

Pastor Tânia Cristina Giachetti  
Ministério Seara Ágape

<https://www.searaagape.com.br/livrosevangelicosonline.html>

***NEVER BE LACKING OIL ON YOUR HEAD***



*Ministério Seara Ágape  
Estudo Bíblico Evangélico*

*Pastor Tânia Cristina Giachetti  
São Paulo – SP – Brazil – 2004*

*“Let your garments always be white; do not let oil be lacking on your head.” (Ecc. 9: 8)*

*This book is dedicated to those who thirst and hunger for God's Word and keep in their hearts the desire of being sowers in His kingdom and to feed His children. To those who let this Word act and call into existence the things that do not exist.*

*I thank the Lord for having poured on me the abundance of His Spirit, giving me boldness and perseverance to overcome challenges and make His wellspring flow from my interior.*

## *PREFACE*

This book contains the study about some biblical themes of great interest to a Christian. I started writing it in 2004, but it took shape in 2007. Thus, it was written over several years and the texts were remodeled and added with new knowledge as the Lord gave me His revelation.

The whole book was a test of dedication, perseverance and boldness to overcome the challenges of God and the snares of the enemy. However, in each correction and revision I could see the move of the Lord, bringing improvement from the cover to the texts.

Overcoming so many obstacles, my faith was strengthened in the certainty that when God determines something, nothing can hinder Him from acting and all the barriers fall before our eyes.

I hope you can avail of these lessons and they can be open doors to new revelations of the Spirit in your life.

In Rom. 8: 37 it is written: "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us."

May God bless you and awake each day in your heart the desire to learn from Him and put into practice His valuable teachings.

I love you in Jesus.

Tânia Cristina Giachetti.

### Notes:

- Words or phrases enclosed in brackets [ ] or parenthesis ( ), in italics, were placed by me, in most cases, to explain the biblical text, although some verses already contain them [not in italics].
- The version used here is the New Revised Standard Version, NRSV – 1989 (1995)
- NIV = New International Version (will be used in brackets in some verses to make it easier for readers to understand).
- Email: [relacionamentosearaagape@gmail.com](mailto:relacionamentosearaagape@gmail.com)

*INDEX*

The healing of the blind man at Jericho	7
The Ten Commandments	10
The Ark of the Covenant of the Lord	20
The meaning of biblical oils and spices	28
Nehemiah	36
The heritage of the bride	42
Sacrifices of the Old Testament	48
Passover	52
Menorah (The lampstand of seven lamps)	54
The armor of God	58
Baptism	65
Love is the supreme gift	74
Biblical study about Ecc. 9: 8	82
Ministries in Church	86
Gifts and spiritual fruit	92
The works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit	104
The Jewish Feasts of the Old Testament	111
The seven Canaanite nations	118
Epilogue	123

## THE HEALING OF THE BLIND MAN OF JERICHO (Mk. 10: 46-52; Matt. 20: 29-34; Lk. 18: 35-43)



This is one of the passages where Jesus healed a blind man in a different manner from that He healed the others: in Mark 8: 22-26, with saliva in the eye, and in John 9: 1-12, with mud and saliva, sending him to wash his eyes in the Pool of Siloam.

In this text, the bible says that the name of the blind man was Bartimaeus, which in Hebrew means son of Timaeus. Timaeus means highly regarded, highly rated or highly esteemed. The first lesson is: we do not inherit the spiritual, emotional or social achievements of anyone, even our parents; each has his own 'Promised Land' to conquer. The father of Bartimaeus could be an important man for his merit, he may have won his position in society, but the son did not get the same thing. We are spirits with different characteristics. For example, we can inherit certain natural gifts present in the family; however, it is up to us to determine how to use them. Our personal victories, only we can have. Our mission, only we can fulfill; our cross, only we can carry.

This Jericho was built by Herod the Great, and was a rich place, especially for those who collected taxes. It's not the same Jericho won by Joshua by entering the Promised Land. In Luke, the bible says (Lk. 18: 35) that he was sitting by the roadside, begging alms, and in Mark, it describes him as a blind beggar, that is, he was blind and poor in the midst of a rich city.

The bible does not say that he was born blind, but it is assumed that he went blind after, because in verse 51 of Mark he says, "My teacher, let me see again." We don't know what blinded him, if an organic illness or an accident. But the fact of being physically blind at the moment and probably for a long time in his life, made him develop another vision, the spiritual, since he did not have the distractions of physical sight; and this made him recognize that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of David, He who was able to restore him completely. When God removes from us some material and physical distractions, He has a purpose that is to develop in us another kind of perception of life and that will lead us to recognize our need for Him, preparing us for the moment of real meeting with Him. Bartimaeus, surely, had time to meditate a lot and was inwardly prepared for this meeting, so much that his inner thirst to be touched by Jesus made him overcome all obstacles of the crowd, trying to shut him up. The interesting thing is that Jesus did not care about the outer and superficial voices of the people that followed Him even by curiosity. He was aware of the inner voices of the afflicted and contrite in heart, who really wanted Him. It's difficult to think that before the noise of a crowd, someone can identify the petition of a single voice; however, Jesus stopped because He heard Bartimaeus and said, "Call him here." When Jesus called him, probably the crowd fell silent to see what would happen. Many voices can speak within us and around us, trying to stop the Lord's call, but when the cry of our heart is sincere, Jesus comes to meet us. When He confirms the call, the voices fall silent and then He speaks.

The bible says in Mark 10: 49: "Take heart; get up, he is calling you." In Greek, the expression 'Take heart' means, 'Have courage.' First, we recognize our weaknesses, our



spiritual poverty and our need for God. After, we recognize that Jesus is the solution. So we cry for His help and we are willing to seek Him, even if all around us say no. And when the time comes, we discover that we must have courage. Courage! What for? To do what the blind man did, he went out of prayer and passed to action. Even without seeing where he was going and depending on others to lead him to Jesus he made an inner movement; he stood up, that is, he ceased to see himself as a poor and powerless, to take possession of the blessing. He stood up, he took on his position of authority and dignity in the face of that situation and before the people and was willing to be helped and blessed. He threw off his cloak, which means that he gave up the label and the stigma, for at that time, the blind were recognized by the cloak they used. He relinquished the shyness, the situation in which he hid and the interior limitations. Perhaps many years of humiliation and defeat have made him fearful, without daring to risk once more, or have taken away from him the hope of being someone honored again, someone who can direct his life and earn his living; maybe, those years were only valid to test and strengthen his faith that the promised Messiah would come one day and touch him. If he saw Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of David, one supposes that he knew the Scriptures and believed in them. Although his soul was hopeless with the apparent impossibility of healing, his spirit certainly kept the flame of faith. This faith gave him the correct notion of the time to take possession of the blessing, and his strengthened spirit has enabled his soul to overcome his own limitations and prejudices and get up, harmonized with the will of God for him. The bible says that he sprang up, that is, he got up quickly; he was determined, he wanted this meeting and came to Jesus.

It is interesting that Jesus could have made things easier for the blind, going to him, but He stopped at some distance so that the blind man came. It was one more test to see if his faith and his desire were really great to be touched by Him. We can imagine that Jesus also benefited him with this attitude, honoring him before the people who once humiliated him, that is, He used those who tried to prevent the blessing to help him to conquer it. He told them to call him, making him feel special and important in front of that people, individualizing him before the crowd. Jesus treats us individually, showing that even if there is a crowd on our side, He recognizes us personally and calls us; He deals with our problem in particular when we are really willing to seek Him and when we want to overcome all the barriers to get our blessing.

The next step of Jesus was amazing. He asked, "What do you want me to do for you?" We can think that this is an unnecessary question, since it is logical to a blind to ask for cure for his blindness, but Jesus knew what He was doing. He wanted to see if Bartimaeus had an idea of what was really a priority in his life, if his request was in accordance with the desire of God's heart for him. Bartimaeus could ask Jesus for many things: family reconstruction, his own house or someone who sheltered him or who supported him financially, and many other material petitions; however, his need was another. He truly needed to know the Messiah and experience His power over him; he needed to see things and his own life differently. So he asked to have his vision restored. The expression 'let me see again', in Greek, means, 'may I recover my sight, may be given to me the ability to direct or reconsider, may I see with the mind's eyes.' Maybe he had recognized Jesus as his Savior and the One who could restore his identity and self-esteem, but had not yet the vision of how he could be someone of value, able to work again for his own sustenance and to show himself to people as a living witness of God's power. In a way, this story is like Job's, who knew God before by hearing about Him, but after his suffering he came to know Him, because he saw Him in truth; he experienced the Lord for himself. The divine design for us is to make us know the truth of His word and have the eyes of our soul and our spirit open to be able to walk with

dignity and authority. Bartimaeus called Jesus Teacher (Master, Rabbi), because he knew that there was wisdom in Him to teach him to do all things and that He was the true way. Then the Lord said, “Go; your faith has made you well” (NIV: “Go, said Jesus, your faith has healed you”). And immediately he regained his sight.

In Mark and Luke, the bible tells that Jesus said him to regain his sight, and in the book of Matthew it says that He touched his eyes. The fact of touching his eyes would be, perhaps, to confirm what He was doing, because the blind was sensitive to the tactile information, and to leave within him a physical certainty that he was actually cured, a sensory mark in his brain; or else to satisfy his need to be touched by Jesus. As God made Jacob lame of one leg as a mark of his encounter with Him, Jesus, in several cures in the bible, left the mark of His touch imprinted in people’s memories, for He knows the need of each one of His children.

Do you need to see with God’s eyes?

Ask Him and have your eyes open today, in the name of Jesus. Receive your victory.

## THE TEN COMMANDMENTS (Ex. 20: 1-17)



In the third month of the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt, on the first day of that month, they came into the wilderness of Sinai (Ex. 19: 1). They camped there and God commanded Moses to purify the people, for on the third day He would descend on the mountain. He wanted to show Himself to His children. The Lord came with power on the third day, as was said, but made it clear that around the mountain there were limits that could not be overcome by the people or by the priests, only by Moses and Aaron. The Lord was beginning to instruct the people and show them that there was a difference between the holy and the profane; one could not come to God in a careless way; it was necessary a preparation. He also made very clear, by allowing Moses and Aaron to go up the hill, that there was a leadership over them that it should be respected. So, Moses climbed Mount Sinai and remained there in the presence of God for forty days and forty nights (Deut. 9: 9). In this period he not only received the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20: 1-17; Ex. 31: 18; Ex. 32: 15; Ex. 34: 28), but all the laws that the people of Israel should obey on any subject (Ex. 24: 1-4). In presenting the Ten Commandments to Moses, the Lord presented them in order, that is, the first four of them relate to man's relationship with God; the other six to man's relationship with his fellow man. Before having a right relationship with his neighbor, man must set things right with the Creator.

So, let's talk about them, one at a time (Ex. 20: 1-17).

**1) "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; **you shall have no other gods before me**".**

God made it clear here that it was He who had taken the people from the hands of Pharaoh, showing His power over all the gods of Egypt. Hence, the Lord wants to be unconditionally worshiped, above any other god. As Christians we no longer worship other spiritual entities. However, we can keep ingrained within us other idolatries, which we take on and admit they are just habits, weaknesses of character, family customs or personal tastes, but in fact they are gods that need to be dethroned in order to walk in the freedom of the Holy Spirit. All that binds us and prevents us from following the will of God is an idol. Even some habits such as novella (or series of TV), sex, magazines, excessive care with the house, with the car or with family members, excessive care with work (profession), with the appearance and clothing, vanity of being always informed about everything that happens in order to have something to talk to people, to be always displaying an outward appearance of balance and well-being to say that there is nothing wrong with us, to be always successful in the profession and even in the ministry just to say that we are capable of everything are examples of idolatry that may be in our lives in a clear or disguised way, but they put themselves in the place of God and prevent us from being one hundred percent in His presence.

Thus, the main five idols that most people are putting before God are: **money, pleasure, power, fame and knowledge**. And behind these idols, as an instigator and an agent of Satan that stimulates and encourages all of them, there is unbridled technology, social networks and digital marketing, the fever of the moment that terribly

contaminates people's lives and affronts God Himself, in the sense of stimulating His own people to misuse these resources to preach His word. Fame, anxiety and pressure for sales and the power of artificial intelligence are subtly stealing people's faith and reasoning, as a dirty strategy of this anti-Christian world system. Short messages on social media, written or in video, do not fill the void or edify the soul, and still bring with them the spirit of consumerism and competition, comparison and a false appearance of success; consequently, destroying the self-esteem and personality of the youngest and weakest in faith.

What we see is gossip about other people's lives, instead of self-growth and spiritual self-development. And the pressure of digital marketing, crazy computerization and money becomes unbearable, forcing human beings to even corrupt their moral values. Anyone who has communion with the Holy Spirit can understand this.

The first god we'll talk about is **money**. A person can be rich or poor; can want wealth or be content with what he has, but often the spirit of misery or avarice that dominates him takes his soul away from the need to seek God in a deeper way. This makes him act in a possessive or jealous way with what is his and does not let the spiritual truths about the prosperity of God penetrate his heart. He gives externally even to show to others, but internally, his heart is still stingy and miserly. He begins to measure the people around him by the profit or loss that they can give him. He does arithmetical calculations in all situations and no longer believes in God's unexpected provision. He is unable to lend anything that is his, by jealousy of that thing is being used and spent. He lives below anxiety and suffers in anticipation by the possibility of an extra expense. He goes to the church and gives the tithe out of obligation, when he decides to give, for he wonders what the pastor will do with his money. He is unable to sow in God's work using any child of His, because "He does nothing more than an obligation!" He refrains from moments of joy and fellowship in the company of someone because they will spend money. He keeps broken things at home or what he no longer uses. He lives in poverty his entire life to save for old age or for his offspring (there's nothing wrong with that, to think about old age or children, unless that behavior becomes sickly). In this topic, not only misery or avarice comes into play, but also greed and the desire to have more and more money, to buy and consume what the person does not even need. And what stimulates and sustains this is the malignant disease of advertising and aggressive marketing strategy, which invades the limits, to where it has no right to enter. These and other examples can be found when money becomes a God.

Another idol is **pleasure**, which often impedes the person from seeking God's presence because 'it's tiresome', 'it will take a long time', 'it requires sacrifice, discipline and surrender' or because 'it hurts'. The person lives for the things he likes and just does what he wants and likes and, of course, nothing he does has an affinity with the things of God, only with the things of the world. It is the case of someone who has no commitment to anything or to anyone who may require care or a portion of his time because this would entail some burden and, from his point of view life is always 'light' and enjoyable, without any problems. He is able to bind emotionally to who is not reliable or who is not of God's will because it gives pleasure to be with that person, even if he steals his time of prayer or communion with Him.

The third kind of god that needs to be dethroned is **power**, which transforms the person who owns it into a real dictator or manipulator, if this power is not in God's hands. The person starts to use it to corrupt, to abuse and to misguide the lives of other people and even his own. He doesn't know how to exercise it in love for the good of others. The word of God says that Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil (1 Jn. 3:

8) and He used the power granted to Him by the Father to accomplish this. In the bible, the word ‘power’ has three meanings in Greek. In first and second place, **exsousia** (authority, ἐξουσία – Strong #1849: power, authority, jurisdiction, right, strength, privilege, that is, liberty – Jn. 1: 12) and **dunamis** (or dunamei – δυνάμει – Strong #g1411; power to perform miracles – Lk. 24: 49) and it is bestowed by the Holy Spirit. However, there is a primordial condition for this to be exercised, which is love, as it is written in 1 Cor. 13: 1-13. Without the love of God, we cannot exercise His power on earth for the good of His people. The world’s power corrupts, but the power of God enables us to perform here everything He did. It’s no use asking for God’s power, without asking first for His love (Agape) and His wisdom to exercise this power. The power that is mentioned here is a force directed at a target to exercise divine authority or to perform a specific work such as healing, deliverance, miracles and releasing of potentials and of spiritual gifts. There is a third Greek word, used more rarely (only 9 times in the NT): **kratos** (κράτος – Strong # g2904), which means: great vigor, glory, dominion, might, power, strength, possession generally over something physical, material, as a holding, homestead (Lk. 1: 51; Acts 19: 20; Col. 1: 11; 1 Tim. 6: 16; Heb. 2: 14; 1 Pet. 4: 11; 1 Pet. 5: 11; Jude 1: 25; Rev. 1: 6).

The fourth god who must fall is **fame**. The desire to be seen and recognized and honored is innate in humans and it is good to keep self-esteem, but when this desire becomes unreasonable or egocentric, occupying or taking the place of others, it should be reassessed and treated. The work for God is usually done in a meek, humble and quiet way, without fanfare, competition and the fame that the world imposes on us, without its help to express our worship. We don’t need to do the Lord’s work under lights or searchlights; however, when His light begins to shine on us, it is logical that we will be seen. Therefore, we must always ask for divine wisdom and humility to deal with what He gives us so that the glory is only His and not ours, but we should never fail to show our authority and our identity as children and servants of the Most High. It was the Lord Himself who said that He would make us the head, and not the tail. We can see in the gospels that Jesus, especially at the beginning of His ministry, tried not to be seen and even asked for those that He healed not to tell anyone anything, for it was not yet His time to appear publicly and draw the attention of the Jewish or Roman authorities. But over the course of His ministry, we can see that His fame spread through the cities because His light was visible. He Himself told us that we are the light of the world and our good works need to be seen so that others may glorify the Father in heaven. We must keep in mind that the impossible we perform comes from Him alone, not from us. We can even have the desire to heal people and resurrect the dead, but nothing inside us has power to do so. Only when He manifests Himself with anointing on our lives is that we can accomplish these things. Therefore, the fame that a Christian should seek is the fame for the kingdom of God. As John the Baptist said, “He must increase, but I must decrease.”

The last god to be defeated is **knowledge**. It is no use we have knowledge in all subjects if it is just to feed our ego and our vanity or to humiliate people. No kind of knowledge that the Lord gives us is for nothing or for selfish purposes. On the contrary, the knowledge that the Lord gives us are ‘talents’ to be multiplied to help the brothers and make them happy and conscious of the divine capacity that is already placed within them. The knowledge that He gives us has the purpose to help others to take possession of the kingdom of God and their blessings. Everything the Lord gives us generates responsibility, therefore we should not seek knowledge in order to be above anyone or to compete, but to give Him multiplied what He has put in our hands. Like everything that He gives us, we must also place the knowledge in His hands so that He Himself

helps us to use it with wisdom and discernment. We should ask Him to give us only what we can bear and manage, otherwise we'll turn aside by a path of death (Prov. 30: 7-9: "Two things I ask of you; do not deny them to me before I die: Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that I need, or I shall be full, and deny you, and say, 'Who is the Lord?' or I shall be poor, and steal, and profane the name of my God."). All the knowledge we have, our diplomas and professional merits were allowed by Him; it was not by our own strength that we conquered them. He allowed us to have them. And here I speak again of Satan's evil and subtle strategy using the media, especially the internet with its social networks and marketing, where worldly, technological and business knowledge, has become indispensable to be successful, to achieve fame and make people feel new pleasures.

2) **"You shall not make for yourself an idol**, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous [אֵנָּה = qanna = jealousy – Strong #7067] God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments." When the bible says a jealous God, it's really saying jealous indeed (as a father or a husband), not only zealous. In Jam. 4: 5 it is written: "Or do you suppose that it is for nothing that the scripture says, 'God yearns jealously for the spirit that he has made to dwell in us?'" God is jealous of us, so He is not pleased when we divide our attention with other gods. As the pagans had a great facility to see God in all things even in nature, like animals, shells, corals, crystals, plants, rocks, sun, moon and stars, He warned the people of Israel not to follow these customs lest to distort the correct view of Him. The human being needs to see a fruit to know the difference between it and a stone, for example, because we can eat one, the other not. God knew of this need, so He showed Himself to the people in form of a pillar of fire or a cloud that followed them through the desert. When He came down upon Sinai He showed Himself through lightning, thunder and fire (Ex. 19: 18-19). When Elijah took refuge in the cave, God showed Himself to him as a gentle whisper. When Jesus came to earth, God was shown in human form to be recognized, but even with this symbolism or through Jesus Himself made man He does not want that we turn Him into a simple piece of stone, wood or paint to put us in contact with Him. The bible says that God is spirit (Jn. 4: 24; 2 Cor. 3: 17), so the presence of His Spirit in us makes us know His image and recognize Him in any situation, anywhere. Even the mental image that we have of Him is not correct because we are too limited to understand Him and to imagine His form. Moses himself, with whom He spoke face to face, mouth to mouth, only saw the glory of God from behind ("and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen." – Ex. 33: 22-23). Often when we are in spirit before the throne, we can perceive His light or His eyes of love on us; however, we do not come even close to what He is. The important thing is to feel His presence in prayer, praise and worship and in constant contact with His word, for Jesus is the Word. Living His Word in us is to see Him properly. I'm sure that when we need truly to be touched and have a vision of God for some reason, God Himself will give us so that we can increase our faith. The apostle John in Revelation shows us Jesus [Rev. 1: 12-17; Rev. 10: 2-3 (the 'mighty angel' is Jesus Himself); Rev. 19: 11-16] and describes Him the way he managed to describe Him. To John, as a human being, he lacked the words and comparisons that could be made to God. Therefore, the key words to summarize this commandment are: **to have the correct view of God.**

**3) “You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God,** for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.” This commandment tells us **to think of Him the right way.** We must feed our mind with lofty concepts about God that inspire us and lead us to revere Him (Phil. 4: 8). The devil is from wicked origin, so we should not fill our minds with him or with concepts about him, because it degrades our soul. The word ‘**profane**’ comes from the Latin **profanus**; **pro** means ‘before, in front of’, and **fanum** means ‘temple.’ A profane word, therefore, is what is not used in a temple, and this is a good way to guide our language. I’m saying this because the first way to profane the name of God is through profane language (speaking of the devil all the time; also the swear words and filthy language, as Paul says in his letters). The second way to make wrongful use of His name is to say, “Only Jesus in my life!” or “In the name of Jesus” for any natural situation without any spiritual significance. His name is to be used for serious things such as disease and demons. The third way to make wrongful use of His name is not to fear Him, i.e., to make jokes using His name or reducing Him to our smallness, treating Him as if He was our similar, without having the consciousness of His power, His majesty and His lordship; we cannot give orders to Him or challenge Him. The forth way is to have an empty faith, faith that is not put into practice when we need it. The bible says that whatever is not from faith is sin (Rom. 14: 23 b). The fifth way is to speak things of our flesh and then say it is prophetic, that was He who said. When the Lord speaks prophetically, we are sure that it was He who said (Jer. 23: 31-32; Deut. 13: 1-5; Deut. 18: 21-22). The sixth way is to refuse to have fellowship with Him or receive His help. This means that when we trust somebody, really, we want to be in constant contact with that person and ask his help when we need. If we say we love God and trust Him, but we do things without consulting Him or asking for His help, it means that we do not think He is good enough to be our friend and our God. Without the sincere prayer every day we won’t keep deep contact with Him. The other way to make wrongful use of His name is to tempt Him; and tempting Him would be to provoke Him in what He can do in our lives. It means not to believe in His promises or His power to accomplish what He promised.

**4) “Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy.** Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and consecrated it.” **Sabbath** comes from the Hebrew word **Shabbat**, which means ‘*rest, cessation, interruption.*’ The Lord set aside a day of the week for us to rest from our workaday activities, to restore our soul in contact with Him. God has given us this day for us to have the opportunity to enjoy some of the best and most important realities of life, and not that it was a day of prohibition. In this day of rest, without worrying about to work to accumulate wealth, we can contact not only with God to hear His voice, but also to contact the family and friends, giving value to true friendship and healthy relationships where He also wants to participate. It is also a day when we separate ourselves from the noise of civilization to be in contact with nature where God can also manifest to us and teach us important lessons. Therefore, the Jews keep the tradition of Shabbat that starts at 6:00-6:30 p.m. on Friday and ends at 7:00-7:25 p.m. on Saturday (it starts at sunset on Friday and ends at sunset on Saturday, when three stars are visible, about 40 minutes after sunset). In fact, the exact start and end of Shabbat varies from week to week and from place to place, according to the time of sunset, also taking into account daylight saving time. During this time they dedicate themselves to family and the things of the Lord. For us Christians, Sunday was set apart

as a day of consecration to God. This does not mean that we should only talk with Him on Sunday, but it should be a special day, when hearing His voice means to receive His direction for our new week and to give Him the fruit of the week that was gone, thanking Him for His help.

However, the word Shabbat has a deeper meaning than just a physical rest. God's rest, the Sabbath (Shabbat, Ex. 23: 12-13; Lev. 23: 3) means to enjoy His spiritual blessings, as it is written in Heb. 3: 11, "As in my anger I swore, 'They will not enter my rest [referring to the people's disobedience to God in the desert, tempting Him for forty years].'" For us Christians, this means that if we respect the Shabbat, our Sabbath of rest, resting in the Lord of the things we cannot solve with our own strength and from the work of our hands to make money and financial support, He will start acting in our favor and we shall receive our blessings directly from Him. Respecting the Sabbath also brings prosperity, because we show that we believe in God to supply us and to resolve what we cannot in our own arm; therefore, in certain situations in our lives, we shall live a time of Shabbat, waiting in the deliverance and salvation of the Lord. Doing this, we are truly consecrating ourselves to Him. Our Sabbath of rest can be any day of the week that we dedicate to God, not necessarily Saturday.

Saturday or Sunday only become religious obligations for all those who have no understanding of what this rest means. Whatever the day that is dedicated to the Lord, what matters is the separation to Him and our rest in Him, knowing that this stop is important for human being, not only to renew his strength, but also to make him understand that, instead of financial loss, he has a good friend working for him on this day. In other words, the Sabbath needs not to be necessarily on Saturday or on Sunday, but any day of the week that we dedicate to the Lord. Let's imagine that your job requires a work on Saturday or Sunday (for example: you're an intensive care doctor or a surgeon, a commercial aircraft pilot, a fireman or have any occupation that deals with emergencies); you would like to have this day off (Saturday or Sunday) to be with your family, your friends or with your brothers in the church; however, it's impossible. What to do? If you really fear the Lord and understand the meaning of Sabbath, choose one day in the week that matches with your day off and make it a day of blessing and separation to God, thinking on His things, that is, in spiritual things instead of earthly ones that only bother you, and rest in Him. While you rest, He works for you. Therefore, the Day of Rest is not a day of financial loss, spiritual prison, trial or strife between brothers, but day of blessing and consecration to Him.

We have other references concerning the Sabbath:

- Lev. 19: 30: "You shall keep my Sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary: I am the Lord."

- Deut. 5: 12; 15: "Observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you... Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day."

- Neh. 13: 17: "Then I remonstrated with the nobles of Judah and said to them, 'What is this evil thing that you are doing, profaning the Sabbath day?'"

- Isa. 56: 2; 4-5: "Happy is the mortal who does this, the one who holds it fast, who keeps the Sabbath, not profaning it, and refrains from doing any evil... For thus says the Lord: To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, I will give, in my house and within my walls, a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off."



- Isa. 58: 13-14: “If you refrain from trampling the Sabbath, from pursuing your own interests on my holy day; if you call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the Lord honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, serving your own interests, or pursuing your own affairs; then you shall take delight in the Lord, and I will make you ride upon the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of your ancestor Jacob, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

- Jer. 17: 21-22: “Thus says the Lord: For the sake of your lives, take care that you do not bear a burden on the Sabbath day or bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem. And do not carry a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath or do any work, but keep the Sabbath day holy, as I commanded your ancestors.”

- 2 Chr. 36: 21: “to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had made up for its Sabbaths. All the days that it lay desolate it kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years.” The people should honor God allowing the land to rest every seven years. This period without plantation was considered a Sabbath of rest (Lev. 25: 2-4; Ex. 23: 10-11). However, as they failed to do that over the centuries, God condemned them and removed all Sabbaths of rest at once. The land would be asleep during the Babylonian captivity, seventy years (Lev. 26: 34-35; Lev. 26: 43; Jer. 25: 11; Jer. 29: 10; Dan. 9: 2).

5) “**Honor your father and your mother**, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.” ‘**abh** or **av** (father – אב, Strong #1) and ‘**ima** (mother – אִמָּה) or ‘**em** (’em, אִמָּה, Strong #517). ‘Giving honor’ means to recognize, to respect, not to defame, not to make who is honored be embarrassed for our sake. The word **honor** comes from the Hebrew word **kābhôdh** and means **dignity, reputation, honor, renown, pride, prestige, wealth**. A child who follows the ways of God and does His will is honoring his parents. This means: to be decent, not to be ashamed of anything, to serve the Lord with all our heart, to be a motive of pride (in the sense of pleasure) for God, to show His dignity, to have zeal for His reputation. As we do with Him, we should do with our earthly parents. This is the only one of the Ten Commandments that has a promise, that is, honoring our parents makes our days may be long.

In Eph. 6: 1-4 it is written: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother—this is the first commandment with a promise: so that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth. And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” And in Col. 3: 20-21 the Apostle Paul writes; “Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is your acceptable duty in the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, or they may lose heart.”

Unfortunately, here we see the major problems resulting from the action of the devil on families, making parents to act in a different way of God’s laws, misusing the power He delegated to them and oppressing the children, forcing them to disobey and then bringing the blame on them. We should pray for God to intervene in families, beginning with the parents so that they may be under His commandments and educate their children based on them. Parents should not put over the children the yoke of guilt and rebellion when they are the first to be disobedient to God’s law. Maybe because of this Paul wrote the guidance to parents and to children in sequence; to children, to obey their parents; and to parents not to provoke their children to anger. Let us be good children and good parents, walking in the ways of the Lord.

6) “**You shall not murder**”. Here the Lord is talking about all kinds of murder: of body, soul and spirit, since it involves punishment. Some biblical references remain consistent with this precept: Gen. 9: 6; Lev. 24: 17; Matt. 5: 21; Matt. 19: 18; Mk. 10:

19; Lk. 18: 20; Rom. 13: 9; Jam. 2: 11. About the suicides and homicides we have nothing to comment. Let's talk a little about other invisible types of death that are as harmful as physical death, for they cause the death of soul and spirit of someone. People cannot see or pretend they do not notice, but God sees and, in due time, He will do justice. I'm talking about ungrateful words and feelings, of indifference, of neglect, of the cruelty to treat the other, destructive emotions and, certainly, the curses of sentence that can destroy a life forever if this process is not interrupted by the divine healing. We should take care with our words and attitudes, as well as people who are true messengers of Satan to destroy, kill and steal, using their mouths, feelings and attitudes to raze what we are building. We must forgive them, but move away completely so that the destruction is not worse.

**7) "You shall not commit adultery".** Adultery is the violation of the vow of marital fidelity. Therefore it is not approved before God. When this occurs, sin must be cleansed through repentance and forgiveness, and when it's not possible to reconcile, divorce is released from God (Matt. 5: 27-32; Matt. 19: 7-9; Deut. 24: 1-4). However, this brings trouble for both parts involved, for a mark was left. In Gen. 2: 24 it is written, "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh." This was the original purpose of God for man; therefore, the separation that follows the act of adultery brings emotional and spiritual wounds that are slow to heal. Therefore, the flesh must submit the mastery of the Spirit of God.

It is written in 1 Cor. 7: 10-11: "To the married I give this command—not I but the Lord—that the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does separate, let her remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife". First Paul explains that if there is separation of the couple, there should be no marriage with another person. If reconciliation is not possible, it is best the legal separation through divorce. This way, the person remains married or, then, chooses divorce, but not an uncommitted separation, where the person remains halfway, and leading to illegal unions such as adultery or fornication (Matt. 5: 31-32; Matt. 19: 9; Mk. 10: 11-12; Lk. 16: 18). In clearer words, if the separation occurred because of trivial problems, Paul confirms that is better the couple to be reconciled. However, if the separation occurred because of adultery, it is advisable that the woman does not marry her first husband again, and her husband does not marry his former wife again, because their bodies were 'invaded' by strangers (cf. Deut. 24: 1-4).

