the potential to bear the image of God and to be fully fashioned according to God's likeness, but Adam never attained to this. The apostle Paul gives us further insight into this.

I Corinthians 15:45-49

So also it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living soul." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven. As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly. And just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

Adam was merely a living soul, but of God we are told that He is Spirit, and those who worship Him must do so in Spirit and in truth. The first man to ever bear the perfected image of God was not Adam, but Christ Yahshua. He declared this truth with the words:

John 14:9

"Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

The first Adam could not say "He who has seen me has seen the Father." The

patriarchs could not say “He who has seen me has seen the father.” None have been able to make this declaration other than Yahshua. Yahshua was the first man to fulfill the prophetic words of Genesis chapter 1, “Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.” He was the first man of whom it could be truly stated that to see Him was to see the Father.

In Genesis then we see the beginning of God’s plan, the seed that is planted in the ground, but it is much longer before we see the seed come forth to produce that which God declared to be His intent. Yahshua refers to Himself as “the Son of Man.” More than any other title, this is what He declares of Himself. Though He was man, He was the first of a new order of man, for He was the first to have the Holy Spirit indwelling Him. To His disciples He declared:

John 14:16-17

"And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth..., you know Him because ***He abides with you, and will be in you.***"

Many men had known the abiding of the Spirit WITH them, and the disciples had even been able to heal the sick and cast out demons by the power of the Spirit who dwelt WITH them. But a much fuller relationship would be experienced on Pentecost when the Spirit would be IN them. In this passage in John’s gospel we see that there was to be a change in the way that man and the Spirit dwelt together.

Having established then that Yahshua the Messiah was the first Man to fulfill the words of Genesis chapter one regarding man, being the first to truly bear the image and likeness of God, we can understand that God planned from the beginning the ages and stages that man must go through to reach the place of entering into His desire for man. The six days of creation reveal much of the plan of God to bring us to the last day when Man (True Man - the second Adam) would be revealed.

As the book of Genesis opens we find that the earth has already fallen into ruin. It has experienced a judgment that has resulted in chaos and formlessness and darkness. So quickly does the transition come that many miss it.

Genesis 1:1-2

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. But the earth became formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep...

[For a fuller treatment of the correct rendering of the words of these two verses, and a deeper exposition of the judgment of the earth that is spoken of here, see the book “God’s Plan of the Ages.”]

The words had only just been penned that God created the heavens and the earth, when we read that the earth became formless and void. This description of the earth corresponds to the first Adam, for we already have read Paul’s words where he declared “The first Adam was of the earth, earthy,” showing that the first Adam is closely related to the earth. We also read in Genesis chapter one where God formed man of the dust of the earth. So the earth and its stages are a picture of man and his stages as God brings him to the place where he will fully bear the image of God.

Even as the words of Genesis 1:1-2 so quickly progress from the earth being created,

to the earth becoming formless and void and covered in darkness, so too do we read of the creation of man, and almost immediately afterwards we read of the fall of man and the judgment that accrued to him. Even as the earth became formless and void, so man failed to attain the form of God and his life was made an empty wasteland. Even as the earth was sealed in darkness, so darkness descended upon man.

Ephesians 5:8
For you were formerly darkness...

Matthew 4:16
"The people who were sitting in darkness saw a great light, and to those who were sitting in the land and shadow of death, upon them a light dawned."

The gospel of Matthew repeats the words of the prophet Isaiah. These words were not declaring that the land of Israel was any darker than any of the other nations. In the natural it has just as much light as any other land, and more than most since it lies close to the equator. What Isaiah and Matthew were referring to was the darkened condition of man that is the portion of all who are born of Adam. The darkness is a darkness of death as Matthew reveals. God spoke to Adam and told him that the day he ate of the forbidden tree he would surely die. It is a spiritual darkness that has been the lot of all men, for man was created to be a temple filled with the light of God's Spirit, but until Messiah no such man had been seen.

What then must happen in order for God to bring the earth, and man, back into the fashion and form which He can declare is good? The first event is to remove the darkness, and this we see occurring to the earth in Genesis chapter one.

Genesis 1:3-5
Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

If man is also to take on a form that God can declare is good, then he must also follow the same pattern. He must receive light, and the curse of darkness must be removed. A parallel is here seen between the Old and New Testaments, for the Old Testament speaks of light coming into the earth, while the New Testament speaks of light coming to man.

John 1:4-5
In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

John 8:12
Then Yahshua again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."

John 9:5
"While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world."

John 12:36

"While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light."

Observe now a great tragedy of modern Christendom. Many are those who have become witnesses of the light. They were walking in darkness and they saw the light of Christ. Many are content to remain in this place and merely give testimony to the light they have witnessed in the person of the Son of God. Yet witnessing the light is not the whole purpose of God. God did not stop after day one of creation and then rest on the second day. He did declare that the light was good, and so it is good to recognize that the light of God was manifested in the life of Yahshua. However, if the saints are to progress onto the sixth day when man is formed in the image of God, they cannot camp out on day one. They cannot be content to merely see the light of day one and then wait until God takes them to heaven. They must have Christ formed in them.

This is perhaps the greatest manifestation of the apostasy of the hour we live in. The saints are preached a gospel that makes them professors of the light while failing to bring them to a place of transformation. They have light, but they are still formless and void, lacking a conformity to the image of Christ. Light is shining upon them, but it is merely exposing the ruin of their lives, and the saints call this ruin good. God did not call the state of the earth good on day one of creation. He merely called the light good. If you do not allow God to bring you past the place of seeing the light to a place where you too bear the image of the Heavenly, then you have fallen short of God's desire and have failed to attain to the plan of God that you should bear His image and His likeness.

Of day two of the re-creation of the earth we read:

Genesis 1:6-8

Then God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." God made the expanse, and separated the waters which were below the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse; and it was so. God called the expanse heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

On day two we observe water covering everything. There is not yet any mention of dry land. Waters in Scripture are symbolic of death, and, after giving testimony of the light of Christ, man is to be baptized, which is to be fully immersed in water.

Acts 8:36-37

As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?" And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Yahshua Christ is the Son of God."

Acts 22:16

"Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name."

On day two, not only do we see water being prevalent, but we also see separation being

a key work of the day. In the same way man, after confessing faith in Christ Who is the light of the world, is to be baptized in water, and in doing so he is symbolically demonstrating that his sins have been separated from him, being washed away. Baptism speaks of joining with Christ in His death whereby our sins are atoned for, that we might also be joined with Him in His resurrection life. This resurrection life is the subject of day three of the creation.

Genesis 1:9-13

Then God said, "Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear"; and it was so. God called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters He called seas; and God saw that it was good. Then God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them"; and it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit with seed in them, after their kind; and God saw that it was good. There was evening and there was morning, a third day.

Even as Christ was raised from the dead on the third day, so we see the dry land arising from the waters of death on the third day. This also symbolizes that man is not to remain in sin and death after confessing Christ, but he is to be resurrected as a new creation.

Romans 6:4-7

Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.

What a great deceit is being spread by the enemy today to keep men and women in bondage to sin. Millions of professing believers are told that they are merely sinners saved by grace, and that nothing has fundamentally changed in their lives. They have no conception of their union with Christ, of their victory over sin and death. They continue in sin believing that this is both normal and expected, while counting on the blood of Christ to cover them and make them clean. They have failed to understand the words of the apostle John:

I John 5:18

We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him.

Multitudes of saints make no attempt to buffet their bodies and keep them in subjection. They have received the lie that they have no power over sin. Some who were homosexuals continue in their homosexuality. Some who were liars continue to lie. Some who were fornicators continue to fornicate. Some who were thieves continue to steal. The apostle Paul wrote:

I Corinthians 6:9-11

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Yahshua Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

On the second day of creation we see in type the baptism in water for the washing away of sins. We see separation occurring even as the saints are to leave off their sinning and present themselves as slaves to righteousness and obedience to God. On the third day we see the saints coming out of the waters of death and entering into resurrection life with Christ, a life that exists to do the will of the Father. We also see vegetation springing forth, and this speaks of the fruit that is to be produced in the lives of those who have come this far. This brings us to the fourth day.

Genesis 1:14-19

Then God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years; and let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth"; and it was so. God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night; He made the stars also. God placed them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, and to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was good. There was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.

Having seen the light, having been cleansed from sin, being partakers of the resurrection life of Christ, the saints now shine forth as lights in the earth. Even as the stars in the heavens were given for signs, so too the children of God are given for signs and for wonders as the Scriptures do testify:

Isaiah 8:18

Behold, I and the children whom Yahweh has given me are for signs and wonders...

The saints shine forth as stars, having the light of Christ within them to be revealed to others.

Daniel 12:3

"Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever."

Even as the glory of the Moon and the Sun and the stars vary from one another in their glory, so shall the glory which rests upon the saints vary in the day in which they receive their resurrected bodies.

I Corinthians 15:41-42

There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead.

This fourth day then speaks of the saints as they reveal the life of Christ within them. As a city set upon a hill they are to give off light. As virgins with oil in their lanterns they are to give light. Even as the stars are used to navigate by, so the saints are to be signs by which the world can know the path of righteousness, and the way of truth.

There will be much grief on the day of judgment when many saints come before God having no oil in their lamps. The hour is already late for the saints to allow the light of Christ to be seen in their lives. The hour to earn reward is almost over, and many have given only the slightest concern to the matter. Like the wicked servant of Christ's parable, they have taken that which they have received and buried it in the earth of their flesh to give it back to Christ when He should call for it. They have earned no interest on what was entrusted to them. They have not brought forth increase for the Kingdom of God. They have no fruit that will abide, and great will be their shame when they stand in God's presence on that day.

The lights in the expanse of the heaven then speaks of the saints of God who are set as lights in the midst of darkness. The saints are to shine brightly out of the darkness. Yet it is a great indictment on the church today that few can tell the Christians apart from those who have not seen the light. Christians have allowed themselves to be conformed to a darkened world, and thus we see that the following words of Revelation are speaking of those who have been called of God, but who have failed to attain to the image of Christ.

Revelation 6:13

And the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind.

The stars of the sky are the saints of God, and tragically there are many who are like unripe figs. They have failed to come to maturity, which Paul describes as "the fulness of the stature of Christ" (Ephesians 4). Since these failed to attain to the image of the heavenly, they will be cast back down to the earth, for they stubbornly retain the image of the earthy.

Of the fifth day of creation we read:

Genesis 1:20-23

Then God said, "Let the waters teem with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open expanse of the heavens." God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind; and God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." There was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.

The activity of the fifth day is continued on the sixth when God creates the beasts of the field. On the fifth day that which is created is both below man, in the sea, and above man, in the air. These creatures are spoken of again on the sixth day, and this makes it suitable to look at these days together.

Genesis 1:24-28

Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth after their kind"; and it was so. God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps on the ground after its kind; and God saw that it was good. Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Twice on this sixth day we read the words that man was created to rule, or exercise dominion, over the fish, the birds and the cattle. God spoke directly to the man and woman and said "Fill the earth and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth." God's admonition to man is to both subdue and rule over these things. This gives us a clue as to what these creatures represent.

All of these creatures of the fifth and sixth day are animals and they typify the beast nature that must be conquered and ruled over. All of these creatures were declared good by God, and they were to be subject to the divine order of God. The governmental order of ruling and subjection is given in Scripture, and is as follows:

God is the head of Christ, Christ is the head of man, man is the head of woman, and man and woman rule over the creatures (I Corinthians 11, Genesis 1).

This brings us to perhaps the most critical part of what is revealed in this opening account from Genesis. In order for man to attain to the image and likeness of God, man must both accept and enforce God's governmental order. Man must take his place in the creation and rule as he was created to do. To fail in this is to fail in attaining to the image and likeness of God.

Why is this so? The entire creation bears the image of God as long as God's governmental order is maintained. God is the originator of all things. He is the source of all life and the wellspring of all thought. He alone is to be the initiator of all activity among the creation, and all things must bow to His initiative. Thus we see Christ, the true Man after the image of God, declaring repeatedly, "I never do anything of my own initiative. I only do the will of the Father."

Christ took God the Father as His head. He submitted perfectly to the will of the Father and only did the things the Father commanded Him to do. He was so perfect in this that He even declared that the words He spoke all originated in the Father, and He only spoke those things the Father commanded Him to speak. Because Christ was so fully submitted to the government of the Father, He became the perfect expression of the Father. To see Yahshua was to see God.

When the creation is also perfectly submitted to the government of God then the creation will be a perfect expression of God. We can yet see God in creation, but the image is marred and distorted due to the fall. Man was to take his place in the creation and to

submit to his Head, which is Christ. Man was to receive his direction from Christ, and in turn he was to subdue and rule over the beasts of earth and sky and sea. Woman was given to man to be a helpmate in this ruling.

We know the story of the fall in the Garden of Eden, and how man and woman both failed to accept and maintain the government of God. God commanded both the man and woman to rule over the beasts, yet Eve allowed the beasts to rule over her. We are told that the serpent was the most subtle (cunning and wise) of all beasts of the field. The serpent deceived Eve and she submitted herself to the beast. God commanded Eve to subdue the beasts and rule over them, making them submit to her as she in turn was subject to God. Eve failed to do this, and rather than submitting to God and expressing His image, she submitted to the beast and began to express the beast nature.

Eve in turn urged her husband to eat of the fruit which God had forbidden them to eat. At this point Eve was manifesting the beast nature, for she had submitted to the beast rather than God. Paul tells us that we become slaves to the one whom we obey.

Romans 6:16

Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey...?

Thus, when Eve obeyed the beast she became a slave to the beast nature. Adam likewise had to choose whether he would subdue and rule over this beast nature, choosing obedience to God and honoring the divine government, or whether he would also bow down to the beast and come under its governance. Adam chose to bow down to the beast nature, and as he did so the potential to express the image of God within him was lost, and this is shown in his being barred from the pathway to the Tree of Life. Adam's soul became darkened and overshadowed by the image of the beast. Adam, who was created to bear the image of God, became formless and void, lacking the image of God within him. He also came under the curse of darkness.

Had God made a miscalculation in His creation? Was His plan to "create man in Our image, after Our likeness" thwarted? No! God knew that the first Adam would fail, even as the first earth had been subjected to judgment. He had already planned that mankind should not be perfected apart from sending His only begotten Son into the earth to subdue and rule over the beast nature. This Christ did perfectly. He always maintained the government of God, always being perfect in obedience to the Father, never giving in to the suggestions of Satan, the temptations of the flesh, or the enticements of the world. In Christ man was seen as a perfect expression of God, and all the saints are called to bear this image of the Heavenly.

What is missing from the gospel today? There is an absence of this message of ruling over the beast nature. Mankind cannot attain to the desire of God to bear His image and likeness unless he first rules over all the beasts of earth and sky and sea, that is to say, man must subdue and rule over the spiritual antitypes which are depicted in the types of nature. In the following chapters we will examine what the beast nature is more fully. Sadly, many saints have not discerned the need to rule over this lower nature. They have tried to make peace with the beast, to live harmoniously with it, when it must be subdued and ruled over.

There is an entire church portrayed as a harlot and as Babylon in Scripture, who has failed to rule over the beast, and it will be this beast that in the end will be her demise. The apostle John speaks of this in the book of Revelation.

Revelation 17:3-5, 16-17

So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. And on her forehead a name was written:

MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire. For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled.

The harlot church system today rides on the beast, but it has not tamed it. Rather it has made an unholy alliance with the lower nature and fails to exercise dominion over it. Because of this failure, God will cause the beast to make the harlot desolate and naked, to eat her flesh and burn her with fire. This is not a bad thing, for it is the flesh of a fallen church system that must be consumed, and her nakedness must be exposed in order for God to clothe her with robes of righteousness.

God will accomplish through Christ and His overcomers that which Adam and Eve failed to do in the Garden. He will cast down the beast and He will raise up a body of overcomers who will exercise dominion over the beast.

Revelation 15:2

And I saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire, and ***those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and the number of his name***, standing on the sea of glass, holding harps of God.

The first chapter of the first book of the Bible reveals God's design for man to rule over the beasts, and the last book of the Bible reveals that there will be a company of overcomers who do so. God's plan has not been thwarted. All goes according to Yahweh's plan of the ages. Even as Adam and Eve took upon themselves the image of the beast by submitting to the serpent, so there will be those who are victorious over the beast and his image. These will bear the image of the heavenly. These will have the seal of God in their foreheads, while a multitude of others receive the mark of the beast.

It is a great folly that the church has so misunderstood that which is spoken of the beast, his image, and his number. Multitudes are focused upon avoiding some physical mark of the beast that will be stamped upon the hand or forehead, not realizing that the mark is already there. Mankind bears the image of the beast in their mind and in their actions. The number of the beast is the number of the flesh man, and all who bear the image of the first Adam, and who have not been conformed to the image of the last Adam, bear this mark.