**8) "You shall not steal".** In Ex. 22: 1-15, the Law settles the restitution of two to four times what was stolen, depending on the case. In Prov. 6: 30-31 we see another value of restitution, "Thieves are not despised who steal only to satisfy their appetite when they are hungry. Yet if they are caught, they will pay sevenfold; they will forfeit all the goods of their house" (the number seven here refers to the fullness, the perfect number of God). When someone recognizes his mistake and truly repents, changing his attitude, God's salvation comes into action in that life. This is the case of Zacchaeus (Lk. 19: 8-9) that recognized his mistake and Jesus rescued him, "Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, 'Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much' Then Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham.'" There are also other subtle forms of theft that often go unscathed before men, but not before the eyes of God, for example: to retain something that is the neighbor's; to live beyond his means because the person lives at the expense of the work of another (Jer. 22: 13); waste of time or negligence at work, which is to steal the boss; envy, which through actions or words, comes to steal the inner wealth of another person (joy, hope, innocence, the strength or the spiritual blessings); to betray the trust

in a relationship; bad humor and frustration discharged without cause on someone to steal the joy; negative words that bring doubt and destroy projects; emotional blackmail that makes the other to leave his needs to pay attention to the blackmailer; undue taxes, which are diverted for unlawful purposes; to retain tithes and offerings from the Lord (Mal. 3: 8-9: “Will anyone rob God? Yet you are robbing me! But you say, ‘How are we robbing you?’ In your tithes and offerings! You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me—the whole nation of you!”); to deny information or give false one, which makes the other ‘to stumble’ and to take longer to reach his purposes, when one has the capacity and conditions for this: “Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it” (Prov. 3: 27); to nurture a dream in someone’s life and then not fulfill the promise; to try to legalize something that in itself is illegal (‘piracy’ in any area, forging licenses that do not exist); to collect more for a service when it is not worthy of it (“Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him [*John the Baptist*], ‘Teacher, what should we do?’ He said to them, ‘Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you’” – Lk. 3: 12-13); to use of cunning, deceit or worldly trickery based on wisdom and experience of the flesh in any business, whatever the profession, which only brings own benefit for selfish ends. One loses the confidence of men and God, making increasing gaps for the destruction of the devil. These and other subtle forms of theft cause harm for both parts: who is stolen and who steals.

9) **“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor”**. One of the things that affects most the lives and conversation of people is slander. Once I read in a book the following thought: “Who has advanced mind speaks of ideas; he who has it in a median level talks about facts and the petty-minded talk of others”. The slander feeds pride, because when someone speaks of someone else he feels better than that person. Furthermore, slander is fed by jealousy, by criticism and judgment. The thought of the gossip is that it is just a harmless matter, but Jesus says in Matt. 7: 1-2: “Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get.” In Col. 3: 8 it is written: “But now you must get rid of all such things—anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth” and in 1 Cor. 6: 9-10, the bible says: “Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers [*NIV, Slanders*], robbers—none of these will inherit the kingdom of God.” Another way of practicing slander is to hear the gossip about the lives of others without questioning or stopping the conversation right there. Of all forms, slander distorts the facts, distorts the image of the victim before those who know him, generates curses on him, but attracts the curse back on the talebearer, because speaking badly of beloved and anointed of God has a promise of God Himself: “Blessed is everyone who blesses you, and cursed is everyone who curses you” (Numb. 24: 9 b). False testimony is a lie and the Lord does not approve lie. “You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not profit by the blood of your neighbor: I am the Lord.” (Lev. 19: 16).

10) **“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor”**. The word **covetousness**, or the verb **to covet**, in Latin (*Cupiditia*), means **strong desire, greediness**. That’s what Paul says in his letters with the name of **desires of the flesh** (in some versions lust of the flesh), which can destroy what belongs to the other just with the look. It walks hand in hand with envy, mediocrity and laziness, because only those who are mediocre, lazy and jealous and cannot chase their own dreams covet what belongs to the other. This commandment of God is a big challenge

that He proposes to us to lead us to personal fulfillment. When we want something, whether material, emotional or spiritual, this desire should be in accordance with God's will for us because to want, to long for, to plan, to design, to earn, to dream, to achieve and to reach are part of human nature and are healthy things placed in us by Himself, but don't bring anxiety or lack of control nor harm others; but when the greediness (covetousness), that is the temptation, gives rise to the theft, which is sin, for example, things go out of control and destruction settles. In fact, covetousness is already a sin, but may begin as a simple temptation, which must be treated by God as soon as possible.

The Lord has not given us these commandments to be burdens and yokes on our lives, but to prevent us from falling into the devil's death snares. They are truly summarized in two. As was said, the first four relate to God, **"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might"** (Deut. 6: 5). The other six relate to our relationship with people, **"... you shall love your neighbor as yourself"** (Lev. 19: 18; Lk. 10: 27). Whoever loves his neighbor cares about what is his as if it were his own.

May God have mercy of our lives, forgiving our sins and failures and enabling us through His Spirit to practice all these words. Amen.

## THE ARK OF THE COVENANT OF THE LORD



The Ark of the Covenant (Hebrew: 'edhuth = Testimony, Covenant) has a special significance for the people of Israel, as it must have for any Christian who understands its parallel with what happened in the New Testament after the coming of Jesus. The first reference to the Ark of the Covenant is in Ex. 25: 10-16, when the Lord commanded Moses to build the tabernacle (Ex. 25: 8-9; Heb. 8: 5). The tabernacle (in Hebrew, mishkan, which means 'dwelling house') or 'Tent of Meeting' was the tent used by the Israelites as a place of worship while they traveled through the desert. In fact, the tent where Moses initially met the Lord ('the tent of meeting') was pitched outside the camp (Ex 33: 7), for the people had sinned, and the Lord told him that He would not follow among them. So, Moses pitched the tent outside the camp, and there, God spoke with him. Everyone who sought the Lord would go out to the tent of meeting (Ex 33: 7). In Ex 29: 42-46, the Lord said to Moses that it would be in the Tabernacle (or tent of meeting) that He would descend to talk to him and to His people. The Tabernacle was also called 'sanctuary' (Ex. 25: 8) and 'The tent of the Covenant' because in it the Covenant was stored (the tablets of the Law): Ex. 38: 21; Num. 1: 50; Num. 9: 15; Num. 17: 8. Later, the Tabernacle came to be known as 'the House of the Lord' (Deut. 23: 18; Josh. 6: 24). God commanded Moses to build the Tabernacle so that the people could have a reference place for worship and could feel His safety along with them wherever they walked (Ex. 25: 8). The Tent was pitched, carried and cared for by the Levites. In the innermost place was the enclosure known as the Holy of Holies where the ark was placed and where only the high priest could enter. Its dimensions (the sanctuary itself, the tent where the Ark of the Covenant was) were basically five meters wide, fifteen meters long and five meters high (Ex 26: 1-30).

The Ark of the Covenant was a box, built of acacia wood with 2 ½ cubits long, 1 ½ cubits wide and 1 ½ cubits high (about 3.94 feet x 2.62 x 2.62). The cubit used here is the primitive cubit or Mosaic cubit used for sacred purposes and whose measure is different: 51.8 cm or 20.39 inches or a cubit plus a handbreadth (the normal cubit was of 44.5 cm or 17.5 inches). The ark was covered with pure gold and there were four rings in its four corners where were passed two poles of wood also covered with gold; it was transported by these poles. Inside the ark, the Lord commanded Moses to put the tablets of the Law, which symbolized the covenant that He was doing with His people. As the ark was without cover, the Lord planned another piece called atonement cover [NIV] or [mercy seat, NRSV] of pure gold, of the exact size of the ark so that it could stay covered. Forming a single piece with the mercy seat were placed two cherubim of gold at each end; they had their faces turned to each other and their wings touched in the center. From there, in the middle of the mercy seat between the cherubim, God spoke to Moses (Ex. 25: 22). It was called the mercy seat or atonement cover [NIV] because it was there that was spilled the blood of the sacrificed animal for atonement of sins (Lev. 16: 14-16; 18-19; 30; 33; 34; Heb. 9: 25). In Num. 10: 33-36, there is something

interesting about the ark: “So they set out from the mount of the Lord three days’ journey with the ark of the covenant of the Lord going before them three days’ journey, to seek out a resting place for them, the cloud of the Lord being over them by day when they set out from the camp. Whenever the ark set out, Moses would say, ‘Arise, O Lord, let your enemies be scattered, and your foes flee before you.’ And whenever it came to rest, he would say, ‘Return, O Lord of the ten thousand thousands of Israel.’” Here we can see that the ark went ahead of them, as God says He will go ahead of us to prepare the way, throwing our enemies away from us. The ark was carried ahead by the Levites, that is, by the priests.

As for the Ark of the Covenant there is an important detail about the poles, for many pictures we see are not faithful to the biblical report. The bible says:

- 1 Kin. 8: 6-8: “Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the Lord to its place, in the inner sanctuary of the house, in the most holy place, underneath the wings of the cherubim. For the cherubim spread out their wings over the place of the ark, so that the cherubim made a covering above the ark and its poles. The poles were so long that the ends of the poles were seen from the holy place in front of the inner sanctuary; but they could not be seen from outside; they are there to this day.”

- 2 Chr. 5: 7-10: “Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the Lord to its place, in the inner sanctuary of the house, in the most holy place, underneath the wings of the cherubim. For the cherubim spread out their wings over the place of the ark, so that the cherubim made a covering above the ark and its poles. The poles were so long that the ends of the poles were seen from the holy place in front of the inner sanctuary; but they could not be seen from outside; they are there to this day. There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets that Moses put there at Horeb, where the Lord made a covenant with the people of Israel after they came out of Egypt.”



This means that the poles were placed along the width of the ark, not along the length, so that when it was carried, the cherubs were seen side by side and not one behind the other. The image above shows the correct placement of the poles. Therefore,

the bible says that they could be seen from the Holy Place, in front of the curtain that separated it from the Holy of Holies.

In Heb. 9: 4-5, when the writer talks about the ancient tabernacle he comments on the ark, "In it [*he was referring to the Holy of Holies*] stood the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which there were a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant; above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot speak now in detail."

And in Ex. 16: 33-34 it is written: "And Moses said to Aaron, 'Take a jar, and put an omer of manna in it, and place it before the Lord, to be kept throughout your generations.' As the Lord commanded Moses, so Aaron placed it before the covenant [NIV: the Testimony], for safekeeping."

I will try to explain the meaning of each of these parts so that we can understand what it represents today for us Christians. Cherubim are angels whose function is to reveal the power, the majesty and the glory of God and defend His holy character. They have the function of watchfulness and worship. They also indicate a class of angels with great strength of knowledge, wisdom and divine light and that reflect the beauty of the Creator. Therefore, it is said that they are knowledgeable of the divine mysteries ('full of eyes'). The ark was of acacia wood covered with gold. Wood symbolizes something that is taken from the earth, from the matter, and gold, the precious things. We are this ark of perishable material like the dust of the earth, but that were covered with the most precious of God which is the same Spirit that was in Jesus. Within our being He put His laws ('tablets' – cf. 2 Cor. 3: 2-3), His food ('manna'), which is His word to sustain us, and His anointing and authority as kings and priests (Aaron's rod that flourished). But so that we were not stolen, so that we did not stay unprotected, 'without cover', He gave us the mercy seat (or atonement cover) that is Jesus. The mercy seat was the place where the priest sprinkled the blood of the animal that replaced the man to be forgiven. When Jesus died for us on the cross, He replaced us, forgave us and shed His own blood for us. Therefore, it is Jesus that covers us with His blood. It was there, between the two cherubim that the Lord spoke to Moses. Now we can talk directly to Jesus, for He is already within us. His angels watch over us and lead us where God determines that we walk ('poles'). The mercy seat was made of pure gold, just as Jesus was God's most precious to us. The whole of chapter 9 of Hebrews says that Jesus came to replace the sacrifice of the old covenant in the place of the lamb and the high priest; and in Heb. 10: 12-13 the bible says, "But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, 'he sat down at the right hand of God', and since then has been waiting 'until his enemies would be made a footstool for his feet.'" Likewise, the enemies are already beneath our feet.

Throughout the Old Testament, the ark was very important for the Israelites, so much that, at times that it was not with them, because it had been stolen by the enemy, the people felt weak and abandoned (1 Sam. 4: 21-22). Also for the Lord the ark was very important and symbolized His presence and He did not let anything profane touched it. See what is written in 1 Sam. 5: 10-11. The Philistines had stolen the ark, but suffered so much the wrath of God because of this that they decided to return it so that in the midst of their people no one else died. Even the Israelites had no right to touch it, unless they were priests; who touched it, would die (1 Sam. 6: 19, when the Lord kills seventy Israelites of Beth Shemesh because they looked into the ark).

When David was king of Israel, the ark was in Baalah of Judah, and he decided to bring it back to Jerusalem. However, the first time he acted wrongly, bringing it on a bullock cart and one more Israelite was killed at the hands of God for touching the ark.

This man was Uzzah (2 Sam. 6: 1-11 cf. 1 Sam. 7: 1; 2 Sam. 6: 3). So we are, like the ark of the Lord; who is not anointed of God cannot touch us. If the enemy plots against our lives, God destroys him. Therefore, He wants us to zeal for the holiness and the gifts He has given us so that we were not stolen by the 'Philistines' (demons). When David remembered the proper way to carry the ark, he managed to bring it unscathed to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6: 12-19). He remembered that the ark could only be carried by the Levites, so this time he brought it with praise and holiness. Likewise, it is with us. The ark also represents the glory of God in us, therefore, to bring it to our lives we cannot do this on the strength of our soul ('bullock cart'), or in a careless way as Uzzah did, but with holiness and joy in heart. When we praise the Lord, His glory fills our being.

When Solomon's temple was built, the ark ceased to dwell in tents and went to live permanently in the Holy of Holies, in the innermost place of the temple. In 1 Kin. 8: 1-11, when it was put in its place, the glory of the Lord was so strong there that neither Solomon nor the priests could stay to minister. This means that when we put ourselves on the altar of the Lord, in the center of His heart, His glory covers us in such a way that nothing else is necessary. The biblical word for the **glory of the Lord** is **kābhôdh** (Heb.) or **doxa** (Septuagint, the Greek version of the OT) = weight or dignity, and which can be understood as the manifestation of God's power where it is needed, victory, protection, abundance, wealth, dignity, reputation. It is the Jewish equivalent of the Holy Spirit. The known word Shekinah, often translated as 'brightness, presence of God dwelling among His people', does not appear in the OT or the NT. It derives from the verb Shakhan (שָׁכַן = to dwell, abide, continue, have habitation, inhabit – Strong #7931), which appears in verses such as Gen. 9: 27; Gen. 14: 13 and Jer. 33: 16. Also appears in Ex. 40: 35: "Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled [Shakhan] upon it, and the glory of the Lord [kābhôdh] filled the tabernacle." **Shekinah** (Shekhinah, Shekinâ), in fact, is a Kabbalistic concept, mystic, which considers this word as the female face of the Divine Presence. According to Kabbalah, Shekinah is a powerful cosmic energy, which dwells within the universe, vivifying it and being its soul or spirit. The writers of Targumim created the word 'Shekinah' to indicate God Himself, removing the concept of God with a form and feelings, something that the traditional Judaism preached and didn't let be removed. This new standpoint, actually, brought an abstract concept of God, colder and distant (a simple 'cosmic energy', rather than a being with its own identity).

The word **ark** in Hebrew means 'safe (coffer), ark, box', and keeps God's project. In Ex. 2: 3, the word ark (têbhath) was translated as 'basket', where the baby Moses was placed. He was God's project for Israel. Thus, we are the ark and we keep His project within us. Others consider the ark of Moses as a miniature version of Noah's ark (Hebrew, têbhath), but only big enough to contain a baby. It was made of reeds (or papyrus – gôme') and plastered with bitumen and pitch, and because it was necessary to open it (Ex. 2: 6) apparently like Noah's ark, we suppose that it was completely closed. The word used to **Ark of the Covenant** is another: 'ārôn (or arun – אָרוֹן), which not only means "safe (coffer), ark, box" but also "closet, cabinet."

To complete the understanding about the ark, let's talk a bit how the tabernacle and the temple of the Lord were planned. In Exodus 25 and 26, the Lord gives to Moses the guidelines for building the tabernacle and describes all furnishings that should be part of it. To our understanding, the temple was divided into three parts: the **Outer Court** where the people were and where the burnt offerings and sacrifices were made. The inner part, called the **Holy Place** was where only the priests entered and there was the table, the bread and the lampstand (Heb. 9: 1-5). The **lampstand** meant the light, the Spirit of God with them. The **table** meant communion and intimacy with God; and the



**bread of the Presence** or **Shewbread** (KJV – Êx 25: 30; Êx. 35: 13; Êx. 39: 36; in Êx. 40: 23, simply, ‘the bread’), the food and the divine provision. The **altar of incense**, although placed in front of the ark out of the curtain (or veil), in the Holy Place, was considered a part of the **Holy of Holies**. Separating the Holy Place from the **Holy of Holies** there was a thick **veil** (‘curtain’), which symbolized the separation between the holy and the profane, between God and men. In the Holy of Holies there was the **Ark of the Covenant**, and there, only the high priest could enter once a year to worship the Lord and to offer sacrifices. The high priest entered with a special garment of fine linen (Ezek. 44: 15-19), after being washed with clean water. The curtain was torn when Jesus died on the cross symbolizing that His death was breaking the separation between us and God. From that moment, as high priest, He was making the final sacrifice to give us free access to the heart of the Father. The temple constructed this way has a resemblance to our being and our life. The **Outer Court** represents our social relationships in which many people see us, greet us, but know little about us. The **Holy Place** is our soul, in which participate the closest people as our family and friends who know us better and know what goes on in our hearts. In the **Holy of Holies**, which corresponds to our spirit, where are the inmost of our desires and our true **self**, only the Spirit of God has access.

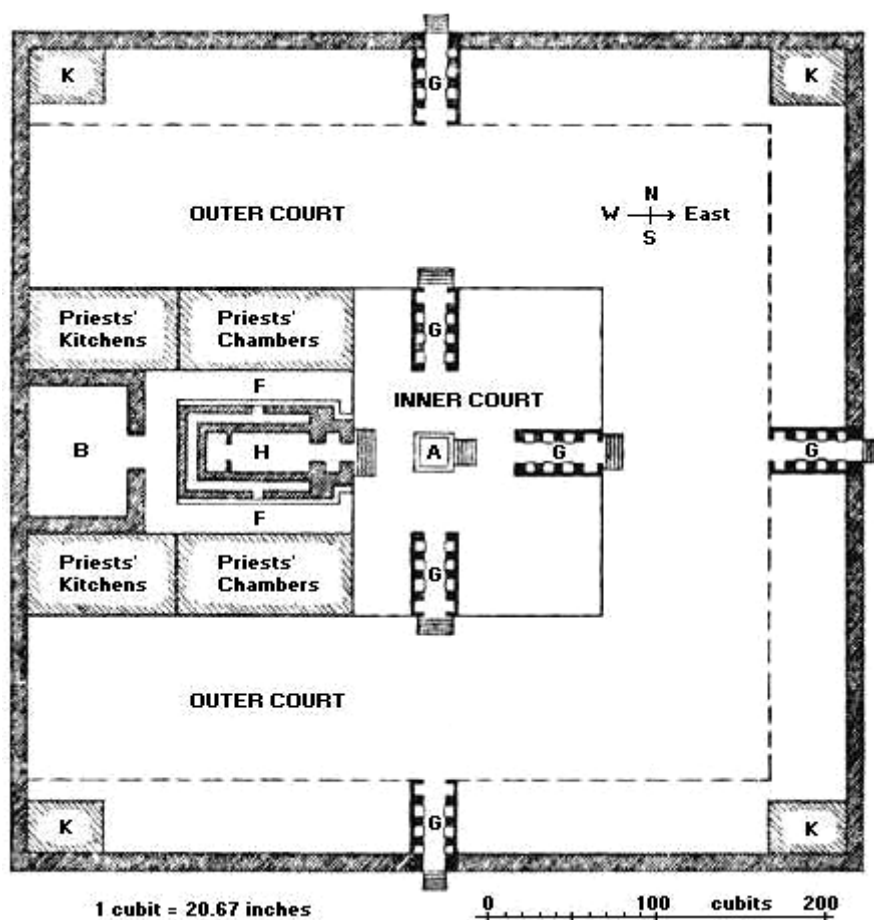
Today it is clear to us that we are a temple and an ark not built by human hands; it’s we who carries God’s presence where we go and we are protected and guarded by His angels so that nothing causes us any harm. Within us there must be the fire of the Spirit burning constantly (the flame burning on the altar, Lev. 6: 12-13) and the praise, because it brings us closer to the throne. Ps. 22: 3 says: “Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel.”

A prophetic reference to the ark is found in Jer. 3: 16-19: “And when you have multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, says the Lord, they shall no longer say, ‘The ark of the covenant of the Lord’. It shall not come to mind, or be remembered, or missed; **nor shall another one be made**. At that time Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the Lord, and all nations shall gather to it, to the presence of the Lord in Jerusalem, and they shall no longer stubbornly follow their own evil will. In those days the house of Judah shall join the house of Israel, and together they shall come from the land of the north to the land that I gave your ancestors for a heritage. I thought how I would set you among my children, and give you a pleasant land, the most beautiful heritage of all the nations. And I thought you would call me, My Father, and would not turn from following me.” When the Babylonians sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the temple, the Ark was taken by Nebuchadnezzar and destroyed, so it was never found again. Hence too, its absence in the second temple was a factor to make it inferior in relation to Solomon’s.

**The trajectory of the Ark of the Covenant:** It was in Shiloh that the tent of meeting was set up on the first days after the conquest of the Promised Land (Josh. 18: 1), and this was the main sanctuary of the Israelites during the time of the Judges (Judg. 18: 31). By the time of Eli (the priest) and his sons, the sanctuary had become a well-established structure of centered worship (1 Sam. 1: 3; 9; 1 Sam. 3: 3). After Shiloh, the Ark of the Covenant has changed place several times (**Ebenezer**: 1 Sam. 4: 3; 1 Sam. 5: 1; **Ashdod**: 1 Sam. 5: 1; 6; **Gath**: 1 Sam. 5: 8; **Ekron**: 1 Sam. 5: 10; **Beth Shemesh**: 1 Sam. 6: 12) because it was stolen by the enemies (Philistines), until being transferred to Baalah of Judah [or Baale Judah, in Hebrew], also called Kiriath Jearim or Kiriath Baal (Josh. 18: 14; 1 Sam. 7: 1-2; 1 Chr. 13: 5) to the house of Abinadab and his sons, Eleazar (1 Sam. 7: 1), Uzzah and Ahio (2 Sam. 6: 2-3), where it stayed for 20 years (1 Sam. 7: 2); from there it went to the house of Obed-Edom (probably a Philistine of

Gath, and who lived near Jerusalem – 2 Sam. 6: 10; 1 Chr. 13: 13-14; 1 Chr. 15: 25 – according to “J. D. Douglas – The New Bible Dictionary, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1995”), from where David (as king) took it and brought it to Zion, the city of David, until take its place permanently in the temple in Jerusalem built by Solomon. The people offered sacrifices on the altar of the burnt offering at the high place in Gibeon (1 Chr. 16: 39; 1 Chr. 21: 29; 2 Chr. 1: 3-5), but the ark stayed in Jerusalem, in a tent David built for it: 1 Chr. 15: 1; 1 Chr. 16: 1; 37-39; 2 Chr. 1: 3-5; 1 Kin. 3: 4; 15. When Solomon’s temple was built, the ark ceased to live in tents and began to live permanently in the Holy of Holies, in the innermost place of the temple.

The exiles in Babylon were revived in their sorrow (Ps. 137) with the vision of a new temple (Ezek. 40 to 43), which was given to Ezekiel (572 BC – Ezek. 40: 1). It was never built. The second temple of Ezra (rebuilt in 536 BC) was an attempt to reconstruct what had been built by Solomon.



Plan of the temple of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 40; 41 and 42):

A = the altar

B = building mentioned in Ezekiel 41: 12

G = gatehouses

K = kitchens

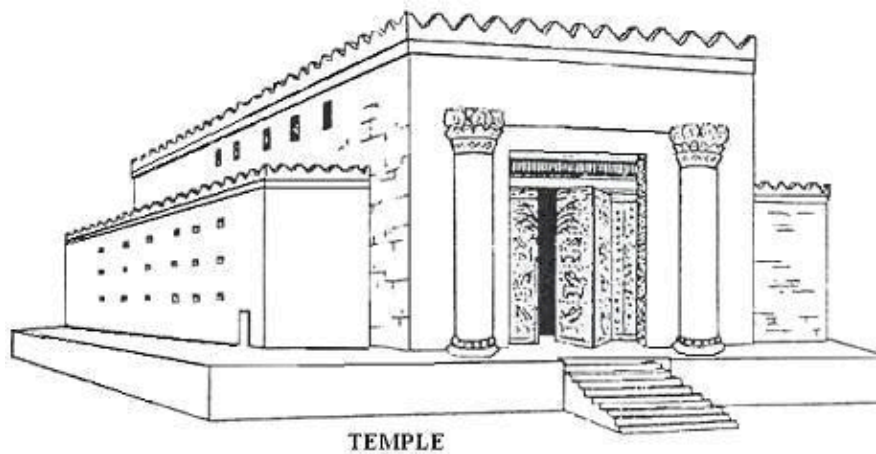
H = Holy place

F = free space; ‘temple courtyard’ (NIV) or ‘the separate place’ (KJV – Ezek. 42: 13); the priests’ chambers had three floors.

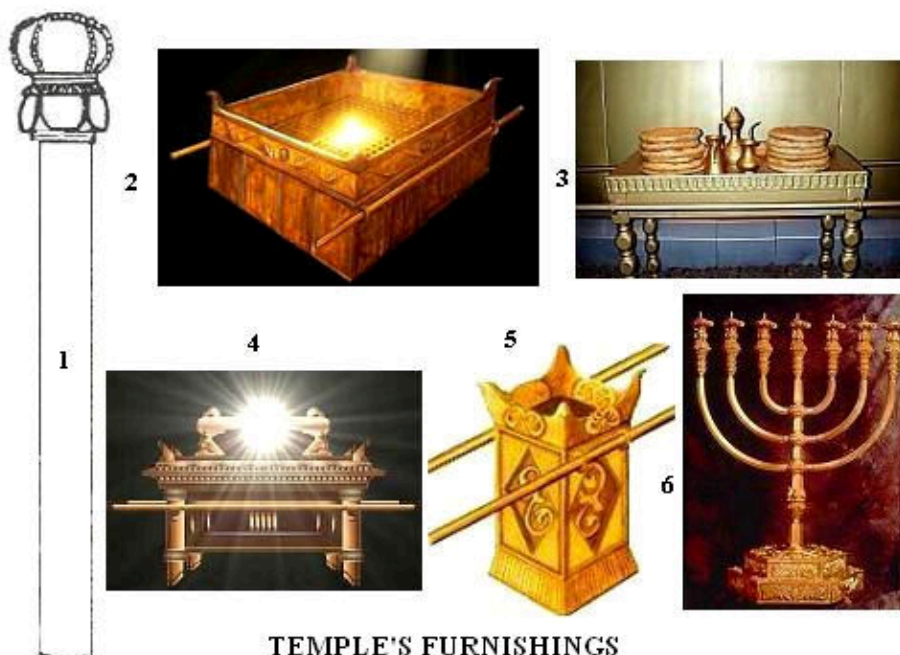
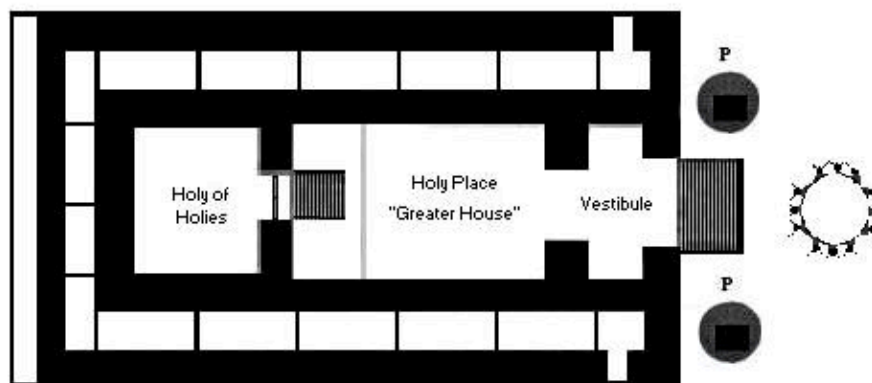
Ezek. 40: 5; 43: 13, cubit (a cubit plus a handbreadth) = 51.8 cm or 20 inches;  
'Measuring reed' (kaneh), for measuring the buildings had 6 cubits (3.11 meters or 3.40 yards).

Let us thank God for giving us Jesus who with His blood has opened the way to the Father and allowed us to know freely, by grace, the secrets of His heart. Honor, glory and praise be to Him for ever and ever.





TEMPLE



TEMPLE'S FURNISHINGS

Solomon's temple: **(1) Pillars:** The pillars were loose and did not support the ceiling of the Portico, but were in front of it as part of the furniture, not the building of the temple. The names may be the first words of the oracle that gave power to the Davidic dynasty: "YHWH will establish (*Jakin – Yakhin – the right – south*) your throne forever" and "in the strength (*Boaz – be'ōz = strength – the left – north*) of YHWH the king shall rejoice" (1 Kings 7: 21; 2 Chr. 3: 15-17 cf. Jer. 52: 21); **(2) altar of burnt offering;** **(3) table** with the holy bread (bread of the Presence); **(4) Ark of the Covenant;** **(5) altar of the incense;** **(6) candlestick of seven lamps (Menorah – the golden lampstand).**

## THE MEANING OF BIBLICAL OILS AND SPICES (Song of Songs 4: 7-15)



The book of ‘Song of songs’ expresses the desire of the human heart to be united to God fully and completely and, of course, the same desire of God’s heart for His Church.

Covered with the blood of Jesus we are perfect, for we become like Him; therefore, by being treated and healed by the Lord, our spiritual and emotional clothes are clean and without blemish: “You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you” (Song 4: 7). In Song 4: 8-10 the lover invites us to climb the heights with Him, to the hills, from where our vision is clearer and from where we can see the land that God gives us and is ready to the conquest of love that manifests and declares itself. From verse 11, some quotations of fragrances and spices are made and that are relevant to the kind of attitude that the Lord expects of His bride, the Church. The Bible uses the word ‘spice’ to refer to the ointments, perfumes, oils and incense of the time.

The anointing is like a shield that covers us completely so that the evil has no power to touch us. The word ‘**anointed**’ and the act of anointing with oil (**Mashach**) refers to the custom of anointing with oil to consecrate and sanctify things or people: Gen. 28: 18; Ex. 28: 41; Ex. 30: 22-33; Judg. 9: 8; 2 Sam. 1: 21; 2 Sam. 2: 4; 1 Kin. 1: 34; 1 Kin. 19: 16; 2 Kin. 9: 1-3; 11-13; Isa. 21: 5. The person or thing that was anointed became holy (Ex. 30: 22-33; 1 Sam. 24: 6; 10). The anointing was an act from God (1 Sam. 10: 1; Ps. 89: 20; Acts 10: 38). The anointing was used metaphorically to mean the bestowal of divine favor (Ps. 23: 5; Ps. 92: 10) or the appointment to a special role of God’s purpose (Ps. 105: 15; Isa. 45: 1). Furthermore, the anointing symbolized empowerment for a service, and is associated with the outpouring of the Spirit of God (1 Sam. 10: 1; 6; 9; 1 Sam. 16: 13; Isa. 61: 1; Zech. 4: 1-14 – The anointing of God upon Joshua and Zerubbabel, the priest and governor of Judah at the time of the rebuilding of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple – Hag. 2: 21). This use is brought to the NT. The use of the oil for anointing the sick (Jam. 5: 14) is understood in the same way, as something that points to the Holy Spirit, the giver of life. In the NT we can see the use of oil or the act of anointing in relation to five situations:

1) Symbolizing the Holy Spirit bringing the divine empowerment on someone (Lk. 4: 18; Acts 10: 38; 2 Cor. 1: 21; Heb. 1: 9; 1 Jn. 2: 20; 27).

2) As an ointment, used as medicine to heal wounds (Lk. 10: 34 – the parable of the Good Samaritan; Rev. 3: 18 – the church in Laodicea).

3) As a custom of anointing the dead with perfumes and spices (Mk. 14: 8, compare Jn. 19: 39-40; Lk. 23: 56, Lk. 24: 1; Mk. 16: 1).

4) As a sign of hospitality, associated with the washing of the feet and the kiss (Lk. 7: 46, Jn. 11: 2; Jn. 12: 3).

5) To the sick (Mk. 6: 13; Jam. 5: 14)

The anointing oil represents the Holy Spirit (Ruach haKodesh) or the Spirit of God (Ruach Elohim). **Mashach** gives origin to **Mashiach** (māshiyach, in Hebrew, or meshīhā, in Aramaic), which means ‘anointed’, like the kings, judges, prophets and priests in the OT. It also came to be used for Messiah, משיח, the Anointed One (Greek:

Christ, Christòs, Χριστός), the awaited savior or deliverer of Israel, a descendant of King David that will rebuild the nation, bringing peace. ‘Anointed’ is found, at least, sixteen times in the Old Testament, being used the words *mâshiyach* or *meshiycho*: Lev 4: 3; Lev 4: 5; Lev 4: 16; Lev 6: 15; 1 Sam 2: 10; 1 Sam 24: 6; 10; 2 Sam 1: 21; 2 Sam 22: 51; Ps 2: 2; Ps 18: 50; Isa 45: 1; Ezek 28: 14; Zech 4: 14; Dan 9: 25-26 – when an angel announces to the prophet Daniel that the Messiah would come and be killed 62 prophetic weeks after the rebuilding of Jerusalem, before the city and the temple being destroyed again (what happened in 70 AD by the Romans). In Ps 105: 15 and 1 Chr. 16: 22 (“Do not touch my anointed ones; do my prophets no harm”), the expression ‘my anointed ones’, in Hebrew, is used as equivalent to ‘my prophets.’ In the NT the Greek word Μεσσίας (Messiah) is written only two times: in Jn. 1: 41 and Jn. 4: 25. Christòs is the adjective, while the verb is *chriō* – to anoint. **Ruach** means ‘spirit’, ‘wind.’ **‘Holy’** or **‘Saint’** (Hagios, in Greek) means: sacred, pure, blameless, consecrated, set apart, worthy of being honored, like God, to have the inmost nature of God, be separated and reserved to God and for His service. So, when we are performing a spiritual liberation or healing in someone, first we drive out the demons and then we anoint the person. Interestingly, God tells us, “Be holy because I am holy.” Just as He is clear and gives us security because He is faithful to what He says, He wants us to be like Him, so that others can see Him through us.