It is a great deceit that the church should be focused on conspiracies of men and physical marks on the hand and forehead, but that she has neglected to preach the truth that a more important spiritual mark has already been given, and only by being united with

Christ in His death in order to be joined with Him in the power of His resurrection, can man rise above the beast nature and bear the image of the heavenly. Many teachers of prophecy are telling the saints that they must refuse to receive some physical mark that will one day be given, while failing to admonish the saints to rule over the beast nature that assails them daily. They should teach the former without neglecting the latter.

In closing this chapter, let me recap what has been shared. The opening chapter of Genesis which details the creation of the earth, its judgment and its re-creation, is a type and foreshadowing of man. Man too fell and was judged. He became formless and covered in darkness, and he too needs the moving of the Spirit of God upon Him to refashion him after God's image in order that God might declare man good. The six days of creation are a picture of the process man must go through in this restoration, and the goal is the seventh day, the Sabbath rest of God where all is in harmony with the Father.

The vast majority of the church has failed to progress through all six days to arrive at the seventh. Many have gotten no further than day one, and in this failure they have fallen short of the grace of God. It is not enough to see the light of day one which speaks of Christ. Christ is but the door, and there is a straight and narrow path to be followed all the way to day seven. Many saints have experienced the baptism of the second day, but have failed to discern the significance of this washing away of sin and separation from wickedness and death. They have been washed, but then many return to the mire of sin. Those who arrive at the third day will experience the resurrection life of Christ, and it is through this union with Christ that the child of God is able to walk as an overcomer in this world and to produce fruit in their lives that will abide to the glory of the Father.

This leads to the fourth day when the saints are to be as lights set in the firmament of heaven. Many of these stars have been cast back to the earth as unripe figs, but there is a remnant who will shine with the glory of Christ. On the fifth and sixth days the beasts are created which mankind must rule over. If a man should exercise dominion over the beast nature he will then attain to God's Sabbath rest. There will be rest in the land, which is man's body, and the will of God will be completely fulfilled. Man will have attained to the image and likeness of God.

There is great grace available in this hour for man to attain to the will of God. Much of the church is unaware of the desire of God in this matter, and are not availing themselves of this grace. Many are content to dwell with beasts that are neither subject to them, nor ruled over. There is a vast multitude who have joined themselves to a harlot church which rides upon the beast, and the call of God's Spirit in this hour is to "come out of her, My people." Those in this church have no adherence to the governmental order of God. Men choose to obey the voice of their wives rather than God, and men and women together have chosen to listen to the voice of the beast, rather than heeding the Word of God.

Let those who have ears to hear, hear what the Spirit is speaking.



The Beast Nature

What is the beast nature that Adam and Eve submitted unto? What is it that Adam and Eve were commanded to subdue and rule over, but which they became slaves unto? A good place to begin studying this matter is to look at the creature that was the instrument of Eve's fall.

Genesis 3:1

Now the serpent was more crafty than any **beast** of the field which Yahweh God had made.

Genesis 3:14

Yahweh God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you more than all cattle, and more than every **beast** of the field; On your belly you will go, and dust you will eat all the days of your life..."

The serpent is identified as a beast, and he excels all other beasts in two distinct ways which are mentioned in these verses. The serpent was more crafty than any other beast, and the serpent was cursed more than any other beast. We should note that in this account we have the very first appearance of Satan, and he appears as a serpent. That the serpent and Satan are one is revealed in other passages.

Revelation 12:9

And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world...

Satan's first appearance in the form of a beast reveals much about his character. Satan is wholly given over to the beast nature. He was created as a covering cherub, perfect in beauty and the sum of wisdom (Ezekiel 28, Isaiah 14). He was flawless in his creation until the day that iniquity was found in him. He became corrupted due to his great beauty, and he began to worship the creature rather than the Creator. When Satan began to worship the creature he was given over to a beast nature. His wisdom, which was declared to be "perfect" before his transgression, became distorted, and thus we see the serpent described as "cunning." The word cunning speaks of a fallen wisdom that has been given over to the pursuit of selfish desire, no longer seeking the will of God.

There is no greater characteristic of the beast nature than its selfishness. It lives for self. It exists to satisfy the natural appetites that are found within its own being. It lusts and covets and is jealous and knows nothing of dying to self in order to live for the will and pleasure of another. While Satan was yet in heaven he determined that he would no longer live for the will and pleasure of God, but he thought it right that he should be equal with God and be able to determine his own way, being self-directed and seeking self-fulfillment. An attitude of selfishness always leads to a host of other sins such as covetousness, jealousy, selfish ambition, pride, strife, and violence.

Much is revealed about the beast nature in the curse which God spoke to the serpent.

Genesis 3:14

“On your belly you will go, and dust you will eat all the days of your life...”

There is great symbolism here. The words, “On your belly you shall go” signifies that the beast nature will live for the fulfillment of the natural appetites. What is it that the beast nature desires, and what are its appetites? Food, sex, fame, riches, ease, pleasure, worldly goods, power and a host of other such things. None of these things are inherently evil, but they become evil when they are that for which the creation pursues, hungers and thirsts. God’s will is that mankind would seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness while allowing God to choose how and when to supply mankind’s needs. Yahshua spoke in this way:

Matthew 6:31-33

“Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

What is expressed in these words is the contentedness of those who live to do the will of the Father. Doing God’s will is the foremost priority of their lives, and they care not for the things of this world. They do not need houses and lands and cars and many material goods. They are not worried about the care of their physical body, for they understand that the One who fashioned man’s body already knows their needs and He will certainly provide according to His great wisdom, love and power. They understand that if they give themselves to the pursuit of the Kingdom of God that Yahweh will take care of their needs.

Those who are subject to the serpent do not know the contentedness of doing the Father’s will. Of the serpent we read that he was cursed to eat dust all the days of his life. The flesh of man was formed from the dust of the earth. These words of judgment upon the serpent symbolically speak of an appetite for that from which the flesh was formed, and for all of the sins of the flesh.

Galatians 5:19-21

Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these...

The serpent was cursed to be ruled by its belly and to eat of the things of the flesh. When a Christian gives himself to the things mentioned in the list above, it is certain that they are allowing the beast nature to be manifested in them. Many men, even those who name the name of Christ, are ruled by this nature.

Philippians 3:18-19

For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.

Paul surely had the serpent in mind when he penned these words, for he speaks of the

belly and a mind set on earthly things. The belly is a prominent feature of the beast nature, and it was singularly marked out when God cursed the serpent. The emphasis on the belly of this beast reveals that its entire life rests upon the satisfying of its earthly appetites. The belly is also emphasized when speaking of men who have given themselves over to be ruled by the beast nature.

The beast nature can be summed up in one word, “selfish.” The divine nature, in stark contrast, can be summed up in the word “selfless,” or with the word “love,” for we are told that love “does not seek its own” (I Corinthians 13:5).

The perfect wisdom of God is unselfish and seeks the welfare of another. Thus we see in Scripture that among the godhead there is a great selflessness. The Father glorifies the Son, the Son lives to do the will of the Father, and the Spirit takes the things of the Father and with them glorifies the Son (John 16). The perfect wisdom of God is such that Yahweh would send His beloved Son to die for mankind, and Yahshua would freely lay down His life for His friends. This wisdom is utterly unselfish. This wisdom is meek and gentle and humble.

James 3:17

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.

The corrupted wisdom of the beast nature is not so. It is born in selfishness and cares not about the welfare of others.

James 3:15-16

This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.

I want to share something here that is difficult to convey. The reason it is difficult is that the saints have been so carnal for so long that they can only with great difficulty begin to perceive the tremendous depths to which the church has sunk. I know the majority of those reading this book will think that they are not manifesting the beast nature in any way, that they are truly selfless and to a great degree they are manifesting the Spirit of Christ, but we must remember that the serpent is cunning above all beasts and that Satan’s chief weapon is deception. Satan can convince you that you are the image of godliness when in fact you are far from it.

I ask you to really allow the Spirit to search the depths of your being as you read what follows. It will certainly sound radical and appear out of place in a world ruled by the evil one. It will appear as heretical to a harlot who wants to remain firmly seated upon the beast. It may even cause some fear to arise within your being as you “count the cost” and consider the consequences of what is being shared, but if you will not shrink back, and if you will allow the Spirit to transform you so that you are no longer conformed to a fallen, materially obsessed world, you will find the image of the divine expressed in and through your being. You will begin to manifest that for which God created man. You will appear as the very image and likeness of God.

Are you ready?

We read above where jealousy, and selfish ambition, and a slavery to the belly, or the

appetites of the flesh, are all characteristics of the beast nature. The beast nature is marked by its consumption and it is never satisfied. This consumption is evident everywhere in our society, but we really do not see it. We have become so lost in this conspicuous consumption that it is no longer conspicuous to us.

Saints are called to be conformed to the image of Christ, and Christ is called “the Light of the world.” He is totally selfless and giving. He laid down His life for the very ones who hated Him. We are told that “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us,” even when we were His enemies. We read in the first chapter of Genesis that on the fourth day that lights were created in the firmament of the heavens, and we saw how the saints correspond to these lights. Light is selfless. Light does not consume, rather it radiates outward. It goes forth and brings warmth and life and energy to all that it shines upon. All saints are called to be such selfless, giving lights, radiating the life and love of Christ in a darkened world.

It has occurred to me that even as God has given us a representation of the saints in the heavens, so too has He given us a representation of those who are marked by the beast nature. Much has been spoken in recent years about black holes. Black holes are said to be areas of super dense matter that are caused by a star collapsing in upon itself. These areas of super dense matter begin to pull all things into themselves. They are such powerful attractors that they will not even allow light to escape from them. They just suck in more and more matter.

Scientists cannot actually see black holes, for they give off no light. Rather they have determined that they exist by observing the effect that occurs on matter around them. They can observe matter being pulled powerfully to a certain location, and light being extinguished, and by observing this activity they are made aware of the existence and presence of black holes.

See now how perfectly these black holes typify those men and women who have given themselves over to the beast nature. Mankind was created like the stars to show forth the light and life of the Creator, but many have collapsed back in upon themselves, having turned inward and begun to seek things for self. Many, even among the saints, have failed to be content to express the light of Christ and to live to do the will of the Father. Rather, they want things for self. They are attracted to the matter of this world, and they crave it, being filled with covetousness and lust and selfish ambition.

As these ones begin to work to gain the things their souls desire they cease radiating the light of God and they become as big vacuums attracting material things to themselves. They reason that it is only right and proper that they should have a fair portion of the world’s goods and they begin exerting tremendous energy to gain those things around them. They begin attracting matter to themselves. The Bible calls this activity “serving mammon” and the saints are warned that no man can serve both God and mammon.

Now here is the difficult part of what I desire to convey. Almost all saints are attempting to serve both God and mammon, though they do not recognize it. Most saints are marked by the influence of the beast nature on their lives, and a great number are even riding upon the beast with no admission of what it is they are doing. Though all saints have been called to give forth the light of Christ, an alarming number of them have turned inward and have become voracious consumers of matter. They are in peril of being cast back down to the earth as unripe figs, of being given over wholly to the pursuit of their selfish appetites.

One reason that the saints fail to recognize the influence of the beast nature upon their lives, the great selfishness and covetousness that is present within them, is that they

compare themselves with one another rather than with God Who is the true measure of what man was created to be. I would therefore like to set Christ as the standard and reveal what His attitude was regarding consumption and the fulfillment of natural appetites. In looking at Christ we will see clearly what is of the beast nature and what is divine.

Immediately after Christ was baptized by John in the Jordan River, the Spirit led Him out to the wilderness where He fasted for forty days. Another way to say this is that Christ consumed nothing for forty days. After these forty days we are told that Christ was hungry, but He did not yet eat. Satan then came to tempt Yahshua and the very first temptation was related to consumption. Satan said to Christ, "If you are hungry, turn these stones to bread."

What Satan suggested seems very reasonable to the creature part of man. If you have an appetite that is clamoring to be satisfied, then it seems normal to satisfy it. After all, God created man's body to be nourished by food, and even Christ said "food is for the body," but see here a remarkable manifestation of the divine nature. Christ responded to Satan by saying, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

What Christ declared was that doing the will of the Father is more important than satisfying the natural desires of the body. The Spirit had not yet released Christ from His fast, and God had not yet manifested how He would meet His Son's need for food. Yahshua was so submitted to the Father that He would not consider doing anything of His own initiative to satisfy His need for food. He was not worried that His Father would let Him starve to death. He knew that if He sought the Father's will above all else, that the Father would take care of the necessities of life.

Christ refused to be driven by His appetites. He refused to give Himself over to the beast's urging to consume, even when He was hungry. He subdued and ruled over the beast. He buffeted His body and kept it under subjection. We are told that after Satan left Yahshua that the angels of God came and ministered to Christ's needs. God already knew how and when He would provide sustenance for His Son, and the Son had such peace and confidence in the Father's love for Him that He was willing to wait, knowing that the Father's will is always the best and highest good for us.

Let us now look at another event in the life of Yahshua. During the entire span of His ministry Yahshua never owned a house. He never had a ministry center, and He was content to sleep wherever the Spirit led Him to sleep. Sometimes He slept in the open fields. Sometimes He slept in the stern of a boat on a pillow. At times He slept in a bed in someone's house such as in the home of Lazarus and Martha and Mary. When a man approached Yahshua and said that he desired to be His disciple, Yahshua responded in this way:

Matthew 8:20

Yahshua said to him, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."

I think it is significant that Yahshua contrasted His divine way of life to that of two beasts, the foxes and the birds. Beasts demand some type of home. They want a nest to live in, or a nice den in the earth. So too do many men and women demand such things. They may say to God, "I will be your disciple as long as I can have my nice home and furnishings. As long as I can have my nice bed to sleep in at night I will follow you." But look at the words of Christ to one who would be His disciple. He said that He could promise no such

thing, for one who lives to do the will of God is content with whatever God decides to provide for them. In effect Yahshua was telling this man to count the cost. If this man had to have a home, like the beasts demand a home, then he could not truly be Christ's disciple, for Christ revealed that His life was focused upon pleasing the Father, not upon pleasing self.

Am I beginning to sound heretical yet? Are you beginning to feel fear rise up within you at what God might truly require of you if you were to surrender all to Him? You may think, "God does not really require that I be willing to give up all, and I see no one around me doing so," but again let us allow Christ to be the measure of all things. Listen to His words:

Luke 14:33

"So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions."

These words of Christ come immediately after He spoke of counting the cost of discipleship. Bearing the image of the divine nature comes at a great cost to the flesh and the natural man. This is why Christ said that all who would follow Him must take up their cross. The cross is an instrument of death, and the beast must be slain, even the beast that thinks it only normal and necessary to have its own private nest, or den.

We may ask, "How did the apostles and the early church understand this matter? Did they too give up all they possessed?" I am glad you asked. Let us look to the Scriptures to see.

Acts 4:32-35

And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them... For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales and lay them at the apostles' feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need.

During the first few years after Christ's ascension, and following Pentecost, a remarkable work of grace was seen among the saints. They were extraordinarily delivered from the beast nature. They manifested the divine life to an amazing degree, and because of this they appeared as great lights in their world. Of their reputation we read, "The people held them in high esteem" (Acts 5:13).

I want to urge you to consider at length the Scripture above for it reveals perhaps the most profound evidence of God's ability to transform the lives of men than any other testimony or miracle of the New Testament. A large number of men and women who had formerly been enslaved to the beast nature, and who had lived as consumers, were transformed into givers. Before salvation it was their nature to gather material goods to themselves, and after salvation it was their nature to be free of all ownership and all claim that anything was their own.

Notice the scope of the words used "NOT ONE OF THEM claimed that ANYTHING belonging to him was his own." Hallelujah, the beast nature that crawls on its belly and eats the dust of the earth was slain! I know of no greater evidence of the complete

transformation of the saints by the power of the Spirit than these words. They were gloriously set free from self! No one claimed that anything they possessed was their own. They truly began to esteem the needs of others more highly than their own needs. They began to manifest love of the brethren, and because of it all men recognized that they were Christ's disciples. They loved God and the children of God rather than material possessions.

It can be said that these early saints were so captivated with a love of Christ and a desire to do the will of the Father that material things simply became unimportant to them. What they had formerly held onto with great tenacity, and guarded with great jealousy, was no longer precious to them. When the love of Christ and the brethren came in with such power, the love of other things died. When an immense yearning to do the will of the Father gripped them, a desire to do the will of self was put away.

The church today does not manifest this same selfless attitude, this contentment with whatever the Father would give them, at the time and in the way that He chooses. Instead the church rides upon the beast as a great harlot who has many cravings for the things of this world. She longs to be clothed in fine garments and to be adorned with many jewels. The saints are given to a pursuit of houses and lands and cars and furnishings and clothes and rich foods and pleasure and entertainment, and they say "God wants me to have these things and to spend my days collecting whatever my heart desires, laboring for things that will perish," for the cunning of the beast has deceived them.