#### **Songs 4: 11-16:**

<sup>11</sup> Your lips distill nectar, my bride; honey and milk are under your tongue; the scent of your garments is like the scent of Lebanon.

<sup>12</sup> A garden locked is my sister, my bride, a garden locked, a fountain sealed.

<sup>13</sup> Your channel [NIV: your plants] is an orchard of pomegranates with all choicest fruits, henna with nard,

<sup>14</sup> nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes, with all chief spices—

<sup>15</sup> a garden fountain, a well of living water, and flowing streams from Lebanon.

<sup>16</sup> Awake, O north wind, and come, O south wind! Blow upon my garden that its fragrance may be wafted abroad. Let my beloved come to his garden, and eat its choicest fruits.

In verse 11 the lover says, “Your lips distill nectar, my bride; **honey** and **milk** are under your tongue; the scent of your garments is like the scent of Lebanon.” **Honey** speaks of healing and love, sweetness. It means that in our tongue the Lord expects word of healing and love to raise who is wounded and fallen. **Milk** speaks of food and abundance. Likewise, the word of God in our mouth should be abundant food for the hungry. Our spiritual clothes should have the fragrance of the cedars and spices of Lebanon. It is famous because of its covering of dense forest. To the south of the mountains there are cultivation of gardens, olive groves, vineyards and orchards of fruit (mulberries, figs, apples, apricots, walnuts) and small fields of wheat. The forest vegetation is of myrtle, conifers and huge cedars; therefore, Lebanon is a symbol of fertility and of taking benefit and enjoyment of life and of a plantation, of taking advantage of the fruit. The fragrance of the dresses of the beloved is presented to the lover as the smell of the forests and of the fruit of the orchards. This way, our garments must show the joy, the scent of Jesus and God’s prosperity wherever we go.

In verse 13 the lover speaks that our plants, that is, what sprouts in our lives should be like an orchard of pomegranates. The **pomegranate** is a very well-known and popular fruit in the East and it becomes syrup, juice and astringent remedy. This means that our attitudes and our words should serve as a remedy for diseased hearts.

**Henna** is used as a cosmetic to dye nails and hair; it has branches covered with spines that produce clusters of whitish and fragrant flowers at the ends, so our words and our life testimony must beautify the lives of everyone.

**Nard** (scientific name: *Nardostachys jatamansi*) spiritually means God's presence with us every day and worship to the Lord. It is a perennial plant of the valerian family, but endowed with roots even more fragrant. It is native to northern India, where even today is used to perfume the hair. In biblical times the nard, besides expensive, was imported in sealed jars of alabaster, which were only opened on special occasions.

**Saffron** is therapeutic, besides of dyeing food. As therapy it is antispasmodic, that is, it takes away the cramps and spasms. The Egyptians used saffron to color the shrouds of mummies. For us, it means that the word of God in our mouth takes away the pain and paints the lives of those who are 'blue' and have no reason to exist.

**Calamus** (Greek, *Kalamos*, scientific name: *Acorus calamus*) means cane, slender reed. It is a root known as Sweet Flag. It only exudes perfume when the root is broken. It was of Calamus (reed) the basket of Moses, when he was placed as a baby in the river Nile. It represents the price that Jesus paid for our redemption, reverence to the Lord, return to the roots; renewal of alliances, humility, to depend on the Lord as children that need to grow and be taught; also that from time to time, we need to renew our covenant of loyalty and commitment with Him. The anointing of calamus also means that we must be 'broken' by God, be worked by Him in our interior so that His essence can be exuded through us. It is part of the holy anointing oil of the priests.

**Cinnamon** is the bark of a trunk that is restored every season. It's the same family as the laurel tree and cassia. It means fear of God, ransom, restoration of personal things and not to make again the same mistakes of the past. The cinnamon is like a bush, coming from the Far East. As it is macerated (peel and seeds) into powder, it is a prophetic picture of the acceptance of Jesus Christ in His death and cross. It represents our approach to Jesus in humility, stripping us of our flesh, making us more like Him, as well as peace and love at home. **Cassia**, along with **aloe** and **myrrh** (Ps. 45: 7-8), composes the oil of joy. In this verse of Song of Songs (Song 4: 14) the bible is speaking of a plant other than 'aloe vera', one of the 500 species of aloe. The Hebrew word is 'ahaliym (Strong #174; or (feminine) ahalowth (only used thus in the plural). This is a word of foreign origin; aloe wood (i.e. sticks): tree of lign-aloes, also known as agarwood or gharuwood (which belongs to the various species of *Aquilaria*, family Thymelaceae) with a very dense, dark and fragrant resinous wood native to China, India and Southeast Asia. Lign-aloes (Agarwood or Gharuwood) is used in incense, perfume and small carvings. The resin is formed when the tree is infected with a type of mould called 'Phialophora parasitica' and is much appreciated in Arabic-middle eastern culture due to its fragrance. There are 70 species of *Aquilaria*. **Aloe** should have at least thirty years of age to produce oil, and to be extracted, its trunk needs to be bruised or torn. It means 'to hurt oneself' as well as joy and position of glory. Therefore, to win the anointing of joy, first we must strip ourselves of the ego and be hurt by the hands of the Lord in order to remove from us what it's not useful anymore, and extracting His precious oil from within us, that is, the best we have.

**Cassia** means potential, nobility. The essence of cassia, that is also part of the holy anointing oil of the priests, is prepared with the bark of a tree called **Cinnamomum cassia**, of the same family of cinnamon, used for cooking. *Cinnamomum cassia* is one of the species of the genus *Cinnamomum*, of the family of Lauraceae, a small plant, similar to a shrub and that reaches up to ten or fifteen meters high. It has perennial leaves of reddish color when young, oblong to lanceolate (as shaped like a lance), somewhat pointed at the end and about ten to fifteen centimeters long. The bark is

grayish outwardly, and brown in the interior. Its odor is similar to the cinnamon we usually use in cooking. The flowers are white and small. The fruit are small, fleshy, about one centimeter long, purple in color when ripe. *Cinnamomum cassia* is known by the names of aromatic cinnamon (odoriferous cinnamon), Chinese cinnamon, Chinese cassia or, simply, cassia. The *Cinnamomum cassia* species originates in Southeast China and Indochina, but is now widely cultivated in Southeast Asia (India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam). In ancient Hebrew (the language of the Semite merchants), it was called qetsiiah or qesī `āh or else, qtsiy`ah (קצייעה). In ancient Greek it was called kasia (κασία). Semitic merchants introduced the product into the Middle East, bringing it from China. The cassia for merchandise is the bark of the tree. Ezek. 27: 19 speaks of this spice as part of the trade of Tire, where it is written in Hebrew the word 'qiddah' – Strong # 6916, meaning cassia bark (as in shriveled rolls). The spice is obtained from the removal of the bark from the tree, and the inner bark is scraped, dried and ground. The buttons are also used as spice.

From the bark (which is called **cassia lignea**) the essence of the oil of the holy anointing mentioned in Ex. 30: 24 (qiddah – Strong #6916) was extracted. Cassia lignea is also known by other names like *Cinnamomum cassiae cortex*, *cassiae cortex*. In Ps. 45: 8, the word cassia, in Hebrew, is written as qtsiy`ah – Strong #6916: cassia (as peeled), in reference to Cassia lignea, the cortex of *Cinnamomum cassia*. The word 'cassia' appears three times in the OT (Ex. 30: 24, Ps. 45: 8; Ezek. 27: 19), unlike the word 'acacia' (Shittah – Strong #7848), which appears 28 times, often related to the Tabernacle: Ex. 25: 5; 10; 13; 23; 28; Ex. 26: 15; 26; 32; 37; Ex. 27: 1; 6; Ex. 30: 1; 5; Ex. 35: 7; 24; Ex. 36: 20; 31; 36; Ex. 37: 1; 4; 10; 15; 25; 28; Ex 38: 1; 6; Deut. 10: 3; Isa. 41: 19.

**Myrrh** means deliverance, healing, purification, life changing, as was also used to anoint the royal robes of marriage. It was used to prepare Esther for six months, and after this, more six months with other ointments and perfumes to take her to King Ahasuerus (Xerxes, Est. 2: 12-13). Myrrh is a shrub that grows in desert regions, especially in Africa (native to Somalia and eastern parts of Ethiopia) and the Middle East. It is also the name given to the oily resin of reddish-brown color obtained from the dried sap of this tree (*Commiphora myrrha* or *Balsamodendron myrrha*). The word originates from the Hebrew, *maror* or *murr*, which means 'bitter', so it's bitter and often used in the bible as a synonym for gall or 'poison.' It has the power to numb and anaesthetize and take away the pain, so it was offered to Jesus on the cross (Matt. 27: 34 – 'wine mixed with gal'; Mk. 15: 23 – 'wine mixed with myrrh'). In Prov. 31: 6-7 it is written, "Give strong drink (*shekhār*) to one who is perishing, and wine to those in bitter distress; let them drink and forget their poverty, and remember their misery no more." The strong drink mentioned here refers to the wine of high alcohol content (*shekhār*) mixed with myrrh given by Jewish women to the sentenced to cross so that they could withstand the punishment and suffering. This text about the advice of King Lemuel's mother, and which in v.4 talks about the duty of a king to abstain from wine and strong drinks, as it would be dangerous for his ability to judge, as well as it would apply to any person, for the use of these drinks would only be a temporary escape from the problems of life, in verses 6 and 7 we can see that their use would be permitted in the case of the dying (perhaps to relieve them of intense pain – "to one who is perishing" – NRSV; or "to those who are perishing" – NIV) and to cheer the souls of those who were very depressed and discouraged ("to those in bitter distress" – NRSV; "to those who are in anguish" – NIV), so that they would not be so distressed by their afflictions. Therefore, it would not be surprising that these drinks were mixed with myrrh so that they could withstand the pain of crucifixion. In Ps. 69: 21, prophetic psalm of David, there is



another reference to the myrrh: “They gave me poison [NIV, gall] for food (Matt. 27: 34; Mk. 15: 23), and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink (Jn. 19: 28-30).” The word Shekhār (‘strong drink’) appears 23 times in the OT and refers more often to other fermented beverages, perhaps made from palm fruit juice, pomegranate, apple, or date, or else, fermented drink of barley. However, we cannot exclude the beverage with high alcohol content forbidden to the priests in the OT (Lev. 10: 9 – wine and strong drink) and Nazirites, and often used by the wicked to get drunk.

Myrrh, Calamus, Cassia, Cinnamon and olive oil (anointing and God’s provision for a purpose) are part of **the holy anointing oil** with which only the priests were anointed (Ex. 30: 22-33). This means that the Lord has anointed us with joy, love, nobility, purpose and humility, fear of the Lord and redemption, deliverance and healing so that we may be balm and soothe the pains of the afflicted and the hopeless, lifting them to a new level.

In Song 4: 15 the poet says: “[You are – NIV] a garden fountain, a well of living water, and flowing streams from Lebanon.” The Church is the fountain of life, carrying the renewing waters of the Spirit, a garden locked, a fountain sealed (v.12), where no impurity enters only the holiness of God, through which the Spirit works in us.

**Balsam** was a product of Gilead exported to Egypt (Gen. 37: 25; Gen. 43: 11) and Tyre (Ezek. 27: 17). It is known by its curative properties (Jer. 46: 11; Jer. 8: 22; Jer. 51: 8) and often used as a cosmetic, also used to symbolize deliverance from national disasters. It was probably a gum or aromatic spice, but the original meaning of the word is unclear and cannot currently be identified with any plant in Gilead, despite the claims made in favor of the product of zaqqii (*Balanites aegyptiaca*) and of mastich (Genesis 37: 25), product of *Pistacia lentiscus*, used for healing purposes. In general sense, balsam is a symbol of healing of the soul, strength, freshness, relief, calm, peace and balance. Gilead was the land occupied by the tribe of Gad, Reuben and the half tribe of Manasseh (Num. 32: 33-42; Deut. 3: 12-13). It is a mountainous region covered with forests. To the south there is a plateau appropriate to the raising of cattle and flocks of sheep and goats. It served as refuge for fugitives (Jacob and David). The meaning of Gilead is ‘thorny’, perhaps because it is a hill region, but it is a symbol of divine providence supplying with solace, healing and relief something that is generated in a ‘thorny’ situation. In other words, along with the temptation and suffering, God gives deliverance and balm (1 Cor. 10: 13).

As you can see the biblical essences reported above are only a physical symbol of the true anointing poured upon us by the Holy Spirit, as our spiritual growth takes place. In other words, perfumes mustn’t be seen as a means to conquer this or that, but a symbol of what we should ask the Lord as spiritual gifts and what He can make flow from our hands when He wants to use us for a particular purpose. The word of God is sovereign. A priori, the anointing with oil, as described in the NT seems to be restricted to its use in healing the sick, and as an outward symbol of the anointing that God Himself poured upon a child of His, separating him to a ministry. When you are not sure if the Lord wants the oil, it is better not to use it.

I hope you enjoyed the subject and have received the anointing of the Spirit, making you a winner in any situation. Now, let it flow freely.

## Illustrations



**Honey**



**Milk**



**Calamus**



**Barks of Calamus**



**Pomegranate fruit**



**Olive tree trunk**



**Olive tree**



**Olive oil**



**Saffron (powder)**



**Saffron (plant)**



**Aloe**



**Bark of Aloe's trunk**



**Cinnamon**



**Trunk of cinnamon**



**Cinnamon sticks**



**Cinnamon**



**Henna**



**Henna**



**Cassia**  
(*Cinnamomum cassia*)



**Cassia**



**Cassia**  
(*Cinnamomum cassia*)



**Nard**



**Myrrh (shrub)**



**Myrrh (resin)**



The balsam of Gilead was probably a gum or resin, such as propolis, with healing properties on the digestive system (anti-worm remedy and against jaundice) and as an antibiotic. We cannot yet prove its relationship with the resins of *Pistacia lenticus* or *Balanites aegyptiaca* (common trees in the Middle East with healing properties).



## NEHEMIAH



Nehemiah is known as the rebuilder of the walls of Jerusalem. The author of the book of Nehemiah may be Ezra, who wrote it along with the book of Ezra about 430 BC. In the original Hebrew Bible, Ezra and Nehemiah compose a single book. It is a book that talks about restoration: restoration of our 'walls', our personalities, emotional balance, relationships; in short, of what has already been lost in the soul. Nehemiah means 'God comforts' or 'God consoles.' Through this book, God calls us to build our souls and our lives where our walls have been destroyed.

The Babylonians conquered Judah in 586 BC. Persia, in turn, conquered Babylon (539 BC) and then allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem. Under the leadership of Joshua and Zerubbabel they had rebuilt the temple (520-516 BC). Ezra the priest came back from Babylon in 458 BC to minister in the new temple, but the city walls remained in ruins. In 445 BC the challenges of rebuilding the homeland had lowered their morale, so Nehemiah came to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

Susa was the winter capital of the Persian Empire, located about two hundred and forty kilometers (149 miles) to the north of the Persian Gulf, where now is the border between Iran and Iraq. Susa was to the southwest of Baghdad and was far from Jerusalem about one thousand miles. It was also the setting of the story of Esther. The month of Kislev corresponds to November-December in the Christian calendar.

Nehemiah was the cupbearer of King Artaxerxes, which corresponds today to the intelligence department that countries have to protect their presidents, that is, he tasted the food and drink served to the king. He cried when he heard the news about the destroyed walls and the burned gates, so he prayed and fasted for four months (the month of Nisan described in Neh. 2: 1 corresponds to March-April in the Christian calendar), asked God's direction and found grace in the eyes of the king to return to his land and rebuild. Likewise, when the Spirit shows us our soul and life destroyed we cry, pray, ask God's guidance and we get ready to rebuild our doors and our walls. When we talk of walls, we are biblically talking about protection of our spirit and our soul. Gates and doors mean power and authority, limit to the advance of the enemy, as column (that we see in other biblical texts) means a life of prayer, something that brings support and stability to our life. The temple is our spirit, and our soul is Jerusalem, the city that needs to be rebuilt. Tower means vigilance, place of communion with God, who warns us of attacks and strategies.

Nehemiah obeyed some basic principles to rebuild, and that's what we will study in more details now, for they are principles to be obeyed to carry out our inner reconstruction:

1) **He humbled himself before God and confessed his sins and the sins of the people.** The sins were many, but the most serious of all was the apathy towards the commandments, that is, the people disobeyed the word of God and fell into idolatry, the reason why God delivered them into hands of the enemy. We read this in Neh. 1: 5-11.

So it is with our life. When we look at our destroyed soul and decide to rebuild it, we must first recognize our mistake, ask God's forgiveness for our sins that opened gaps to the enemy, and ask and release God's forgiveness for people who participated somehow in this destruction.

2) **He asked what he needed to make his travel and his work of reconstruction** with wisdom and certainty, for he was instructed by God (Neh. 2: 5-8). Nehemiah asked the Persian king what he needed for the work he had ahead of him, because he was under his dominion. We, however, will not ask permission to the enemy. After the Holy Spirit makes us assess our situation clearly, He Himself gives us wisdom to enter the presence of God and ask Him what we need to perform our work. We can ask exactly what we want.

3) **He declared the king's letter to the governors, releasing the work**, that is, after the king had given him letters, he only had to deliver them to the governors of the provinces as a royal order that could not be revoked (Neh. 2: 9). Likewise it is with us. When God allows us to reconstruct, we begin to prophesy His word so that it can be fulfilled. It goes ahead of us, preparing the way for us in order to execute His will in the natural world. It is obvious that in prophesying our victory, the enemy will know. Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the Ammonite, heard about and opposed. Sanballat could be the governor of Samaria, a region just to the north of Jerusalem. Some scrolls found says that Sanballat was governor of Samaria in 407 BC, which makes us think that around 445 or 443 BC when Nehemiah came to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, he aspired to this post of government, not only over Samaria but also over Judea. In Neh. 2: 10; 19 and Neh. 13: 28 he is called the Horonite, which probably denotes that he had come from Beth-horon [or Beth Horon], about twenty-nine kilometers northwest of Jerusalem, in the land of Ephraim, after, Samaria (cf. Josh. 10: 10). Tobiah, possibly, was governor (the bible says official – Neh. 2: 10) of Ammon, the region to the east of Jerusalem, across the River Jordan, and friend and business partner of Sanballat. Although under Persian yoke, these men had become rich and powerful, exercising control over Jerusalem and its inhabitants. It is probable that they did not appreciate the entry of anyone in their territory. Sanballat is a name is of Babylonian origin, Sinuballit, that is, 'Sîn (the moon-god) gave life.' Some scholars say that Sanballat (in Hebrew) means **disguised hatred, force, violence**. Tobiah means **YHWH is God, God is good**. Figuratively, he represents accommodation, that is, he makes us feel good the situation that we are in. Later in the text, we'll find another character named Geshem, the Arab. Geshem means **rain**, and biblically speaking, rain is the presence of the Spirit in us, answer of prayer from heaven. Geshem prevents us from receiving God's answers and tries to extinguish the fire of the Holy Spirit. These three characters symbolize demons that are sent to thwart the project of reconstruction in our lives. The enemy sends violence to destroy what we reconstructed, makes us feel accommodated with our situation of failure, defeat and destruction, inducing us to think it's best to leave everything the way it is, and tries to prevent the arrival of God's answer to our prayers, in order to extinguish the fire of the Spirit in us. We also should not forget our own flesh, whose limiting thoughts are also an impediment, trying to thwart the plans of God, i.e., not everything is demon. Our human imperfection also acts.

4) **He did not talk to anyone before inspecting the damage** (Neh. 2: 11-16). This may be due to two factors. With the walls destroyed, Jerusalem was inhabited by non-Jews; therefore it suffered political intrigues, and spies could sell secret information to the enemies of Israel. In second place, he did not want those Jews, who were already weakened and discouraged, ceased to believe in him and in God's plan to rebuild. This means that after assessing our situation and decide to rebuild, we must review it alone

and decide if we'll ask for help or not or if we'll ask it to those around us, that is, if those around us are people of faith and willingness to help us or are disheartened and blabbermouth, for they can 'sell us' to the enemy.

5) **Only after assessing the destruction, he called for help to those who wanted to build with him** (Neh. 2: 17-18). We can notice that when asking for help, Nehemiah had to give them a word of encouragement, strength and faith in God. One of the arguments used by Nehemiah and that weighed heavily in their decision was the shame by which they were passing, for the City of David was still a point of pride for the Jews, and the way it was, it shamed them as nation before the people around. So it is with us. The enemy destroyed what should be a matter of pride for us, bringing shame on us before the people. Therefore, those who are on our side must see the glory of God on this situation, rebuilding what seemed impossible and unsolvable. The strong and faithful will be by our side.

6) **He paid no attention to the mockers** (Neh. 2: 19-20). Nehemiah responded the mockery and the provocations, putting God ahead of everything, because what he proposed to do seemed impossible to human eyes. So we should put God ahead of our project and not to pay attention to those who say that what we intend to do is very difficult, or those who have the carnal vision of things and conform to human weakness, with the natural impossibilities, with limitations or destruction.

7) **He started to work** (Neh. 3: 1-32). Nehemiah separated the people into groups to rebuild every part of the walls. It seems that the northern and western parts of the wall only needed repairs. The eastern wall, however, probably was completely redone. But if we look at the map of the city of Jerusalem from the time of Nehemiah (at the end of the text) and compare it with the time of the monarchy, we can see that the western wall has been expanded. **Measures of the walls:** The walls, with a base of about eight feet thick, were rudimentarily built with whole stones and gravel, explaining why they were mocked. Maybe the walls had a height of nineteen to twenty-nine feet, with almost two and half miles long, in a circle of two hundred and twenty-six square miles. The wall was rebuilt in fifty-two days (Neh. 6: 15 – Elul, 6<sup>th</sup> month, August-September), therefore, it must have started in the month of Tammuz (4<sup>th</sup> month, June-July). Here, I see an interesting parallel with our Christian life. The North, in the bible, means the throne of God, what guides our lives, His Word and His abundant life for us. The South means our own lives, our humanity and imperfection in comparison with the majesty and fullness of God. The West means the material world, the natural things, the ancient; and the East, the spiritual world, the spiritual things. If we notice what happens to us, most of the destruction that occurs in our lives starts with the action of demons and with our spiritual weakness, for we were usually born with no sense of spiritual realities and often we grew wrongly seeking God's presence through idolatry. This weakens us, because it takes us out of the center and the goal of our true worship that must be Jesus. Therefore, we must begin our rebuilding by our right spiritual life before God, with the exact vision of the spiritual realities and the true weapons to be used; just thus we'll have victory. Another attitude we must have is that of Nehemiah: he started the work soon and did not arrange excuses to delay the reconstruction; it is to put immediately into practice what God has already told us, without procrastination.

8) **He watched and worked at the same time** (Neh. 4: 1-23), with courage, strength and perseverance; even under threat, they didn't leave the work for anything. As the wall was rebuilt in fifty-two days, probably they did not leave it to worry about other chores. With one hand they held the shovel; with the other, the sword and the spear, clothed in the armor (in fact, they worked in alternation; Neh. 4: 16). This means to keep praying, prophesying, but acting in a practical way. It is interesting that

Nehemiah continued encouraging the people, reminding them of the Lord and their families, because these were the real incentives to continue the work. In verse 20 he makes mention of the trumpet so that the people helped each other when necessary. This means that we should ask for support of prayer when necessary so that we have strength to continue the work. In verse 23 he makes another warning: not to take out the clothes, that is, not to leave the protection of the armor of God (Eph. 6: 10-20).

9) **He did not surrender to the enemy or took advantage of those who helped him** (Neh. 5: 1-19). God expected His people to help the poor by giving them interest-free loans. Sometimes, the ancient people without properties to mortgage were forced to use family members as pledge for loans. If the loan was not paid off, the creditor earned the promised person as a slave for the time necessary to pay the debt. This type of slavery was not necessarily cruel and these slaves were not necessarily taken away from their homes, but had to serve the new masters. So, Nehemiah rebuked the nobles and officials and made them swear before the priests that they would release loans for the sustenance of the people, without they had to be sold again to peoples from other lands. Nehemiah made them restitute the possessions to each of their people without asking anything in return. He, of his own money, sustained those who helped him, so he set the example. This means that the leader should fear God and give of himself, not to take advantage of the weak or of his leadership position. When we rebuild, we must receive the help that each one can give us, without asking for more than they have to give.

10) **He asked discernment from God not to fall into the snares of the enemy**, and he didn't let be distracted by futile and unimportant things that were put in his way so that he abandoned the work (Neh. 6: 1-14). Nehemiah's foes did everything to get him out of his place and his project: they called him for a chat; they used false accusations and even cunning to incur the wrath of the Lord. He knew he was not a priest and therefore could not freely enter the temple. Through spiritual insight, he realized it was a plot and that was not God who sent Shemaiah (a false prophet). The same way with us, we must resist the provocations of the enemy and clothe us with the Holy Spirit to have spiritual discernment and not to fall into snares.

11) **He kept watchfulness to prevent theft and invasion until God filled the place fully** (Neh. 7: 1-14). We must keep guards to prevent theft and invasion until God fill us fully, that is, until we are restored. He kept the gatekeepers, the singers and the Levites. Likewise, we must put the angels of God guarding our walls and our gates, that is, keeping His protection around us; we must continue taking care of what we built (the Levites took care of the House of the Lord in every way) through our prayer and reading of the Word, and keep the praise in our lips to strengthen our soul and our spirit. Nehemiah kept the singers, for the songs of praise maintained the people strong.

12) **He made it clear that the glory of the work was God's** (Neh. 6: 16). Nehemiah recognized that by God's intervention is that he completed the work; therefore, it is for His help and intervention that we manage to rebuild. The glory is all His, for it becomes clear to us that humanly speaking we are unable to do anything that was done.

13) **After rebuilding, he lived as a new creature** (Neh. 8 and 9). Nehemiah called Ezra the priest and scribe to read to the people the Lord's law and thus remind them of the divine precepts that they had forgotten in captivity; also to teach those who were born in a foreign land what they have never heard or knew of the true God and the history of Israel. Hearing everything, they cried and repented of their sins and the sins of their forefathers and began to rejoice. Likewise with us. After our city was rebuilt, we must persevere in the directions and the commandments of the Lord; we must live as a new creature, forgiven and healed. From now on, we begin to live a life of joy, because



the direction of God does not punish us, but protects us. The Feast of Tabernacles reminded the inhabitants of the Promised Land of what it meant to live in the desert. In captivity, however, Jews could not celebrate the joy of living in their own land. Now they had returned home, they could celebrate once again. So, celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles means to remember with gratitude the wonders that God has done for us and from where He brought us out.

14) **He dedicated the work to the Lord and kept the praise** (Neh. 12: 27-47). Praising the Lord is a way to maintain our walls strong, the same way Nehemiah kept the Levites in their places.

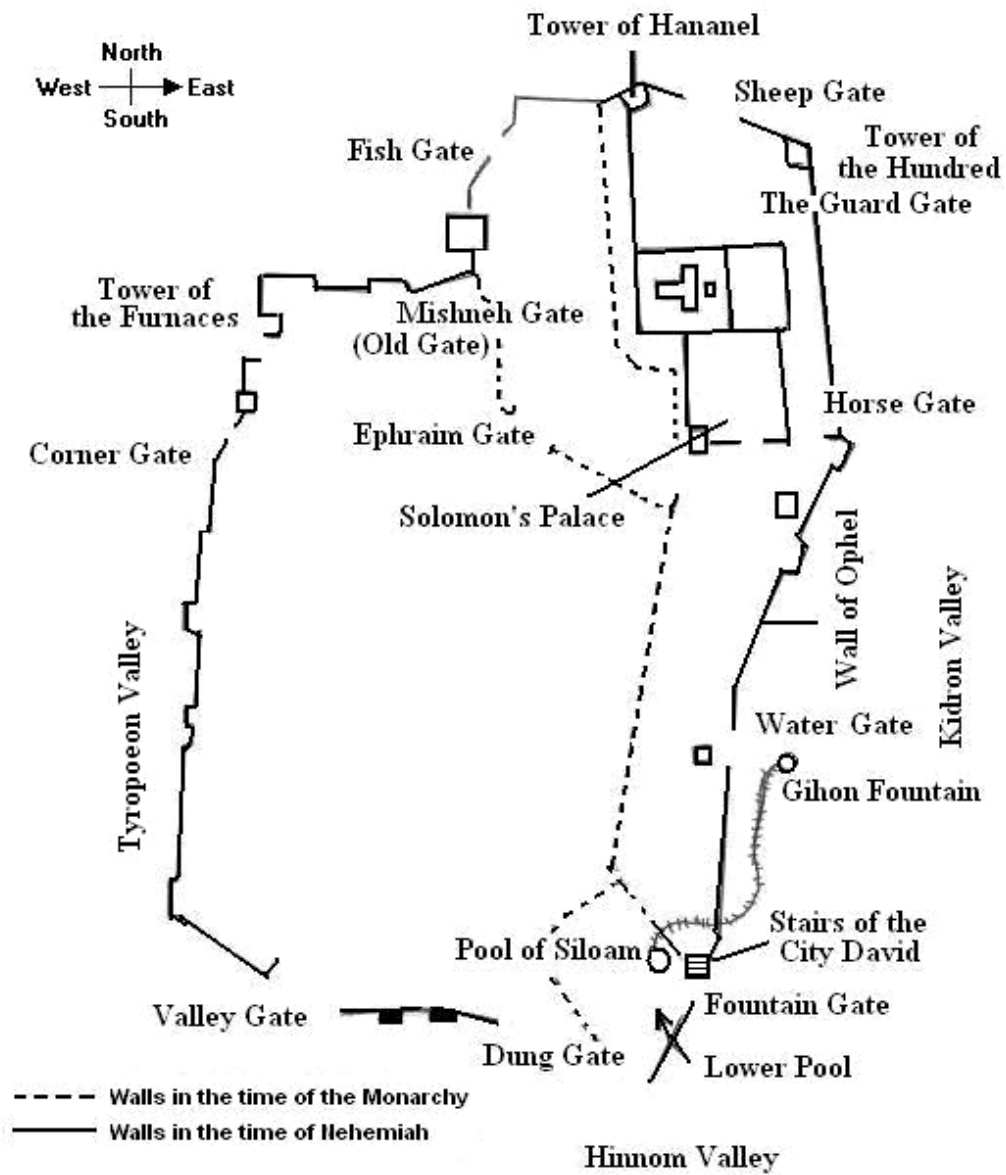
15) **He left the filth outside and kept inside only what was holy** (Neh. 13: 1-3). The spirit of the world with idolatry and works of the flesh no longer enter 'Jerusalem.' Only what is holy can enter, as well as who is committed to God. Israel separated from the nation all those of foreign descent. This means: what once seemed a curse, God turned into a blessing in our lives.

16) **He no longer allowed the self-indulgence and stagnation take hold of his spirit in relation to the work of God** (Neh. 13: 4-9). Nehemiah expelled Tobiah from the temple, that is, he didn't let anything stay hidden inside the House of God to serve later as a snare. Likewise, after rebuilt we must ask the Holy Spirit to inspect our interior so that the accommodation does not come upon us. Indeed, we need to rest to regain our strength, but keeping firm in us the thought that we now have a new life and a new reason to exist, which it is to do the work of the Lord, and self-indulgence can no longer be part in this project.

17) **He did not bear yoke or burden, he didn't do God's work, but rested in Him** (Neh. 13: 15-22). Nehemiah restored the observance of the Sabbath so that the people learned to rest in the Lord in what only He can do, and no longer rely on their own strength to do things. Likewise, we do not serve the enemy anymore, therefore our work for the Lord should be without yoke or burden, with joy and own willingness, resting in the direction of the Holy Spirit in us.

18) **Not to make agreement with what is impure** (Neh. 13: 23-31). Nehemiah condemned mixed marriage as it was of God's will for His people, not to happen as it was in the past. God expects us to flee of the middle ground in our relationships with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6: 14-18), but wants us to preserve the spiritual integrity and holiness, entering in contact with the 'foreigners' in order to lead them to the Savior. Nehemiah also asks God to remember him, what means that He may continue paying attention and listening to him in his prayers. 'To remember' in Hebrew, in the Old Testament, means 'to pay attention.' Nehemiah also mentioned the supplies of wood at appointed times, that is, we must keep the flame of the Spirit burning in us.