Consider the words of the apostle Paul:

Philippians 4:11-13

Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

I Timothy 6:8

If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.

Hebrews 13:5

Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have...

The mark of the divine nature is contentment, not coveting. Paul said, "Having food and covering, with these we shall be content." He said he was content in whatever circumstances he was in. The bottom line is that those who bear the divine nature are satisfied with whatever provision the Father chooses to give them. They are not living to satisfy self. They are living to do the will of the Father. They are not given over to the pursuit of worldly things. They are not in debt that they might own today what they crave, but do not have the money for. They are marked by their generosity and their selfless giving. They do not claim that anything they possess is their own, for they have surrendered all their possessions to God.

I must add a few remarks here for the sake of clarity, for I know that some might misunderstand my words. I am NOT saying that in order to bear the divine nature that all saints must embrace poverty and get rid of their houses and lands. What I AM saying is that

they must be willing to do so if it is God's will for them. Paul said that he knew how to be content with poverty (humble means), but he also knew how to be content with prosperity. The heart of the matter is just what has been stated repeatedly, the saints must be content with allowing God the Father to choose what HIS provision is for them, and to be at rest with HIS timing and HIS provision. They cannot demand their own way.

In this chapter I am focusing mostly upon the beast nature's demands to have homes and lands, etc., for this is what the majority of saints have given themselves to pursue. There are not many who go to excess in the opposite direction, demanding that they live in an impoverished way, treating their bodies very strictly and denying themselves all pleasure, but this too is error.

Colossians 2:20-23

If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!" (which all refer to things destined to perish with use) -- in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.

There are a small minority of saints who have erred in the opposite direction of the majority. This minority glory in their self-abasement and severe treatment of the body. Paul says that such things have an "appearance of wisdom," for it appears that they are not serving self, but God. Yet Paul reveals where the error lies in these saints as well. He states that these are not truly wise for their appearance of wisdom is based in "**self**-made religion and **self**-abasement."

These ones, whom Paul equally condemns with those who give themselves over to the pursuit of pleasure, are missing the mark for they are still SELF directed. They are not content to wait upon God and to receive WHATEVER He has for them, but they will only receive poverty and self-abasement. Paul said he was content with poverty, but also with prosperity, with hunger and with being filled, with suffering need and with having an abundance. Those who are conformed to the image of the divine are content with what God chooses for them.

To be sure, most saints are erring on the side of covetousness, not self-abasement, but both are equally sinful for both originate in self. Those who are mature reflections of Christ have crucified the flesh and self and they live to do the will of God. They are content with whatever He provides and they will not stretch out their hand to satisfy their natural appetites apart from the will of God. Neither will they refuse to receive what God would provide for them in order to glory in their self-abasement.

Discipleship is surrender to the will of another, and this surrender of the will is where the cost of discipleship lies. There is a high cost to discipleship, and for this reason Yahshua urges all who would follow Him to count the cost. He promises no man or woman houses and lands, but He would urge all to be content with whatever the Father chooses for them. This then is a real sticking point. Can you be content with whatever the Father chooses for you, or do you have certain requirements, desires, wants, or demands that are non-negotiable? Will you say to God, "I will give you a part of my life, but I reserve a portion of it?" Remember, Christ said that no man can serve both God and mammon.

Yes, these things are radical, and the early church was very radical, and they shone forth as a brilliant light for a season. The beast suffered a mortal wound, but the wound has healed and the beast has returned and has offered the church a ride on its back.

Revelation 13:3-4

I saw one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast; they worshiped the dragon because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?"

When Christ was crucified and rose again Satan received a mortal blow. The early church subdued and ruled over the beast nature. They were completely set free from a slavery to their natural appetites. They were transformed from consumers to radiators of light and life. They knew the glorious liberty of possessing nothing but Christ. However, the saints failed to continue subduing and ruling over the beast nature. They began to worship the dragon, Satan, the serpent, once more. By cunning he convinced them that they could be disciples of Christ while allowing the beast to live. He convinced them that the beast would even carry them to their goal and they could live harmoniously with the beast nature.

There are many carnal interpretations of what this passage from Revelation 13 speaks. Many prophecy teachers see the beast as some political ruler who will arise and make war against Christianity, but let me declare that the beast has been present for the entire duration of Christianity and he has waged war with many saints, and few have overcome him. Many are the saints who have been defeated through great deception and cunning, as they have failed to subdue and rule over the beast nature. They have believed that they could live for self and for God, that they could offer God a portion of their lives while maintaining a sizeable piece for themselves, that they might find pleasure and satisfaction in the offerings of the world.

Are you willing to allow the Spirit to shine a light upon your life, upon your spending habits and your accumulation of the goods of this world? Are you willing to give up all your possessions should Christ require this of you as He did of the rich young ruler? Would you be content with food and covering, not even demanding that which the beasts have, your own nest, your own den? Christ admonishes all to count the cost before declaring that they will follow Him wherever He would lead. If you would bear the image of the divine, then the nature of the beast must be ruled over and subdued.

Many cling tenaciously to the things of this world, to possessions that they own, for they do not know a love of Christ and of the brethren that should make such things appear pale in comparison. If you are not wholly captivated by Christ, you will be captivated by lesser things. On the other hand, if your love of Christ is pure and unadulterated, then the things of this world will be as nothing to you. You will not covet them, or spend your life, your time, and energy in pursuit of accumulating matter.

Christ came to set men free, and those whom the Son sets free are free indeed.



Nehushtan

We have seen that the serpent is the fullest representation of the beast nature, being cursed above all beasts while also being more cunning. When God proclaimed the curse that would fall upon man and the serpent for their transgression, the following was declared.

Genesis 3:15

And I will put enmity between you (the serpent) and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.

There is both a physical and a spiritual fulfillment of many of the things recorded in Scripture, and this is true of this curse. Mankind in general loathes and detests snakes. There is enmity between serpents and mankind. Where I live in the state of Georgia there are a number of poisonous snakes. Among the more prevalent are the rattlesnake and the water moccasin. There is no love lost between most Georgians and these serpents.

It is very common to see these snakes dead in the road during the warm months when they are out crawling about. It is a passion of many drivers to intentionally run over these serpents, and even to slam on the brakes and skid across them to make sure they are dead. Some drivers will even back up and perform this action repeatedly to leave no doubt that the snake has been killed.

This enmity toward serpents is unique among the animal kingdom. There is much wildlife in Georgia and it often crosses roadways. There are signs warning drivers that turtles are present in certain areas, and I have witnessed drivers perform all sorts of maneuvers to avoid striking a dog, a deer, a rabbit, a beaver, a raccoon, or an armadillo. I have seen people stopped in the road to aid a hawk that had been injured, and my own daughter came to a screeching halt recently with a large hawk only a foot or two away from the front of our car. I would have been very saddened had the car struck the hawk, for they are magnificent, beautiful birds. If it had been a rattlesnake in the road, however, I would not have felt the same distress over hitting it.

It is interesting that even those who know nothing of Christ, or of God's desire for man to bear the image of the divine, have such an enmity against serpents. They intuitively know that this beast is an enemy of man. The way in which a serpent injures man is very significant. Serpents do not tear men to pieces like a lion or a bear would do. They do not trample men like an elephant or rhinoceros might. Instead, they do their harm by injecting poison into man's blood stream. This poison begins to effect man's vital organs and in many cases can cause death. With their poisons, serpents kill men from the inside.

This speaks of the way that Satan kills men and women. He poisons their souls and does his destruction by filling mankind with things that result in spiritual death. All men who have been born of Adam have experienced the venom of the serpent and death is working in their members. There is but one way to be saved from this fatal injury and this salvation is found in Yahshua, the Son of God.

There is a very symbolic story that is recorded for the saints in the book of Numbers. It presents a parable lived out by actual people, and there is a message in it for the saints today.

Numbers 21:6-9

Yahweh sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. So the people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned, because we have spoken against Yahweh and you; intercede with Yahweh, that He may remove the serpents from us." And Moses interceded for the people. Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall come about, that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, he will live." And Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole; and it came about, that if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived.

I can imagine that before Christ was crucified there lived many godly men who desired earnestly to understand the significance of this thing that Yahweh instructed Moses to do. Why make a bronze serpent and place it on a pole? How would looking to this serpent bring healing to mankind? What was symbolized here? Yahshua revealed to His disciples that the bronze serpent on the pole actually pointed to His own crucifixion.

John 3:14-15

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.

The saints eagerly embrace depictions of Christ as a pure and spotless lamb, but there is something within them that recoils at seeing the Son of God depicted as a serpent. Yet Yahshua testified that this serpent pointed to Himself. Moses himself recoiled when God first revealed to him an image of Christ as a serpent.

Exodus 4:2-3

Yahweh said to him, "What is that in your hand?" And he said, "A staff." Then He said, "Throw it on the ground." So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it.

You may ask, "How do we know the serpent depicted here represents Christ?" Moses' staff was a symbol of Christ. This staff was the power of God to accomplish salvation for the Israelites. In many places in Scripture we see the staff being symbolic of Christ. When David penned Psalm 23 he wrote, "Your rod and your staff, they comfort me," it was Christ who was depicted as both the rod and staff. In Isaiah we also read:

Isaiah 11:1

There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.

The staff in Moses' hands is a picture of Christ, and that the staff turned into a serpent is a further confirmation of this divine imagery. Yet even as Moses fled from the serpent, so too do most Christians flee from the image of Christ as a serpent. It was this serpent, however, that swallowed the serpents of Pharaoh's magicians. And it is the serpent on the pole that brought healing to all those dying among the Israelites who would look to it.

Why should the Son of God be depicted as a rod that changes into a serpent, or a

serpent hung upon a pole, which is a type of rod? The rod is an image of Yahweh's power. In many places in Scripture we read words such as the following:

Isaiah 11:4

And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked.

The rod is an instrument of power. We are told in another place that Christ will rule the nations with a rod of iron. Christ is the rod of Yahweh's mouth, for He is called the Word of God, and a Word comes forth from the mouth. Christ demonstrated great power during His ministry, raising the dead, healing the sick, making the blind to see, stilling the storm with a word, and many other amazing displays of power. Yet His greatest act, and that which crushed the head of Satan, was when He gave His body to be crucified and He bore on Himself all the sins of the world. "He made Him who knew no sin, sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (II Corinthians 5:21).

Yahshua became sin. He became as the serpent. Not only was He born in the likeness of sinful flesh (Romans 8:3), but He became sin that He might destroy the works of the Devil and set men free from the curse. Christ stood in man's place. He became a curse that men might be freed from the curse. As it is written:

Galatians 3:13

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us-- for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree."

The serpent on the pole and the rod that turned into a serpent, both pointed to Christ who would take upon Himself the sin of the world. In this way the power of the enemy would be shattered and men could be free from the beast nature and become the image and likeness of God. Those who were infected with the venom of the serpent, which is sin, could be healed by looking to Christ who became sin on their behalf. A great exchange occurred on the cross, for Yahshua took upon Himself all the sins of man, and in return gave to man His righteousness.

Sadly, this account in Numbers of Moses creating the bronze serpent and placing it on a pole is not the last that we hear of this matter. Many years later when Israel was settled in their land and they had turned to much sin, wickedness and idolatry, a godly man named Hezekiah became king. He cleansed the land of idols, abominable images and practices and turned the people back to a pure devotion to Yahweh. While in the midst of this cleansing work we read:

II Kings 18:4

He also broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the sons of Israel burned incense to it; and it was called Nehushtan.

Nehushtan means "something formed of copper." The words "copper" and "bronze" are used interchangeably in Scripture. These metals were not highly prized as were gold and silver, but rather these were considered base metals. Today if someone would desire to purchase a crucifix, an image of Christ on the cross, they would most likely choose a precious metal in which to have it fashioned. It is common today to find crucifixes of gold

or silver, but when God instructed Moses to build the first image of Christ upon the cross as depicted in the serpent upon the pole, He told Moses to use bronze, or copper, for the metal. This was to indicate the baseness of what was being depicted. This image depicted the Son of God becoming sin, and there was no reason to fashion such an image in gold, for it was to appear as something loathsome and detestable.

We are told that God cannot look on sin, for He is holy, and while His own Son hung on the cross the Father turned away from Him. For this reason Christ called out, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?" Darkness covered the earth from the sixth hour to the ninth hour as Christ bore the sins of the world, and became as a detestable thing. The pure golden Son of God became as something base and worthless. Such depictions of the Son of God in the form of a serpent do make men recoil and flee away today, but it is a measure of the vastness of the love of God that He would go to such lengths to redeem man from his bondage to sin and slavery to corruption.

Romans 8:31-32

What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

Even as there is great symbolism in Yahweh instructing Moses to fashion the bronze serpent upon the pole, so there is symbolism in what the Israelites did later in idolizing this image and offering up incense before it. What the Israelites did was an act of man-made religion. Yahweh did not instruct the Israelites to worship the serpent on the pole, nor did He tell them to offer incense before it. He told them only to look to it, and this command was with the express purpose of healing them from the venom of the serpents. In a similar incident King Saul lost the kingdom when he made an offering he was not commanded to give. It was on this occasion that Samuel spoke the words that are often quoted today:

I Samuel 15:22

So Samuel said, "Has Yahweh as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of Yahweh? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams."

A great lesson for the church today can be seen in God instructing Moses to fashion the bronze serpent on the pole for the healing of the people, and in their subsequent worship of Nehushtan which was idolatry. Yahweh sent His Son to destroy the works of Satan, to bring an end to the venomous death that was killing all mankind. Yahshua was crucified to atone for the sins of man, and He was raised again that all men might become partakers of His resurrection life and walk in victory over sin, Satan and the world. Christ came to bring healing to all men.

I Peter 2:24

He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

This is the healing that Yahshua purchased for mankind, namely that we might die to

sin and live to righteousness. The apostle Paul wrote that the saints should not consider the grace of God to be an opportunity to continue in sin. In the strongest of terms he condemned such a mindset as being a gross misappropriation of the sacrifice of Yahshua.

Hebrews 10:29-31

Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "Yahweh will judge His people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

The Israelites in King Hezekiah's day were not coming to the bronze serpent on the pole for healing. They were coming only to worship the image. In the same way a multitude of saints today are not coming to Christ to be healed from sin's destruction and corrupting influence. They do not truly desire to be set free from bondage to the flesh and the beast nature. They only come to worship an image of Christ. They make their offering of praise while being content to remain bound to the sinful nature. They have taken that which God intended for healing and made it merely an object of idolatry.

As plainly as I can communicate let me say, "Many saints who worship the crucified Christ week after week, bringing an offering of praise before Him as incense that ascends to the heavens, are in truth practicing idolatry." Yahweh would declare to them:

Amos 5:21-24

"I hate, I reject your festivals, nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer up to Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them; and I will not even look at the peace offerings of your fatlings. Take away from Me the noise of your songs; I will not even listen to the sound of your harps. But let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."

What God desires today from the saints is lives marked by righteousness. He yearns to see His children being conformed to the image of His firstborn Son. He wants to see them walking as overcomers, subduing and ruling over the beast nature. He wants them healed.

There are a vast number of Christians today who are not walking as overcomers, yet they come week after week to look upon the image of a crucified Christ and offer their incense before this image. They come into their places of worship infected with the venom of sin, and they leave with this same death coursing through their veins. They reason, "I am just a sinner saved by grace and if I continue in sin God will forgive me. I like my selfish life, and I am no different from anyone else. I will bring God my offering and I will trust Him to forgive me and bring me to His heaven when I die." And all the time God says, "I hate, I reject what you are bringing before Me. Let me see righteousness in you. I have provided healing for you, yet you continue clinging to your sins. You have settled on your dregs, your scent remains in you and your flavor has not changed" (Jeremiah 48:11).

Saints, let me show you the subtlety and cunning of the serpent today. Every week multitudes go to their houses of worship and they make offerings of praise and of money to the crucified Christ. They confess the light which they have seen, but they remain unchanged. Those who witness these devoted worshipers coming week after week before their images of Christ judge them to be well pleasing to the Father. After all, they confess

Christ with their mouths, and they bring their incense before Him. Yet Christ never came to call confessors, or even worshipers. He came to make disciples after the image of God.

It is of no value to worship an image of Christ week after week if you are not being conformed to His image. It is no good to call Him "Lord, Lord" if you do not do the things He commands. The church today offers salvation without transformation, but Yahweh says that true salvation is transformation, and there is no salvation without transformation. The word salvation is synonymous with the word deliverance. To be saved from sin is to be delivered from sin.

Galatians 6:7-9

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

I Corinthians 6:9

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived.

Over and over the Scriptures declare "Do not be deceived," but the saints are deceived. They reason that it is enough to confess Christ and maintain the same scent and flavor as the unwashed world. They live for self and are filled with covetousness and are seeking after things of this world while bringing their sacrifice of praise before God week after week.

If you are not being conformed to the image and likeness of God then you are deceiving yourself concerning God's will for you. You are in rebellion and are living in idolatry. May God raise up many men and women with the spirit of Hezekiah in this hour who will smash the idols of Christendom. May these men and women declare "Cease worshiping your images of Christ and begin being conformed to Christ. Let His image be formed in you." This is the will of God and nothing else will satisfy His desire.

The voice of God is crying out today through the prophet Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 7:21-23

I did not speak to your fathers, or command them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices. But this is what I commanded them, saying, "Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you will be My people; and you will walk in all the way which I command you, that it may be well with you."

The church has repeated the error of Israel. When God called them to obedience and righteousness they preferred worship and sacrifice instead. The church says, "Let us continue to live for those things that perish. Let us devote ourselves to acquiring houses and lands and material possessions of all kinds. Let us pursue pleasure, and let us protect our flesh from the suffering of the cross. But this we will do, we will venerate Christ's image, and we will bring our offerings of money and praise before Him. Let this be sufficient."

Do not be deceived! Such man-made religious acts are not sufficient before God. He will only be content when He sees the image of His Son formed in the lives of those who have been called and chosen for this honor. If your church is calling people to worship before an image of the crucified Christ, but it is not bringing people to a conformity to

Christ and a death to self, sin and the flesh, then flee from the midst of it. Such churches are houses of idolatry, and have constructed their own Nehushtan before which they invite the saints to present their offerings. Such churches are merely harlots riding upon the beast.

Let those who have ears to hear, hear.



The Overcomers

The book of Revelation contains many stark contrasts. There is much that is dark and tragic, yet there is also great light and victory. While one group of men are judged by God for receiving the mark of the beast, another group is rewarded for achieving victory over the beast, his image and the number of his name. The book of Revelation speaks of saints who are overcome by the beast, as well as those who are overcomers, being marked in their foreheads with the names of the Father and the Son.

I would imagine that all who read this book aspire to be numbered among the overcomers. Great promises are spoken to the overcomers. These promises do not belong to all those who name the name of Christ. Many saints have fallen short of these things, and great numbers in this hour are in peril of forfeiting things that are impossible to value. To the overcomers is promised the following:

Revelation 2:7

To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.

Revelation 2:11

He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death [which is the lake of fire].

Revelation 2:17

To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.

Revelation 2:26-28

He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from My Father; and I will give him the morning star.

Revelation 3:5

He who overcomes shall thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels.

Revelation 3:12-13

He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name.

Revelation 3:21-22

He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

Revelation 21:1-7

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them, and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." And He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost." He who overcomes shall inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.

A great deception has fallen upon the church, for a vast number of saints have received the lie that all that is required to inherit all of the things listed as the inheritance of the overcomers is that they maintain their confession of Yahshua the Messiah. Yet the Scriptures reveal that believing in Christ, and confessing Christ as Savior and Lord, is not sufficient to receive these promises. One must also be conformed to Christ, being sealed in their foreheads with the names of the Father and the Son. One must triumph over the beast, his image and the number of his name. The professing Christian must manifest the fruit of a transformed life by turning from sin and exhibiting righteousness.

Yahshua was very plain in revealing the fact that it was not enough to merely be a confessor of Christ, or to even offer up many good works to God. There is only one thing that satisfies the righteous requirements of God, and that is to know His will and do it.

Matthew 7:21-23

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'"

These words of Christ reveal that mere confession falls far short of God's will for the saints. Even doing good and miraculous works falls short, for one can still be self-directed in doing such things. Only this one will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, he who does the will of the Father. And what is His will? That mankind should bear His image and His likeness, subduing and ruling over the beasts. This was God's first command to man, and His will in this matter has not changed. The saint must come to a perfect resignation to the will of God in every area of his life. He must lose his soul life that he might gain the divine life.

There is much symbolic language used in Revelation that speaks of the overcomers. Most prophecy teachers have focused only upon the physical, or carnal, sense of the words, and they have stopped short of looking at the spiritual understanding that is most important. Following is one such passage that relates to the overcomers in Christ.

Revelation 12:11

And they overcame [the devil] by of the blood of the Lamb and by of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death.

Many prophecy teachers today understand this verse to be one more evidence that a great martyrdom will take place in the last days, and that many Christians will be killed for their faith. Yet not all overcomers die as martyrs. The apostle John who penned these words did not die as a martyr, but he will surely be found among the overcomers. There is something more than a natural death being spoken of here, and Yahshua revealed to His disciples what it is.

Matthew 10:38-39

“And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.”

Losing one’s life is clearly linked here to taking up the cross. Taking up the cross is not speaking of outsiders killing the saints, but rather it speaks of the saints putting to death their own flesh with all of its carnal desires. Not all believers have, or will, face persecution from without to the extent that they are killed for their testimony, yet ALL saints are called to take up the cross and put the flesh to death.

Galatians 5:24

Now those who belong to Christ Yahshua have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Is it not clear that when the Spirit reveals to John an image of a great harlot riding upon a beast, that this harlot has not crucified the flesh? This is why John wrote that the beast would eventually turn on her and consume her with fire and eat her flesh. The death that all overcomers must die is not physical martyrdom, but a daily dying to the desires of the flesh and to the willfulness of man’s soul. Yahshua brings further insight to this matter with the following words:

Matthew 16:24-28

Then Yahshua said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it. For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and will then recompense every man according to his deeds. Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who shall not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

I would like to point out a great deceit that has occurred in this hour, for I have never heard a single preacher or prophecy teacher share what I will share here. There has been much wrangling over what the last sentence here means. What did Christ intend when He said, “there are some of those who are standing here who shall not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom”? I have heard many theories, and all of them have

spoken of this as being a positive statement that some would not experience a natural death before they saw Christ revealed in glory. Some have suggested that this was fulfilled when Christ was transfigured upon the mount in the presence of Peter and James and John.

Let me suggest to you another interpretation that is in keeping with the context of the passage. Yahshua had just declared that all who seek to save their natural, fleshly and soulish lives would lose them, and only those who died to their natural life by taking up the cross would know true life, the divine life of God. He then says that some of those to whom He is speaking will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom. What death has He been talking about? Has He been speaking of the physical death of men's bodies? No! He has been speaking of the death that is defined as taking up the cross. Yahshua was declaring that among those He spoke to, some would not know this death to the soulish nature of man until they saw Him coming in His kingdom.

These are not positive words He is speaking. They are words of great sorrow and calamity. Christ was declaring that many men would wait too long to experience the death that they were called to embrace. A death to the natural life of Adam. Some would not taste of this death until they saw the Son of Man coming in His kingdom. This is why we read of such a grievous response from mankind when the sign of Christ's coming occurs.

Matthew 24:30-31

And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

Do you know who will be mourning the most? It will be those who have been confessors of Christ, but who have avoided the working of the cross in their lives. These will have avoided tasting of death to their fallen nature until it is too late. They will not be counted among the elect, the overcomers, and they will have their names blotted out of the Lamb's book of life. The Lamb's book of life has recorded in it the names of all those who have embraced the working of the cross, who have allowed God to bring them to a conformity to Christ in this life, that they might not have to experience the purging of the Lake of Fire.

Saints, listen to the words of Scripture:

Psalms 69:28

May they be blotted out of the book of life and may they not be recorded with the righteous.

Revelation 3:4-5

But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

Revelation 20:15

And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into

the lake of fire.

Revelation 2:10-11

Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.

All those who are called as children of God have their names written in the Lamb's book of life. Yet of those who are called, few are chosen. Many will have their names blotted out of the book of life because they have refused to take up the disciple's cross and crucify their flesh with its affections and desires. They have retained control over their lives and have lived according to their own direction and initiative. They have sought the things that will perish instead of that which is eternal.

All Christians are invited to present their bodies as a living sacrifice upon the altar of God now in this age that their flesh might be consumed and that they might come forth as gold that has been tried in the fire. Yet a vast number of saints have protected their flesh and have lived to fulfill the desire of their souls. They have loved their lives and they will lose them. Only those who have hated their lives will keep them.

Can you see the plain language that Christ is employing? He is not speaking about a physical death to the body, but rather a subduing and ruling over all that is of the flesh and of the beast nature. Some saints will wait too long to subdue and rule over that which God commanded them. When they see Christ appearing it will be too late. Some will not taste of death until Christ appears, and the death they will then taste will be the second death which is reserved for all those who have avoided the working of the cross.

[For a fuller explanation of the purpose of the Lake of Fire, and the understanding that many saints will share a place with the unbelievers there, see the book "God's Plan of the Ages." The Lake of fire is not for eternity as the church teaches today, for this "second death" must come to an end, for the last enemy to be destroyed is death. The lake of Fire shall pass away when its purpose is fulfilled.]

Let us return now to that which is written of the overcomers. John records that "they loved not their lives even to death." Is it not plain now that he is not speaking of physical martyrdom, but of the working of the cross in their lives? The overcomers are overcomers because they have attained the victory over their own bodies and the beast nature that resides in the flesh. That John is using symbolic language to speak of spiritual matters is further revealed as we look at another Scripture relating to the overcomers.

Revelation 20:4

Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Yahshua and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

The word beheaded here comes from a Greek word that occurs nowhere else in Scripture. It denotes having one's head cut off with an axe, which was a common enough

type of capital punishment in Roman days. We read in the gospels where Herod beheaded John the Baptist in this way. But this was not the only method employed to martyr the saints. Many of the early saints in Roman times were crucified. Some were stoned to death. Many were taken to the forums and given to wild beasts such as lions. Others were burned to death as “Roman Candles,” and there were many other such ways in which the saints have suffered death at the hands of their persecutors.

We have to conclude that the Holy Spirit is not seeking to convey with these words that only those who are physically beheaded are numbered among the overcomers and will be given the honor of reigning with Christ during the Millennial period of the Kingdom of God. Rather, the words used to describe this beheading are filled with symbolism and are intended to be understood figuratively.

In an earlier chapter we read of the overcomers being sealed in their foreheads with the names of the Father and the Son. This typifies one who has taken Christ as their Head, and they have no head of their own. These overcomers have the mind of Christ, and they live no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. In I Corinthians Paul employs symbolism of one’s head being related to authority and submission. He writes:

I Corinthians 11:3

But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.

If a man has Christ as his Head, then this indicates that a man has no head of his own. He must figuratively cut off his head in order to take Christ as his Head. A man must die to his own will, initiative and desires that are found in his head, and he must take Christ’s head as his own. Man must live for the will of Christ, not only calling Him Lord, but living as if He is Lord. He must take Christ’s desires for his own, buffeting his body and keeping it in subjection when he should find desires arising which are contrary to the desire of Christ.

No man can take Christ as Head and keep his own head at the same time. God does not desire two-headed monsters. So all those who are overcomers must lose their own heads. This is the spiritual understanding of John’s words in Revelation. He is not indicating that the guillotine will be brought back into fashion in the last days, which is an idea many prophecy teachers are promoting. He is saying that the overcomers will be beheaded by receiving Christ as their Head in place of their own head. They will be perfectly resigned to the will of God in their lives, not pursuing their own agenda and goals, but living to do the will of God.

Many foolish things are being taught as truth in this day. Satan is pouring forth a flood of deception to sweep the saints away. The hugely popular books in the “Left Behind” series are promoting many erroneous interpretations of the words of Daniel and John. Tragically, they are encouraging many saints to focus upon a battle that will come from outside of their bodies, when the true battle lies within.

The overcomers will not attain victory by forming some political opposition group to withstand an evil world ruler, nor by employing carnal means to resist his domination. Such speculations are worse than folly, they are damnable lies and deceit, for they lead the saints away from the mind of God, and they inoculate them against the truth.

The overcomers in Christ will attain victory through embracing the cross of Christ. The blood of the Lamb, the word of their testimony, and loving not their fleshly and soulish lives will bring the victory.

May many have ears to hear what the Spirit is speaking!



Enemies of the Cross

One of the most misunderstood phrases in the Bible is that found in the title of this chapter. The phrase “enemies of the cross” rolls off the lips of pastors and Bible teachers often enough in these days, but it is almost universally misapplied. If you have been long in the traditional Christian religious system of this day, when you hear the phrase “enemies of the cross” you most likely will envision evil despots who rule their nations with an iron hand and who persecute those who name the name of Christ. You may envision liberal organizations such as the ACLU who have been instrumental in attacking public expressions of Christ, removing prayer from schools, and other such actions that are viewed as antagonistic toward Christianity.

Once more we see that the church has set its vision outward toward an external enemy, and we observe preachers lambasting these villains outside the doors of the church while urging the saints to take action and to stand against them. The truth of the matter, however, is that those whom the Scriptures describe as enemies of the cross are much closer to home than the church has wanted to admit. They fill the pews of churches every Sunday and Wednesday, and they confess Jesus Christ, Yahshua the Messiah, as Lord. The apostle Paul had confessing Christians in mind when he spoke the words “enemies of the cross.”

Philippians 3:17-19

Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things.

Paul is writing to saints in this epistle to the Philippian church. He is declaring to them that he has set an example before them of how the saints in Christ should conduct themselves. His life of sacrifice and obedience is a pattern for others to follow. Yet, he also declares that there are *many* of those who have been called of God who are manifesting a different pattern. When Paul considered the carnality of these saints, the reproach they brought upon the name of Christ, and the judgment they would meet with, he was brought to tears.

Paul did not envision some outside entity that was antagonistic toward Christianity when he spoke of enemies of the cross. He defined an enemy of the cross as anyone who was focused upon earthly things and who lived to satisfy their fleshly appetites. In the book of Galatians Paul wrote of the purpose of the disciple's cross.

Galatians 5:24

Now those who belong to Christ Yahshua have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

The cross is an instrument of destruction to the flesh. It is a place where we choose to lay aside our desires and passions and choose instead to live for the pleasure of God. We can understand then that an enemy of the cross is anyone who avoids the working of the cross in their life. It is all those who seek to protect the flesh, and who serve their natural

appetites. These enemies of the cross are found everywhere in the church, and it was this fact that led Paul to weep.

Paul stated that he had often warned the church about those whose god is their belly. We can find these warnings in numerous places. One of the most carnal of churches was found in the city of Corinth. These saints were bringing a reproach upon Christ, even taking one another to court and suing one another over worldly possessions and earthly matters. These saints were vastly different from those found in Jerusalem in the early years who claimed no ownership of anything, but freely shared what they had with others. Instead they were warring with one another over possessions and material things. Paul wrote to the Corinthian believers the following words of correction:

I Corinthians 6:7-10

Actually, then, it is already a defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded? On the contrary, you yourselves wrong and defraud. You do this even to your brethren. Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.

The church has given themselves so far over to the beast nature in this day that many see no error in appointing homosexuals to positions of church leadership. Paul declared that homosexuals will not inherit the kingdom of God, so there is only one place that homosexual ministers can lead those who follow them, and that is away from the kingdom of God. But Christians should not congratulate themselves if they have turned away from the sins they consider more grievous in this list, for Paul states that those who practice any of the things listed will not inherit the kingdom of God.

A Christian may not give themselves over to homosexuality, and they may even abstain from fornication and adultery, they may not be a drunkard or a thief, but there are some things listed here that appear much more acceptable to the church today. The church does not place the same weight upon covetousness as it does on being a homosexual, an adulterer or a thief, but Paul lumps all of these things in the same list of those transgressions that will keep the saints from inheriting the kingdom of God. Another sin mentioned in this list is idolatry. Many saints think that idolatry is only something that ignorant pagans engage in. Paul reveals that this is not so.

Ephesians 5:5-6

For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person **or covetous man, who is an idolater**, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

Paul reveals that a covetous man is actually an idolater. Covetousness is not seen as a great evil in the church today. In many cases covetousness is even presented as a virtue. There is an entire host of prosperity preachers today that are leading the church into covetousness, and some even depict the saint who is content with the things they have as being wicked and lacking in faith. Many pastors have encouraged their flock to take pictures

of the things their soul desires and place them on their refrigerators, or in other places they frequently look, so that they might keep a vision of these things in their minds and be diligent to give themselves to the pursuit of that which they crave. This is a diabolical evil, and many are being turned away from the kingdom of God by preachers who are proclaiming the things that men's ears want to hear.

How does a believer in Christ know whether he is acting covetously, and whether he is content with God's will and provision for him? It is very easy to deceive oneself in this matter. We may claim that all we have came as a gift from God, and that He desires us to have an abundance of material things and to be satisfied with many earthly possessions. But how did we come to acquire the things we have? Did we submit every purchase to God in prayer? Have we surrendered to Him our spending habits?