What about you? Do you want to rebuild what was destroyed in your life? Ask for strength to the Lord and put your hands to work.



JERUSALEM IN THE TIME OF NEHEMIAH

## THE HERITAGE OF THE BRIDE

(Ezek. 16: 1-14)



“The word of the Lord came to me: Mortal, make known to Jerusalem her abominations, and say, thus says the Lord God to Jerusalem: Your origin and your birth were in the land of the Canaanites; your father was an Amorite, and your mother a Hittite. As for your birth, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water to cleanse you, nor rubbed with salt, nor wrapped in cloths. No eye pitied you, to do any of these things for you out of compassion for you; but you were thrown out in the open field, for you were abhorred on the day you were born. I passed by you, and saw you flailing about in your blood. As you lay in your blood, I said to you, ‘Live! And grow up like a plant of the field’. You grew up and became tall and arrived at full womanhood; your breasts were formed, and your hair had grown; yet you were naked and bare. I passed by you again and looked on you; you were at the age for love. I spread the edge of my cloak over you, and covered your nakedness: I pledged myself to you and entered into a covenant with you, says the Lord God, and you became mine. Then I bathed you with water and washed off the blood from you, and anointed you with oil. I clothed you with embroidered cloth and with sandals of fine leather; I bound you in fine linen and covered you with rich fabric [NIV, costly garments]. I adorned you with ornaments [NIV, jewelry]: I put bracelets on your arms, a chain [NIV, necklace] on your neck, a ring on your nose, earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown upon your head. You were adorned with gold and silver, while your clothing was of fine linen, rich fabric, and embroidered cloth. You had choice flour and honey and oil for food. You grew exceedingly beautiful, fit to be a queen. Your fame spread among the nations on account of your beauty, for it was perfect because of my splendor that I had bestowed on you, says the Lord God.”

Although this text (Ezek. 16: 1-63) speaks of the abominations and infidelity of Jerusalem, it begins with a declaration of love of God to His people, His Bride (v. 1-14). In a figurative way the Lord explains what He did with us when He separated us to Him through Jesus.

The Lord reminds that the nation of Israel came from the land of the Canaanites, which was given to Abraham (Gen. 12: 5), as well as other people living there, like the Hittites and the Amorites. The Canaanites were the first inhabitants of the Promised Land before Israel arrive. They lived in the region near the Great Sea (Mediterranean Sea) to the north, so were also called Syro-Phoenicians. In the times of the Old Testament, Phoenicia was called Canaan (Hebr.: Kena'an), and its inhabitants, **Canaanites** (Hebr.: Kna'aniy; Strong #3669), meaning ‘merchants’, ‘traders.’ And just as a merchant takes care of his goods so that they are not stolen and that he does not have financial loss on them, we can extend its meaning to ‘zealous.’ In Greek, Phoenicia is called Phoinikē, Φοινίκη, ‘land of the palm trees.’ **Hittite** (Hebr.: Chitti; Strong #2850) means ‘descendant of Heth’; and Heth means ‘fear, terror.’ We can say,

therefore, that Hittite means ‘He who is not afraid to show who he is.’ **Amorite** (Hebr.: Emori; Strong #567) is a word derived from a primitive root that means prominence; consequently, mountaineer, mountainous, mountain dweller; symbolically, visionary.

What the Lord means here is that what He wished for His bride was in the enemy’s hand before giving that land to the chosen people. Instead of characteristics and blessings belonging to the wicked, they should be ours. It’s we that should be zealous of the word and the things of God and take care of them like seeds planted within us; it’s we that should think ‘high’ as the inhabitants of the mountains, as visionaries, and not to be afraid to change our lives and show who we are.

He speaks in verse 4, “As for your birth, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut”, that is, ‘without proper attention to the navel cord’, for the child who was just born is susceptible to die from a serious infection. For us, this means: when we were born in the world, there was no one to intercede and pray for us, breaking the hereditary curses on our lives. Neither we were washed with water to cleanse us, that is, we were not ministered with the word of God to cleanse us from the curses of sentence from men or with an anointed word prophesying a life of blessings for us. The prophet talks also that we were not rubbed with salt. Salt concerns to the faithfulness of the promises, God’s unchanging love, that is, the enduring nature of His covenant with men.



The birth of a child, in the Middle East in particular, obeyed certain standards and had meaning. Wrapping the newborn with strips of cloths was a common practice in Ancient times, showing that he was well cared for. First, the umbilical cord was cut and the child was washed with water to remove from his body the amniotic fluid and blood present at birth. The baby was then rubbed with a small amount of salt and olive oil to help clean and disinfect the skin. Some desert tribes rubbed salt on the skin of the newborn child so that he could bear heat better. Therefore, it means protection, strengthening, resistance to adverse conditions. Another meaning of this practice, equally important for Jews, is that salt was added to each offering on the altar of sacrifice in the Tabernacle and in the Temple. Most likely, Israelite mothers saw this

custom in relation to their babies as a symbolic way of offering their children to the service of the Lord; a way to dedicate them to God. After that, the baby was wrapped in long strips of linen or cotton, which helped to provide him comfort; the tight bands would replicate the feeling of the comfort of the womb. On some occasions the bands were marked in some way to find out whose baby it was. Some scholars say they were embroidered with symbols of the child's ancestry. Therefore, the prophet Ezekiel wrote in this way. So, back to our reasoning: No one wrapped us in cloths, which means that we were deprived of the warmth, care and tenderness from of our true Father, God. Nor were we consecrated and presented to Him for His service. I am talking about what happened spiritually with the people of God (Israel) and with us, at least with most of us who were not born in an evangelical home, without the real knowledge of spiritual things.



And in verse 5 the bible says: "No eye pitied you, to do any of these things for you out of compassion for you; but you were thrown out in the open field, for you were abhorred on the day you were born." This is an allusion to children exposed by their unnatural parents, or cruel midwives, and left in an open field, or anywhere in the desert, to perish for lack of care, food, water and protection, unless someone saw them and sympathized with them. The Egyptians mistreated the Lord's people, for the Hebrews were an abomination to them. In the same way, many children of God were born and suffered the pain of rejection, ostensible or not and even inexplicable, because the enemy touched people to act in this way, knowing somehow that these children were already separated by God to be His at some point in their lives; they were 'different.' Jesus said: "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me" (Mk. 9: 37).

Therefore, in verse 6, the Lord says: "I passed by you, and saw you flailing about in your blood. As you lay in your blood, I said to you, 'Live!'" The Lord passed by her, His bride, His people, and gave her a word of ransom and life. "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child

will never enter it.’ And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them” (Mk. 10: 14b-16).

The Bride grew up, and in verse 7, when the time to have children came He spread His cloak over her. In Hebrew, the word ‘mantle’ or ‘cloak’, means, among others things, ‘wings’, symbol of protection, life, anointing and power. It also refers to marriage proposals. So, when the Lord set us apart for Him, we became to be His exclusive property and we no longer felt unprotected. God made a covenant with us as in a marriage (v. 8).

From verse 9 to 14, He reports the process of growth and beautification of the Bride to whom He Himself goes on adding blessings and gifts like ornaments. In verse 9, He says He bathed us with water, that is, we came to Jesus, we heard His word and it began to wash us from the old ways of thinking and acting. He also says that He washed off the blood from us, that is, He healed our wounds. After this He anointed us with oil, i.e., His Spirit was poured out on us, strengthening us and sanctifying us and consecrating us to Him. In verse 10, He speaks of embroidered cloth, fine linen, rich fabric such as silk, and sandals of fine leather (“I clothed you with embroidered cloth and with sandals of fine leather; I bound you in fine linen and covered you with rich fabric.”) The fine linen is a symbol of holiness and righteousness (Rev. 19: 8). Silk, for example, is a symbol of refinement and sensibility. He protected the feet of the Bride from injuries, as well as enabled them to step with safety. The expression ‘fine leather’ or ‘hides of sea cows’ translated in KJV as ‘badgers skins’, in Hebrew is tahash (tā·haš) or tachash – תַּחַשׁ (plural: tahashim or thchshim – תַּחֲשִׁים) – Strong #8476; probably originated from the Egyptian word, thhs, ‘leather’, and the Arab, tuhasum, ‘dolphin.’ Tahash means porpoise, dolphin, sea cow (dugong); a (clean) animal with fur (like some species of goat). Ezekiel here probably refers to shoes, not sandals. The shoes were made of soft leather; the sandals, made of hard leather.

I want to make a parenthesis here to talk a little about sandals and shoes in ancient times.

Sandals were well known in Ancient times: Am. 2: 6; Am. 8: 6; Deut. 25: 10; in Ezek. 24: 7, where the word sandal (סַנְדָּל) is written in our version, in Hebrew it is written ‘footwear’ or ‘shoe’ – na‘al נָעַל or נָעַל – Strong #5275; in Ezekiel 16: 10 it is the same word, used for the verb ‘to put on’ (shoes or sandals) (נָעַל – Strong #5274, naal or na‘al): “I clothed thee also with brodered work, and shod thee with badgers’ skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk” (KJV).

Sandals with soles (ne‘ālīm or na‘alayim – נֶעָל – Strong #5275) of leather were worn to protect the feet from the burning sand and dampness. Sandals might also have soles (ne‘ālīm) of wood, with leather straps (serōkh – Gen. 14: 23, Isa. 5: 27; Mk. 1: 7; Lk. 3: 16; Mk. 6: 9). Sandals were not worn in the house or in the sanctuary (Ex. 3: 5; Josh. 5: 15). Walking without sandals was a sign of great poverty (Deut. 25: 9; Lk. 15: 22) or of mourning (2 Sam. 15: 30; Isa. 20: 2-4; Ezek. 24: 17, 23). When an angel appeared to Peter in the prison, he ordered him to put on his sandals (Acts 12: 8).

In Assyria, sandals also covered the heel and the side of the foot. Sandals and thongs were so common that they symbolized the most insignificant thing, as in Gn. 14: 23. Most people at that time walked barefoot or wore sandals, but shoes were not so common. The poor could not afford to wear shoes, since they were made of soft leather, which was scarce. The sandals were made of hard leather. Jews did not wear sandals at home (Lk. 7: 38); they removed them when entering the house, and washed their feet. Sandals are related to authority, occupation, material possessions. And in Ex. 3: 5 and Josh. 5: 15 when the Lord said to Moses and Joshua on different occasion to take off the sandals from their feet, the connection between taking off one’s shoes and surrender is

implicit, a sign of submission and respect, “Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.”

The Jews considered carrying or untying someone else’s sandals to be a very humble task. When John the Baptist spoke of the coming of Christ, he said, “... the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.” (John 1: 27).

Retuning to our text of Ezek. 16:

In verses 11 and 12, the Lord tells us about the ornaments and jewelry that He gave us, which means the gifts and fruit of the Spirit.

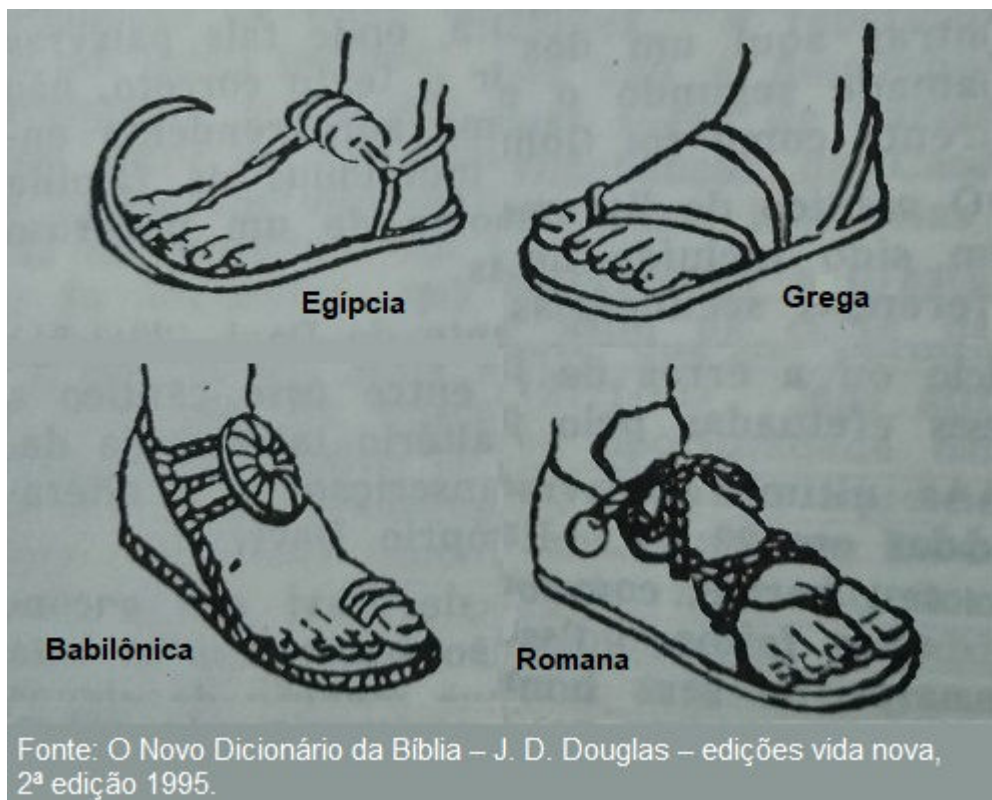
In ancient times, male Jews wore bracelets, rings, chains and necklaces of various types. In the Near East, both sexes used gold chains as an ornament and a symbol of dignity. Government officials placed such gold chains on Joseph and Daniel as a symbol of sovereignty (Gen. 41: 42; Dan. 5: 29). Male Jews wore jewelry with the purpose of improving their personal appearance. The art of jewelry began in a remote period of humanity (Num. 31: 50; Judg. 8: 26; Hos. 2: 13). A Jew used the ring as a seal and symbol of his authority (Gen. 41: 42; Dan. 6: 17). With the seal he stamped his personal seal on official documents (In the time of Esther, for example). It could be worn on a string around the neck or on the finger. Men also wore rings or bands on their arms (cf. 2 Sam. 1: 10). The bracelet and the crown are symbol of glory and majesty. The necklace is a symbol of grace, mercy (Hebrew, *Hesedh* or *Chesed*) with which we are adorned. Women wore earrings and other jewelry (Gen. 24: 22, 30, 53; Gen. 35: 4; Ex. 32: 2-3; Ezek. 16: 12).

But as a free man, a Jew never used earrings. The rings and earrings are a symbol of voluntary private property. In the OT, when it was the seventh year of slavery for anyone, he was entitled to be freed, but if he wanted to stay with his master, this one led him to the judges and his ear was placed in the doorpost and pierced. It was placed, then, an earring and the slave went to serve that man forever (Ex. 21: 6; Deut. 15: 16-17): “If you buy a Hebrew servant, he is to serve you for six years. But in the seventh year, he shall go free, without paying anything. But if the servant declares, ‘I love my master and my wife and children and do not want to go free,’ then his master must take him before the judges. He shall take him to the door or the door-post and pierce his ear with an awl. Then he will be his servant for life” (Ex. 21: 2; 5-6); “But if your servant says to you, ‘I do not want to leave you,’ because he loves you and your family and is well off with you, then take an awl and push it through his ear lobe into the door, and he will become your servant for life. Do the same for your maidservant” (Deut. 15: 16-17). Spiritually speaking, the earring is a sign of slavery.

In verse 13 the Lord tells that He fed the Bride with what was best: honey, oil and choice flour. Thus, well-treated and adorned the Bride came to be beautiful and her fame spread among the nations.

In the following verses, as a betrayed and angry husband He reports the infidelity of the Bride, surrendering to all sorts of idolatry and that led her to the loss of her beauty. Thus the Lord takes us out of the world, heals us, adorns us, feeds us and beautifies us, therefore He wants from us loyalty and gratitude, and not that we come to repeat the same mistake as Israel. May you know how to keep the precious heritage you received from Him, waiting for His coming.







## SACRIFICES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT (Leviticus chapters 1–7)

The first seven chapters of Leviticus talk about the types of offerings in the OT. I put the table below to make it easier to understand:

<b>Sacrifice</b>	<b>Biblical reference</b>	<b>Elements</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
Burnt Offering	Leviticus 1: 1-17	A male animal: bull, lamb or bird (turtledove or pigeon), in the case of poor person. Totally consumed. Without blemish.	Voluntary act of worship. Atonement for unintentional sin. Expression of devotion, commitment and complete surrender to God.
Grain Offering	Leviticus 2: 1-16	Choice flour (Fine flour), olive oil, incense, cakes or wafers (boiled, baked or fried) with salt. No yeast or honey. It accompanied the burnt offerings and peace offerings (along with a libation). Note: Wafer: folder mass that is made the unleavened bread.	Voluntary act of worship. Recognition of the goodness and providence of God. Dedication to God. The oil symbolizes joy.
Fellowship Offering or peace offering (symbolizes the supper with the Lord)	Leviticus 3: 1-17	Any animal without flaw from the flock. Variety of bread.	Voluntary act of worship. Thanksgiving and Communion (it was accompanied by a communal meal).
Guilt Offering	Leviticus 7: 1-10	Sheep or Lamb	Obligatory atonement for unintentional sins that required restitution. Purification of taints. Restitution in full, adding a fifth of the value of what made him guilty.

Sin Offering	Leviticus 4; 5; 6; Leviticus 16: 1-34	1. Young bull: in the case of the high priest and the congregation. 2. Goat: for the prince. 3. Female goat or lamb: for ordinary people. 4. Turtledove or pigeon: the case of the poor. Tenth of an Ephah of fine flour: the case of the very poor.  1 Ephah = 22 liters = 3/5 bushels	Obligatory atonement for certain unintentional sins. Confession of sin. Forgiveness of sin. Purification of taints.
--------------	--	---	---

- Unintentional sins are also known as sins of ignorance. The original word translated as *ignorance* means 'to wander', like a sheep that strays from the flock. It refers to the sin originated from the weakness of human character, not an ill-disguised rebellion or a premeditated evil. We associate guilt with intention, but the ancients associated it with its effects.

- Salt in the grain offering instead of honey, for salt symbolizes the covenant (Lev. 2: 13; Num. 18: 19), the fidelity of the promise, non-perishable nature of the covenant, God's unchanging love, a sign of purification and holiness. It melts the ice. This means that God's true word melts hearts that are cold and hardened by sin and human barriers.

- Leaven (Yeast) was not used for cooking not to remember the pagan cult. Leaven symbolizes the flesh, human wickedness and malice in opposition to the holiness of the Spirit (1 Cor. 5: 6-8).

- When more than one type of offering was presented (Num. 7: 13-17), the procedure was usually the following: 1) the sin offering, 2) the burnt offering, 3) peace (or fellowship) offering and grain offering (along with a libation). This sequence shows part of the spiritual importance of the sacrificial system. First, sin had to be treated (sin offering or guilt offering). Second, the worshiper was fully committed to God (burnt offering and grain offering). Third, it was established the fellowship or friendship between the Lord, the priest and the worshiper (peace offering or fellowship offering). In the peace offering, the breast and right thigh were the priest's portion determined by God (Lev. 7: 29-34).

- Lev. 3: 14-16; Lev. 4: 8-9; Lev. 7: 3-5; Lev. 9: 10: The Lord commanded that the fat, the kidneys and the lobe of the liver were separated to be burned on the altar. They were not burned along with the rest of the animal, what makes us think there were an interest and a higher purpose in this. Fat symbolizes the tastiest part of the meat, what tastes better, what rises like a sweet aroma to God. For Jews, the kidneys were the center of emotions and consciousness and this means that our offering should be what is most pleasant to the Lord and all our soul must be involved in this process, i.e., our emotions must also be placed on His altar, mainly the joy of being offering. Thus, our financial offering in the House of the Lord rises as sweet incense to Him. Delivering the emotions and consciousness to the Lord frees us from guilt. Our emotions and

consciousness must be sanctified, consecrated to the Lord (Lev. 7: 5: guilt offering). In other words, just as the animal fat in the guilt offering was burned on the altar to make atonement, the spiritual parallel is also true. When we deliver our ‘fat’ and ‘our kidneys’ (our emotions, consciousness, our ‘tasty’, the best we have) to Jesus, He sheds His blood over our sins, freeing us from our guilt, because He knows that what we are doing is from the heart.

- Lev. 22: 17-33: The offering must be flawless (without blemish). Defective animals were not accepted, so our offering before the Lord should be with the best we have, with the firstfruits, not with what’s left, with the remains. Verse 19 says: “to be acceptable in your behalf it shall be a male without blemish, of the cattle or the sheep or the goats”. Like the tithe should be given before using our money for anything else, the offering should be given liberally and with integrity of heart.

- The wave offering or elevation offering ('othâm tenuphâh or ath-m thnuphe – Lev. 7: 30; Lev. 14: 12) of meat or grain received this name, perhaps, to be moved before the Lord before being presented to Him. In Hebrew, the verb ‘eniph’ means ‘to move the offering, to wave the offering, to elevate the offering.’

- The priest stood before God in favor of the people, but also represented God to the people. As a representative of God, he ate the offerings that were brought to him. But he could not, in the same way, represent God to himself. His grain offerings had to be completely burned, to be true sacrifice, completely dedicated to God (Lev. 6: 23). However, he could eat the part that was reserved for him of the grain offerings given to God by the people: Lev. 2: 9-10; Lev. 6: 14-18.

- Aaron and his sons were consecrated priests. The Hebrew word translated as consecration or ordination (millu) or consecrations or ordinations (millu'iyim – Strong #4394 – Lev 7: 37; Lev 8: 22; 28-29; 31; 33; Ex 29: 22; Ex 29: 26-27; Ex 29: 34) means, literally, to ‘fill the hand’; ‘hands full’, and perhaps it referred to the offerings that were put on the priest’s hands or to the oil that was spilled on them in some cases (the leper after being healed – Lev. 14: 15). The ritual of consecration of the priests (Lev. 8: 1-36) symbolized the responsibilities and the privileges of the priesthood, notifying the Levites that they were set apart for God’s service. According to Lexicon Strong’s Concordance, the word millu'iyim, מלאים, comes from mâlê' – מלא (Strong #4390), a primitive root that means: to fill or to be full of, to accomplish, to confirm, to fulfill, to be or to become full, to overflow, fullness, furnish (evidence or a house), to gather (alone or together), to replenish, to satisfy, to take with a hand full, to presume, to dare, as in Esther 7: 5 (‘who has dared’ – NIV; ‘who has presumed’ – NRSV; ‘where is he, that durst presume’ – KJV).

*Altar of burnt offerings*



- The Lord also forbade to eat the animal with its blood (Lev. 17: 11; 14 cf. Heb. 9: 22), because the blood had a sacrificial nature. Blood, in the OT, is the symbol of life usually ended by violent means. It also means what sustains the physical life of a being, as well as its spirit, that is, its character, its nature (think of the genetic transmissions). Remembering Gen. 4: 10-11, the blood was a means of atonement provided by God Himself, for His love of man lest to keep him away from Him. The purpose of the blood would be a spiritual act, sacrificial, of worship to God and atonement for sin, using animals such as lamb and others. Complementing the reasoning: the life of the flesh (Lev. 17: 11; 14) was the life sacrificed in death, because the purpose of the animal's blood would be a spiritual act to cleanse man of his sin (death) and restore his life (communion with God). The animal's blood was the substitute of human blood; instead of killing the sinner for his sin, God would use a substitute, in case the animals considered pure, set apart for this purpose.

- The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross replaced all these sacrifices, having Jesus given of Himself as a lamb without blemish in our place to redeem us from sin and the curse of the Law.

## PASSOVER IN THE OLD TESTAMENT



In the OT, the Passover was instituted by God as a landmark of the deliverance of His people from bondage in Egypt and should be remembered by generations every year to celebrate the glory and the divine providence in their lives. For Jews, the religious calendar sets the month of Aviv or Nisan (March-April) as the first month, the month of Passover (Pesach).

In Ex. 12: 1-28 the Lord instituted the Passover. The Israelites should choose the lamb on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the month and kill it on the 14<sup>th</sup> day, at twilight. They should take the blood and mark the doors of their houses and, on the same night, eat **the meat roasted over the fire, with unleavened bread and bitter herbs** and leave nothing till the morning. If some meat was left, it should be burned. The blood was a symbol of liberation; the meat was a symbol of God's word, and the unleavened bread, of sanctification. The Lord was about to send the tenth plague on Egypt, which was the death of all the firstborn, and therefore the blood of that lamb on the lintels of the doors would protect them from punishment. The Lord also commanded them to eat unleavened bread for seven days, because the yeast symbolizes the flesh, the human wickedness that prevents the dominion of the Spirit. The 14<sup>th</sup> day of the month was marked as the first day of Passover; so, until the 21<sup>st</sup> they would eat unleavened bread. God also gave instructions on how they should eat that Passover: loins girded, sandals on their feet and their staff in hand, and they should eat it hurriedly. They should eat in a hurry, that is, under readiness and watchfulness. Nobody knew what would happen or when they could rest or eat again, so the Lord insisted on them to eat all the meat. It would sustain them in the journey that they would have ahead. Also some important guidance were given, for example, the alien with them would not eat the Passover unless he was circumcised; the lamb should be eaten inside the houses and shouldn't have any of its bones broken – Ex. 12: 46 (in prophetic reference to Jesus, who had none of His bones broken: Ps. 34: 20; Jn. 19: 33). Other references to the Passover can be found in Lev. 23: 5-8; Num. 28: 16; Deut. 16: 1-8.

We can notice an interesting thing in the text of Deut. 16: 1-8, especially in vs. 5 and 6, saying that the sacrifice of the lamb could not be accomplished inside any city but in the place chosen by God. Therefore, Jesus was not crucified inside Jerusalem, but outside the walls. The lamb's meat symbolizes the body of Jesus, wounded on the cross, and the blood on the lintels of the doors prefigures the protection of His blood over those who are His, justifying them from sin and freeing them from the Evil one.

The Jewish people celebrated Passover for many times, as it was ordered by the Lord (Some of them are especially mentioned in the bible). Each one of them has a meaning for us.

Thus, the **first Passover** described in the Old Testament occurred in Egypt and symbolizes the *Passover of the deliverance from the bondage of sin*.

The **second Passover** occurred in the desert (Num. 9: 1-14). They stayed one year at the foot of Sinai (Ex. 19: 1-2 – Ex. 40: 2; 17; 34-35) and in that time they built the tabernacle, were enlisted and received instruction on how to be trained as an army (Num. 2: 1-34); they were taught about offering (*korban*, in Hebrew, *qorbān* or *qrbh* =

*'that which is brought near', 'to draw near to God'; qorbān is practically a generic term, while others are specifically used for burnt offering, sin offering and guilt offering etc.) and how to give themselves as an offering to God. He removed from them the mentality of slave; therefore they received the identity and personality back. Thus, the second Passover is the *Passover of the restoration of personality and identity*, characteristics that we receive when we cross our spiritual desert, that is, after we leave Egypt we must know who we are and who God is in our lives.*

The **third** was the **Passover** of Joshua (Josh. 5: 10-12). This is the Passover that talks to the leaders, teaching them to *trust in God, to be guided by the Holy Spirit and not to let the flesh scream* (all were circumcised before taking possession of the Promised Land, overthrowing Jericho, for they had already crossed the Jordan and were in the plains of Moab).

The **fourth** is the **Passover** of Hezekiah (2 Chr. 30: 1-27). The door of the temple had been closed for a long time because of the Assyrian dominion, and Hezekiah opened the doors again for the word of God to be ministered to the people. This brought revival, symbolizing *the opening of our spirit to God's word*.

The **fifth** is the **Passover** of Josiah (2 Kin. 23: 21-23; 2 Chr. 35: 1-19), who repaired and cleansed the temple, restored the Levites to their office and taught the people to be faithful to the Lord. For six years he cleansed the House of God (2 Chr. 34: 3; 35: 19). Therefore, this Passover is related to *spiritual revival, protection, healing of the soul, the revelation of God's word and restoration of Levitical ministry* (worship and teaching, for the Book of the Law, which had been lost, was found).

The **sixth Passover** is that of Daniel, for in Dan. 10: 4 there is a reference to the first month, the month of Nisan. Daniel was seeking the Lord's revelation in relation to the prophecies and visions he had received from Him. Therefore, Daniel's Passover speaks of *the revelation of the word, understanding, intelligence and spiritual and natural discernment*.

The **seventh** is the **Passover** of Ezra (Ezra 6: 19-22), in which there was restitution after the liberation from Babylon. It is the Passover of *the restitution and the rebuilding of our inner temple, especially in relation to our calling*.

The **eighth** is the **Passover** of Nehemiah (Neh. 2: 1), when a reference is made again to the month of Nisan. After spending almost four months in fasting and prayer seeking God (since the month of Kislev of the previous year, corresponding to November-December), Nehemiah received permission to rebuild the fallen walls of Jerusalem, therefore this is *the Passover of the reconstruction of the walls, the restoration of the soul*.

The **ninth Passover** that the Jewish people experienced was the beginning of a new era, when Jesus came in person as a living sacrifice, freeing us from the ancient rituals and bringing to our lives all kind of anointing that we need and the *eternal salvation*.

In short: **Passover is time of** sanctification, healing of body and soul, releasing of chains, restitution, restoration of identity and personality, time of miracles, time for God to take the shame away from us; to break chains and open doors, time of revelation of the Word, understanding, intelligence, natural and spiritual discernment, greater anointing to lead the people of God, forgiveness, revival, protection and ministry. The best is ready for us. Passover reflects the life of Jesus entering the dead areas of our lives, driving out the demons right there where they trod on us, bringing real change. It is time of intimacy with the Lord. It is time to be spared from sacrifice.

## MENORAH (THE LAMPSTAND OF SEVEN LAMPS)



We will speak here of another interesting theme that for us Christians has a meaning not only important but practical. It's about is the lampstand, to the Jews called **Menorah** (מְנֹרָה – Strong #4501 – noun feminine). The first reference to the lampstand is in Ex. 25: 31-40. Here God was giving orders to Moses to build the tabernacle and commanded him to do it with seven lamps to be placed in the Holy Place of the temple, where priests should be every day. The next reference is in Ex. 37: 17-24, when again He talks about the tabernacle. The lampstand was made of pure gold, unlike the table and the ark, which were made of acacia wood covered with gold; the lampstand was carved in gold and, as the bible says, was hammered gold. In Num. 8: 1-4 we find another reference to the lampstand, when God is speaking to Moses about Aaron and the Levites, which makes us think that the lamps are related to the priesthood. In the NT we find a reference to the lampstand and the tabernacle in Heb. 9: 1-10. In short, here we can speak of the meaning of these symbols: The Holy Place, where the table, the lampstand and the loaves are, means a life dedicated to God. The **lampstand** means the presence of the Holy Spirit with us, God's light, a lifestyle that should be part of the Christian life. The **table** speaks of communion and intimacy with God; the **bread** means food and provision; the **altar of incense**, although was placed in the Holy Place, is part of the Holy of Holies and is a lifestyle of prayer and the brightness of the Lord; the **ark** is symbol of covenant with God and His presence in us; **manna** is symbol of spiritual food He gives us and the **staff** represents the authority and the anointing that we should have in our spirit. The **stone tablets** are our covenant with God and His commandments. The **Holy Place** represents our soul and the **Holy of Holies** (The Most Holy Place, NIV), our spirit, where only the high priest, Jesus, has access.

For us who are born of the Spirit, all this has a meaning. In Isa. 11: 2, the meaning of these seven lights becomes clear to us. Isaiah prophesies about the qualities of the Messiah, as one would expect of a king, also called 'God's anointed.' Therefore he begins by saying that the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon Him, the Messiah (Jesus), bringing also the gifts of wisdom, of understanding, of counsel, of might, of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. The text says: "The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him [*Jesus*], the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might [NIV, power], the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord." In this verse, the word 'counsel' in Hebrew, *etsah* (Strong #6098), means advice; by implication, plan; prudence: advice, advisement (deliberation, consideration, weighing or prudence), counsel, counselor, purpose.

From God's standpoint, it is good to ask for these seven portions, the seven spirits of God upon us, because we'll know how to lead ourselves properly on our Christian journey. In Rev 1: 4 we can find a reference to Menorah (the fullness of the seven characteristics of the Holy Spirit): "John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne."

Let us now explain what these seven spirits of God mean, based on the text of Isa. 11: 2.



Candlestick or lampstand

Menorâh or Menorath (Hebrew) Ex. 25: 31-39

Nebhrashtâ' or Nebrsha' (Aramaic) Dan. 5: 5

Luchnos (candle, lamp) or Lychnia or Luchnia (lampstand, candlestick) Matt. 5: 15

1) **The Spirit of the Lord:** is the very Spirit of God within us, keeping His flame of life in our spirit, causing us to exist and do His work on earth. With the Holy Spirit we can do what Jesus did: to preach good news, heal the sick of soul and body, set free the captives of the devil and bring joy. We receive it at the moment of our conversion. Let's have a look at Isa. 61: 1-3: "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory." The spirit of the Lord makes us feel courage as well as the strength and the power of God in action of miracles, deliverance and healing.