I have found that financial debt is one indicator of a covetous heart. The apostle Paul admonished the saints with the following words:

Romans 13:8

Keep out of debt and owe no man anything, except to love one another...
(Amplified Bible)

Those who have heard my own testimony know that I once struggled greatly with covetousness and I had much debt. The person who desires many things will manifest a willingness to place himself in bondage to acquire the things today that his soul longs for. It was only through much pain that I was delivered from the covetousness that I was formerly given over to. I do not have nearly as many possessions today as I once had, but I am free of all debt.

Many people in the church today view their Christian faith as a means to acquire worldly goods. Paul warned Timothy of such men, and described them with the words that they "suppose godliness is a means to gain." To answer the question of whether we are free from covetousness, or not, we should carefully consider the words of Paul to his son in the faith.

I Timothy 6:6-11

Godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. But flee from these things...

Do we have the mindset of seeking the things above, rather than things on this earth? Do we live as if we understand that none of the possessions of this world will follow us when we depart this life? Are we content with food and covering, or have we pursued and accumulated much of the world's goods? It might be illuminating to walk around your home some time and make a note of everything you possess that is not related to food and covering. Note all things that are related to entertainment, to creature comforts, to fulfilling some desire of your soul. What things fill the rooms of your home, your closets, your garage, your attic? Have you had to purchase a larger home just to contain all the "stuff" you have

been acquiring? Are you like millions of Americans that have had to rent storage buildings just to have room to put the things that will no longer fit inside their homes?

In reading the biographies of men who have devoted themselves to God and who have been greatly used of Him, I have noted that they rarely had many of the world's goods. Last year I read several books on the life of George Mueller, the minister who lived in the 1800's in England and who built orphanages to house thousands of children. He also supported a large number of missionaries and funded various day schools and paid for millions of tracts and Bibles to be printed and distributed. At the end of his life a vast sum of money had passed through his hands, yet he died owning no houses or lands, he lived in a room in one of the orphan houses he had built, and his furnishings were described as Spartan. At his death he had no personal savings, and all his money consisted of a few British pounds that were in his pocket.

When we are seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and when our focus is upon satisfying Yahweh's pleasure and performing His will, then we are not as prone to the attractions of this life. We will live our lives as servants to God and to others, rather than spending all of our time serving our own selves. Can it be said of us, even remotely, that we have been content with having food and covering? Are we fleeing from a love of money, or are we engaged in an endless pursuit of more of it? Do we deny ourselves the things we want, choosing instead to have only what God desires for us?

Our answers could determine whether we are enemies of the cross, or disciples who have embraced the cross of Christ. Would you describe your own accumulation of the things of this world, and the way in which you spend your money, as manifesting the cross and crucifying your flesh, or is there no discernible difference between your life and that of your lost neighbors who make no pretense of following Christ and being conformed to the image of God?

There is a reason I am spending so much time in this book in relating our accumulation of the goods of this world with the beast nature. What we spend our money on reveals where our heart is. The beast nature is earthly and it desires many things of this earth, while the divine nature is heavenly and seeks those things that are above. The beast nature is satisfied with earthly possessions, while the divine nature seeks righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. The divine nature finds its satisfaction in doing the will of the Father.

The one whose focus is set upon things above will use the things of this world sparingly. Paul wrote to the believers in Corinth warning them against being attracted to all the material things that were around them in abundance.

I Corinthians 7:29-31

But this I say, brethren, the time has been shortened, so that from now on... those who buy, [should be] as though they did not possess; and those who use the world, as though they did not make full use of it; for the form of this world is passing away.

The days are truly short, and the Lord is soon to return to recompense every man and woman according to their work. What will Christ say of us? Will He commend us for devoting such a large part of our lives to pleasing self and acquiring things which will perish? Will He be able to identify where we embraced the cross in the area of our desires, so that we could seek His will and desires?

Another reason that I am giving much emphasis to this matter is that the book of

Revelation reveals that a majority of the church will fall short of the will of God in these things. We have read of the church in the last days being depicted as a harlot riding upon a beast. This harlot is described with words that indicate that she is materially focused when she should instead have a pure devotion to Christ in her heart. We read of this harlot:

Revelation 17:4

The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality...

Revelation 18:7

To the degree that she glorified herself and lived sensuously, to the same degree give her torment and mourning; for she says in her heart, "I sit as a queen and I am not a widow, and will never see mourning."

Some of the outstanding things that mark this harlot are her sensuous living, her emphasis on self, and her great attention to the way she is adorned with the wealth of the world. She spares no effort or expense for self, choosing to lavish herself with everything she desires, and she abhors the suffering of the cross. She desires to avoid all mourning, all suffering, all pain, seeking to spend her days in comfort and ease.

James saw the danger of the church entering into harlotry with the world in his day, and he spoke strongly to admonish the saints.

James 4:3-4

You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

All it takes to qualify as an enemy of the cross is to be devoted to the pursuit of pleasure, comfort, or ease. Many are the saints who will be caught up in a pursuit of worldly things when Christ returns.

Luke 17:26-30

And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building; but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed.

There was much debauchery in Sodom, even as Paul listed the sins of homosexuality, stealing, adultery and fornication among the things that would keep men and women from the kingdom of heaven. Yet Luke quotes the Lord as saying that Sodom was focused upon eating and drinking and buying and selling and planting and building. Are these things evil?

Doesn't man need to eat? Is it wrong for man to live in a house or to plant crops to eat? No, but many people have the attitude of the man of which Christ spoke in His parable:

Luke 12:16-21

And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man was very productive. And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' Then he said, "This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.'" But God said to him, "You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?" So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

The saints may reason that they do not have barns, nor have they built themselves bigger ones. The goods of the current age may not be placed in barns, but they are placed in homes. How many saints have purchased a larger home because they surveyed all their goods and decided they needed more room to store it all? The prophet Ezekiel further describes the transgression of Sodom with these words:

Ezekiel 16:49-50

Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had arrogance, abundant food and careless ease, but she did not help the poor and needy. Thus they were haughty and committed abominations before Me. Therefore I removed them when I saw it.

It is very easy to fall into a pattern of selfish living when we are surrounded by a self-focused society. The excesses of the world around us are everywhere. People are glutting themselves while turning a blind eye to those in need around them. This should not be true of the saint of God, for the child of God should have their eyes turned upon the Savior and a pursuit of Him alone. "The things of earth" should "grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace."

There is a cross for all saints to bear in the matter of spending, in their acquisitions and consumption. Our life will either be a manifestation of the beast nature that is focused upon acquisitions and consumption, or it will be an expression of the divine nature that is giving and where things of this earth do not have a hold. Consider for a moment what Paul's words to the saints in Corinth actually mean. He said, "those who buy, [should be] as though they did not possess; and those who use the world, as though they did not make full use of it."

Let us use a house as an example, for we see houses specifically named in the book of Acts as one of those things that the saints did not claim ownership of, but which they were in some cases selling to give the proceeds to the needs of the church, and in other cases opening up their homes for the benefit of the church and the needs of the saints. What would it mean to buy a home, but to live as though we do not possess it?

One clear meaning is given in the book of Acts where we are told that no one claimed that anything they possessed was their own. Such an idea is really foreign to the saints today. We may think, "I bought this house and it is mine. It is for my personal use and that of my family. Others do not have the same right to this house as I do." Does such an attitude

measure up to the example of the early saints and the example of Christ and the apostles? Does it reflect a mind that is set upon the will of God above all things?

Suppose God wants to send you and your family to another place to minister. Would you be free to go, or are you tied down to your possessions? Would you reason, "I cannot go for I have a nice home and a good job and a comfortable life where I am at?" If your thinking reflects such ideas then you are not living as though you possessed nothing. Neither are you living purely for the will of God. Your attitude reflects that you are living partly for God and partly for self, and when these two interests collide you will have to choose which one you will serve. This is why Christ said:

Luke 16:11-13

"Therefore if you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true riches to you? And if you have not been faithful in the use of that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."

The phrase, "Therefore if you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true riches to you?" were words that the Spirit used to get my attention and call me to repentance. I understood from these words that if I could not act faithfully with that which the KJV Scriptures call "unrighteous mammon," then how could God entrust to me true spiritual riches. If I would not obey Him by giving up coveting, and independent spending, and by fleeing from the bondage of financial debt, then how could God entrust me with any great anointing, or open to me the mysteries of His word? The principle found in Scripture is that those who are faithful in small things will be given greater things.

Have you ever complained that the Scriptures were not as open and revelatory to you as they are to some other people? Have you ever wondered why some people seem to have a greater anointing to minister the life of Christ to others than yourself? The reason could well be that you have not proven yourself faithful with small things in order that God might entrust greater things to you. It may be that you have not embraced the cross in the area of your money management and spending habits and in your acquisition of things of this world, and because you have not been faithful in things that are "unrighteous" God cannot entrust to you those things that are holy.

The Spirit convicted me that this was the case in my own life some years back, and for this reason I invited Him to bring me to a place of death to those areas of my life where I was not submitting to Him. This led to a painful process of delivery where my flesh was laid upon a cross and my selfish desires and willful spending habits were crucified. At the same time that I began entering into faithfulness in the use of money and in my attitude toward worldly goods, the Spirit began giving me insight into spiritual things that had formerly been hidden.

Saints, we must consider that in our coveting things of this world that we are trading away true spiritual riches. I would rather be a poor and wise man than a rich and foolish man. I would prefer to have riches that are eternal and unfading than to amass a vast fortune in those things that are corruptible and passing away.

The cross is an amazing instrument. On the cross we die to the lower nature with its affections and desires, but we enter into heavenly realms and become partakers of awesome

spiritual treasures. Those who embrace the working of the cross the most will gain the most. Those who avoid the suffering of the cross will suffer the greatest loss. Within the church there are many enemies of the cross, and this fact should bring us great grief and lead us to weep. The spiritual life of the church is at ebb tide because so few have embraced the disciple's cross. May God grant that many might have their eyes opened to discern the incalculable loss that lies before them.

There is a true story that recounts how some of the early settlers and traders of America purchased Manhattan Island from the Indians for some trinkets and beads. Manhattan now is one of the most highly valued pieces of real estate in the world and a news article a while back said that some Indians are suing to receive compensation for this disastrous trade.

There will be no opportunity to renegotiate with God when this life is over. The trade we made will stand. If we choose a few trinkets and baubles of this world over eternal spiritual treasures we will weep and wail and gnash our teeth in grief over our folly. As I look at the church of this hour I see a great heavenly poverty. The majority of Christians have chosen to pursue that which perishes, and like Esau whose natural appetite led him to trade his birthright for a pot of stew, so too are many saints trading away an immense and unfading inheritance in order to satisfy their appetite for earthly things. There is a warning in the words written of Esau:

Hebrews 12:17

For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.

Esau did not find within himself the motivation to rule over his natural appetites and the desires of the flesh. His failure to embrace the cross and to put his flesh to death resulted in much loss that he later wept bitterly over. An appetite for things of this world is something that we are born with, and we can choose to either rule over and subdue these appetites in order to seek things above, or we can live to satisfy these earthly desires and trade away our birthright.

There is at this hour still room for repentance, but the hour is late and soon will be over. Seek God while He may be found and turn away from the allure of things of this world. Hold all things loosely and have the attitude that you do not possess anything here. Do not spend your strength seeking things which are destined to perish, but seek the true riches which are in Christ. The pleasures of this life are fleeting, but those who seek pleasure in the presence of God will enjoy it forever.

If you have viewed the disciple's cross as an enemy to be avoided, then reconsider. The cross is the instrument upon which we slay the beast nature and release that which is divine. Satan despises the cross, but Christ embraced it. We will follow in the footsteps of one of them.



Kings and Beasts

In previous chapters we have looked at God's command to the man and woman to subdue and rule over the beasts. This command is given in the very first chapter of the Bible. We have also read in the very last book of the Bible that there will be a group of overcomers who will know victory over the beast, his image, and the number of his name. From start to finish the Bible is focused upon the plan of God for man to rule over the beast nature, and we see this message in types and shadows throughout the pages of Scripture. We should not be surprised then to find this same symbolism in the center of the Bible, in the book of Psalms.

Psalms 8:4-8

What is man that You take thought of him, and the son of man that You care for him? Yet You have made him a little lower than God, and You crown him with glory and majesty! You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, whatever passes through the paths of the seas.

David repeats in this Psalm the same three classifications of animals that are mentioned as being formed on the fifth and sixth days of creation. He speaks of the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens and the fish and creatures of the sea. David testifies that God made man to rule over these beasts.

God's report of David is that he was "a man after My own heart." People have taken this expression to mean various things. Some have understood it to mean that David pursued God and His will and pleasure, while others have taken it to mean that David's heart was like unto God's own. I believe there is truth in both understandings, and that David both sought after God and His will, and he became conformed to God's image and likeness in many ways.

The very first command that God gave to mankind was to subdue and rule over the beasts, and one of the first things we learn of David is that he walked this out in a very literal manner.

I Samuel 17:34-36

But David said to Saul, "Your servant was tending his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and took a lamb from the flock, I went out after him and attacked him, and rescued it from his mouth; and when he rose up against me, I seized him by his beard and struck him and killed him. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear...."

Even while a youth David had begun to subdue and rule over the beasts, both within and without. What David performed in killing the lion and the bear was a symbol of his inward victory over the beast nature. I believe the lion represents pride. We call a group of lions a pride. Satan is depicted as a roaring lion and we know that pride was his downfall. Paul, in writing to Timothy, speaks of Satan's error. In speaking of the qualifications of one who is fit to lead the church of Christ, he writes:

I Timothy 3:4-6

He must be one who manages his own household well..., and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil.

Pride and conceit were the downfall of the man God chose David to replace. King Saul was little in his eyes before he was made king, but then pride took hold of his life and led to arrogance and disobedience before God. The prophet Samuel spoke to Saul of the change that occurred in him.

I Samuel 15:17

Samuel said, "Is it not true, though you were little in your own eyes, you were made the head of the tribes of Israel? And Yahweh anointed you king over Israel..."

Saul was once little in his own eyes, even hiding himself among the baggage when the men of Israel were seeking him to make him their first king. Yet Saul did not remain little in his own eyes. He became conceited, and in his pride he became stubborn and willful. He was no longer careful to do those things that God commanded him. He chose to do things his own way, rather than God's way.

We never read of Saul that he slew the lion or the bear, or ruled over the creatures. In fact, in the Bible's first mention of Saul we see him being led along by animals that are noted for their stubbornness. It would seem that this failure to rule over this stubborn animal was a prophetic testimony of what was to come in Saul's life.

I Samuel 9:3-4

Now the donkeys of Kish, Saul's father, were lost. So Kish said to his son Saul, "Take now with you one of the servants, and arise, go search for the donkeys." He passed through the hill country of Ephraim and passed through the land of Shalishah, but they did not find them. Then they passed through the land of Shaalim, but they were not there. Then he passed through the land of the Benjamites, but they did not find them.

Repeatedly we read how these dumb animals, these stubborn donkeys, eluded Saul. Everywhere he looked he could not find them so that he could rein them in, subdue them and take them back to his father firmly in his control. This speaks of his inability to rule in the pride and stubbornness of his own flesh and present this area to God the Father as under his subjection. Saul never did find the donkeys, or rule over them.

I Samuel 9:19-20

Samuel answered Saul and said, "I am the seer... As for your donkeys which were lost three days ago, do not set your mind on them, for they have been found."

Samuel reported to Saul that the donkeys had been found. What Saul failed to do, someone else accomplished. Even so, in the church there are many who are failing to find and rule over the beast nature within them, but God will have a remnant who will do so. There will be those like David who are victorious over the beasts. Both Saul's and David's lives are parables which reveal that God calls many men and women to share the honor of

ruling and reigning with His Son Yahshua, but only those who rule over the beast nature will be chosen to continue in positions of honor in the kingdom. The kingdom of God will be taken away from those who fail to subdue and rule over the beasts and given to those who do so.

I Samuel 15:28

So Samuel said to [Saul], "Yahweh has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to your neighbor, who is better than you."

As we look at the event that precipitated these words of Samuel to Saul, this matter of his failure to rule over the beast nature can be seen even more plainly. God had charged Saul with destroying the Amalekites, and God gave Saul explicit instructions in this matter.

I Samuel 15:3

Now go and strike Amalek and utterly destroy all that he has, and do not spare him; but put to death both man and woman, child and infant, **ox and sheep, camel and donkey.**

It is interesting to once more note the mention of donkeys in this list. The animal that Saul had failed to subdue and rule over earlier, he is commanded to slay and to not spare. Saul was also commanded to destroy the other beasts of the Amalekites as well, their ox and sheep and camels. Yet Saul found an excuse to let the more attractive of the beasts live.

I Samuel 15:7-9

So Saul defeated the Amalekites, from Havilah as you go to Shur, which is east of Egypt. He captured Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, and were not willing to destroy them utterly; but everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed.