2) **The Spirit of Wisdom:** wisdom is the art of being successful, to form a correct plan to achieve the desired results, to have skill, prudence, grace; to learn to apply knowledge and understanding of the word; it is involved in the act of interpreting dreams. In the NT, it has the same intensely practical nature that we find in wisdom in the OT. The wisdom in its broadest sense belongs exclusively to God and consists not only in the complete knowledge about all aspects of life, but also of the irresistible fulfillment of what He has in mind. Wisdom is more related to teaching, while knowledge is more related to the prophetic ministry. Its seat is the heart, the center of intellectual and moral decision. Wisdom puts us in direct contact with the divine mind, making us think as He thinks.

3) **The Spirit of Understanding:** intelligence, discernment. It is the comprehension that we acquire after having knowledge (revelation) of God's Word. It puts us in contact with the divine truth contained in the Word, bringing us the security about what we



believe and giving us the ability to resist evil and everything that tries to prevent His will for our lives, as well as false teaching.

4) **The Spirit of Counsel:** it means planning and strategy, solution for a purpose. Being on a council table is to be together with authorities who come to discuss something important and to plan strategies and solutions (Isa. 40: 13-14; Jer. 23: 18). Thus, being in a meeting with God in prayer gives us the spiritual insight to receive strategies from Him to overcome any situation. The word ‘counsel’ in Hebrew is *’etsah* (Strong #6098), meaning advice; by implication, plan; prudence: advice, advisement (deliberation, consideration, weighing or prudence), counsel, counselor, purpose. Prudence leads us to plan the right strategy in each situation and to wait for the right moment to make decisions; it also teaches us how everything must be done. Through it we acquire the certainty that everything has a solution.

5) **The Spirit of Might [NIV, Power]:** it gives us dominion and conviction of victory. Where my strength ends, God’s resources are released. The Spirit of Might makes us do things that in our nature we cannot, big and bold things. The Spirit of Might involves us like a protective shield and firms us on ‘the Rock’, like someone plants firmly on the ground a tree with strong roots. It gives us determination, security and certainty to follow our goals.

6) **The Spirit of Knowledge:** it means to have the right understanding of things, the revealed information of the word of God, and to know what we have at our disposal through it. It is related to revelation and experience, dreams and visions. The word ‘knowledge’ has the idea of revealing something hidden so that it can be seen and known as it really is, i.e., it expresses the idea of revelation. Knowledge brings light, clarity, revelation and manifestation of what is hidden, whether good or bad. It makes us know the secrets of the heart of God and the mysteries of the spiritual world. It fills us with the truth so we can overcome the false prophecies.

7) **The Spirit of Fear of the Lord:** it means reverence, priority, respect and devotion to God, acknowledgement for who He is and not to use His name in vain. The fear of the Lord lifts us up to the throne and puts us in contact with His holiness. It puts us in a position of separation from worldly chores in order to give reverence and priority to the person of God. Through it, we know His Love and the strength of the praise and worship of the angels around the throne. Before Him, all irreverence, idolatry and disturbance of the peace fall down. It’s interesting to notice that in the bible the word fear or dread (or awe) comes from several Hebrew and Greek roots, such as: **a)** Phobos (Greek) = rapture, fear, terror, alarm; the object or cause of fear; reverence, respect; to be put in fear; alarm or fright (phobos φόβος – Strong #5401; Matt. 14: 26; Matt. 28: 4; 8; Mk. 4: 41; Heb. 2: 15 etc. = 47 times in the NT; **b)** Deilia (Greek) = fear, cowardice, timidity (deilia δειλία – Strong #1167, as it in 2 Tm 1: 7 – only once in the NT); **c)** Eulabeia (Greek) = prudence, reverence, caution, fear of God, piety; Strong #2124, eulabeia, εὐλαβείας, as in Heb. 12: 28; Heb. 5: 7 = only twice in the NT). **d)** Pachad, the equivalent of the Greek word Phobos (Pachad, Strong #6343; פָּחַד, as in 1 Sam. 11: 7; Ex. 15: 16; Gen. 31: 42; 53; Deut. 2: 25; Deut. 11: 25, Ps. 119: 120, etc. = 49 times in the OT) = dread, dreadful, fear, great fear, terror; a (sudden) alarm; to fear, to be anxious or terrified; a helper or a companion for life (referring to death), until Jesus came to free us from fear of it (ref.: Heb. 2: 15).

But here in **Isa. 11: 2**, there still a Hebrew word for fear (or to fear), which is **yirah**, יִרָא, Strong #3374, and means fear; excessive fear or to fear exceedingly; dreadful, or fearfulness; (morally) reverence. It appears 45 times in the OT, usually referring to God or together with the expressions, ‘fear of the Lord’, ‘fear of God’ or ‘fear of the Almighty’ [Gen. 20: 11; Ex. 20: 20; 2 Sam. 23: 3; 2 Chr. 19: 9; Neh. 5: 9;

Neh. 5: 15; Job 4: 6; Job 6: 14; Job 15: 4; Job 22: 4; Job 28: 28; Ps. 2: 11; Ps. 5: 7; Ps. 19: 9; Ps. 34: 11; Ps. 90: 11; Ps. 111: 10; Ps. 119: 38; Ps. 1: 7; Prov. 1: 29; Prov 2: 5; Prov. 8: 13; Prov. 9: 10; Prov. 10: 27; Prov. 14: 26-27; Prov. 15: 16; Prov. 15: 33; Prov. 16: 6; Prov. 19: 23; Prov. 22: 4; Prov. 23: 17; Isa. 11: 2-3; Isa. 29: 13; Isa. 33: 6; Isa. 63: 17; Jer. 32: 40; Ezek. 30: 13 (fear throughout the Land of Egypt); Jon. 1: 10; Jon. 1: 16]. Only 3 times, this word appears as a reference to fear or calamities or the enemy (Deut. 2: 25; Ps. 55: 5; Isa. 7: 25) and only once (Ezek. 1: 18), referring to his fear of the rims of the wheels of the cherubim (KJV: dreadful; NIV: awesome), but anyway, fear of the supernatural.

Ask God to light these flames in your spirit, so that you can experience His Power and accomplish everything Jesus came to do on earth.

## THE ARMOR OF GOD (Eph. 6: 10-17)



Paul, though a Jew by birth and studious of the Mosaic Law, had Roman citizenship, therefore, he knew the customs and military discipline of this people. By converting to Jesus and begin to experience the fights for the gospel, the Holy Spirit made him write something from God that would enable the believers at all times to protect themselves spiritually from the wounds caused by Satan. It is about the armor of God described in Eph. 6: 10-17. Let us, first, read the text and then explain it: “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand therefore, and fasten [NIV, buckled] the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace [NIV: ‘and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace’]. With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

Paul begins by saying for us to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of God’s power, what makes us think that the armor is not something produced in the strength of our soul, especially in our mind, but dependent on the action of God through His Spirit. In the course of the explanation we’ll see that the armor is Jesus Himself. Paul also says that our struggle is not against people or the natural things of life, but against demons, so we need the armor because it defends us from the invisible. The wounds of the devil in our soul and our spirit are ugly and often even part of our armor is damaged, reflecting in the weaknesses and spiritual, emotional and physical symptoms that we strive to take away from us and to restore our well-being. The armor becomes stronger as we let God’s word enter and act within us, as we go surrendering more to the action of the Holy Spirit. Another thing he says is that the purpose of armor is to help us to withstand the devil and his snares in times of tribulation and war and to make us steadfast and winners. He also writes several times the expressions ‘to be able to stand’, or ‘that you may be able to withstand’ or ‘to stand firm’; it means that after all a warrior must always remain firm and upright, standing up.

The first piece of armor is the **belt of truth**. The verbs ‘to buckle’ or ‘to fasten’ has the same connotation that the verb ‘to gird’ (we remember the instructions of God to the people in celebrating the Passover, before the departure of Egypt – Ex. 12: 1-28) and means ‘to surround, to enclose, to fasten or bind around, to adorn in wheel, to put to the waistband, to band together, to tighten, to get close, to approach.’ Whatever the word is

used, the aim to the belt is to fit the waist and not be loose. The Roman belt was a kind of leather skirt attached to the belt and that protected the soldier from the waist to the knees. This was to avoid injuries around the abdomen, genitals and thighs as well as the lumbar region. Sometimes, sheets of metal were placed on the leather to increase resistance to attacks. The belt was perfectly adjusted, it shouldn't be loose at all, hence the term 'buckle' or 'fasten' or 'gird' as we've seen before. Likewise, the believer should be girded **with the truth of God's word** like a belt that protects him from the attacks of Satan in his body, in his emotions and his relationships. This truth is *Jesus, the Living Word*, who resists the lies of the evil one.

The second piece of the armor that is described is the **breastplate of righteousness**, a little different from a simple coat of mail. The armor was of bronze for leaders and leather to soldiers, general rule to protect the body. In 1 Sam. 17: 5 the bible describes the armor of Goliath; he was an exception because he was not a leader, just a champion of the Philistine army, but his armor was of bronze. The **shiryôn** was actually a breastplate that protected not only the chest but also the back. It was part of the armor of the workers of Nehemiah (Neh. 4: 16). In other parts of the bible other breastplates are described, which consisted of small iron plates sewn to a leather background. The Greek equivalent is called the **thōrax = breastplate**. For us Christians, it means that the justice won through the cross of Jesus is the breastplate that protects our feelings of hatred and injustice. The justice won on the cross is the connection of man with God through repentance and forgiveness of sins; it is His greatest love in action that encourages us to want for the lost the same thing we've gained that is the justification of our sins and the right to be in His presence; in short, eternal life. The breastplate of righteousness prevents that all the bad feelings of the devil lead us astray from the presence of God's love. When Jesus was already dead, the Roman soldier pierced His side with a spear, that is, Jesus' heart was pierced by the spear, represented by our transgressions and by the action of hatred and violence of the enemy, so that we could be protected from the fiery darts ('flaming arrows') he tries to throw on us. When we are under the love and justice of God in the person of Jesus, we are protected and guarded from evil. Therefore, the second part of our armor is **to believe in the righteousness of God and the justification of the blood of Jesus over our lives**.

The third piece described in the armor is **the shoes of the gospel of peace**. The shoes were of leather with thick soles with nails that allowed walking in the desert, protecting the soldier's feet from snakes, scorpions and sharp stones that could cause serious injury. Greaves (or 'shin guards') protected the legs from the knees to the ankles and are mentioned only once in Scripture (1 Sam. 17: 6 = **miçhâ** or **mitschah**). Goliath wore bronze greaves. It is possible that the Hebrew word, in fact, means a kind of boot. Paul says to put on the shoes of the gospel of peace. This means that the word of peace and good news should direct our steps and our journey through life not to err the way, not to be injured by stones of the enemy or bitten by snakes and scorpions. Therefore, the bible says: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns'" (Isa. 52: 7). The shoes are a symbol of authority, occupation of land and material blessing. Again, the garment here is Jesus who teaches us to put on His word of power, boldness and determination. It is written that any place that we set our feet will be ours. Therefore, the third part of the armor is **the peace of the gospel of Christ** that we take wherever He sends us and to those who need this peace, reconciling with God and with themselves.

**The shield of faith** is the fourth piece of the armor. The Israelites had two varieties of shield. The bigger one (Hebrew, **çinnâ** or tsinnah, also translated as **shield, a large**

**shield**; Strong #6793) was used to cover the entire body, with oval or rectangular form like a door (the Greek term **thyreos** derives from **thyra** = door). The large shield was used by the heavily armed infantry (2 Chr. 14: 8), and in the case of Goliath, there was a special shield bearer (1 Sam. 17: 7). The smaller one, the **buckler** (**mâghen**; Ez 38: 4 – Strong #4043) was carried by the archers. Usually, they were made of wood or interlaced wicker covered with leather, for they could be burned (Ezek. 39: 9). The leather was anointed with oil before battles to preserve it or make it shiny (Isa. 21: 5). Occasionally the brass or bronze was the material used to make it (1 Kin. 14: 27). The Romans, likewise, used the large shields in major wars, for if they were killed in combat, they returned lying down on them. The shield of faith to the Christian is Jesus that surrounds us behind and before and makes us bar all the flaming arrows of defeat, relinquishment and threats of the enemy to our progress. By rising from the dead, Jesus showed that nothing is impossible for Him to defeat, not even death; and this was an encouragement to our faith in Him and in everything that He intends to accomplish in our lives. His words were: “The impossible with men is possible with God”. Therefore, the fourth part of our armor is **faith** in God’s promises and protection over us.

**The helmet of salvation** is the fifth piece of the armor. The Greek term is **perikephalaia**. In the early days the helmet (Hebrew, **Kôbha**) apparently was restricted to kings or prominent leaders. Thus, King Saul gave David his own bronze helmet (1 Sam. 17: 38). By the time of Uzziah, all Hebrew soldiers received helmets (2 Chr. 26: 14) that probably were made of leather. This was the material used until the brass (a yellow alloy of copper and zinc) or bronze (a yellowish-brown alloy of copper with up to one-third tin) has also become common. Among the Romans and the Greeks in the time of Herod, there were helmets of both materials.

Since helmets were handmade in Antiquity, their exact form, type of metal, and design varied over time, from Roman Republic to the Empire, and also between different types of the army units, so it is not known if there was any standardization. What is known is that there was the same basic design: a bowl to protect the skull, a neck guard (more frequent over time), a deflector band to protect the forehead and also part of the nose and the metal plates on the cheek to protect the face.

In the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, the helmet of the late Roman Empire left the ancient Celtic design and was replaced based on the helmets of the Sasanian Empire, characterized by a bowl made up of two or four parts, united by a longitudinal ridge. Some were made of iron and sheathed in silver-gilt, and decorated with glass gems.

Sure of our salvation in Christ, our minds are protected from the sophistries [NRSV, arguments] of the enemy and the tempting voices that insist on taking us out of the way of the Lord. Jesus is our salvation. In Isa. 59: 17 it is written: “He put on righteousness like a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in fury as in a mantle.” There is also a reference to the helmet in 1 The. 5: 8: “But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.” Therefore, the fifth part of the armor is **the certainty our salvation**. By the grace of God and our faith in Him we are saved (Eph. 2: 8).

The last piece of the armor is **the sword** (**herebh**). The straight blade was made of iron (1 Sam. 13: 19) and sometimes had two edges (Ps. 149: 6; Heb. 4: 12). It was hanging from the belt on the right side of the bearer, and usually protected by a sheath. The bible says that the sword of the Spirit is the word of God; once again the word, symbolizing Jesus in action in our lives. Only His word can create something good, cutting the weeds from our land, the snares of the fowler and the cords of affliction with which the enemy tries to arrest us. Only the sword of God may combat the sharp

swords, trying to hurt us. So, often in the bible, the Lord said He was putting His words in the mouths of His servants, as it happened with Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel and other prophets. It was Jesus Himself who said (Lk. 21: 14-15), “So make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance; for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict.”

Something interesting can be found in the literature about weapons and armors. The armor is associated with the word **maddim** (‘armor’, 1 Sam. 17: 38. Maddim is the plural of mad, Strong #4055, מַדִּיּוֹ; derived from madad), which has a defensive aspect, while the weapon is linked to the word **nesheq** (‘weapons’, 2 Kin. 10: 2, נֶשֶׁק – Strong #5402), which has an offensive aspect. This makes us think that God gave us all weapons, the defensive and the offensive ones, to destroy the weapons of the devil. In 2 Cor. 10: 3-6 is written: “Indeed, we live as human beings, but we do not wage war according to human standards; for *the weapons of our warfare* are not merely human, but *they have divine power* to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments [*fallacies, sophistries*] and every proud obstacle raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to obey Christ. We are ready to punish every disobedience when your obedience is complete.” And in 2 Cor. 6: 4a; 7 is written: “but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: truthful ... truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand [*offensive ones*] and for the left [*defensive ones*].” In Greek, both verses write the word ‘hoplon’ (ὅπλον – Strong #g3696), corresponding to the Hebrew, ‘nesheq.’

Therefore, the sixth part of the armor is **the word of God in our mouth**, acting in our favor **by the power of the Spirit of God** against every kind of lie and snare of the evil one. But this Word of God must also be an anointed word to build up the lives of our brothers and sisters, not to hurt or destroy them. Wounds that come from distorted words from the mouths of believers are more deadly than those that come from the flesh of outsiders (of course, without the destructive power of Satan in them).

I’d like to repeat here what I’ve put in the beginning: the armor is not something produced in the strength of our soul, especially in our mind, but dependent on the action of God through His Spirit. In other words, the armor is a spiritual covering, because it is about Jesus Himself in us, His living word acting with power.

Often, we feel certain things and we do not know how to explain; we think to be the devil touching us, but they are only distorted feelings of our soul; human feelings poorly worked within us and that need to be enlightened by God as to their origin so that we can take the more convenient attitude, such as: to apologize, to ask the Lord for help to transform behaviors, and even to learn new things. Everyone has a natural tendency, as happened in Eden, to transfer to others the responsibility for his actions, so the easiest target is Satan. Then, we began to expel the spirit of this or that when, in reality, it is about emotions poorly controlled or works of the flesh. David understood this, so he talked to his soul and kept it still (Ps. 62: 5-6; Ps. 131: 2-3; Ps. 116: 7, the latter is not confirmed as being written by David). He certainly didn’t ignore the existence of the devil, but his biggest concern was to be in the center of God’s will, and feel cleansed before Him. Everything in us is fully under the control of the Holy Spirit and if we think everything is evil spirit, darkness start to have a dimension much bigger than they really have. If we exaggerate in our prayers and our concern for the spiritual protection, we will put so much armor that we forget to praise and thank the Lord for His love poured every day on our lives. All of this brings a very big burden to the soul, generating problems that would have no need. It is His Spirit that gives us the discernment if something is generated by evil spirit or if it is our soul is that is scared with something. In fact, the works of the flesh have a significant portion over our being and over what

surrounds us. Recognizing our weaknesses, our lack of knowledge about something, our lack of God and our total dependence on His mercy is what makes us true winners.

One of the emotions that touch our soul is fear. I once heard a comment about fear, in a preaching. If we think that is an acronym, we'll have: F= false; E= expectation; A= appearance; R= reality. Therefore, fear is a false expectation with the appearance of reality. Thus, coming from the soul or the devil, anyway it is a lie. The love of God casts out all fear. Living in His love keeps us and protects from fear. So, don't give in to fear.

- 1 Jn. 4: 8; 18, "Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love... There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love."

If you had no knowledge of the armor or was not sure of what it means as protection of God in your life, be sure that He is clothing you today to be a warrior and to conquer all the blessings that have been separated for you. Perhaps you have felt frail and unprotected so far, but from that moment on, you will begin to feel the strength and boldness of the Lord in your being and all your enemies will be under your feet. Hallelujah!

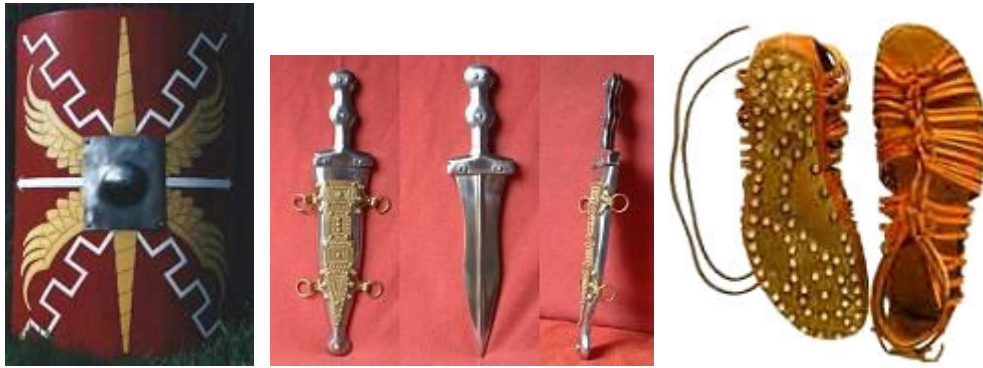


Helmet, Breastplate of metal for the leaders, Leather breastplate for soldiers



Belt (cingulum), greaves (shin guards), Two-edged sword





Wooden shield covered with leather, Dagger, Leather sandals with nails in the soles



Roman armor, Soldiers protected by shields, Darts with metal tip and wooden handle

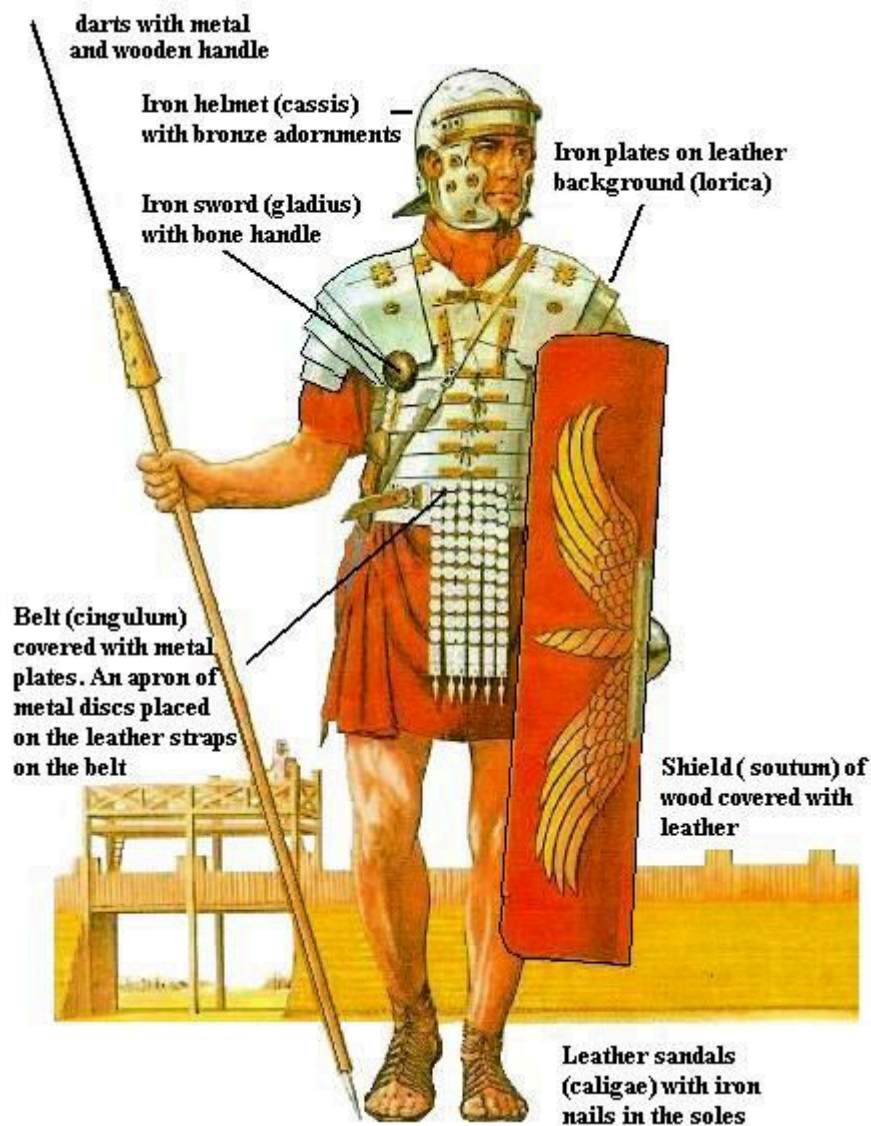


Roman helmets



Some of the helmets used by legionaries had a crest holder. The crests were usually made of plumes or horsehair, and whose color was red, though they could be found in other colors, like yellow, purple and black. According to some Roman writers of the 4th century, the legionaries had their crests mounted longitudinally and centurions, transversely. In the early Empire, centurions wore them at all times, including during battle, but in the late Empire, legionaries and centurions wore crests only occasionally.

## Roman Soldier



## BAPTISM



“Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased’” (Lk. 3: 21-22).

Jesus was baptized in water to set us the example, so we have the chance to live a new life with Him, washed and forgiven of our sins and all our old life.

The term **baptism**, in the bible, is originated from the Greek word, **baptisma** (βαπτισμα), the suffix (ma) emphasizes that occurred the immersion, “βαπτίζειν” (baptizein) to immerse. In the Bible, we find the noun ‘baptism’ (**baptisma**, in Greek) and the corresponding words to the different verb tenses of the verb ‘to baptize’.

The term Baptism is a transliteration from the Greek ‘βαπτισμω’ (baptismō) into Latin (baptismus), as seen in the Latin Vulgate in Col. 2: 12. This noun is also written as ‘βαπτισμα’ (baptisma) and ‘βαπτισμός’ (baptismós), being derived from the verb ‘βαπτίζω’ (baptizō; baptizó), which can be translated as to baptize, immerse (he immerses, he baptizes), bathe, wash, pour, cover, or dye (to paint), according to the New Testament and the Septuagint.

**Baptisma** means ‘outpouring’, ‘to enter the water’, ‘to be kept in the water’, ‘sense of permanence’, ‘submerged several times’, ‘to dip’, ‘to be immersed’. We can see this Greek word in several texts:

- Mk. 16: 16: “The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned.” In Greek, o pisteusas kai **baptistheis** sôthêsetai o de apistêsas katakrithêsetai

Note that ‘baptistheis’ is the past participle of the verb baptizō; baptizó (βαπτίζω – Strong #907: to baptize, to dip, submerge, but specifically of ceremonial dipping; used only (in the New Testament) of ceremonial ablution, especially of the ordinance of Christian baptism). So whoever believes will be saved; and whoever believes in Jesus is baptized in water as His ordinance. It is not baptism that saves, it is faith in Him, but immersion in water is the outward symbol of that faith, which brings salvation.

- 1 Pet. 3: 18-22: “For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. **21** *And baptism which this prefigured now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,* **22** who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.” Here a parallel was made with Noah, comparing the ark with our spirit that must be immersed in the Spirit of God to keep salvation. In Greek (v. 21): o kai êmas antitupon nun sôzei **baptisma** ou

sarkos apothesis rupou alla suneidêseôs agathês eperôtêma eis theon di anastaseôs iêsou christou

- Gal. 3: 27: “As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” The word baptism here refers to abide in Him through the Holy Spirit. In Greek: osoi gar eis christon **ebaptisthête** christon enedusasthe

- Matt. 3: 11: “I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.” In Greek: egô men **baptizô** umas en udati eis metanoian o de opisô mou erchomenos ischuroteros mou estin ou ouk eimi ikanos ta upodêmata bastasai autos umas **baptisei** en pneumati agiô kai puri.

The baptism of John the Baptist was a baptism of repentance, where people were washed from their life of sin preparing themselves to receive the word of Jesus. Putting it another way: The baptism of John convinced man of the need for repentance and prepared hearts for the coming of the Messiah (Matt. 3: 2; 6; 11). Whoever received this baptism was acknowledging himself a sinner before God. The baptism of Jesus Christ (‘water baptism’) cleansed from sin and conferred the new birth, that is, eternal life (Matt. 28: 19; Jn. 5: 21; 24) – Acts 19: 1-7. John knew that the Kingdom of God that would come with Jesus would be marked by the great action of the Holy Spirit in people’s lives (Isa. 32: 15; Isa. 44: 3; Ezek. 11: 19; Ezek. 36: 26; Ezek. 39: 29; Joel 2: 28-29; Acts 2: 16-18). But those who rejected Him, He would baptize with fire, which is probably an allegory of God's judgment.

- Lk. 12: 50: “I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what stress I am under until it is completed!” Jesus was referring here to His ‘baptism of blood’ on the cross of Calvary. In Greek: **baptisma** de echô **baptisthênai** kai pôs sunechomai eôs ou telesthê

- Acts 19: 5: “On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.” Here it refers to water baptism, the baptism of repentance and the new birth. In Greek: akousantes de **ebaptisthêsan** eis to onoma tou kuriou iêsou

- Rom. 6: 3-14: “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? **4** *Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.* For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For whoever has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore, do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. No longer present your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.” Paul refers to water baptism. In Greek (v. 4): sunetaphêmen oun autô dia tou **baptismatos** eis ton thanaton ina ôsper êgerthê christos ek nekrôn dia tês doxês tou patros outôs kai êmeis en kainotêti zôês peripatêsômen

- Col. 2: 12: “when you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead”. The text refers

to water baptism. In Greek: suntaphentes autô en tô **baptismati** en ô kai sunêgerthête dia tês pisteôs tês energieas tou theou tou egeirantos auton ek tôn nekrôn

- Acts 1: 22: "... beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us – one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection." In Greek: arxamenos apo tou **baptismatos** iôannou eôs tês êmeras ês anelêphthê aph êmôn martura tês anastaseôs autou genesthai sun êmin ena toutôn

- Acts 10: 37: "That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced." In Greek: umeis oidate to genomenon rêma kath olês tês ioudaias arxamenon apo tês galilaias meta to **baptisma** o ekêruxen iôannês

- Acts 13: 24: "... before his coming John had already proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel." In Greek: prokêruxantos iôannou pro prosôpou tês eisodou autou **baptisma** metanoias [*repentance*] panti tô laô isaêl

- Acts 18: 25: "He [*Apollos*] had been instructed in the Way of the Lord; and he spoke with burning enthusiasm and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John." In Greek: outos ên katêchêmenos tèn odon tou kuriou kai zeôn tô pneumatî elalei kai edidasken akribôs ta peri tou kuriou epistamenos monon to **baptisma** iôannou

- Acts 19: 3-4:

"Then he said, 'Into what then were you baptized?' They answered, 'Into John's baptism.'"

"Paul said, 'John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus.'"

In Greek:

3 eipen te pros autous eis ti oun ebaptisthête oi de eipon eis to iôannou **baptisma**

4 eipen de paulos iôannês men ebaptisen **baptisma** metanoias tô laô legôn eis ton erchomenon met auton ina pisteusôsîn tout estin eis ton christon iêsoun

- Acts 22: 16: "And now why do you delay [*Paul tells about his conversion*]? Get up, be baptized, and have your sins washed away, calling on his name." In Greek: kai nun ti melleis anastas **baptisai** kai apolousai tas hamartias [*sins*] sou epikalesamenos [*calling on*] to onoma tou kuriou

- Eph. 4: 4-5: "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism." In Greek: en sôma kai en pneuma kathôs kai eklêthête en mia elpidi tês klêseôs umôn eis kurios mia pistis en **baptisma**

## PART ONE: THE PARALLEL WITH THE COVENANTS



### 1) **Parallel with the covenant of Noah: to wash from sin.**

Noah and his family passed unscathed by the trial, and the very way of the trial against sin, paradoxically, ensured their victory. Let's read some texts about it:

- Gen. 6: 8: "But Noah found favor in the sight of the Lord."
- Gen. 6: 18: "But I will establish my covenant with you; and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you."
- Gen. 7–8: They report the entry of Noah and his family in the ark, the Flood, Noah and his family getting out of the ark and the altar built by Noah to God.
- 1 Pe. 3: 18-22: "For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. And baptism which this prefigured, now saves you – not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him."

Similarly, the believer goes through the trial against sin, secure in Christ. The power to wash away the filth of the flesh lies in His death and resurrection. His death represents to us the establishment of the new covenant and our personal entry into its benefits.

### 2) **Parallel with the Abrahamic covenant: it focuses on the circumcision** (circumcision of the heart):

- Deut. 10: 16: "Circumcise, then, the foreskin of your heart, and do not be stubborn any longer."
- Rom. 2: 29: "Rather, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart—it is spiritual and not literal. Such a person receives praise not from others but from God."

In Gen. 17: 9-14, the Lord established the circumcision, "God said to Abraham, 'As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. Throughout your generations every male among you shall be circumcised when he is eight days old, including the slave born in your house and the one bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring. Both the slave born in your house and the one bought with your money must be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.'"

In Col. 2: 13 it is written, "And when you were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive together with him, when he forgave us all our trespasses."

Therefore, the death resulted from sin is compared to the uncircumcision, that is, total lack of knowledge of the renewing work of God. Circumcision signified divine revival, therefore, what circumcision was in the covenant with Abraham, baptism is for the Christian. This is indicated by the use of the word **seal**. Seal means: 'what is owned with security, something that is complete, a sign of authenticity and authority.'

In Rom. 4: 11-13, circumcision is called a **seal**: “He received the sign of circumcision as a **seal** of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the ancestor of all who believe without being circumcised and who thus have righteousness reckoned to them, and likewise the ancestor of the circumcised who are not only circumcised but who also follow the example of the faith that our ancestor Abraham had before he was circumcised. For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith.”

In 2 Cor. 1: 21-22 and Eph. 1: 13, the word **seal** probably refers to **baptism**, an interpretation based on the use of the word ‘anointing’ in Acts 10: 38, referring to the baptism of Jesus. Let’s read the text by text:

- Acts 10: 38: “how God anointed [*sealed*] Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.”

- 2 Cor. 1: 21-22: “But it is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed [*sealed*] us, by putting his seal [*baptized*] on us and giving us his Spirit in our hearts as a first installment.”

- Eph. 1: 13: “In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal [*baptized*] of the promised Holy Spirit.”

### 3) Parallel with the Mosaic covenant: the release from the devil and separation for God.

- 1 Cor. 10: 1-4: “I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ.” The Lord’s Supper was prefigured in the drink from the Rock (v. 4), and the baptism was prefigured in the sea (the baptism of repentance) and the cloud (baptism in the Holy Spirit). The Israelite baptism symbolized the separation; the crossing through the sea separated them from the Egyptians; the cloud set them apart for God (baptism in the Spirit). Peter presents the baptism as the release of the believer from the judgment and the transition to the kingdom of God (1 Pet. 3: 20-22).

## PART TWO: BLESSINGS ASSOCIATED WITH THE BAPTISM

Water baptism performs in us:

1) The new birth, that is, to have the remission [forgiveness] of sins and be born again in spirit, receiving a rebuilt spirit and a new mind, God’s mind. John the Baptist urged the people to repent, promising remission of sins:

- Mk. 1: 4: “John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” In Greek: *egeneto iōannēs baptizōn en tē erēmō kai kêrussōn baptisma metanoias eis aphesin amartiōn*

- Matt. 3: 2; 6: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near... and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.” *Jordan* symbolizes watershed, new mentality, to change and renew the mind, to be cleansed from the leprosy [sin], separation between the mind of man and the mind of God.

- Acts 2: 38: “Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”

- Tit. 3: 5: “he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.” He talks about salvation and regeneration of our spirit, that is, by water baptism our spirit is rebuilt, so our souls will be worked by the action of the Holy Spirit in us.

- Heb. 10: 22: “let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed [*remission and new birth*] with pure water.”

2) The stripping of the sinful body (we deny our carnal nature and we assume ourselves as spiritual beings) and the burial of sin, separating us definitely from the world and from sin (our old life is ‘buried’ and we rise up to eternal life like Jesus in His resurrection):

- Rom. 6: 1-14: “What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For whoever has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore, do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. No longer present your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.”

The text says that we were free from sin by the grace of God through baptism, simulating His death, that is, in baptism we bury our flesh in order to ‘resurrect’ when we get out of the waters, like Jesus rose from the grave. Now we have a new life, a life of holiness.

3) The circumcision of our hearts:

- Col. 2: 11-12: “In him [*Jesus*] also you were circumcised with a spiritual circumcision, by putting off the body of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ; when you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.” Circumcising the heart means to be open to the action of the Spirit of God, divine revival.

4) In addition to receive the Holy Spirit as a seal of the exclusive property of Jesus upon us water baptism enables us to receive the baptism in the Spirit:

- Jn. 3: 5: “Jesus answered, ‘Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water [*He meant conversion and baptism of repentance*] and Spirit.” This is something deep that we need to understand. It is not baptism that saves, but the confession of Jesus as Lord and Savior (Rom. 10: 9-10). However, without the baptism this salvation is not complete, because there is not the seal of the Spirit, enabling the person to truly take possession of the kingdom of God; in other words,



without the seal the person has no authority to rebuke demons nor to perform miracles or healings.

- Acts 2: 38-39: “Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.’” Water baptism enables us to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is promised gift, for us that came after the apostles, as for all who will come after us.

- Acts 8: 36-38: “As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, ‘Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?’ He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.” Nothing prevents a person from being baptized, if he really believes.

- Acts 10: 47: “Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” Here people were baptized before with the Holy Spirit by divine determination, then were baptized with water.

- 2 Cor. 1: 22: “by putting his seal on us and giving us his Spirit in our hearts as a first installment.” Water baptism ensures the eternal presence of the Holy Spirit in us.

- Gal. 3: 27: “As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” We are clothed with the presence of Christ through baptism.

- Tit. 3: 5: “He saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.” This means that our good works do not buy salvation, nor assure the presence of the Spirit in us. It’s by the mercy and the grace of God and by our faith.

5) It assures us the condition of children of God, gives us entry into His kingdom and active participation in it (divine adoption and spiritual authority):

- Matt. 3: 17: “And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.’” Baptism makes us children of God in the moment we give our lives to Jesus.

- Matt. 28: 19: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

- Jn. 3: 3-5: “Jesus answered him, ‘Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.’ Nicodemus said to him, ‘How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?’ Jesus answered, ‘Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.’” Notice here some important details. When the Lord says ‘without being born of water’, He is speaking of water baptism that brings the Spirit’s presence in us and allows us to enter the kingdom of God. But when He speaks in the previous verse about ‘being born from above’, He refers to the action of the Spirit in us in a strong and steady way, bringing transformation, that is, making us truly see the kingdom of God in our lives and the life of God in us, His full and abundant life.

- Acts 8: 14-25: “Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. The two went down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit (for as yet the Spirit had not come upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). Then Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. Now when Simon [the magician, Acts 8: 9-13] saw that the Spirit [of God] was given through the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money, saying, ‘Give me also this power so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit’.



But Peter said to him, ‘May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain God’s gift with money! You have no part or share in this, for your heart is not right before God. Repent therefore of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and the chains of wickedness’. Simon answered, ‘Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may happen to me’. Now after Peter and John had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, proclaiming the good news to many villages of the Samaritans.”

The text above speaks of the lives that were gained for the kingdom of God and how many of them received the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands of the apostles. It also talks about Simon that, seeing that they received this power from God, wanted to buy the gift, but was rebuked by Peter because the participation in the work of God is not achieved by money but by faith in the saving grace of Jesus and for love of Him. Simon, according to the bible, had joined the faith and was baptized in water (Acts 9: 13; had he really been converted?), but the Lord didn’t grant him the baptism in the Holy Spirit, for He knew the true intentions of his heart. This makes us think that it is not only water baptism that enables us to do His work in a more profound way, but the strength of the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

- Rom. 8: 14-17: “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.”

- 1 Cor. 12: 13: “For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.” This means that when we were baptized, we became part of the Body of Christ.

The blessings do not operate automatically just because of water baptism; they are only assured by this act, but will be enjoyed by active and obedient faith that follows baptism (item 2: Romans 6: 1-11). It is our obligation to live in practical holiness.

In short, **water baptism** performs in us:

The new birth (our spirit is rebuilt), the stripping of the sinful body (we deny our carnal nature and we assume ourselves as spiritual beings), the burial of sin (our old life is ‘buried’ and we resurrect to eternal life like Jesus in His resurrection – Rom. 6: 3-4; Col. 2: 11-12), the circumcision of our heart (to overthrow the barrier to the flowing of the Holy Spirit), it assures us the condition of children of God, gives us entry into His kingdom and active participation in it (divine adoption and spiritual authority) and separates us definitely from the world (our owner now is Jesus, for the seal of His blood is on us).

Before concluding, I want to talk a little about the **baptism in the Holy Spirit**, which leads us to be immersed in Him until the end of our lives, if we do not extinguish His flame in our spirit through sin. In Acts 1: 8 Jesus tells the apostles, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” And in Lk. 24: 49 He says, “And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.” The word **power** here comes from the Greek **dunamis**, which means **power to perform miracles**. Jerusalem symbolizes our home, Judea our kindred and Samaria, our neighbors and those whom the Lord lead us to preach the word. Therefore, the **baptism in the Holy Spirit** clothes

us with an extra strength to carry out the work of God on earth. He empowers us with His fire to perform miracles. In Acts 2: 1-41 we see the baptism in the Holy Spirit (Pentecost) empowering the disciples to the ministry that Jesus had set aside for them. The action of the Spirit was so strong there and on the days that followed that in Acts 4: 13 is written: "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and realized that they were uneducated and ordinary men, they were amazed and recognized them as companions of Jesus." This is only one reference to the transformation that occurred after the baptism of the apostles. The entire book of Acts reflects the consequences of this spiritual act. The characteristic of the baptism of the Spirit is to speak in tongues (Acts 2: 1-13; Acts 10: 44-46; Acts 19: 6). And in 1 Cor. 14, the entire chapter, but with emphasis to verse 4, Paul says that praying in tongues edifies our spirit. We should really pray in tongues so that our spirit speaks with the Father and thus be strengthened.

In Lk. 11: 13 it is written: "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" When Jesus spoke these words, the Holy Spirit had not yet been given (Jn. 7: 39, for He only came at Pentecost). Although the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in us at the moment of our conversion (Eph. 1: 13), He gradually fills us with gifts and power (1 Cor. 12: 1; 4-11) according to His calling for each one of us and our exercise of faith and willingness to serve God. This is indisputable (Acts 8: 14-17; Acts 19: 6). So much so that He left us the ordinance of baptism in water, but baptism in the Holy Spirit, with gifts and power, is God's prerogative, for He knows the hearts of His children and knows how they will use His gifts (Remember Simon, the magician in Samaria). Therefore, I believe it is valid to continue asking, yes, for the outpouring of spiritual gifts to serve the Lord more completely. I am living proof of what "Baptism with the Holy Spirit" means and why this strength is necessary in our Christian life.

Therefore, if you already confessed Jesus as your Lord and Savior but were not yet baptized in water, don't waste time. Baptism is ordinance, not option. Don't let the devil rob you of the blessings resulting from it. And if you don't have yet the baptism in the Spirit ask God; it is your right and your promise given by God.

## LOVE IS THE SUPREME GIFT



In 1 Cor. 13: 1-13, Paul tells us why love is an excellent way, explaining the last verse of chapter 12 which says, “But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.” Then he writes about love. So let’s read the entire text:

“If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude [NIV, it does not envy, it does not boast, it does not proud. It is not rude]. It does not insist on its own way [NIV, it is not self-seeking]; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.”

Talking about love these days seems to be something very common, since even worldly music addresses the subject; so it became a highly distorted and trivialized matter when it should be something treated with great respect because talking about love is talking about God Himself. In 1 Jn. 4: 8 is written that God is love.

To speak of the true love, we need to set aside first the sick and distorted actions of the devil that take on the beautiful clothes of love, but are sickly and evil ways of arresting the human being in chains for many years. Love presented by him is a way to mask the emotional blackmail, misuse of power, ridiculous emotionalism, the will to dominate or subjugate others, to take away the free will that was given by God to people, to manipulate each other, to put the burden of concern on the shoulders of those who love and those who are loved, to remove protection of a life as a result of uncontrolled worry, carnal desires or simple physical attraction, jealousy, emotional dependency and possessive behavior that leads to homicidal impulses in an extreme degree of imbalance, and other bad attitudes that only bring pain and oppression.

Another very important thing to know: the Greeks gave names to the different manifestations of love (Eros, Philia and Agape; or Storge (Greek: storgē), between parents and children), but this was a merely human division; for God, love is love, it doesn’t matter if it’s between a couple, between parents and children or between friends. Where there is respect there is love, where the qualities described above in 1 Cor. 13: 4-7 are present there is love, and where there is this kind of love there is God.

Love is not romance. It is a mistake to think so. True love was demonstrated on the cross and to get there we need to grow. Agape requires maturity.

Let's spend our time talking of the love designed and demonstrated by God Himself through His Son Jesus.

First, Paul begins by saying that even if we speak in tongues, if there is no true love in us, it would only be ostentation of power without having actually a beneficial purpose to attain; we would be just as a noisy bell more irritating to hear than producing a melodious and enjoyable sound. Those who heard the preaching soon would feel the emptiness of it, because it would be dead word without the life of the Spirit of Love of God Himself.

In second place, he says that even prophesying the word of God, understanding all the mysteries and all knowledge, having faith and doing the impossible, without love we will be nothing. This is why Jesus said in the gospels to those who in the end of times claim the right to be in heaven just for having done healings and prophesied in His name: "Then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers'" (Matt. 7: 23), because with no trace of resemblance to Him, we cannot be recognized as His. The devil also heals and prophesies, but does not know how to love.

In third place, although we distribute our goods to the poor and make sacrifices of our own body as proof of love, if true LOVE is not in us, nothing will avail. This will not assure us a place in heaven or God's approval.

We can then summarize these three conditions: it is no use pretty talking; it is no use to accomplish miracles in His name or to prophesy His word or to practice sacrifices or good works. None of these things guarantees us a reward or participation in the kingdom of heaven. It is necessary the divine enablement to exercise love, which is the very nature of God. First, we must have the Spirit of God in us, not only because we accept Jesus as Lord and Savior, but the baptism of the Spirit that will perfect us in His gifts and fruit, of which love is the first and essential gift so that the others can be manifested and exercised.

Love is a set of characteristics described in the verses that follow:

1) **Love is patient.** The great and the first characteristic of the presence of God's love in us is patience; patience so that things happen, patience with ourselves and with people, patience with the circumstances and even with God, what already puts us in a position of humility before Him and dependence on His help. In a world so computerized, mechanized and so desperate and concerned with the urgency, speed, efficiency and profit, it becomes extremely difficult to practice true love, because we have no patience or humility to recognize that we are apprentices in some areas and that is exercise, time and practice that make us effective in what we are learning. A doctor does not become a doctor in two weeks in medical school or just sat in the library studying on medical pathology, but in a hospital from eight to thirty-six hours, sometimes, dealing face to face with the practical side of situations. A pastor does not become a pastor in three years as a convert, just because he knows the word of God by heart or because he knows how to drive out demons. Both to deal with devices and with people, even with plants and animals, we need to have love, which implies patience to wait for the seed to bear fruit and 'the child' to be born, or the 'father (mother)' to be ready to be father (mother). That is why God made the world in seven days, to show us that when someone loves what was created and wants to make it perfect, it is necessary to have patience and meticulousness, perseverance, persistence and care. Human flesh is impatient because it sees the chronological time; the spirit is patient because it sees eternity, God's time.

2) **Love is kind.** Kindness means benevolence, indulgence, clemency, sweetness, gentleness; desire to serve others); to show oneself useful (Act benevolently); goodness, uprightness. Kindness symbolizes a good nature, a nature aimed always to what is good and thinking about the well-being of the neighbor as God thinks of His children; it means to hate all that is evil or may cause harm to others; to reject and oppose to the nature of the devil and the world. Being good is to know how to make others happy. And making someone happy implies respect for his wishes and needs. Sometimes, we want to give something to someone; however, we do not care if what we are giving will make that person happy or not, for not all presents please people, simply because there is a need implied in this act. For example, the dress or the decorative piece we want to give to our friend can be beautiful and surely she would be happy because it is expensive and the product is imported. But it may be that a packet of hamburger given with love in a time of extreme financial difficulty is the great happiness. Making others happy, being good, means having sensitivity to observe them, as well as their needs, tastes, habits, as Jesus did with all those who approached Him asking for something. He simply might cure the blind, but He asked him first, “What do you want me to do for you?” This was, among many other things, a sign of respect for the other’s desire. It’s obvious that, as God, He knew more than the man what he needed. The blind man could simply have asked for Jesus to talk with those people to fix the roof of his house because if there were leaks, he could be hurt by falling. I’m sure that if the request was this Jesus would give him with pleasure, but as God, even if this was the only request, He would heal him too, because He knew very well what would make him truly happy. Therefore, exercising love is to exercise the goodness of Jesus, to make our neighbor happy, whether with big or little things. Often, being good does not make us spend money or time; only a kiss or just a ‘good morning’ is enough; a prayer in the moment of a weep of distress of a brother is enough to bring him back to his state of bliss. Kindness is linked to compassion. A person cannot feel compassion for those who suffer from something that is unknown to him. That’s why God allows us to suffer many things: so that we can understand each other and be a true channel of blessing as Jesus was. Selfishness and not wanting to commit to the neighbor is innate in humans. The teaching of Jesus is, “Love one another as I have loved you; weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice” (Jn. 13: 34; Jn. 15: 12; Rom. 12: 15).

3) **Love does not envy.** In Greek, the word used is ‘zeloo’ (Strong #2206, ζηλόω), which means: to have warmth of feeling for or against: to affect, to covet (earnestly), (have) desire, (move with) envy, to be jealous over, to be zealous, zealously. Sometimes we behave like immature children before God and we feel jealous of His approval if a brother does something better than us. He sees us differently; He looks at our hearts in another way. When Samuel was sent to anoint David, God told him, “for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.” Not envying or not being jealous means to be generous. Generosity means to give freely, without thinking that what we are giving belongs to us and is too precious to give to another person. If we are jealous of something that belongs to us, it is difficult to give it freely to someone, because we go thinking about it all the time. It’s the same thing with love. If we love someone, thinking that love belongs to us, we’ll end up with the feeling that it will be missing, and then we’ll claim it back to supply us. That’s where we note the difference between human love and divine love. We were born with a misconception that love is something limited, and that has a daily portion to be used, so we love narrowly, demanding back what we give. That’s what Paul says in his epistles to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 6: 12): “There is no restriction in our affections, but only in yours.” Many parents instill this misconception in their children when they say, “If

you're a good boy, daddy gives you a toy," or, "If you're a good girl, mom gives you a kiss," or else, "Look what you did! I hate you!" Thus, the person carries that conditional love within him all his life and does anything to earn it; it's what is called the 'peace at any price.' We don't need to feel jealous if others love more than us, or if whom we love is more loved than us or if whom we love can only be loved by us and by nobody else. Jesus loved everyone on the cross and His love was enough to everyone until today. It is available twenty-four hours a day for who wants to drink of it for more than two thousand years. We do not need to be jealous of the love of God for other people, because His love is enough for us all at the same time. The interesting of all, the big key, is to know how to find and receive His love; in the second place, to learn to love like He loves, freeing people. Human love grasps; the divine love frees. To find the love of God is easy: just entering His presence through prayer and with a sincere heart, free from sins, without fear of His punishment and with the interior willing to be like Him, a giver. When we learn to give of ourselves, we discover how God loves. Many people get confused and want to justify their selfishness by saying that each one has his own way to love, what indeed has, but what is at stake here is not the amount or the form of manifestation, but the quality of love: "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (Jn. 15: 13). The quality of love which the Lord speaks here is the one He gave on the cross, the totality of His being in availability to all; in other words, what we have is not ours, it was freely given to us by the mercy and the grace of God without our merit; therefore, it should be available to whoever needs it. The most precious thing we have is His word of salvation.

4) **Love does not boast, does not proud.** This means humility. True love gives of itself without asking for a medal of honor for its act of donation and goodness. It doesn't get proud of having done good. It doesn't go telling its achievements to everyone. It does not intend to be seen, but rejoices in the fact of having exercised the commandment of the Lord, knowing that the reward comes from above. We don't need exaggerated demonstrations of affection or great gifts to say that we love; on the contrary, love is a small seed that needs to be sowed, fertilized and watered every day as a lifestyle, not as a sporadic act of boon. Love involves constant care with what one loves, even with inanimate objects like a house or the temple of the Lord. The act of love requires perseverance and vigilance so that nothing may harm what is being cared. That's how God makes with us: day by day He takes care so that nothing can harm us (Isa. 27: 3, "I, the Lord, am its keeper; every moment I water it. I guard it night and day so that no one can harm it").

5) **It is not rude.** It means delicacy, discretion. True love is gentle, discreet; it respects the will, the right, rest, limitations of others and always looks for the best time to manifest. To be so, it is necessary to develop sensibility. Just as the Holy Spirit is gentle and looks for an opportune moment to talk to us without exposing us to ridicule, we should do the same with those whom we say we love, not reprehending them in front of others for small things or just a habit, a 'small joke' that causes discomfort in all who are around. Making jokes with people's way of being, with their limitations, nervous tics or problems, especially in the presence of others, even before a large audience, it does not please the heart of God. Husbands and wives, fathers and sons, brothers and sisters, friends, lovers, students and teachers, bosses and employees, pastors and 'sheep' and so on, all need to review their attitudes so that rejection, division, enmity and hate disappear from relationships. Love lifts the fallen and exalts him before those who mocked him. That's what Jesus did all the time. Remember the woman with the flow of blood; Jairus, the chief of the synagogue; the centurion; the lepers; Zacchaeus; the adulterous woman who was to be stoned; the woman who wiped His feet with her hair

in the house of Simon; the story of the lost son; the poor widow; the children who wanted to be with Him; Mary who was criticized by Martha; Mary Magdalene, who was freed from seven demons and began to accompany Him; the Samaritan woman who had had five men, but none of them in truth was her husband; the blind who were cured; the evildoer on the cross next to Him; the Gadarene possessed by demons and others. Jesus did not ridicule any of them; on the contrary, He was sensitive enough to deal with them, He knew how to behave properly, He loved them.

6) **It does not insist on its own way** [NIV, it is not self-seeking]. This means surrender. Who loves does not care if the other will give profit, a return, or not. This means to know how to supply the need of the fellow man without seeing in him an 'investment' for the future. People are not savings account that will give yields later. This refers to couples, families, friends, relationships with brothers in Christ, etc. The mutual care will be the result of a seed that was planted; it will be an exercise of love, not an obligation subject to a penalty or trial. If it was so, Jesus would have taken a total disadvantage with us because none of us, however much we do our best, can give back to Him what He gave to us; it's useless to try. Respect for others is not something a person can buy, sell or demand; however, it is gained in the day by day, depending on the attitude of who wants it. Jesus did not need to demand respect; His daily attitude by itself was worthy of respect. He loved unconditionally, without seeking His own interest, even when they denied shelter to Him. Do you remember the passage that Jesus said, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" – Matt. 8: 20 – because they refused a stay for Him in that city? He did not curse them, just went His way.

7) **It is not irritable.** It means tolerance. What a difficult thing is to be tolerant with the slowness of others, their habits and customs, even with their anxiety and stress, for often they affect us and take away our peace of mind! Sometimes it's hard to be tolerant even with us, with our own growth and understanding of natural and spiritual things. The perfectionism that affects most people is a reflection of intolerance in relation to their own imperfections, demanding of others what they cannot give and preventing the free flow of the Spirit of God. Where everything has to be perfect, the Holy Spirit does not act, because our deformed concept of perfection is completely different from His. We should seek perfection, yes, what makes us think that we should seek the resemblance to Jesus, do the best we can for Him, for ourselves and for others, but being aware of our limitations and learning to compliment someone or ourselves when we discover that the love with which something was done is above the human neurosis of reaching perfection. For the Lord, perfection is related to being complete, that is, it's our union with Him that makes us perfect, for He completes us, fills our empty spaces and supplies us in our shortcomings. Perfection is not the absence of sin; it indicates fullness, maturity, by exercising the law of love to God and men. The Lord said to Abraham, "Walk before me and be blameless" [*i.e.*, '*be perfect*'] (Gen. 17: 1b). There is another verse that says, "For if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has—not according to what one does not have" (2 Cor. 8: 12). Doing the best we can is to be perfect. On the other hand, perfectionism is a form of rejection against ourselves and makes us inflexible with what we need to have flexibility as, for example, to deal with people like us. Perfectionism brings yokes and hinders laughter; it generates formality and prevents the true fellowship in the Agape (Greek, God's love), because we feel inhibited of being as we really are. It saddens the heart of God, for it takes away the humility and the spontaneity and gives way to pride. Jesus was so tolerant that endured the closed mind and traditionalism of the Pharisees, judging His sound doctrine; He endured the incomprehension and the arrogance of Pilate, judging

whether He should be released or arrested. He was so tolerant that ate with thieves, drunkards and prostitutes to bring them the real light. He was so tolerant that endured the mood swings of Peter. He was so tolerant that endured to see Judas as His treasurer. He was so tolerant that He heard the longest and most absurd stories, when He could go straight to the point, to heal the person once and for all and go out and do something else. He is so tolerant with us that He works for years in the same wound and in the same trauma until they are perfectly healed and we are totally secure to face new challenges, even when any psychologist has given up on us. He is so tolerant that He does not give up on turning us from 'rough stones' into 'fine crystals' or perfect 'sculptures' like Him. What do we have to say about that?

8) **It is not resentful.** It means innocence, not to keep grudge by things that are made to us. Who loves forgives and forgets, closes his eyes to certain things so as not to be hurt. It's another difficult item of the characteristics of love, and only by divine action in us is that we can overcome life's trials. It means to practice, by faith, what David had to do with his family and before Saul. It means preferring to be happy rather than being right; to leave justice in God's hands, as well as the choice of certain circumstances so as not to suffer more than necessary. It does not mean to flee from the challenge; it is simply having wisdom and prudence. It means to do what David did before the revolt of Absalom and let God decide. Loving innocently is to do things in the simplicity of a child, just because we delight to do; not because others will find appropriate or not. Today we are so demanding on everything, that even in matter of love we judge the attitudes. Loving with no resentment is to be as a child in malice and live under the protective wings of God the Father, instead of being as adult as men want us to be; it means to escape the carnal attitudes that bring weight to our being.

9) **It does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth.** This means to be sincere, to do the same that Jesus did in the past and still does to us: to love the sinner but hate the sin. It means to know that we can make a mistake; however, we don't need to be complicit with the error or the things that grieve God's heart. In fact, this is to experience true repentance and to show this repentance to those who are on the wrong track so that they can enjoy the intimacy with the Lord. Repenting is to acknowledge the error and change attitude. When we love our brothers and the things of God, we also care if the devil is deceiving them and stealing from them or through them God's blessings or violating His holiness. It is often to take position in certain causes for the love of His righteousness, even costing us the lack of support of the cowards or accommodated people; it means to defend those who cannot defend themselves and fight to eradicate sadness, exchanging it for a smile of satisfaction on someone's lips. In short, it is to repeat what Jesus came to do here on earth, to destroy the works of the devil. Sincerity, however, should not be an excuse of the flesh to bring someone down or undermine his hope and faith, but the sincerity of showing in our own face the approval or disapproval with the situations and attitudes that affront us; is to exercise discipline and authority to preserve the life of God in us and in whom we love.

The text goes on saying that love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. And all this until we can see fulfilled the justice and the truth of God in every situation.

The chapter also says that love never ends. Even when we get to eternity, where there will be no more need of prophecies, or science, or knowledge or speaking in tongues, love will remain, for it is God Himself and He is eternal. The secret is to bring this love today into ourselves and live His essence now. Today, we know things in part, as Paul says, because we are not yet fully immersed in God, but in the end of times,



when we join Him and we are aware of His true essence, then we won't need our conjectures or carnal and imperfect experiences because we will know, face to face, the One who is perfect. The text ends with an interesting comment from Paul, confirming his growth with God, which brought maturity to him and, consequently, a broader view of love.

He says, "When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways." The word 'child' means in Greek: 'infantile, unskilled, illiterate, stupid, insecure and totally dependent on others.' 'Man' or 'adult' means 'to have authority and command.' 'To think' means 'opinion about oneself.' 'To reason' means: 'to consider, to assess, to imagine, to fantasize.' 'To speak' means 'to preach.' In the case of a child, it means 'to talk without knowing the truth of the situation, what others expect it to say or feel.' What Paul wants to explain is that when he was immature in matter of love, he fantasized, was insecure, had a different opinion of himself, relied on information and experience of others, he said what others wanted him to say or feel, without knowing the truth of the situation. However, when the full revelation of God came upon him, he began to have more security, understanding and authority; the fear went away. Furthermore, he knew more of God. He goes on saying that his journey is not over; nevertheless, he will know things as God sees them, as He knows him in his heart. Faith, hope and love do not die; however, the greatest of these is love, because it is God Himself generating hope and faith in us.

Love cannot be something lax, careless, too complacent with what does not deserve it, but often firm and strong so as not to let those we love get lost. It's a mistake to think that who loves is always nice and does not rebuke, for this would deny the very word of God which says that He is love, but also says that He rebukes the son He loves. If God allowed us do everything our flesh wanted, we would all be in sin and not saved. It was for love of us that He has allowed the torture of His own Son on the cross. And it is for love of us that He disciplines us lest we lose our salvation. This does not mean that He punishes us with hatred or violence, but that His discipline is tempered with mercy.

Love is the supreme gift, but it is also a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5: 22), that is, the exercise of love creates more love; in other words, when we plant love, we reap love.

A tip: If you do not know how to love a particular person, try to ask her (him) how she (he) wants to be loved, how she (he) feels loved, how she (he) sees love or realizes the demonstration of love for someone for her (him). You may be surprised at the simplicity of the answer. She (he) may not be as demanding as you are thinking; on the contrary, her (his) needs can be simpler than you might think.

We know little of true love, almost nothing, so we should ask God to remove from us the distortions of love and put His truth into our being so that it can act in our own lives and that of others. May love be the first gift to be sought, because the others can only act through it. Be sure of one thing, it's homework for the rest of life.

- Love is not conniving with sin and does not provoke people; it respects them.
- Having time for someone and communicating freely is a way of showing love.
- As faith without works is dead (Jam. 2: 17), words without love and practical actions are nothing (1 Cor. 13: 1-3).
- Whoever loves knows how to make another person happy; does not deny others what makes them happy.
- To love is to be present and participate; it is to laugh and cry together.
- Love is not a feeling, it is an attitude of faith, surrender to God and courage to obey Him.

- Love is a seed that someone plants, waits for it to germinate, sees it grow and is happy to harvest.
- It is a two-way street, where one goes and the other returns.



## BIBLICAL STUDY ABOUT ECCLESIASTES 9: 8



“Let your garments always be white; do not let oil be lacking on your head.” (Ecc. 9: 8)

In the Middle East, the custom of welcoming a guest into one’s tent was done with great pleasure and courtesy. The kiss and the washing of feet was not only a customary ritual, but a sign of cleanliness and civility (Matt. 6: 17). The host poured fragrant oil on the visitor’s head to bring comfort and relief from the heat and dust (Eccl. 9:8). The oil brought relief to dry skin. The head anointed with oil is a common biblical figure for abundance of joy (Isa. 61: 3; Ps. 45:7). The guest was also kissed on the cheek and had his feet washed (Gen. 18: 4-8; Lk. 7: 44-46). Washing the guest’s feet was a sign of cleanliness, comfort, and hospitality, usually done by the humblest slaves, something that was done spontaneously by the sinful woman and Jesus Himself (Lk. 7: 38; Jn. 13: 5). The kiss (in the NT written as ‘holy kiss’ – 1 The. 5: 26; Rom. 16: 16; 2 Cor. 13: 12: “Greet one another with a holy kiss”) was a form of greeting, an expression of brotherly affection and unity among Christians. In Antiquity and in the Bible, the kiss was a common form of greeting and expression of affection. The kiss is also mentioned in Lk. 7: 45, when the sinful woman kissed Jesus’ feet and he told Simon that he had forgotten this courtesy. Furthermore, in Ancient times it was difficult to keep white garments clean (that is, until they were completely white – cf. Mk. 9: 3). Therefore, among the directions given by Solomon in this chapter of Ecclesiastes, one of them is to keep the garments always white (clean) and the head anointed with oil, as a symbol of purity, holiness, and joy.

But for us today, this verse has deeper meanings.

The verse begins by saying that our garments should always be white, that is, clean and without sin, because they were cleansed by the blood of Jesus (Rev. 7: 14). The Bible says that we are the sanctuary of the living God, that is, a temple where the Holy Spirit dwells (1 Cor. 3: 16-17; 1 Cor. 6: 19-20) and, logically, a place without the impurities of sin and without the dominion of human flesh, otherwise there would be a dispute for the authority and the lordship of God in our lives. As we surrender wholeheartedly to Jesus at the moment of our conversion, we are not our own anymore and become property of the Lord. Now, as servants and children we owe Him obedience. Obedience to the Lord is a way of showing our love for Him: “They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them... Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.” (Jn. 14: 21; 23-24 cf. 1 Jn. 5: 3).

Therefore, the bible says to work our salvation and our sanctification, so we will be ready to enter the New Jerusalem, our heavenly abode. It also says that it is not we who

work our own sanctification; the Spirit of God does this, but it is through our free will that we give Him room to work within our soul (Phil. 2: 12-13; Phil. 1: 6; Zech. 4: 6). The apostle wrote in 1 Jn. 3: 9-10: “Those who have been born of God do not sin, because God’s seed abides in them; they cannot sin, because they have been born of God.” John also wrote in 1 Jn. 5: 18: “We know that those who are born of God do not sin, but the one who was born of God protects them, and the evil one does not touch them.” This means that all those who have experienced the new birth through the surrender to Jesus do not continue to sin, at least consciously, for they have the wisdom of God and His discernment. His word is eternal and never lies. It gives us the direction when we are in trouble and we need a correct guidance.

Regarding sin, we can say that it is not just about stealing, killing or committing adultery, as many people think. That’s why the apostle John also wrote in 1 Jn. 1: 8-10: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.” This does not contradict what we read above, that is, one who was born of God does not live by committing sin, but continues to have within him the nature of sin placed in man in Eden. Although with the tendency to sin, whoever is a child of God knows how to master it, and does not sin. Therefore, when Cain was displeased at the rejection of his offering in relation to Abel’s, the Lord said to him, “Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it.” (Gen. 4: 6-7)

One of the meanings of the word ‘sin’ in Greek is HAMARTIA = to err the target. But there are others like: ADIKIA = iniquity, injustice; PONERIA = evil, of a vicious or degenerate kind; PARABASIS = transgression, to go beyond a known limit; ANOMIA = lack of law, disrespect or violation of law. Sin is the failure to love God with our whole being; it’s the active refusal to recognize Him and obey Him as our Creator and Lord, independence, to claim the position that only God can occupy, hostility toward God (Rom. 8: 7: “For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law—indeed it cannot”), manifested in active rebellion against Him; to take from God what is His. So we can understand that we are sinners even though we do not live in conscious sin all the time. But we are free when we let the Spirit of God command our will, our thoughts and our feelings.