What tragedy is in these words, "but they were not willing to destroy them utterly." How many saints shrink back from the cross when God would command them to crucify the flesh entirely? Perhaps they hold onto some area of covetousness, or some secret sin, some lust, or pride. They say, "God, I will destroy that which is unattractive to me, but I will hold onto that which I value and cannot bear to put to death."

Saints, this is why those who are called of God must count the cost of discipleship. God is not satisfied with those who shrink back from allowing Him to do a thorough work of transformation in their lives. He is not willing that man should leave any area of the beast nature un-crucified. The saints are called to present themselves a living sacrifice that all their flesh might be consumed on the altar.

Observe now Saul's deceit, for it is found everywhere in the church today.

I Samuel 15:13-15

Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said to him, "Blessed are you of Yahweh! I have carried out the command of Yahweh." But Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" Saul said, "They

have brought them from the Amalekites, for the people spared the best of the sheep and oxen, to sacrifice to Yahweh your God; but the rest we have utterly destroyed."

Many are the saints who pretend to have carried out the will of Yahweh. Yet these saints have chosen to forget much of God's will. They come to God and declare, "I have kept the faith by maintaining my confession of Christ," yet they have ignored God's many admonitions for the saints to be holy, even as He is holy. They have somehow forgotten that Christ said that all who would follow Him must take up the cross daily, and deny the flesh, and live for God's pleasure rather than their own.

What was Saul's justification for disobeying the command of Yahweh? He declared that he and the people spared the attractive beasts so that they could be presented to Yahweh as a sacrifice. This act of disobedience was supposedly done for God. With such deceit does the church justify her continuance of riding upon the beast today.

The church says, "It is good to love money, for if I have much money I can give more to God." The church says, "It is good for me to have a glorious appearance, to promote myself and tell of my great education and many honors and awards, for then people will think me wise and listen to me when I tell them of Christ." The church says, "It is good that I am satiated with the goods of this world, for then the world will not find me so repulsive, but rather they will be attracted to my embrace and be brought to Christ." The church says, "I must give myself to much entertainment and pleasure, for these things will draw in the lost." The church says, "I must have the same type of music as the world, and the same clothing styles, and I must have as much of the flavor of the world as possible, for in this way I can draw in more people and bring them to God."

Yet God sees through the deceit. The church's decision to spare the beast nature was not arrived at for the sake of God, but for the sake of self. The church has not failed to embrace the cross and leave off her pursuit of the world and its pleasures out of concern for God, or the lost, but because she loves the world and the things of the world. It is a carnal church that would follow God with half measures, and it is such a church who will have the kingdom taken from her and given to one who is better than she.

Here now is a great distinction between the overcomers and those who will be rejected as members of a harlot church. The harlot, like Saul, makes excuses when confronted with their failure to do the will of God. Those who are overcomers will stumble at times, perhaps even badly as David did in his sin with the wife of Uriah. Yet when confronted with their transgressions, the overcomers will respond with quick repentance. When the prophet Samuel confronted King Saul he was met with excuses and justifications. In stark contrast, when the prophet Nathan confronted David we read:

II Sam 12:13

Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against Yahweh."

David not only confessed his sin, but he never transgressed in the same way again. Saul, however, became more willful and stubborn throughout the rest of his reign. His failure to repent sincerely and completely led to his being given over to greater error. Saul killed an entire city of priests out of jealousy, and he consulted a medium shortly before his death.

Today there is a group of saints who are embracing the cross and subduing and ruling over the beast nature, crucifying their flesh and buffeting their bodies. They are becoming

more and more set apart unto God as the Spirit brings before them new enemies to conquer. When the Spirit shines the light upon their life and points out some area of sin, they respond with agreement, and they turn away from the sin and seek diligently to pursue a course of righteousness.

There is another group, a much larger group, that are avoiding the cross. The Spirit also shines the light on their life, but they make excuses and present justifications for their continued carnality and subservience to the flesh. These do not realize that the darkness in them is growing darker. They do not see the light being extinguished in their lives, and they are unaware of their peril of being excluded from the kingdom of God, of having their place in the kingdom given to another.

Saul and David are pictures of two types of Christians. God is calling all saints to subdue and rule over the beasts and to spare nothing. It is no wonder that Christ is called the Son of David, for what David began to do in ruling over the beasts, Christ completed. Yahshua subdued and ruled over all. May many sons and daughters come forth in His image.



The End of Suffering

With so much attention upon the working of the disciple's cross in the Scriptures it would seem that God is opposed to pleasure, and intent upon making all of His children suffer while in the flesh. It is true that God does not want His children to give themselves over to a pursuit of pleasure, as is revealed in Paul's words to Timothy.

I Timothy 5:6

Whereas she who lives in pleasure and self-gratification [giving herself up to luxury and self-indulgence] is dead even while she [still] lives.

(Amplified Bible)

However, pleasures in themselves are not evil. In one of David's Messianic Psalms we read:

Psalms 16:11

In Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forevermore.

There is a place for pleasure and a place for suffering. There is a time and a season for all things as the author of Ecclesiastes states in a beautiful poetic form.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven -- A time to give birth and a time to die; A time to plant and a time to uproot what is planted. A time to kill and a time to heal; A time to tear down and a time to build up. A time to weep and a time to laugh; A time to mourn and a time to dance. A time to throw stones and a time to gather stones; A time to embrace and a time to shun embracing. A time to search and a time to give up as lost; A time to keep and a time to throw away. A time to tear apart and a time to sew together; A time to be silent and a time to speak. A time to love and a time to hate; A time for war and a time for peace.

God has not chosen one thing over another. He has not chosen suffering over pleasure. Rather, He has an appointed time and place for all things. I am convinced that in God's plan of the ages that there will ultimately be much more pleasure than sorrow and suffering, but in this particular age in which we live suffering is appointed unto men. Suffering must come before pleasure as the words of the book of Revelation declare.

Revelation 21:3-4

And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, ***and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.***"

Weeping and death and mourning and crying and pain are “the first things.” The creation has been subjected to such pain and futility until the sons of God should come to maturity. Apart from this suffering the overcomers in Christ could not be perfected and brought to the fulness of the stature of Christ. It is impossible for man to be perfected through pleasure. Wisdom is not learned, nor holiness attained, by giving oneself to pleasure. These things are only won through many trials, temptations and pains. Solomon spoke of the superiority of sorrow over pleasure in this life.

Ecclesiastes 7:2-4

It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, because that is the end of every man, and the living takes it to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter, for when a face is sad a heart may be happy. The mind of the wise is in the house of mourning, while the mind of fools is in the house of pleasure.

Sorrow is appointed unto the saints in this age, but this sorrow will eventually give way to great joy. The sorrow we must know is not a meaningless sorrow, but it has a great aim in mind. The title of this chapter bears a double meaning. There will be an end of suffering one day as John wrote when he said that the first things will one day have passed away. There is also an end of suffering in the sense that there is a goal and final object to which it points. Yahshua hinted at this “end,” or goal, of suffering with His following words.

John 16:20-22

Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy. Whenever a woman is in labor she has pain, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy that a man has been born into the world. Therefore you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you.

When speaking of the suffering and sorrow of the saints Yahshua used the illustration of a woman being in labor. There is great pain in labor, but it precedes great joy. The joy is such that the former pain is not even remembered, and so it will also be with the saints. At this time we will know sorrow, but we must keep the end in sight. This present sorrow is for the purpose of bringing forth a man into the world. It is for the purpose of producing a full stature man child after the image and likeness of God.

Even as God revealed in the first book of the Bible His desire for the man and woman to rule over the beast nature, He also revealed to them that they would have sorrow, but that this sorrow would lead to the birthing of a man who would bear the image of the divine. All of these things are signified in the very first words of Scripture.

After Adam and Eve sinned, Yahweh spoke to them and told them what the world would be like until man should be redeemed and come to a full reflection of His divine nature. To the woman He spoke the following.

Genesis 3:16

To the woman He said:

"I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception;
In pain you shall bring forth children;

Your desire shall be for your husband,
And he shall rule over you."

Let us take each line of the above verse and look at them individually to see what they signify. God said to Eve, "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception." Certainly we know that this is true in the physical realm, for the woman has tremendous pain in the process of child birth. We need to consider what this means spiritually as well. Yahweh was declaring in the presence of the man and the woman that mankind would only be able to give birth to godly offspring, offspring in the image and likeness of God by multiplying their sorrow. God was not punishing the man and woman by multiplying their sorrow. God knew that sorrow was the only way in which sinful man could be transformed from the beastly image he had chosen, in order to be brought to a divine reflection of the perfected Christ.

The next line states, "In pain you shall bring forth children." A woman is often uncomfortable during her pregnancy, and she may experience backaches, nausea and other discomforts which can be quite severe at times. But the greatest pain is in the birthing process when she begins to experience contractions. The world has yet to see mankind come to a fulness of the stature of Christ. They have seen only one Man who has yet been perfected through suffering and who was the perfect image and likeness of God. Yet it is God's will that many sons should come forth after the image of Christ. The birthing of these sons will be attended with great pain. Yahshua spoke of the days preceding the revealing of these full stature sons of God in this way:

Matthew 24:4-13

And Yahshua answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. For many will come in My name, saying, "I am the Christ," and will mislead many. You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. ***But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.***

Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.

What Yahshua describes here to His disciples is very terrible and it speaks of great sorrow and much pain. He uses once more the imagery of birth pangs for a reason. These tribulations will precede the revealing of the full stature sons of God, and all those who enter into this adoption as sons will have forgotten the things they suffered when they enter into the glory of Christ. As Paul said, "For I consider that these present sufferings are not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed in us."

Saints, God's desire, from the very creation of man in the Garden of Eden, has been that man might bear His image and likeness. God will fulfill His desire, and the earth will see these sons who will come forth after the image of God. They will share His glory and manifest His image. They will be the spirit and image of God.

It is impossible for these sons to be revealed apart from suffering and pain. Mankind must pass through the first things in order to attain to the high calling of God. As the words

of the song declare, “Some through the fire, Some through the flood, Some through great sorrow, But all through the blood.” There is only one way in which to attain to the will of God that man should be formed in his image and after His likeness. The flesh must be crucified that the beast nature might give way to the divine. In the book of Revelation we read of the birth of these full stature sons of God.

Revelation 12:1-5

A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; and she was with child; and she cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth. Then another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems. And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child. And she gave birth to a son, a man child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne.

The woman, who is the church, is depicted as in labor and in pain to give birth. This birth is that which she was chosen by Christ to accomplish. This birth will be the great fulfillment and highest attainment of her life. What joy it will be when the church, who has so long been barren, finally produces children in the very image and likeness of her Husband who is the Lord Yahshua the Messiah.

The next line of this verse from Genesis states that the woman’s desire will be for her husband. The husband that is spiritually signified here is Christ. Even though her desire for her husband will lead her to experience pain, there have been, and continue to be, those who still desire Him. Even the pain of bringing forth children after His image will not turn these ones away.

The last line states, “And he will rule over you.” What glorious things this points to. What is in view here is not some domination by a tyrant, but the advent of the kingdom of God. “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done” should be the desire and passion of all the saints. Yes, gladly do we choose for Christ to rule over us! May the beast be cast down and may Christ arise as Lord over all areas of our lives.

We may look at the church today and see her barrenness. We may behold all those who name the name of Christ who are far from manifesting the image of the divine. But the seed of Christ has been sown, and it has been taking shape in hidden places out of sight from the eyes of mankind. One day soon a birth will take place and the world will be amazed to witness the revealing of this overcoming company who have attained to the image and likeness of God.

Christ suffered many things in His life, and through His sufferings He was perfected. As the saints join in the suffering of Christ they too will be perfected and be brought to the image of God. This message is revealed in numerous Scriptures.

Hebrews 2:10

For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings.

Hebrews 5:8-9

Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation...

Luke 24:26

"Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?"

Even as it was necessary for the Son of God to suffer, so too those who would be conformed to His image must suffer. As you look at the church today what do you see? Do you see a message of suffering? Do you see all the saints embracing the working of the cross and coming to a greater reflection of Christ? Sadly, and tragically, these things are rare, and most of those who profess to be followers of Christ are not following Him at all. They are living for pleasure while seeking to avoid the suffering that must attend the formation and revealing of the image of God in mankind.

I think it is significant that there is such a great number of women who are aborting their babies in this day. In this is a picture of the church. John describes the church as a harlot, and like a harlot many women have sought out various lovers, and multitudes have become pregnant. Yet these women do not desire to experience the discomfort of pregnancy, or the pain of childbirth. In the same way the church seeks to avoid all that will bring her discomfort or pain. She wants to continue to enjoy the pleasure of her lovers, and she wants to appear attractive in a fleshly way. So she aborts, or casts out, all those sons that are growing to maturity within her womb, caring not whether they perish. She has not set her eyes upon the desires of the One to whom she is wed. She does not care to produce offspring after His likeness, but only wants to continue in her pleasures and her harlotry.

The wrath of God will surely come upon a people who so treacherously kill their offspring in order to live for pleasure, yet an even greater judgment is reserved for a church who has sold herself to wanton pleasure and who refuses to bring forth offspring after the image and likeness of Christ. A church who aborts all those who are growing and maturing within her and discards them as some piece of unwanted tissue.

Yet, Christ does have a remnant! So much is bound up in these words. Christ does have a remnant who have come out of the great harlot, and more are coming out every day. Great is the patience of God, and as eager as we may be to see the sons of God revealed, we should consider the patience of God to be salvation for many.

Can you see the great error of the church today? A multitude of saints are being turned away from the cross by ministers who tell them to enjoy a good life while awaiting being raptured to heaven. They are not told that they live in an age where suffering must be the portion of all who would be conformed to Christ. The Scriptures state:

II Timothy 3:12

Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Yahshua will be persecuted.

All! None are exempt! But many Christians have made themselves to be friends of the world. A world that lives for pleasure has no problem with Christians who also live for pleasure. As long as the Christians do not inhibit, or speak against, the wanton pursuit of pleasure that the world is set upon, the world will abide these carnal Christians. As the

world grows darker and darker she applies pressure to the church to abide more and more darkness. Even homosexuals can find a place in a church that lives for pleasure, and which seeks to satisfy its appetites to the same extent as a lost and dying world.

But a remnant have set their eyes on higher things. A remnant fear God and understand that His wrath will be poured out upon those who shrink back from the cross set before them. A remnant are turning away from the pot of stew that could satisfy their raging appetite in order to attain to a glorious and unfading birthright that is the portion of the overcomers in Christ.

At this time we must have sorrow, but our sorrow will be turned to joy. At this time the world must hate us, but one day they will bow at the feet of the overcomers. For the joy set before Him Christ endured the cross and bore the shame. For the joy set before the overcomers in Christ they too will stay the course, and one day soon they will know such rejoicing that the former things will be forgotten.

Conformity to Christ, and being partakers of His glory, is the end, the goal, of this working of death and sorrow within us. With great assurance there is a far surpassing weight of glory that awaits all those who endure these momentary and light afflictions that Christ leads them through.

Selah, Pause and consider!



666 - The Number of the Beast

Throughout this book I have endeavored to focus on the spiritual understanding of the abundant symbolism relating to the beast. There has been much debate about the significance of the number which is given to represent the beast, and I believe God would have us to understand this number and not be in doubt about it. That God desires that we should have understanding is revealed in the following Scripture:

Revelation 13:18

Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six.

John declares that it is possible to understand this symbolism. This is not one of those things that God told John to seal up. Instead, we are told that those who have understanding can arrive at the meaning of this number. The number is specifically related to a man, and the number of this man is 666.

Many have set out to decipher this riddle, and they have used various means to do so. One of the most common methods in days past and present is through the study of Gematria. In Hebrew and Greek, as well as some other languages, each alphabetic character has a corresponding numeric value. By summing up the value of each alphabetic character in a name, or title, one can arrive at a numeric value. In this manner many have demonstrated that various persons throughout history, from ancient Nimrod to present day Popes, as well as various world political figures, have borne names and titles whose corresponding numerical value has added up to the number 666.

It is not my intent to disprove any of these associations between individuals and the number 666. In fact, I believe that many of them are valid and correct. Yet, just because we can say that the Roman Pontiffs have borne this number, or we can link it to some other figure past or present, we cannot declare that this is sufficient proof that they are THE Beast. These individuals may be ones who have manifested the beast nature, as have multitudes of men and women down through the ages, they may have even been key instruments of Satan in his warfare against the elect of God, but in this book we want to delve down deeper to the fullest understanding of this symbolism and, with the help of God and the anointing that He has given to His elect, we hope to do so.