Sin defiles our garments and that is why the verse of Ecclesiastes speaks to keep them always white. One way to defile them, besides the more obvious sins, which are the works of the flesh mentioned in Gal. 5: 19-21, is to keep more intimate fellowship with unbelievers, for this undermines our strength. This is what Paul writes in 1 Cor. 5: 9-13 and 2 Cor. 6: 14-18: “I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral persons—not at all meaning the immoral of this world, or the greedy and robbers, or idolaters, since you would then need to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother or sister who is sexually immoral or greedy, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or robber. Do not even eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging those outside? Is it not those who are inside that you are to judge? God will judge those outside. Drive out the wicked person from among you”... “Do not be mismatched [NIV: yoked together] with unbelievers. For what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship is there between light and darkness? What agreement does Christ have with Belial? [*A demon (an angel of hostility), or symbolizes wicked or worthless people*] Or what does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the

temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, ‘I will live in them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore come out from them, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you, and I will be your father, and you shall be my sons and daughters’, says the Lord Almighty.”

The most important thing is to give ourselves into the hands of the Holy Spirit and let Him gradually sanctify us, taking from our soul the taste for the things of the world and placing within it the taste for the things of God.



The second part of the biblical verse is, “do not let oil be lacking on your head.” Here, we’ll talk about the meaning of ‘anointing.’ The anointing is like a shield that covers us completely so that the evil has no power to touch us. The word ‘anointed’ and the act of anointing with oil (Mashach) refers to the custom of anointing with oil to consecrate and sanctify things or people. The anointing oil represents the Holy Spirit (Ruach haKodesh) or the Spirit of God (Ruach Elohim). The spice, the perfume, the fragrance, symbolizes Jesus (2 Cor. 2: 14-16). Mashach gives origin to Mashiach (Messiah), the Anointed One (in Greek, the Christ). Ruach means ‘spirit,’ ‘wind.’ ‘Holy’ or ‘Saint’ (Hagios, Greek) means ‘sacred, pure, blameless, consecrated, set apart, worthy of being honored, to be like God, to have the inmost nature of God, be separated and reserved to God and for His service’. He wants to see this characteristic in us, so He says, “You shall be holy to me; for I the Lord am holy, and I have separated you from the other peoples to be mine.” (Lev. 20: 26).

The bible says, “Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5: 18). How do we become filled with the Spirit and let His anointing overflow? This begins as a habit of reading His word, praying, praising and letting it perform its function, which is to cleanse, strengthen and edify us (1 Pe. 5: 10). Also, when we allow ourselves to be channels for the Holy Spirit to bless other lives and to accomplish the Work of God on earth, we multiply the anointing we receive from Him and we enhance the spiritual gifts. On the other hand, when we let the flesh prevail, the spirit weakens and the anointing decreases.

Therefore, my brother, my sister, give your life in the hands of the Lord and He will put the Holy Spirit into your spirit. Through Him you will be saved and sanctified and will receive the spiritual gifts and fruit necessary for your growth and for the edification of other brethren in Christ.

## MINISTRIES IN CHURCH



There are two basic texts that talk about the ministries established by God here on earth, showing the different ways by which we can serve Him and contribute to the growth of the Body of Christ. The two texts are:

- 1 Cor. 12: 1-31a (cf. Rom. 12: 7-8; 1 Pet. 4: 10-11): “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. You know that when you were pagans, you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak. Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says ‘Let Jesus be cursed!’ and no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit. Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses. For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,’ that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear would say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,’ that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you,’ nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’ On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all

teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But strive for the greater gift.”

• Eph. 4: 1-16: “<sup>1</sup> I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the **calling** to which you have been called, <sup>2</sup> with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love [KJV: With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; NIV: Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love], <sup>3</sup> making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. But each of us was given grace [= *spiritual gift*] according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore it is said, ‘When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people.’ (When it says, ‘He ascended,’ what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things). The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people’s trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love.”

Initially, based on Eph. 4: 1 we’ll find written the word **calling**, in Latin, **vocation**, and in Greek, **klesis** (klêseôs), which means ‘an invitation to a feast.’ Looking at this, we can see that exercising a ministry is a privilege given by God, an invitation to participate in the blessings of His kingdom, for by serving Him and serving others in love, somehow we are sowing into good ground and we’ll reap the fruit of our labor, that is, the best that God has for us.

The main features of those who want to exercise a ministry are in verse 2: humility, gentleness and patience (KJV: Lowliness, meekness and longsuffering). If we go to Gal. 5: 22-23 we’ll see that these characteristics are fruit of the Spirit. **Humility** (lowliness) is to know that we depend on God in all situations, regardless of our position within the Church or the society. It is to be conscious of the lack of God and the dependence on Him. It is to be empty of our ‘self’ so that the Holy Spirit fills that void. It should not to be confused with humiliation, low self-esteem, lack of money or material possessions, nor with the denial of the spiritual authority that was already given to us by God. **Gentleness** (or meekness) means: serenity, tranquility, calm, to let himself be shaped by God, calm in the certainty of victory, to be sure that everything has a solution. Being meek is to be submissive to the will of God, to His laws and the divine plan. In this verse of Eph. 4: 2, the Greek word for meekness is *praotês*, *πραότης*, Strong #4236, meaning: mildness, gentleness, meekness, kindness; humility. **Patience** (longsuffering) means knowing how to wait. So we can deduce that there is no ministry without having first spiritual gifts and spiritual fruit, that is, the spiritual gift bears fruit, and by the exercise of these fruit, the ministry is defined. Later, we’ll see that God has a purpose in distributing the ministries that is the improvement of His children and the edification of the Body of Christ, so that we all reach the unity in the faith and in the knowledge of Jesus, the spiritual maturity. In doing so, we’ll contribute to the growth of the Church of



the Lord (Eph. 4: 12-16). Therefore, we are members of one Body and our personal performance is important so that it can be strengthened.

Still in Eph. 4: 11 we can see that the gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers. The verb '**to give**' in this text in Greek, **didomi** (δίδωμι), means 'to grant, to give something to someone, privilege, concession, to transfer a property, to exchange, capacity, purpose, ability to do.' In the conjugation of the verb didomi, the past action is written as **edôken**, ἔδωκεν, 'gave' (kai autos edôken tous men apostolous tous de prophêtas tous de euaggelistas tous de poimenas kai didaskalous, namely, 'The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers'). **Didomi** has other meanings, in this biblical text and in any others, such as: 'to give something to someone, to give something to someone to his advantage, to bestow a gift, to grant, to supply necessary things, to deliver something to someone's care, to entrust something to be administered, to give or commit to someone something to be religiously observed, to give what is due or obligatory, to pay (wages or reward), to appoint to an office, to give something to someone as his own (as an object of his care), to give someone to someone to care for his interests, to grant or permit, to commission, to deliver, to give something to whom it already belonged, to return.' All these meanings confirm the privilege given by God to determine a specific ministry to a child of His. The work for Him should be seen not as a burden or as if God was charging something, but as a means provided by the Father to make us happy, because actually we only feel personal fulfillment in Him and in the accomplishment of His will with joy. If we look at the text of 1 Cor. 12, we'll also understand that for God we are all important, even if at human eyes the form to serve Him may seem less worthy or less showy. In 1 Cor. 12, Paul purposely mixes spiritual gifts with ministries. In Eph. 4: 11, the ministries are more clearly defined: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.

**Apostle** comes from the Greek, **Apostolos (Apostolous)**, which means: 'messenger, the one who establishes the foundations of the Church.' The verb in Greek is **Apostellein**, 'to send forth.' It also means 'he who goes ahead with or by a command from God to plant, to unfurl a banner, to form a people with certain characteristics.' Paul was an example of apostle, even though he had not walked with Jesus, but by His order he went ahead to establish the Church of Christ among the Gentiles and, if he was not obedient to the commands of the Lord or if he feared the opinion of the Jews, we would not be here to enjoy the benefits of the cross. In Gal. 1: 10-17 he says: "Am I now seeking human approval, or God's approval? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still pleasing people, I would not be a servant of Christ. For I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin; for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. You have heard, no doubt, of my earlier life in Judaism. I was violently persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it. I advanced in Judaism beyond many among my people of the same age, for I was far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors. But when God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with any human being, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were already apostles before me, but I went away at once into Arabia, and afterwards I returned to Damascus." The bible itself describes other apostles after Jesus, and even without having known Him personally, are so considered: Matthias (Acts 1: 15-26 – he, yes, may have known Jesus personally, given Peter's statement – Acts 1: 21-22); Paul (Rom. 1: 1; 1 Cor. 9: 1); Barnabas (Acts 14: 14),

Silvanus or Silas (1 The. 1: 1; 1 The. 2: 7), Timothy (1 The. 1: 1; 1 The. 2: 7); James the brother of Jesus (Gal. 1: 19; he also knew Jesus); Apollos (1 Cor. 4: 1; 6; 9). Others were called messengers, which, in Greek, means apostles. They are: Epaphroditus (Phil. 2: 25) and Titus (2 Cor. 8: 23-24). Even today, God chooses apostles, through whom He can bring revival to His people. As we have seen, the apostolate implies creating a people with certain characteristics, unfurling a new flag, a new way to perform the gospel of Christ, keeping the sound doctrine, that is, show the Body a new facet of Jesus and the work of His Spirit.

**Prophet** comes from the Greek word **Prophetes (Prophêtas)**, spokesman; **pro** = **before** and **phetes** = **speaker**; verb phenai = 'to speak.' **Prophet** means: spokesman, messenger, who reveals the divine thoughts; who interprets oracles (prophecy or the word of God; divine counsel, responses or utterances; in Hebrew, *dabar*, דָּבָר, 'thing', 'word', Strong #1697; in Greek: λόγιον, *logion*, 'divine responses or utterances', Strong #3051); who is moved by the Holy Spirit and, thereafter, offers himself, solemnly, to declare to man what he has received from God by inspiration; the man who is used by the Spirit of God and to whom is given the authority and wisdom in the Word so that it has the weight that it should have; some have the gift of predicting the future (class of prophets called seers); also means poets. The prophet has the power to instruct, to comfort, to encourage, to rebuke, to convince of error, to declare guilty and stimulate people. There are references in the New Testament about prophets in Acts 11: 27; Acts 21: 10; Acts 13: 1 and Acts 15: 32, which makes us think that prophets existed not only in the Old Testament, but also in the Early Church. Even within the prophetic ministry there are various manifestations of the Spirit, because some are endowed with clairvoyance (prediction of the future), others not. Some are more used by God for exhortation, others for instruction and revelation of the Word and so on. In Matt. 10: 41 it is written: "Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward." The word of God tells us it is to test everything and hold fast to what is good (1 The. 5: 21). How do I know if a prophet is truly from God? Here are some important references: Jer. 23: 31-32; Deut. 13: 1-5; Deut. 18: 21-22. In short, the prophet who comes from God does not lead to error or sin, brings no lies or yoke; the true prophet does not say things of his flesh nor reports dreams or visions that are not God's, and, the most important of all, what comes from the mouth of God is fulfilled. The false prophecies sooner or later come to light and are unmasked, because the Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that they are in contradiction with the divine path for our lives. In addition, the gift of discernment of spirits (given by the Holy Spirit) helps us to distinguish the true from the false prophet.

In some places the bible, for example, Mal. 3: 1, the prophet (just as the apostle, as mentioned above) is called the **messenger**. In this text in particular, the Holy Spirit is doing a prophetic reference to John the Baptist.

**Evangelists (Greek, Evangelistes; euaggelistas):** name given in the NT to those who preached the gospel, but was not an apostle. *To Preach* means: to declare, to bring joy. Mark, Luke and Timothy (2 Tim. 4: 5) were evangelists. The evangelist reveals the love of God to the lost. It is the one who 'takes the sheep from the wolf's mouth', leads it into the sheepfold and makes it know Jesus' salvation. The word of God in his mouth brings light where there was darkness and enables the person to see the truth. The big weapon of the evangelist is the love of God for the lost, which protects him and gives him strength to face the darkness. It is also necessary that the evangelist develops his sanctification day after day, because it will increase the anointing of God upon his life. Actually, there are not standardized rules to evangelize people. The evangelist who is truly guided by the Spirit of God has the right strategies for each life that he wants to

gain to the Lord, for he has his feet protected with the Word, which gives him the basis for the work.

**Pastor** comes from the Greek, **Poimen (poimenas)**, and means: he who guards the cattle, he who presides over a meeting or heads an assembly (as Christ presides over the Church). It's the name given in the Old Testament to kings and queens, priests and prophets (Zech. 11: 8). He is who has the task of defending the flock from enemies that attack it. He is who finds the lost and loves him; he feeds the 'sheep' and expresses God's love for it. In Jn. 21: 15-23, Jesus is giving to Peter a pastoral calling. He speaks first, "Feed my lambs", that is, to give the best of living ('feed') to the small (lambs), to the youngest in faith. Secondly He says, "Tend my sheep", which means 'discipline, teach, exhort, correct, take care ('tend') of the oldest ones, those who have already grown and know my word.' In the third place He says, "Feed my sheep", that is, 'Feed my sheep; give the best of livelihoods also to the oldest ones that have grown, for they also need My love.' One must have Agape love (unconditional love of God) to feed sheep. Interestingly, Jesus asked Peter the first two times if he loved Him, using the Greek word corresponding to Agape (God's love), but Peter answered with the word corresponding to Philia (brotherly love). The third time that Jesus asked, He used the word Philia and then Peter wept, because it was with the love of friend (or brother) he had betrayed the Master. This made it very clear that Peter didn't know the Agape yet and was afraid of the responsibility of tending the flock of Christ without this kind of love, so he answered the first two questions with the kind of love he knew and that was not enough to lead other lives. In the third time, when Jesus decided to check also how his human love was, his love of brother, Peter discovered that even this kind of love he could not sustain. Therefore, only Jesus can clothe us with His empowerment of LOVE, with capital letter, so that we can take on the responsibility of caring for His flock and treat our human love too and then, to keep our soul supplied in our basic needs.

In the OT the kings were called in the bible 'anointed' or 'shepherds', and were **anointed by the prophets**. The prophets were the first to be called by God, they heard His voice and obeyed it; they were ordered (anointed) by Him to the position of spokesman of YHWH and then chosen to anoint a king (a shepherd). So it was with Moses, Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, etc. If we read the books of the prophets in the bible, we notice that their call always begins with: "The vision that came on such-and-such a man...", "Word of the Lord that came upon the prophet..." etc. Samuel heard the call of God since his childhood, but was not anointed by Eli the priest; Daniel began to be used by God as a prophet after a dream that Nebuchadnezzar had. Moses heard the voice of the Lord in the burning bush. Therefore, we can imagine that the call for kings (as it is for pastors today) is different from the call to be a prophet. Firstly, all hear a call within them, but the pastors receive from the Church the anointing with oil as a **human symbol** of their ministry. The prophet is usually called by God Himself and does not need symbolic confirmation of his service, **because the very word that comes out of his mouth testifies to the one who commanded him**. There can be no pastor in the Church without a prophet, because the word itself says, "Where there is no prophecy, the people cast off restraint, but happy are those who keep the law" (Prov. 29: 18).

**Teacher (Greek, Didakalos; didaskalous):** means teacher, master; who has great power in teaching, as Jesus and John the Baptist; who teaches the way of salvation, as Jesus and Paul; one who is used in a religious assembly and is under a weight of teaching through a special assistance of the Holy Spirit; one who is suitable to teach. It is who has the adaptation, capacity and suitability for teaching; he who has empowerment, base and structure in the Word. He is a column in the Church, for without the real teaching of the Word the Church perishes. The ministry of teacher, the

gift of teaching, cannot be learned in a classroom in the world or in the church, but it is a spiritual gift given by God to be effective. It depends a lot on the gift of wisdom to have strength. More than anything, it depends on the gift of love, because love creates patience, kindness, gentleness (meekness) and other fruit necessary to pass the information to someone. We can pass the information, but only the Spirit of God brings **formation** to that life; He alone shapes the character and perfects the personality; He alone is truly able to make the man a disciple. The teacher is only a channel to let flow the anointing of God's **formation**.

Missionary is a person sent by the church to announce the message of the Gospel to people of another cultural and geographic context, where it was not yet spread. The term is most commonly used by preachers of Christianity to promote their faith or perform ministries of service, such as education, literacy, social justice, health care, and economic development. The word arose in 1598 when the Jesuits sent members abroad. 'Mission' is a word derived from the Latin *missionem* (nom. *missio*), meaning the 'act of sending', or *mittere*, meaning 'to send.'

The missionary is who is the closest to the apostolic ministry by the fact to send forth the Word as an emissary, raising a people with new characteristics such as was the case of Paul, chosen by God to the Gentiles.

God's mission for His children [the **calling** (**vocation**, *klesis* or *klêseôs*)] is different, more or less comprehensive (depending on each case) and creative, not imposed by men.

As you can see, the ministries instituted by God are interactive and dynamic and should be under the dominion of the Spirit, in order to truly contribute to the growth of the Body of Christ. It is no use asking God, first, what is our ministry without first discover our spiritual gifts. Through the exercise of the gifts and of the fruit generated by them, the ministry itself will be defined.

The big secret to perform well the ministry that the Lord has given us is, first of all, the desire to serve in love to please God and not men, knowing that from the Lord we will receive the reward of our inheritance. The competition and power struggle are not part of this project.

## GIFTS AND SPIRITUAL FRUIT



The correct name for this theme is *Gifts and Spiritual Fruit*, instead of *Gifts and Fruit of the Spirit*, since there are gifts that come from the Father, others from the Son through the Spirit. So we have two types of gifts, with two meanings in Greek:

1) *Charisma* [χάρισμα, Strong #5486] appears fifteen times in the bible and has several meanings: a gift of grace, an undeserved favor, donation, advantage; free gift. From 'charizomai'; a (divine) gratuity, i.e. Deliverance (from danger or passion), a spiritual endowment; miraculous faculty (objectively); (subjectively) religious qualification (power) that some Christians have for service 'in' and 'of' Church of Christ.

We can find the references in:

- Rom. 1: 11: "For I am longing to see you so that I may share with you some spiritual gift to strengthen you" (This means that I can share my gifts with others and I do not get poorer if I exercise them).

- Rom. 5: 15: "But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the one man's trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many" (Here the gift refers to eternal life).

- Rom. 6: 23: "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eternal life is the great charisma, the great gift of God).

- Rom. 11: 29: "for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (This means that I don't lose the gifts that God gave me; they are irrevocable like the eternal life).

- Rom. 12: 6: "We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith" (This means that we have different charismas, there is not the right or wrong).

- 1 Cor. 1: 7: "so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ" (We must seek in God all the gifts He has for us).

- 1 Cor. 7: 7: "I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has a particular gift from God, one having one kind and another, a different kind" (This means that we can have different gifts, but there is one that individualizes us).

- 1 Cor. 12: 4: "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit" (A gift can have different manifestations, but it was generated by a single source, the Holy Spirit).

- 1 Cor. 12: 9: "to another faith by the same Spirit, to another, gifts of healing by the one Spirit" (Again we can see that there are many manifestations of the gifts).

- 1 Cor. 12: 28: "And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues" (All these gifts are used in ministries in the Church).

- 1 Cor. 12: 30-31: “Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way” (The greatest charisma is love).

- 2 Cor. 1: 11: “as you also join in helping us by your prayers, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing (Greek: Charisma) granted us through the prayers of many” – NRSV.

“... as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our [*Many manuscripts your*] behalf for the gracious favour granted us in answer to the prayers of many.” – NIV.

(I bless the brothers using my gifts. Here, the prayer of the believers favored the outpouring of God’s grace upon Paul and his companions in the time of tribulation).

- 1 Tim. 4: 14: “Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you through prophecy with the laying on of hands by the council of elders” (It is necessary to practice the charisma that God gave me. Neglecting it means not to participate in the kingdom of God on earth. Despising opportunities to serve the Lord means to neglect the gifts).

- 2 Tim. 1: 6: “For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands” (Charisma can be revived, not necessarily by the touch of hands, but who prays and lays his hands asks the Holy Spirit to revive the gift. In Deut. 34: 9 we have an interesting comment about it: “Joshua son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, because Moses had laid his hands on him; and the Israelites obeyed him, doing as the Lord had commanded Moses.” In the ancient cultures of the Old Testament, the laying on of hands was a **significant act** by representing the transfer of authority and the right of leadership. It also symbolized the approval of God and of the community, commissioning Joshua as leader. Joshua, however, did not receive wisdom by the touching of the hands of Moses; his wisdom came from the Lord. The same happened with Timothy in relation to Paul).

- 1 Pe. 4: 10: “Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received” (We serve with the charisma that we have).

2) *Doma* [δόμα, Strong #1390] appears three times in the bible and means: a gift, present, godsend; there is another meaning, such as: ‘one that protects from behind; boldness; have the power to protection.’

- Matt. 7: 11: “If you then, who are evil, know how to give *good gifts* to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!”

- Lk. 11: 13: “If you then, who are evil, know how to give *good gifts* to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

- Eph. 4: 8: “Therefore it is said, ‘When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave *gifts (doma)* to his people.’” I have someone protecting me from my former captivity. The protection here comes directly from the Father, not the Holy Spirit.

#### *SPIRITUAL GIFTS (Charisma):*

1 Cor. 12: 4-11; 27-31a: “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities,

but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance\* [NIV, 'message'; KJV, 'word'] of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses... Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance [those able to help others – NIV], forms of leadership [gifts of administration – NIV], various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But strive for the greater gifts.” \* I'll use the term of KJV: “Word”.

#### 1) *Gifts of the word:*

Word (*Greek, logos*): to tell, to assess, to produce decree, what the OT prophets said; the act of speaking, teaching, divine expression.

1.1 *Word of wisdom*: in Greek is *logos sophias*; in Hebrew, the word used for wisdom is *hokhmâ*, although other words are also sometimes used as synonyms: *bînâ* (understanding – Job 39: 26; Prov. 23: 4), *ʿbhünâ* (discernment – Ps. 136: 5), *sekhel* (prudence – Prov. 12: 8; Prov. 23: 9). Wisdom is intensely practical, not theoretical. Basically, wisdom is *the art of being successful, to form a correct plan to achieve the desired results*. Its seat is the heart, the center of intellectual and moral decision. It also means: *skill, prudence, grace; to learn to apply knowledge and understanding of the word; full of intelligence, knowledge of different subjects and the act of interpreting dreams*. There is also the human or worldly wisdom that is based on intuition and experience, without the aid of revelation, so it is limited. In the NT, it has the same intensely practical nature that we find in wisdom of the OT. The wisdom in its broadest sense belongs exclusively to God and consists not only in complete knowledge about all aspects of life, but also the irresistible fulfillment of what He has in mind.

- Rom. 11: 33: “O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!”

- 1 Cor. 1: 17: “For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power.” Here Paul speaks of the wisdom of human speech.

- 1 Cor. 1: 19: “For it is written, ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart’” (the wisdom of God destroys the wisdom of men).

- 1 Cor. 1: 20-22: “Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom” (the world’s wisdom is much sought, but does not lead to the knowledge of God).

- 1 Cor. 1: 24: “but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” (the more I have Jesus, the more I will have the wisdom of God. Christ is the expression of God’s wisdom).

- 1 Cor. 1: 30: “He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (when I have the wisdom of God, I have redemption and sanctification; I am like Him).

- 1 Cor. 2: 1; 4-5: “When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom... My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God” (human wisdom does not produce miracles, does not create new things. God does not operate through the wisdom of men).

- 1 Cor. 2: 7: “But we speak God’s wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory.”

1.2 *Word of knowledge*: in Greek, *logos gnōseōs*, which means: *knowledge (in general), intelligence, understanding, knowledge of Christian religion*. For the Greeks, knowledge was a contemplation of reality in its static and permanent state; for the Jews, it was something dynamic linked to the understanding and the will and related to the daily events. It is related to *revelation and experience, dreams and visions*. In the OT the Hebrew word used is *gālā* and the Greek word (NT) is *apokalyptō*, which has the idea of revealing something hidden so that it can be seen and known as it really is. The New Testament has other words that express the idea of revelation: *phaneroō* (to manifest, to let clear), *epiphainō* (to expose; *epiphaneia*, noun, event, manifestation), *deiknuō* (to show), *exegeomai* (to unfold, to explain by narration), *chrematizō* (to instruct, to admonish, to warn; *chrematismos*, noun, God’s response). The word of wisdom is more related to teaching, while the word of knowledge is more related to the prophetic ministry.

- 1 Cor. 8: 11: “So by your *knowledge* those weak believers for whom Christ died are destroyed.” Human knowledge makes one proud and destroys another.

- 1 Cor. 13: 2: “And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all *knowledge*, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.” It needs complementation: love

- 1 Cor. 14: 6: “Now, brothers and sisters, if I come to you speaking in tongues, how will I benefit you unless I speak to you in some revelation or *knowledge* or prophecy or teaching?”

- 2 Cor. 2: 14: “But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads in every place the fragrance that comes from *knowing* him.” The word of knowledge is fragrance that attracts.

- 2 Cor. 4: 6: “For it is the God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness’, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the *knowledge* of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

- 2 Cor. 6: 6: “by purity, *knowledge*, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love.”

- 2 Cor. 10: 5: “and every proud obstacle raised up against the *knowledge* of God, and we take every thought captive to obey Christ.”

- Phil. 3: 8: “More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of *knowing* Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.”

- 1 Tim. 6: 20: “Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you. Avoid the profane chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called *knowledge*.”

- 2 Pet. 3: 18: “But grow in the grace and *knowledge* of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.”



It is the Spirit that teaches us all things:

- 1 Cor. 2: 7-16 (the true wisdom; the teaching from the Holy Spirit): “But we speak God’s wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, ‘What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him’—these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God’s except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual. Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God’s Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. Those who are spiritual discern all things, and they are themselves subject to no one else’s scrutiny. ‘For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?’ But we have the mind of Christ.”

- 1 Jn. 2: 27: “As for you, the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and so you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, abide in him.”

### 1.3 Prophecy (Greek: *Propheteia*):

- Rom. 12: 6: “We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: *prophecy*, in proportion to faith.”

- 1 Cor. 12: 10; 28; 29: “to another the working of miracles, to another *prophecy*, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues... And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second *prophets*, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues.”

- Eph. 4: 11: “The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some *prophets*, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers.”

The main function of the prophet in the NT was to convey the divine revelations of temporary significance that proclaimed to the Church what it needed to know and do in special circumstances. His message was of edification, exhortation (*gr. paraklesis*) and consolation (Rom. 12: 8; 1 Cor. 14: 3: “the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness”; “On the other hand, those who prophesy speak to other people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation”) and included occasional statements of authority about the will of God in particular cases (Acts 13: 1-3: “Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the ruler, and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off”) and predictions about the future (Acts 11: 28; Acts 21: 10-11: “One of them named Agabus stood up and predicted by the Spirit that there would be a severe famine over all the world; and this took place during the reign of Claudius”; “While we were staying there for several days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. He came to us and took Paul’s belt, bound his own feet and hands with it, and said, ‘Thus says the Holy Spirit, ‘This is the way the Jews in Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles’”).

#### 1.4 *Discernment of spirits (Greek: diakresis pneumatōn)* – 1 Cor. 12: 10:

It is complementary to that of prophecy; it allows listeners to assess the claim of prophetic inspiration to prove exactly which statements are of divine origin and to distinguish the genuine from the false prophet (guided by demons):

- 1 Cor. 14: 29: “Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said.”

- 1 The. 5: 20: “Do not despise the words of prophets.”

- 1 Jn. 4: 1-6: “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. And this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming; and now it is already in the world. Little children, you are from God, and have conquered them; for the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. They are from the world; therefore what they say is from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us, and whoever is not from God does not listen to us. From this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”

#### 1.5 *Various kinds of tongues (Greek: gene glōssōn)* – 1 Cor. 12: 10; 28:

- Acts 2: 5-8; 11b-12; 33: “Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, ‘Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ... ‘in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.’ All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘What does this mean?’ ... Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear” (related to Pentecost).

- Acts 10: 44-48: “While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, ‘Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?’ So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days.”

- Acts 19: 6: “When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.”

#### 1.6 *Interpretation of tongues (Greek: hermeneia glōssōn)* – 1 Cor. 12: 10; 30.

### 2) *Gifts of Power (Deeds of Power)* – 1 Cor. 12: 28:

#### 2.1 *Faith:*

In Greek, *pistis* (1 Cor. 12: 9): here a higher measure of faith, whereby special and wonderful deeds are performed.

- Matt. 17: 14-21 (the healing of the possessed young man; v. 20 – faith = *pistis*; cf. 1 Cor. 13: 2).

- 1 Cor. 13: 2: “And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all *faith*, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.”

- Heb. 11: 33-34: “who through *faith* conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.”

The basic definition of faith found in Heb. 11: 1: “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”

*Pistis* (NT, πίστις, Strong #G4102) means: *fidelity, belief, conviction of truth, conviction that God exists and of His deeds, to believe in the impossible. Other meanings in Hebrew in the OT for faith: courage, conviction, fidelity, trust, to believe.*

- Rom. 9: 30: “What then are we to say? Gentiles, who did not strive for righteousness, have attained it, that is, righteousness through *faith*.” Faith brings justification.

- Rom. 10: 8: “But what does it say? ‘The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart’ (that is, the word of *faith* that we proclaim).”

- Rom. 10: 17: “So *faith* comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ.” Faith comes by hearing.

- Rom. 11: 20: “That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand only through *faith*. So do not become proud, but stand in awe.” Faith keeps the believer firm.

- Rom. 12: 3: “For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of *faith* that God has assigned.” Faith leads us to think correctly about ourselves from the perspective of God.

- Rom. 12: 6: “We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to *faith*.” The faith or the lack of it, limits the gift of prophecy; in other words, the prophecy is proportional to the faith.

- Rom. 14: 1: “Welcome those who are weak in *faith*, but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions.” Faith is not to be discussed.

- Rom. 14: 23: “But those who have doubts are condemned if they eat, because they do not act from *faith*; for whatever does not proceed from *faith* is sin.” Doubt condemns and leads to sin because it steals the faith.

- Rom. 16: 26: “but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of *faith*.” We only obey God if we have faith.

- 1 Cor. 2: 5: “so that your *faith* might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.” To have faith we must believe in the power of God.

- 1 Cor. 13: 2: “And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all *faith*, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.” It needs complementation: love.

- 1 Cor. 13: 13: “And now *faith*, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.” The faith is connected to hope and love.

- 1 Cor. 15: 14: “and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your *faith* has been in vain.” The great manifestation of faith and power of God is the resurrection.

- Heb. 11: 6: “And without *faith* it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.”

2.2 *Gifts of healing (Greek, charismata iamatōn)*. They are given to perform miracles of restoration to health.

- Acts 3: 6: “But Peter said, ‘I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk.’”
- Acts 5: 15: “so that they even carried out the sick into the streets, and laid them on cots and mats, in order that Peter’s shadow might fall on some of them as he came by.”
- Acts 8: 7: “for unclean spirits, crying with loud shrieks, came out of many who were possessed; and many others who were paralyzed or lame were cured.”
- Acts 19: 12: “so that when the handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were brought to the sick, their diseases left them, and the evil spirits came out of them.”
- 1 Cor. 12: 28: “... then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues.”

### 2.3 *Operation of miracles (wonders)*.

Miracles (*Greek: dunamis*): strength, power, ability, power to do miracles, excellence of the soul, special miraculous power, abundance.

- Acts 9: 36-43: The resurrection of Dorcas.
- Acts 13: 4-12: Elymas the magician gets blind for a while, after Paul’s rebuke.
- Acts 20: 7-12: The resurrection of Eutychus, when Paul preached at Troas.
- 1 The.1: 5-6: “because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in *power* and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of persons we proved to be among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for in spite of persecution you received the word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit.”
- 2 The. 2: 9: “The coming of the lawless [*refers to the Antichrist*] one is apparent in the working of Satan, who uses all *power*, signs, lying wonders.”
- 2 Tim. 1: 7: “for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of *power* and of love and of self-discipline.”
- 2 Tim. 3: 5: “holding to the outward form of godliness but denying its *power*. Avoid them!” Evil tries to deny the power and the miracle.
- Heb. 1: 3: “He is the reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being, and he sustains all things by his *powerful* word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.” Jesus is the expression of God’s power.
- Heb. 2: 4: “while God added his testimony by signs and wonders and various *miracles*, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, distributed according to his will.”
- Heb. 6: 5: “and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the *powers* of the age to come.”
- Heb. 7: 16: “one who has become a priest, not through a legal requirement concerning physical descent, but through the *power* of an indestructible life.” Eternal life is a miracle.
- Heb. 11: 11: “By faith he received *power* of procreation, even though he was too old—and Sarah herself was barren—because he considered him faithful who had promised.” The miracle is connected with faith, patience, hope, perseverance and firmness in Christ. By faith also Sarah herself received *power* to be a mother.
- Heb. 11: 34: “quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became *mighty* in war, put foreign armies to flight.”
- 1 Pet. 1: 5: “who are being protected by the *power* of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” The power of God protects us until the ‘Last Day.’