One problem I see in declaring that the Popes, or some other individual(s), are the person to whom this number points is that the influence of these men upon mankind has not been universal. I believe that John is speaking of that which is a threat to all men, and which all saints have an opportunity to overcome. There have been ages when the Popes held tremendous power over a large portion of the "civilized world," but even at their zenith they did not have power over all men. With the advent of the Reformation the power of the Popes began to wane, and though they still have considerable influence in the world today, they are not someone, or something, that all men universally strive with.

We have already seen that from the very first chapter of the Bible, both the man and the woman were commanded to subdue and rule over all the beasts. Since Adam and Eve were at the head of the race of mankind, this command was universal and has applied to all those who have been born of woman. Ruling over the beasts is a universal injunction, and no man, woman, or child is exempted from this command of God. Therefore, when we read

of the beast, his image, and the number of his name in the book of Revelations, and when we also read that there is a group of overcomers who have achieved victory over these things, what is being declared is something that is universal and in which all the saints must enter into battle and seek the victory.

The struggle against the beast nature began with Adam and Eve when they were met by the serpent, the most cunning of all beasts, while still in the Garden of Eden. This struggle has continued throughout all the ages of man. Because of the universality of this struggle, and in light of God's injunction for all mankind to subdue and rule over the beasts, I believe that those who are seeking to identify a particular man as the beast are on the wrong track.

You may ask, "Didn't we read that the number of the beast is the number of a man?" Yes, we did. But we must ask, "What man?" The Scriptures tell us that there have only been two men who have ever lived. These are the first Adam, and the Second Adam, who is also called the Last Adam. The name Adam literally means "man" and it occurs 552 times in the Old Testament. In the majority of instances it is translated as "man," and only when it is used as a name of a person or town is it rendered as "Adam." The corresponding word in the New Testament is the Greek word "anthropos" and we find this word occurring 561 times.

It is in the following Bible passage that we read of these two men:

I Corinthians 15:45-49

So also it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living soul." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven. As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly. And just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

The apostle Paul writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit identifies the first Adam as the first man. He identifies Christ as the Last Adam, and he also calls Him "the second man." Paul further states that, though we have all borne the image of the first man, we are now called to bear the image of the second man. As we have already discussed in this book, not all men attain to the image and likeness of God in this age. Some stubbornly cling to the image of the earthy.

I believe it is these two men that John has in view when he states that the number 666 is the number of a man. This makes the determination of which man it is relatively simple, for instead of billions of men to select from, we have only two. It is very evident from the Scriptures that the beast and His number cannot refer to the Second Man, who is Christ Yahshua, for Christ completely ruled over the beast nature. Christ always lived to do the will of the Father, and the Scriptures do further testify that Yahshua was the very expression of the Father.

This leaves us only the first man, Adam, whom Paul describes as being of the earth, earthy. How does this number 666 point to this first Adam? I believe that we can find testimonies of this everywhere throughout both the Scriptures and nature, for God is the architect of both of them and He has set this seal upon the flesh man. However, I will focus upon just a couple of these testimonies.

Let us begin with the opening chapter of Scripture. We read here that the first man,

Adam, was created on the sixth day from the dust of the earth. It is generally accepted that the number six is representative of man, and particularly of the flesh man. The number six is a very interesting number. When we multiply the number six by itself we arrive at the number thirty-six. If we add up the sum of all the numbers from one to thirty-six we find that the sum of these numbers is 666.

In verse 28 of Genesis chapter 1 we read God's command to the man and woman to "multiply." This multiplication is done through the union of the man and the woman. Since both Adam and Eve were of the earth, earthy, they could only produce offspring who were also of the earth. They could produce living souls, but their union could not produce life giving spirits. Therefore, the multiplication of Adam and Eve, flesh man (6) multiplying with flesh woman (6), can only produce more of the same (36). If we are to calculate the value of their offspring by summing them all up we arrive at 666.

Because Adam and Eve bowed to the beast, all of their offspring were subject to the beast nature. They were marked, or engraved, with this nature and became subjected to futility and wrath. It would take the divine seed of God being united with woman to produce a man that was wholly man and wholly God. This man was Christ, who being in the image of sinful flesh was Himself without sin. This Second Man was not earthy (beastly), but heavenly. We must experience a second birth, a spiritual birth that arises from the seed of Christ, in order that we might escape the bondage to the flesh and live as heavenly creations.

I Peter 1:23

For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring Word of God.

Let us return to the flesh man and his relation to the number 666. God is the Author of all creation and He has revealed His marvelous truths through the creation. As modern science has advanced, that which is true science has only served to confirm the marvelous design of God in the creation.

Today, scientists understand that there are certain elements that are found abundantly throughout the universe. One element that is essential to all life, and which is found in all organic life forms is carbon. No other element is linked to life to the extent to which carbon is so linked. Therefore we often hear the phrase "carbon based life forms." The life forms that are dependent upon carbon are of the earth, earthy. Therefore, we should not be surprised if we find in the element carbon a witness of the beast, and even the number of the beast.

All elements are classified by the number of protons, electrons and neutrons that are present within them. No two elements are the same. Only in the element carbon do we find six protons, six electrons, and six neutrons. Thus, the life of all flesh is marked with the numbers 666. Could God have engraved any deeper this stamp upon earthbound life forms? Consider now the following words of the apostle Paul:

I Corinthians 15:50-53

Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable,

and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.

Flesh cannot inherit the kingdom of God. That which is stamped with the number 666 cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Even after men have been born again of the Spirit they still walk around in bodies of sinful flesh. Therefore, these bodies must be put off before the saints can enter into the presence of God. All that pertains to the beast must be slain.

Is it any wonder that throughout the Old Testament we see ordinances established and practiced whereby a beast has to be slain in order for men to enter into the presence of God in the Temple? These things are a symbol of man's need to slay the beast that dwells in his flesh in order to enter into God's presence. These carnal ordinances of the Old Testament were unable to free men from their slavery to sin, and they had to be repeated year after year. Only in Christ has sin been totally atoned for, once for all, that we might be freed from sin and made slaves to righteousness.

At this time, those who are born again are a divided house. The flesh wars against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh, and these two are contrary to one another. Flesh cannot inherit the kingdom of God and therefore it must be crucified. Those who walk according to the Spirit have crucified the flesh with its affections and desires, and one day they will lay aside the sinful flesh and take upon themselves glorified spiritual bodies after the image of Christ.

It is 666, the flesh, the beast nature, that must be overcome, and all saints are called to subdue and rule over it. In our flesh dwells no good thing, and we must buffet our bodies and keep them under subjection to the Spirit. It is not a Pope, or some political world ruler, that the saints must overcome, though there be men in abundance who bear the imprint of the beast, and many who are enemies of the saints of God. The greater, deeper, and more universal understanding of the number of the beast's identity is that it points to the first man, Adam, and his sinful nature which became the inheritance of all his children. This number is the number of a man, and all men have been called to put off the old man and put on Christ.

Romans 6:6

Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

The universal struggle of mankind is to put off the old man, the first Adam, that is marked with the number 666, and to put on the New Man, even the Last Adam, who is the Lord Yahshua the Messiah. We have dealt much with the beast nature thus far in this book, and in one type presented in Scripture we have seen that God has commanded the man and woman to subdue and rule over the beasts. In another type, we now see God depicting this as a struggle between two men, the first Adam and the Last Adam. One of these men is of the earth, earthy, and one of the men is from heaven. All men will bow to one of them.

When we read in the book of Revelation that some men will have victory over the beast, his image, and the number of his name, we are reading the same thing that the apostle Paul spoke of when he contrasted the old man and the new man. Paul wrote further of this struggle to the saints in Ephesus.

Ephesians 4:17-24

So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Yahshua, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old man, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

Paul declares that the new man has been created in the likeness of God in righteousness and holiness and truth. We know these words are descriptive of Christ, and they are descriptive of all those who are being conformed to the image of Christ. We must lay aside the old man who bears the mark 666, who is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and put on Christ. Only those who subdue and rule over the old man with his bestial desires can be said to have attained victory over the beast, his image and the number of his name.

Is it not apparent that a man could resist the influence of a pope, or an emperor, or of some other evil despot, while still falling short of ruling over the beast nature within themselves? It is the old man that all saints are called to lay aside and to have victory over, with all of its evil lusts and desires. None can attain to the image of God who have not overcome the image of the beastly man. I believe this is the deeper understanding of the symbolism of the number 666 and the man whom it represents.



Beast Men of the Bible

There have been many men and women who have given themselves to sin and to slavery to the flesh, who have been extraordinarily marked by the beast nature. The Scriptures contain histories of many who have failed to subdue and rule over that which God commanded them. In this chapter I would like to look at a few men who stand out as being clear expressions of those who had hearts of beasts, for in looking at their lives we can gain understanding of this lower nature that all saints have been called to rule over.

In the previous chapter we read about the number 666 being the mark of the beast, and it was specifically mentioned that because Adam and Eve bowed down to the beast and became subject to the earthly nature, that all of their offspring have been marked by this same fallen and corrupt nature. Some of their offspring have waged war against the sin that was present in their members and have looked forward to the redemption that has now been revealed in Christ Yahshua, and these have obtained a good testimony that they are righteous before God (Hebrews 11:4). Yet others have not fought a good fight, and they have allowed sin to have the mastery over them.

It is not surprising that the very first son of Adam and Eve was one of those who stand out as “beast men,” for the tragic consequences of sin could not remain hidden long. This first son is a picture of all those who are born of the flesh and who do not walk as overcomers through the blood of Christ, the word of their testimony, and by not loving their fleshly and soulful lives. The first son of Adam and Eve was Cain, and we read the following about him.

Genesis 4:1

Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, "I have gotten a manchild from Yahweh."

Mankind has witnessed billions of births since this first one, but consider for a moment how special it was to witness the birth of the very first offspring of a man and a woman. It must have been a great mystery, and an awesome marvel, as Adam and Eve witnessed Eve's womb beginning to swell and as they felt the first movement of life within her. What a miraculous thing it had to have been to understand that through their union another being would come forth after their own image. When the child was born they must have examined it closely and observed how perfectly it was a miniature expression of man. Eve certainly spoke with amazement and wonder when she proclaimed "I have gotten a manchild from Yahweh."

In the last book of the Bible we read of a manchild that is birthed, one who is to rule the nations with a rod of iron. This manchild will be fashioned after the image of God, bearing His likeness. Perhaps Adam and Eve had such high hopes for Cain. After all, the serpent had said that if they ate of the forbidden fruit they would be like God. They may have hoped that their son would also be like God. Yet this was not to be, for Cain too submitted to the beast nature, rather than subduing and ruling over it.

Genesis 4:3-7

So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to Yahweh of the fruit of the ground. Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of

their fat portions. And Yahweh had regard for Abel and for his offering; but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. Then Yahweh said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it."

The beast nature is essentially selfish, and seeks its own welfare while considering little about the welfare of others. Cain was jealous of his brother Abel, for Yahweh showed more consideration to his offering than Cain's. The beast nature within was manifesting. Something that did not look like God was present within Cain's being. An evil that did not originate in God was dwelling in Cain's flesh, and Yahweh warned Cain that He must master it.

The language that Yahweh used in speaking to Cain alludes to the beast nature. Yahweh declared, "sin is crouching at the door," and the image here is that of a wild beast that is prepared to spring upon its victim. The words would be fitting of a lion that lies crouching as it awaits its prey, and truly there was something bestial that was seeking an opportunity to overcome Cain.

Yahweh also spoke to Cain and said, "You must master it." This command is a mirror of the words He had spoken to Cain's parents before they sinned.

Genesis 1:28

Replenish the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.

To master the sin that sought to have dominion over him, Cain would have to subdue it and rule over it. Like his parents, however, Cain failed to heed the command of God and he too listened to the voice of the beast. This time, however, the beast was not external to man, for the poison of the serpent had entered mankind's flesh and it now performed its deadly work from inside his being.

Genesis 4:8

And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

Having failed to subdue and rule over the beast within, Cain acted in a manner that was contrary to the divine nature. Far from laying down his life for his brother, Cain rose up and slew him. The very words used here are once more a picture of what occurs within sinful man when he does not subdue and rule over the beast. We are told that "Cain rose up." Cain's flesh rose up and gained dominion over him. What a contrast this is to the Son of God who "laid down" His life for others.

Yahweh once more approached Cain to confront him with his wickedness.

Genesis 4:9-15

Then Yahweh said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" And he said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground. Now you are cursed from the

ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you; you will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth." Cain said to Yahweh, "My punishment is too great to bear! Behold, You have driven me this day from the face of the ground; and from Your face I will be hidden, and I will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me." So Yahweh said to him, "Therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold." And Yahweh set upon Cain a mark, so that no one finding him would slay him.

Is there not a great parallel between what is revealed here in this son of Adam and Eve giving himself to the rule of the beast nature and receiving a mark by God, and in that which we read in Revelation?

Revelation 14:9

Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand he will also drink of the wrath of God."

Yahweh proclaimed judgment upon Cain for his sin. Yahweh's wrath was poured out because Cain bowed down to his bestial impulses. God then set a mark upon him. Many students of Scripture have theorized about the form of this mark that was placed upon Cain, yet in one sense it most certainly points to the mark that all are said to receive who worship the beast. Once more, from Genesis to Revelation we see a continued theme of man's struggle against the beast nature. To receive the mark of the beast is to come under the judgment and wrath of God.

Tragically, the entire earth soon became filled with men and women who were given over to the beast nature. Mankind gave themselves continually to such evil that God poured forth His wrath and destroyed the entire earth with a flood. Yahweh found only one man in the earth who was righteous, and this was Noah. The rest were given over to the same violence that rose up in Cain.

Genesis 6:13

Then God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth."

The earth today is also filled with violence, and because of this we know that the day of God's wrath is not far off. Those who would be delivered from the wrath to come must put off all violence, all wickedness, all unrighteousness, and clothe themselves with the Lord Yahshua the Messiah.

Let us look now at another man who also struggled with his brother and who bore the unmistakable imprint of the beast.

Genesis 25:21, 24-26

Isaac prayed to Yahweh on behalf of his wife, because she was barren; and Yahweh answered him and Rebekah his wife conceived... When her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb. Now the first came forth red, all over

like a hairy garment; and they named him Esau. Afterward his brother came forth with his hand holding on to Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob; and Isaac was sixty years old when she gave birth to them.

Esau must have been an incredible sight to behold. Nearly all babies come forth with very smooth skin, lacking any abundance of hair. Yet of Esau we are told that his entire body was covered as with a hairy garment. We have a further description of the hairiness of Esau in Scripture. When Jacob was encouraged by his mother to deceive Isaac and thereby receive the blessing of the firstborn, Jacob knew that, although his father was nearly blind, he might feel of his skin and be able to tell that he was not Esau.

Genesis 27:11-16

Jacob answered his mother Rebekah, "Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man and I am a smooth man. Perhaps my father will feel me, then I will be as a deceiver in his sight, and I will bring upon myself a curse and not a blessing...." Then Rebekah took the best garments of Esau her elder son, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son. And she put the skins of the young goats on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck.

Esau's hair was so thick that it was akin to the hair of a young goat. Even on his hands and on his neck he was covered with thick, coarse hair. There appears to be some symbolism here, for in the gospels we read of Yahshua comparing the righteous and the wicked, and He depicts the wicked as goats. Goats are certainly very bestial creatures. There is nothing that stinks quite as bad as a billy goat, and they are also known for their great sexual appetite, hence the expression "randy as a billy goat." Throughout history man has associated goats with excessive appetites of a low and base nature, and they are known to eat virtually anything without discrimination. Therefore we see Pan, the part man and part goat god of revelry, being attended by sensuous women and an abundance of wine. Further confirming this same type of spirit being present in Esau, we read of his wives and how displeasing they were to his parents.

Genesis 26:34-35

When Esau was forty years old he married Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite; and they brought grief to Isaac and Rebekah.

So displeasing were these wives of Esau that Rebekah spoke the following:

Genesis 27:46

Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am tired of living because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife from the daughters of Heth, like these, from the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?"

It is evident that Esau did not choose his wives wisely. He did not look at their character, but must have chosen them for their external beauty. In one instance after another Esau demonstrated that he was a slave to his natural appetites. Nowhere is his bondage to the flesh more apparent than when he sold his birthright for a bowl of stew. This

was such a low and detestable act that Esau is used by the apostles as an example of one who embodies all that is evil.

Hebrews 12:15-16

See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God..., that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal.

Pictured in the life of Esau are all those of the race of mankind who live for temporary pleasure while despising the true riches of God. Esau represents men and women whose eyes are on things of the earth, and whose god is their belly. Interestingly, Esau is even described as smelling of the earth (Genesis 27:27). In the same way, those who mind earthly things, and who live to enjoy the pleasures of the earth, take upon them the scent of the world that they love so much. The saints of God are admonished to have a much different focus.

I John 2:15-17

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world -- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life -- is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

Both Cain and Esau responded with murderous hatred when they observed their brothers obtaining favor and a blessing while they did not. Esau swore to kill Jacob after their father had died. Yet the favor of God, the blessing and the birthright, cannot be obtained through such bestial actions. Only by subduing and ruling over the beast nature can man find favor with God and receive the birthright and the blessing that belong to the sons of God. Those who live as children of the devil will receive wrath and judgment along with him.

Let us look now at one final man who was clearly given in Scripture as a type of those who have hearts of beasts. This is the great king Nebuchadnezzar who ruled over the Babylonian Empire from 604 BC until 561 BC. He is spoken of in Scripture more than any other pagan king, and he ruled over the empire whose name has become synonymous with confusion and mixture and the works of man. In the book of Revelation we find Babylon being spoken of as representing all that is evil, bestial and worldly, and the voice of God is crying out for His people to come out of Babylon lest they participate in her sins and partake of her plagues (Revelation 18:4).

Ancient Babylon is noted for her splendor. She was located in what is now Iraq, and there was once an inland sea that came close to her location, but now it is all barren desert. One of the seven wonders of the ancient world was the hanging gardens of Babylon. Babylon was an exceedingly rich and luxurious place, filled with all of the wealth and splendor of the world. Over this empire King Nebuchadnezzar ruled for 43 years. It was this same King who laid siege to Jerusalem and who burned the city with fire and carried off the treasure of the Temple.

Babylon's triumph over the people of God is a symbol of the many men and women who have been called of God, but who have been taken captive by the allure of the world. These have been removed from a place of worship to Yahweh to be taken as slaves to a far

away place that is focused upon trafficking in the goods of the world. Some who have found themselves as slaves in Babylon have mourned over the destruction of the Temple, which is a symbol of mankind who was created to be a temple of God, and they have grieved over the slavery and bondage of the people of God. Yet many more have become comfortable in Babylon, and even when they have been given the opportunity to leave, they have chosen to remain.

Babylon is a picture of all things that appeal to the natural man, and we should not be surprised that her greatest ruler was a beast man. God gave a dream to Nebuchadnezzar revealing that he was going to be given over fully to the beast nature because he would not honor and glorify God, but chose instead to glory in self. We read of the fulfillment of this dream in the book of Daniel.

Daniel 4:29-33

Twelve months later he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon. The king reflected and said, "Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?" While the word was in the king's mouth, a voice came from heaven, saying, "King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty has been removed from you, and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place will be with the beasts of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes." Immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled; and he was driven away from mankind and began eating grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair had grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws.

King Nebuchadnezzar manifested one of the most pronounced attributes of the beast nature, which is pride. Instead of walking humbly before God and acknowledging Yahweh's role in granting him sovereignty and bestowing upon him majesty and splendor, King Nebuchadnezzar brazenly attributed all of these things to his own power.

There are few men or women who have ever possessed authority and splendor to the extent of King Nebuchadnezzar, but even in lesser things there is a great temptation to manifest a similar attitude. Many men have boasted of being "self-made men." Many business leaders have boasted of their prowess in building a successful company, or of rescuing a faltering company and making it profitable. Many artisans boast of their skill in crafting some masterpiece, of writing a best seller, or authoring some work that is a critical success. An actor may be proud of his attainments on the stage or on film. In every venue of life those who attain some measure of success are tempted to credit themselves.

The saints may admit the error of such conceit, but even in the church this boasting is present. Churches vie with one another to build the biggest, or most ornate, sanctuaries. They strive to demonstrate the most growth as they count nickels and noses. Some boast of having the oldest church in the area, or having the most illustrious ministers to preach in their pulpits. Others seek to top their building with the highest steeple in town. The ministers and attendants then walk around and boast of that which they have built through their own power and might.

Is it any wonder that so many of those who have once stood as proud examples of spiritual attainment have suddenly been brought low by some unrestrained lust for sex or

money? God still abases the proud and is determined to have all men walk in humility and meekness before Him.

In each of the three men we have looked at we have seen a different manifestation of the beast nature prove to be the occasion for their downfall. In Cain it was his envy and jealousy. In Esau it was his unbridled appetites. In Nebuchadnezzar it was his pride. In each instance the flesh rose up, resulting in God bringing them low. It is no coincidence that we see Nebuchadnezzar on the roof of his palace when he is speaking such prideful thoughts. Esau and his descendants also settled in high places, even in Mount Seir, which is in some places called "the mount of Esau" (Obadiah 21).

The beast nature crouches within every man awaiting an opportunity to rise up and take control. Yet those who allow it to do so are brought low, even as this once mighty king began to go on all fours and to eat grass like the cattle. God is able to make men into kings, yet when they do not submit to Him or walk humbly before Him, He will give them over to the heart of a beast.

As we look at the society around us, we see many men who have been given over to the heart of a beast. When we capture a wild animal we often place them in a cage to keep them from injuring people. Likewise men place those men and women who act beastly in cells with iron bars. The prisons of the world are filled with rapists and murderers and thieves and embezzlers and extortioners and kidnapers and pedophiles and liars and all manner of violent and lustful and covetous men and women. Yet, the simple fact of living outside of these prisons is no proof that men and women are subduing and ruling over the beast within.

Perhaps in Nebuchadnezzar more than any other man we see the end of those who fail to subdue and rule over the beasts within. God has revealed through him an incredible picture of a man going from kingly glory to beastly depravity. Even the highest can be brought low, and all who do not humble themselves before God will be abased.

As those who are called of God, we should all recognize that within us are the seeds of our own destruction. It is by the grace of God that we are not overcome by the raging appetites of the fallen flesh, and the sin that dwells in our members. Let no man think more highly of himself than he ought, for we are all prone to temptation, and we have laid upon us the necessity of exercising dominion over our fleshly passions. Let us encourage one another in these things. Let us not condemn others for their failures, but rather let us seek to restore them to a reflection of God.

Galatians 6:1-4

Brethren, if any person is overtaken in misconduct or sin of any sort, you who are spiritual [who are responsive to and controlled by the Spirit] should set him right and restore and reinstate him, without any sense of superiority and with all gentleness, keeping an attentive eye on yourself, lest you should be tempted also. Bear (endure, carry) one another's burdens and troublesome moral faults, and in this way fulfill and observe perfectly the law of Christ (the Messiah) and complete what is lacking [in your obedience to it]. For if any person thinks himself to be somebody [too important to condescend to shoulder another's load] when he is nobody [of superiority except in his own estimation], he deceives and deludes and cheats himself. But let every person carefully scrutinize and examine and test his own conduct and his own work. He can then have the personal satisfaction and joy of doing something commendable [in itself alone] without [resorting to] boastful

comparison with his neighbor.
(Amplified Bible)

The nature of God is humble and it seeks the welfare of others. Observe how Christ left His place of honor and glory and condescended to rescue man from his slavery to the beast nature, and to lift him up that he might bear the image of God. Even so, we should seek to lift up men and women and to direct them to their high calling in Christ to bear the image and likeness of God. Should we find a brother or sister acting as a beast, let us remind them that they were called to bear the image of the divine.

At the same time we must be discerning of those who willingly give themselves to sensuality while refusing to acknowledge the debauched nature of their behavior. Our Lord cautioned His disciples to not cast their pearls of truth before swine, for the swine would only turn and rend them.

Once the Lord has opened one's eyes to see the great struggle between the beast nature and the divine nature, it is amazing to learn of the symbols of this conflict that are present everywhere throughout the pages of Scripture. From the opening chapter, to the closing book, we find in the Bible types and shadows, and even plain speech, all revealing God's design for man to bear His image, and the adversary's plan for man to be imprinted with his own likeness.

These three men, Cain, Esau and Nebuchadnezzar, stand as illustrations of the peril that threatens all who will not avail themselves of the great grace that is available through Yahshua the Messiah. The distance between God's image and that of a beast is great, and great has been the fall of mankind. Yet God, in His mercy, would lift us up to heights previously unknown. He would have all men to be partakers of His own divine nature.



The Mark of the Overcomers

As you have read this book with its focus upon God's command for men and women to subdue and rule over the beast nature, you may have considered your own life and the struggles that you have known within your own body as the flesh and the spirit have warred one against the other. Most people, myself included, have had certain areas that they have struggled with for years. For one person it might be an independence in the spending of their money. For another it may be a problem with lust. Yet another may struggle with anger, and another with a critical spirit. Perhaps you have struggled with a tendency to gossip, or a rebellious attitude, or with jealousy, covetousness, or envy.

In my own life I have seen victory in a number of areas, but there are still some strongholds to be pulled down. As you have read this book, perhaps you have thought of some area in your own life that you have experienced conviction in time after time, and you have desired the victory, but you have found yourself coming back to God repeatedly to confess your transgression and to ask for His forgiveness once again. You may have even come to doubt that victory is an attainable goal while you are still clothed in this sinful flesh.

I want to encourage you by saying that complete victory is attainable. Every fleshly impulse can be conquered, every stronghold can be brought down, and you can attain conformity to the image of God in your life. Though you may not see any examples of men or women today that have reached this place of conformity, this crucified life of complete surrender to the will of God, and though the majority of ministers may tell you that such a hope is a vain dream, let God be true and every man a liar. God has said that He will have men and women in His image, and He will accomplish what He set out to do. He will finish the work that He has begun.

God never asks men or women to do that which is impossible. Where He commands obedience He will give sufficient grace to obey. Since God has commanded men and women to subdue and rule over the beasts, we must agree that it is possible to obey God. Through His Son, Yahweh has made a way for all men and women to attain to the high calling of God. What sinful man could not do because of the weakness of the flesh, God did in sending His Son to condemn sin in the flesh. The Scriptures declare that the power of sin has been broken and those who have been immersed into Christ Yahshua have been freed from sin. The saints are now able to present their members as slaves to righteousness. He whom the Son has set free is free indeed.

Satan works to keep Christians in bondage through the power of deception. Many have been deceived regarding God's will for them to rule over the Adamic nature. They do not discern that the cross of Christ changed things in a very fundamental way. They may believe that they now have forgiveness for their sins, while not believing that they have power over sin. The Scriptures testify that the saints have both.

Romans 6:5-7

For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.

I Peter 2:24

He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness...

Romans 6:2

How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

Romans 6:11-12

Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Yahshua. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts...

Romans 6:14

For sin shall not be master over you...

Romans 6:22

But now since you have been set free from sin and have become the slaves of God, you have your present reward in holiness and its end is eternal life.
(Amplified Bible)

Colossians 3:3

For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

I John 3:9-10

No one born (begotten) of God [deliberately, knowingly, and habitually] practices sin, for God's nature abides in him [His principle of life, the divine sperm, remains permanently within him]; and he cannot practice sinning because he is born (begotten) of God. By this it is made clear who take their nature from God and are His children and who take their nature from the devil and are his children: no one who does not practice righteousness [who does not conform to God's will in purpose, thought, and action] is of God...

(Amplified Bible)

With many more similar words the Scriptures do declare that those who are born again of the Spirit of God, and united with Christ in His death and resurrection, have been set free from the bondage of sin. They are now able to exercise dominion over the beast nature. The book of Revelation testifies that there will be a company of overcomers who have attained victory over the beast, his image, and the number of his name.

We need to believe that such a victory is not only attainable, but it is what God expects and demands of His children. If His children are obedient they will walk in this victory. Only the children of disobedience will fail to crucify the flesh and will fall short of attaining conformity to the image of Christ.

We are not to think, however, that this victory is handed to the saints on a silver platter. Christ is the believer's victory, but the saints must follow wherever He leads. There are battles to be fought, strongholds to be torn down, giants to be slain, and wild beasts to be subdued.

Consider the imagery that God has provided for the saints through the Israelites of old who were led by Joshua (a type of Yahshua the Messiah) as they went in to possess the land

of promise. God told them that He was going to give them wells they did not dig, vineyards they did not plant, and houses they did not build. He promised to bring them into a land flowing with milk and honey. He spoke words of comfort and assurance to them, letting them know that if they followed Him fully that no enemy could ever stand before them.

Deuteronomy 11:22-25

“For if you are careful to keep all this commandment which I am commanding you to do, to love Yahweh your God, to walk in all His ways and hold fast to Him, then Yahweh will drive out all these nations from before you, and you will dispossess nations greater and mightier than you. Every place on which the sole of your foot treads shall be yours... No man will be able to stand before you; Yahweh your God will lay the dread of you and the fear of you on all the land on which you set foot, as He has spoken to you.”

God did not give us the history of Israel and of her battles that we might be entertained with stories of peoples and nations from long ago. He gave them to us for our instruction. These things are a symbol of the spiritual battles that the children of God face today. It should comfort us to know that God has said that no enemy will be able to stand before those who love God and keep His commandments. We should be emboldened by the promise that every place we set out foot will be given to us.

Christ, our Captain, has not delivered us from **some** of our enemies, but from **all** of our enemies. He did not free us from anger while leaving us enslaved to lust. He did not loose us from the bondage of pride while leaving us enslaved to covetousness. He conquered every foe, and, if we will follow Him, He will lead us into victory over all things to which we have been bound.

Joshua led the children into the promised land, and they began well, destroying Jericho, and then Ai, and then many other strongholds and fortresses while dispossessing the inhabitants of the land. Yet they did not make a complete work of removing all enemies from the land.

I have often heard testimonies given where people have borne witness of God miraculously delivering them from some addiction, or besetting sin, when they first came to Christ. Some have been immediately delivered of a drinking habit that had persisted for many years. Some were delivered of drugs, or from cigarettes, or from pornography. Many did not even pray for deliverance. They merely believed in Christ, confessed faith in Him, and were baptized. Their salvation experience was attended with a mighty deliverance.

Yet I have never heard any person testify that they were set free from all things in this way. God may drive some enemies out of the land without our raising a finger, as He also did with the Israelites, but He will not dispossess all of them in this way.

Joshua 24:12

Then I sent the hornet before you and it drove out the two kings of the Amorites from before you, but not by your sword or your bow.

God does deliver us from some enemies in our flesh in such a miraculous manner, and others He gives us a quick victory over as we follow Him. Yet some enemies are less easily vanquished. God has a reason for this, and He revealed His mind to the Israelites.

Judges 3:1-4

Now these are the nations which Yahweh left, to test Israel by them (that is, all Israel who had not experienced any of the wars of Canaan; in order that the generations of the sons of Israel might be taught war, those who had not experienced it formerly). These nations are: the five lords of the Philistines and all the Canaanites and the Sidonians and the Hivites who lived in Mount Lebanon, from Mount Baal-hermon as far as Lebo-hamath. They were for testing Israel, to find out if they would obey the commandments of Yahweh, which He had commanded their fathers through Moses.

God wants His children to be delivered from all bondage to the flesh. He wants them to rule over all the beasts in the land. The reason that He doesn't dispel all enemies from the land at the moment of the saint's new birth in Christ is so that He might test them to see if they will obey Him. He tests the love of all Christians in this way, for Christ said, "If you love Me you will keep My commandments." We must learn warfare in order that we might prove our love for Christ.

If we understand this purpose of God, it will bring us to view our temptation to sin in a new light. We will not lightly sin if we understand that disobedience is evidence of a lack of love for Christ. The apostle John wrote the following:

I John 5:3

For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.

I John 4:18

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.

It is the disobedient who are punished. John therefore says that those who are perfect in love have no fear, for to be perfect in love is to be perfect in obedience. The obedient need not fear any punishment.

Let us begin to think of obeying God in terms of loving Him. If we love Him we will crucify the flesh. If we love Him we will subdue and rule over the beast nature. The Lord allows us to be tried by the presence of sin in our flesh that we might prove our love for Him.

The highest manifestation of the divine nature is love. If we love Him and love one another then we have become like God. We bear His image and His likeness when we walk in love.

If we say we are not able to walk obediently in all things before God, we are actually saying that we are not able to walk in perfect love. Yet God has given us sufficient grace to walk in love all the time. We need never choose to walk apart from love.

The mark of the overcomers is love, whereas the mark of the beast nature is selfishness. Those who attain victory over the beast, his image, and the number of his name are those who love God. Those who receive the mark of the beast are those who love self.

Which mark will you receive?





Books By Joseph Herrin

The Remnant Bride

Sabbath

Sarah's Children

The Road from Babylon to Zion

Laying Down the Law

God's Plan of the Ages

The Divine Quest - God's passionate pursuit of faith in the heart of man.

The Mark of the Beast

Evidence of Things Unseen

Overcoming Addiction by the Spirit of Christ

Christ in You - The Hope of Glory

The Marriage Covenant

The Gate and the Way

Dragon Flood

No Apologies

Yahweh's Book

Foundations

Push Back! A Christian Response to the Homosexual Agenda

Lunacy & the Age of Deception

Living Epistles - Testimonies of Faith

Attractive Deception - The False Hope of the Hebrew Roots Movement