- 2 Pet. 1: 3: “His divine *power* has given us everything needed for life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.”

### 3) *Forms of Assistance (helps):*

#### 3.1 *Help (aid) (Greek, antilepseis):*

It denotes the aid to the weak by the strong and refers to special gifts of caring for the sick and needy.

- 1 Cor. 12: 28: “And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, *forms of assistance*, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues.” – NRSV

“And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, *those able to help* others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues.” – NIV

“And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, *helps*, governments, diversities of tongues.” – KJV

‘Helps, forms of assistance, those able to help others’ = antilémpsis, ἀντιληψεις, Strong: #484: help, ministration; one who aids; From antilambanomai; relief.

#### 3.2 *Donation of alms (Greek, ho metadidous):*

- Rom. 12: 8: “the exhorter, in exhortation; *the giver*, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.” – NRSV

KJV: “Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: *he that giveth*, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.”

NIV: “... it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is *contributing* to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.”

“The giver, he that giveth, is contributing” = metadidómi, μεταδίδωμι, Strong #3330: (lit.: to offer by way of change, offer so that a change of owner is produced); to share; sometimes merely: to impart, bestow; to give over, i.e., share; give, impart.

#### 3.3 *Compassion or Mercy (Greek, ho eleōn):*

- Rom. 12: 8: “the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; *the compassionate*, in cheerfulness.” Jesus said about the beatitudes: “Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.” This implies first exercising mercy to receive it from others.

“the compassionate, he that sheweth mercy, is showing mercy” = eleéo, ἐλέεω, Strong #1653: to pity, have mercy on; From eleos: to compassionate (by word or deed, specially, by divine grace); have compassion (pity on), have (obtain, receive, shew) mercy (on).

#### 3.4 *Deaconry (ministry, service; Greek, diakonia):*

- Rom. 12: 7: “*ministry*, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching.”

- Acts 6: 1-2 [to serve = *deaconry*]: “Now during those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. And the twelve called

together the whole community of the disciples and said, 'It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order *to wait on tables*'" [NRSV]; "Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, 'It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and *serve tables*'" [KJV].

- *Phil. 1: 1*: "Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and *deacons*" (*diakonois*).

- *1 Tim. 3: 8* (The qualifications of bishops and *deacons*): "Deacons likewise must be serious, not double-tongued, not indulging in much wine, not greedy for money; they must hold fast to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience." *Diakonous* (from the obsolete form, '*diako*') = an attendant, a waiter (at table or in other menial duties); specially, a Christian teacher and pastor (technically, a deacon or deaconess): deacon, minister, servant.

#### 4) *Forms of leadership (Governments or gifts of administration):*

*Governments (Greek, kubernésis):*

These are the gifts and authority to rule, which the leaders have:

- *1 Cor. 12: 28*: "And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, *forms of leadership*, various kinds of tongues." – NRSV

"And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with *gifts of administration*, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues." – NIV

"And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, *governments*, diversities of tongues." – KJV

"Forms of leadership, gifts of administration, government" = κυβέρνησις, kubemésis, Strong #2941: (lit.: steering, piloting), governing, government. From kubemao (of Latin origin, to steer); pilotage, i.e. (figuratively) directorship (in the church).

#### *SPIRITUAL FRUIT:*

Fruit (Gr. *Karpós*, καρπός, Strong #2590), derived from *karpazo* = fruit, deed, action, result, profit, gain, advantage, avail.

- *Gal. 5: 22-23*: "By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things." (NRSV)

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." (KJV)

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law." (NIV)

The fruit is the reproduction of the character of Christ and, while we are practicing this, no one can accuse us. The greater the power of the Spirit in us, the more fruit we will give.

- Matt. 7: 7-12: “Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him! In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.” If God is good, He gives only good things. To get the fruit we have to ask. To have the fruit there must be a seed before. The seed of the fruit is the gift; therefore, there can only be spiritual fruit if there is a spiritual gift being exercised.

- Matt. 7: 16: “You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles?” People know us through the fruit we produce.

- Jn. 15: 1-5: “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.” To bear fruit we must be connected to Jesus who is the true vine.

- Rom. 6: 22: “But now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is sanctification. The end is eternal life.” The fruit produces sanctification; the reverse is also true.

- 2 Cor. 9: 10: “He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.” God multiplies our gifts and, consequently, our fruit.

- Phil. 1: 11: “having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.” The more we bear good fruit, the more we show the glory of God.

- Phil. 4: 17: “Not that I seek the gift [*he means offering*], but I seek the profit that accumulates to your account.” Our offerings in the work of God are fruit of the exercise of the gift of love in us, and the more we bear fruit, the greater will be our credit in heaven.

- 2 Tim. 2: 5-7: “And in the case of an athlete, no one is crowned without competing according to the rules. It is the farmer who does the work who ought to have the first share of the crops. Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in all things.” The fruit is the result of the work. When we sow in someone’s life, this bears fruit. The fruit is a visible expression of the invisible power of God in the life of a person.

- Heb. 12: 11: “Now, discipline always seems painful rather than pleasant at the time, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” The spiritual discipline produces good fruit when it is exercised.

- Heb. 13: 15: “Through him, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name.” Praise is a fruit of those who confess Jesus.

- Jam. 3: 18: “And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.” We need to be in peace to sow the word of God in the lives of those who do not yet know the Lord. The word that we evangelize is the fruit of righteousness of Jesus performed on the cross, that is, the reconciliation of man with God.

As a summary we can say we receive spiritual gifts according to the will of God to fulfill His purpose in the Body of Christ. The gifts can have several manifestations, but

there is only one Spirit, who works everything in all. Exercising the gifts, we generate spiritual fruit and the more we exercise them, the more they are multiplied by God so that more lives can be blessed. May you be aware of the gifts that were bestowed upon your spirit and may exercise them every day, bearing fruit that bless others for the glory of God. Read about the fruit of the Spirit in the next chapter.



## THE WORKS OF THE FLESH AND THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT



In this chapter we will study about the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. Flesh not only refers to the material and physical nature of man, but also to the part of the soul that tends to sin. The bible tells us to crucify our flesh. To crucify is to make the decision not to satisfy our tastes and desires that lead to sin. In short: giving up our reasons and arguments, feelings and desires so that God may prevail.

- In Rom. 8: 5-8 it is written: “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law—indeed it cannot, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”

- Gal. 5: 16-18: “Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law.”

Then, Paul describes the works of the flesh. We have some biblical texts that are basic, such as:

- 1) Gal. 5: 19-21: “Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” (NRSV).

NIV: “The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

KJV: “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Cf. 1 Sam. 15: 22-23; 1 Cor. 6: 8-10; Eph. 5: 3-7; Col. 3: 5.

Prostitution [NIV: sexual immorality; KJV: adultery and fornication] – regards to sexual promiscuity, where several partners are intertwined in the relationship. Other translations include acts of adultery e sexual intercourses outside marriage. But we can include here the ‘spiritual prostitution’, that is, not to have only one God in whom we rely; it means to ask for help to other gods, other aids to our lives, being unfaithful to Jesus. It is look for the solution of our problems elsewhere and wait on other help than His.

Impurity [KJV: uncleanness] is more than obvious: think in a way that is contrary to the innocence that God has placed in us through His Spirit, to think about dirty and worldly things instead of heavenly ones.

Licentiousness [NIV: debauchery; KJV: lasciviousness] is sensuality, lust, debauchery, libidinousness (giving free rein to sexual desire), sexual satisfaction without shame.

Idolatry is to put things and entities on the altar other than Jesus, the Son of God. Greed is considered by God as idolatry (Eph. 5: 5; Col. 3: 5), as well as stubbornness (1 Sm 15: 23).

Sorcery [NIV and KJV: witchcraft] includes all acts of rebellion to the will of God as all acts of occultism, superstitions, occult arts of divination and prediction of the future, familiar spirits, necromancy etc., that lead us not to believe only in the power of the Word to get something. Rebellion is considered by God as witchcraft (1 Sam. 15: 23; Lev. 20: 27).

Enmity [NIV and KJV: hatred] is all that is contrary to love and true unity between the children of God: antipathy, hostility and prejudice etc. Enmity is seeing another person as an enemy, a competitor, a rival, instead of seeing another human being as a friend or an instrument of help and growth. 'A competitor' is very common language these days, especially in the commercial and business field, and it often negatively influences God's own children.

Strife [NIV: discord; KJV: variance] means discussion or strife of words, controversy, rivalry, competition, discord, dispute. All of these things hinder the Holy Spirit from ministering God's truth. Paul said to Timothy, "Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarrelling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen... Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly... Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels" (2 Tim. 2: 14; 16; 23 – NIV).

As for jealousy [NIV: jealousy; KJV emulations], doesn't even need comment; being jealous and possessive is to want to possess what is not one's own asset, it is to want to take possession of something that belongs only to God, as another human being, for example. In Greek, the word used for 'jealousy' is 'zeloo' (Strong #2206, ζηλόω), which means, to be jealous, to be jealous of a person; to be eager for, be eager to possess (a thing). From zelos; to have warmth of feeling for or against; affect, covet (earnestly), (have) desire, (move with) envy, be jealous over, (be) zealous, zealously, to want for oneself. Jealousy is different from caring for what the Lord has given us as a stewardship.

We don't need to be jealous of the material things we have and that we don't want to lend to anyone. We also don't need to feel jealous if others love more than us, or if whom we love is more loved than us or if whom we love can only be loved by us and by nobody else. Jesus loved everyone on the cross and His love was enough to everyone until today. It is available twenty-four hours a day for who wants to drink of it for more than two thousand years. We do not need to be jealous of the love of God for other people, because His love is enough for us all at the same time. Human love grasps; the divine love frees. All the people who walk beside us, whether family or friends, are not our property, our possession, just as we are no one's possession. We all belong to God. When we surrender our lives to Him, He becomes our only Lord and owner (1 Cor. 6: 19). With this type of thinking in mind, we begin to look at certain situations in life differently, allowing people to take the path they see fit, think as they want, exercise their free will in the way they wish, and even towards those who die, for they are

returning to the arms of God, the true owner of their souls. We can rest in that comfort, giving them back to Him and knowing that the Holy Spirit fills us with His love and heals our bad memories.

Anger [NIV: fits of rage; KJV: wrath] is a feeling that even God Himself feels against all sin and unrighteousness (His wrath). He does not forbid us to feel anger (Ps. 4: 4a: ARA – “Be angry and do not sin”; NRSV – “When you are disturbed, do not sin”; NIV – “In your anger do not sin”), because He knows that this kind of feeling is necessary to man so that he is not conniving with sin and error, losing his salvation. What He does not want is that we give room to anger to affect our neighbor in a damaging manner or that we feel anger for what does not concern to the holy things. Fighting for the worldly and sinful things is not the will of God for us, because it ‘infects’ who are around us and multiplies violence in the hearts, creating hard barriers of hatred and separation and often insurmountable. The bible says that the anger of man does not produce God’s righteousness (Jam. 1: 20). The wrath of God is His firm, constant, continuous and uncommitted antagonism with sin in all its forms and manifestations (Rom. 1: 18, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of those who by their wickedness suppress the truth”). In Lev. 19: 18 it is written: “You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.” God’s wrath has been atoned on the cross.

Quarrels [NIV: selfish ambition; KJV: strife] only serve to create confusion and doubt in the minds of people and come from the evil one to divide and undermine forces. It means a lack of agreement on purpose, projects, desires, in any area of people’s lives. We don’t always agree with everything we see, hear or what others like, but this behavior cannot be present in a more intimate relationship or in a work where mutual cooperation is necessary. The quarrel the Bible speaks of here is a harmful and constant behavior of discord, always with the intention of frustrating other people. It’s about a heated argument or disagreement, typically about a trivial issue and between people who are usually on good terms. There are people with a disposition for discord and quarrels.

Dissension [KJV: seditions] means difference of opinion or interests, disagreement, opposition. It is normal that each of us has the right to think whatever we want about something; otherwise we would live in a dictatorship, which would bring oppression. But what Paul talks here is about the Christian doctrine that can be distorted to the interest of some, creating doubt in the heart of the weakest and stealing their faith. Sermons without any biblical basis generate harmful seeds in the heart of the sheep. Couples with completely opposite goals endanger the stability of the whole family, starting with the children, who lose the parameter of the truth of life. Societies where members do not have a single goal to the company will create sooner or later, the bankruptcy of the business. And so on in all branches of society; when there is dissension, there is no prosperity, but division. KJV goes further, writing the word sedition, which means: conduct or speech inciting people to rebel against the authority of a state or monarch, even ecclesiastical leadership. And this leads to a split within a system, organization or doctrine.

Faction [KJV: heresies] is a divergent or dissident part of one group or a party, revolt, mutiny. Paul says that this kind of thing within a congregation is an act of assumed rebellion, denying God’s choice for the leader and relegating his authority to the background. This decreases the strength of all and opens gaps for the destruction of the enemy. So, if you are not in accord with the leadership of your church, you’d better leave it than to create a divergent group inside it. You will be assuming a position of

Absalom in the face of a reign of David. Therefore, do not make war of spiritual leadership because the consequences are very serious. If you are not a believer and do not agree with the position of leadership in your workplace, do not lift up fans there to break down the company. This will bring harmful consequences for you and for those who follow you in this riot. If you do not agree, be brave, resign from the employment and lift your own business, doing it your way and, if possible, better. This is maturity.

In fact, faction is an evolution of the previous item, that is, dissension. As I mentioned, the KJV uses the word ‘sedition’. So, a person influences others with actions or words to rebel against an authority, but ends up leading them to form another ‘group’ within that working environment where they find themselves and, sooner or later, they separate or live in constant conflict. This is what happened with Judaism in the Intertestamental Period, for example, dividing the religious groups into Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes, Essenes and finally, the Zealots, at the beginning of the 1st century. Thus, the conflict between these political-religious parties (Sadducees and Pharisees) and the extremist groups (Sicarii and Zealots) was the disaster of the last years of the city of Jerusalem, which facilitated its invasion by Titus (70 AD). In recent centuries, practically the same thing happened after Luther’s Protestant Reformation, as Protestantism diversified and branched out into several denominations, often the result of doctrinal splits for very small and absurd reasons.

Envy, lie and slander are the works that have the highest quotation in the ‘ranking’ of devastation of the soul and the Church of Christ. In the world, we might expect such behavior, because the competition for survival generates this kind of attitude in order to succeed. However, within the House of God, where Jesus said that the greatest is as one who serves, envy and slander have to be urgently uprooted from the flesh of members in order to stop the advance of the devil right there. Envy not only summarizes in wanting what belongs to the other; worse than that, is *to want to be that person*. As for slander, in Lev. 19: 16 the Lord has already warned: “You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not profit by the blood of your neighbor: I am the Lord.” It is hypocrisy to raise hands to praise, to sit on the bench to hear the Word or to give tithes and offering with these types of low attitudes and feelings inside the heart. That’s why many churches are on the brink of ruin, because due to pride they do not admit the need of deep inner healing within the heart of each sheep, including the leaders. It starts within families, between parents and children, brothers and sisters. Jesus Himself said that within a house two would be divided against three and three against two, because of the gospel, but He does not forbid us to break this evil work. The promise is: “Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household”.

KJV uses two words at this point, not only envy, but also slaughter or murder; perhaps to show how deep envy can lead a human being to commit even a crime, when he cannot accept the success or life of another fellow man. The Greek word for envy in this text is *phthonos*, φθόνος, Strong #5355, which means ‘envy, grudge, spite.’ And the word ‘murder’, which accompanies ‘envy’, in Greek is, *phonos*, φόνος, Strong #5408, which means murder, slaughter, killing (deliberate killing of many). This is what happened to Herod, for example, who, out of envy and fear of having his throne usurped by a newborn baby (Jesus), committed the killing of many innocent people in Bethlehem and its surroundings.

As for drunkenness and carousing [NIV: drunkenness, orgies; KJV: drunkenness, revellings], don’t even need comment. Anyone who cannot give up a plate of any food, a bottle of beer or a cigarette for the love of Jesus, actually denies His importance over anything else. What happens, in most cases, is not compassion or patience for the

difficulty of others; it is self-indulgence and lack of authority of the person in wanting to change his own life, to have an open mind to the true values of the kingdom of God and learn to put in the scales what belongs to the world and what is sacred.

Gluttony, carousing and drunkenness, orgies and some like that was very common at the time Paul wrote this to the Galatians, especially by Greeks and Romans, and many new converts have got used to all of this, but now they needed to leave this kind of life behind, in order to follow Christianity wholeheartedly. Today is not so different. Many people come to Jesus but don't have understanding of what it means to be a Christian or don't have strength to let go of their old self, their old life, and even a simple cigarette, because they became dependent on many things in the past to fill their emptiness. It will take some time for them to behave God's holy way, but with the help of the Holy Spirit it will be possible.

Hence, it is no use to expel the spirit of envy, theft, prostitution, etc. All this is the work of the flesh (see below, item 2) and flesh is not expelled; it is healed before the cross through surrender. No one disagrees that the devil is cunning; he is like an opportunistic fungus that attacks the human body when its defenses are low. When the defenses are high, the enemy has no place to settle. Each child of God has the free will to seek his own healing directly on the throne, learning to fight for his own interests and strengthening his intimate communion with Him, not depending on another person for that. The works of the flesh imprison us.

**2) Mk. 7: 20-23:** "... And he said, 'It is what comes out of a person that defiles. For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.'" Demon is expelled by the name of Jesus (Mk. 16: 17) and by His blood. Flesh is treated with fasting and prayer (Matt. 17: 21; Mk. 9: 29), repentance and willingness to change life (Jl. 2: 13).

**3) Tit. 2: 11-15:** "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds. Declare these things; exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one look down on you."

Here, Paul instructs Titus, his son in the faith, to exhort and rebuke the wrong things, as the prophets of the past did, so that evil does not spread within the Church. The famous verses, "Our struggle is not against enemies of flesh and blood" and "For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh" (2 Cor. 10: 3-6; Gal. 5: 17a; Eph. 6: 12) have taken away the authority of many leaders, leaving to God to do what is for them to do. So Paul says, "Declare these things; exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one look down on you" (Tit. 2: 15). He said the same to Timothy, "Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Until I arrive, give attention to the public reading of scripture, to exhorting [KJV: exhortation], to teaching." (1 Tim. 4: 12-13)... "proclaim the message; be persistent [NIV: prepared] whether the time is favorable or unfavorable [NIV: in season and out of season]; convince, rebuke, and encourage [KJV: exhort], with the utmost patience in teaching. For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths. As for you, always be sober, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully (2 Tim. 4: 2-5)."

In Greek, the word used for ‘exhortation’ [KJV] or ‘exhorting’ [NRSV] is Paraklesis (Strong #g3874 – 1 Tim. 4: 13 – paraklēsei – παρακλησει), which means: imploration, solace: comfort, consolation, exhortation, entreaty; for the verb ‘to exhort’ is Parakaleo (Strong #g3870 – 2 Tim. 4: 2 – Parakaleson – παρακαλεσον), with the same meanings: to call near, i.e. invite, invoke (by imploration, consolation): beseech, call for, (be of good) comfort, desire, (give) exhort, exhortation, entreat, pray; to beg, to console, to comfort, to exhort, to plead with insistence or seriousness. In Latin, ‘exhortation’ comes from the word ‘exhortatione’ or ‘hortation’: action of exhorting; admonition; warning; advice, words that we find also in the dictionary, in addition to others such as: action of exhorting: to animate, to incite, to encourage and stimulate. This makes us think that exhortation can be an attitude of encouragement and stimulation, insistence or supplication, or even an admonition or warning, that is, a stronger word of authority, almost approaching reprimand, inviting someone to repent of his sin.

**4) Tit. 1: 15:** “To the pure all things are pure, but to the corrupt and unbelieving nothing is pure. Their very minds and consciences are corrupted.”

**5) 1 Cor. 10: 23:** “All things are lawful, but not all things are beneficial. All things are lawful, but not all things build up.”

These last two topics, we will comment together. Being a believer is not to live the gospel of ‘no’ to the rest of life. However, when we truly live in the Spirit, we identify what is lawful or not, what is good for us or not, because He Himself instructs us in the truth. So, feel in the freedom of the Spirit, hear His voice and understand His signs. Obey Him in everything and soon you will know what is right and what is wrong, what is beneficial and what is not. If you are in doubt, open the bible and seek the answers there. Everything will be clear in your life.

• **Gal. 5: 22-23:** “By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience [NIV: forbearance; KJV: longsuffering], kindness [KJV: gentleness], generosity [in NRSV; in NIV and KJV is goodness], faithfulness [KJV: faith], gentleness [KJV, meekness], and self-control [KJV: temperance]. There is no law against such things.”

Let us now turn to the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, meekness and self-control.

As for love, it is placed first as in 1 Cor. 13: 1, related to the main gift that a believer needs to exercise his ministry. Without love, which is God Himself, nothing is achieved; and the love spoken of here is not the Eros or the Philia (brotherly love), but the Agape, the unconditional love of God (Rom. 5: 5), the love of surrender on the cross, the very Word in action. This is not achieved from night to day, but in constant contact with the Lord for years, becoming like Him.

Joy is also a fruit of the Spirit generated in our heart by Him, arising from the consciousness of His lordship over us and that makes us overcome all the trials and difficulties with the assurance of His deliverance and His victory, simply because we are children, no longer slaves (Rom. 8: 15). It is a well-being resulting of the freedom of being a child of God, freed from all yoke of sin.

Peace is the result of a surrender that leads us to the harmony of purpose with Him and makes us want what He wants; the certainty that everything will solve because He is God. Peace makes us to be like Jesus, because we begin to see that with Him inside us nothing threatens us anymore.

Patience means firmness of spirit, longsuffering, generosity, magnanimity, courage and fearlessness.

Kindness [KJV: gentleness] means benevolence, indulgence, clemency, sweetness, gentleness, to know how to make others happy.

Goodness [in NIV and KJV; in NRSV is generosity] means good nature, good deed, sweetness, gentleness. Goodness symbolizes the nature of having the good established within oneself as a brand. It is to have a nature aimed always to what is good and thinking about the welfare of the neighbor as God thinks of His children. It is to hate all that is evil or may cause harm to others. It means to reject and oppose to the nature of the devil and the world; it means to be good.

Faithfulness [KJV: faith] is to be faithful to a commitment and a word that was given even if it has a price. The bible says that God is faithful. If we deny Him, He will deny us; if we are unfaithful, He remains faithful, for He cannot in any way deny Himself (2 Tim. 2: 12-13). This means that if we are unfaithful to a commitment as believers, He will remain faithful to His own Word, for He is the Word and He cannot change it. "For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, have not perished" (Mal. 3: 6).

Meekness [NRSV: Gentleness] means: serenity, tranquility, calm in the certainty of victory, allowing oneself to be shaped by God, being certain that everything has a solution. Being meek is to be submissive to the will of God, to His laws and the divine plan. Submitting to His will brings us power and dominion over Creation. It should not be confused with self-indulgence, laziness or passivity that gives up the authority that God has already delegated to us. Moses was a warrior, however, the bible says he was the meekest man on earth, because he let himself be led by God, despite being a leader and never relinquished the authority He gave him to lead His people. He often took drastic, strong and aggressive steps to keep order among the Israelites and fulfill his mission to the end. He was not powerless or passive in the face of rebellion of the people, but he let himself be shaped by God in all these situations, exercising his leadership with wisdom and patience.

Self-control [KJV: temperance] is certainly one of the most important features of the Holy Spirit in us, preventing us from doing what the flesh wants and putting it under His wings. In Prov. 16: 32 it is written, "One who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and one whose temper is controlled than one who captures a city." This makes us think that the hardest fight is not against the world or against the devil, but against our flesh, because when it is submissive to the will of God and our gaps are closed, it becomes easier to combat what is outside. This work of emotional release is long, it depends on our willingness and readiness to be worked by God and to know ourselves; it depends on the will and the choice of God and a lot of patience; however, this leads us to a deep and true healing. It really makes us new creatures. It makes us live what is written in Gal. 2: 20, "and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

## JEWISH FEASTS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT



Before we enter the subject itself, let's first understand the Jewish calendar. The passage of years was generally marked by reference to the months, the agricultural seasons and the main festivals.

The **year**, in Hebrew, **shānâ**, was composed of twelve lunar months (354 days). The verb shannah means literally, 'repeat [something that was taught]' and was called so because of the change or succession of the seasons. Every three years one month was added (by the repetition of the last month) to take the difference between the twelve lunar months and the solar year. For Jews, the festival that celebrates the beginning of the year is based on the religious and the civil calendar. The civil calendar started when autumn began (seventh month or Tishri – Ex. 23: 16; Ex. 34: 22). While they dwelt Egypt, the Hebrews may have been adapted to the solar year of 12 months, each with thirty days with the addition of five extra days, totaling 365 days. But at the time of their departure from there, the Lord marked the beginning of the year (religious calendar) based in the event of **Passover** (Pesach), when the Destroyer passed over the houses, killing all the firstborn of Egypt (**Pesach** means '**to pass over**' – Ex. 12: 13; 23; 27). Thus, the first month was set in the spring (Nisan or Aviv – Ex. 12: 2) and the Jewish calendar became to have twelve lunar months.

The month started when the **crescent of the new moon** (Num. 28: 14; Isa. 66: 23; 2 Chr. 8: 13; Num. 28: 11) was first seen at sunset. The month (**yerah** or **yare'ach** = **moon**) had twenty-nine days, and since the lunar year was shorter by about eleven days than the solar year, it was necessary to insert periodically, as explained above, a thirteenth month so that the **New Year's Day** did not happen before the spring (March-April).

We can notice two different names for each month: one, pre-Babylonian exile, and other, post-exile. The month of Aviv, appointed by God to start the **New Year**, coinciding with the spring or Passover, also referred to the period of the beginning of the wheat harvest, so the name Aviv (Abib) means: wheat ripening (Ex. 13: 4; Ex. 23: 15). Its name post-exile became to be Nisan = beginning, opening. The other names that remain from the period pre-exile are: Ziv (1 Kin. 6: 1; 37, the second month, which means: splendor of the flowers), Ethanim (1 Kin. 8: 2, the seventh, which means constant rain) and Bul (1 Kin. 6: 38, the eighth, which means changeable, growth).

The agricultural calendar is divided into the dry season (from April to September) and rainy season (from October to March). This last season could be divided also into 'sowing' (November-December) and 'harvest' (April-June).

Some festivals were described in the NT, keeping the Jewish laws given to Moses: **Passover** (Jn. 2: 13; 23; Jn. 6: 4; Jn. 11: 55; Matt. 26: 2; Mk. 14: 1; Lk. 22: 1; Acts 12: 3; Acts 20: 6), **New Year** (Jn. 5: 1), **Tabernacles** (Jn. 7: 2; 37 cf. Lev. 23: 36; Num. 29: 35; Neh. 8: 18), **Pentecost** (Acts 2: 1; Acts 20: 16; 1 Cor. 16: 8), **Day of Atonement** (Acts 27: 9, here called the **Day of Fasting**).

Below I put a table with the months and festivals. In red is the meaning of the name of each month.



Month	Name pre-exile	Name post-exile	Modern Calendar	Season	Feast (day of the month)
1	Aviv (wheat ripening)	Nisan (beginning, opening)	Mar-April	Spring	14° Passover 15°-21° Unleavened bread 16° Firstfruits
2	Ziv (splendor of the flowers)	Iyar	April-May	Beginning of Harvest (Barley and wheat)	
3		Sivan	May-June	Green figs	6° Pentecost (Feast of weeks; Harvest)
4		Tammuz (hidden, son of life)	June-July	Grape harvest	
5		Av	July-August	Olive harvest	
6		Elul (scream or harvest of life)	August-Sep.	Dates and ripened figs of summer	
7	Ethanim (constant rain)	Tishri	Sep.-Oct.	First rains	1° Trumpets 10° Atonement 15°-21°: Tabernacles 22° Closing assembly
8	Bul (changeable, growth)	Heshvan	Oct.-Nov.	Plowing and late figs (Autumn-Winter)	
9		Kislev (confidence, boldness)	Nov.-Dec.	sowing	25° Dedication * (Hanukkah; feast of lights)
10		Tevet	Dec.-Jan.	Rain (snow in high places)	
11		Shevat	Jan.-Feb.	Flower of mulberry and citrus harvest	
12		Adar (amplitude, width, ornament, glory)	Feb.-March	Citrus harvest	14°-15° Purim*

\* Not determined by God. Purim: by Mordecai and Esther (Est. 9: 21-22; 26-29). Hanukkah (1 Maccabees 4: 52-53; Jn. 10: 22): by men during 'God's period of silence' (From 400 BC to the Birth of Christ).

The **feasts of the Lord** (Hebrew, **mô'ade YHWH**) described in Lev. 23: 2, 4; Num. 15: 3 (where they are called **appointed festivals** – NRSV) express a day or a period of religious joy. Although some coincide with the seasons and harvest events, they are not due to these circumstances but to a powerful move of God in the lives of

His people. The feasts were instituted by God so that the people moved closer to Him and remade the covenant with their Creator as an act of gratitude for His benefits. Unfortunately, the Jews over the centuries, left aside the pious aspect of them and began to turn them only into religious observances without their spirit was involved; so, the criticism of the prophets in the OT. Another term used for feasts is **hagh** (Lev. 23: 6; Deut. 16: 16). Although three of them are the main described in the bible (Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles), the Sabbath is also considered in Leviticus as a feast, as well as the Feast of Trumpets [Rosh haShannah (literally “head of the year”), the civil New Year, not the religious one corresponding to Passover] and the Atonement (Yom Kippur). The other two described later (Purim and Hanukkah, see item 8) were not directly established by God, but celebrated by Jewish people for having received an important deliverance from Him. The main feasts described are:

1) **Feast of Unleavened Bread**, in Hebrew, **hagh hamaççôth** (Ex. 12: 8; Ex. 23: 15; Lev. 23: 6), or **Passover**, in Hebrew, **Pesach** (= to pass over – Lev. 23: 5), established to commemorate the liberation of the Israelites from the slavery in Egypt (Ex. 12: 1-28). It began on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the first month and the unleavened bread was eaten for seven days; no kind of work was done. The first and last days of the feast were sacred assembly and sacrifices were offered (Num. 28: 16-25; Deut. 16: 1-8).

2) **Feast of Weeks**, in Hebrew, **hagh shavuot**, also called the **feast of harvest** and the **feast of firstfruits** (Ex. 23: 16; Ex. 34: 22; 26, Lev. 23: 9-14; Lev. 23: 15-22; Num. 28: 26-31; Deut. 16: 9-12; 26: 1-11). Later, it became known as the **Feast of Pentecost**, since it was celebrated fifty days after Passover Saturday (Lev. 23: 15-16). It was marked by a sacred assembly and by offerings of sacrifices. The first fruits of the land was offered as thanksgiving to the Lord (a sheaf of the first wheat harvest), and no regular (KJV: servile) work was done.

3) **Feast of Tabernacles** in Hebrew, **hagh hassukkôth** (or feast of Sukkot; Sukkot = tents, plural of sukkah = tent), or **Feast of ingathering at the end of the year**, in Hebrew, **hagh hă’āsîph** (Ex. 23: 16; Ex. 34: 22; Lev. 23: 34; Num. 29: 12-40; Deut. 16: 13-17). It lasted seven days and on the first and on the last there was sacred assembly. The fruit were harvested and the people lived in huts made of branches and twigs of trees, starting on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the seventh month (Lev. 23: 39-43; Num. 29: 12-40; Neh. 8: 15). The fact of living in tents during the festival recalled the Jews on their wanderings in the wilderness after being freed from Pharaoh. Just like in other festivals, rest was kept. Seven types of food are harvested in the time of Sukkot in Israel. Many Jews hang examples of each on the roof of Sukkah (Sukkah) to symbolize the harvest. These foods are: wheat, barley, grapes, olives, pomegranates, dates and figs. The Lulav or palm is tied with the willow (NIV: poplar) and the myrtle. The Etrog (citron) is used in prayers and ceremonies of Sukkot.



The plants and fruit are described in Lev. 23: 40: “On the first day you shall take the fruit of majestic trees (etrog – citron), branches of palm trees (lulav), boughs of leafy trees (hadas – myrtle), and willows (aravah) of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days.” The eighth day of Sukkot described in Lev. 23: 36 was a day of sacred assembly instituted by God as a way of consecration to Him and as the closing of the Feast of Tabernacles.

Today, the solemn assembly of the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month (or 8<sup>th</sup> day of the Feast of Tabernacles) is called Shemini Atzeret (Lev. 23: 36), the “Eighth Day of Assembly” and marks the conclusion of the festival of Sukkot, and Simchat Torah, celebrating happily the end of the annual cycle the Torah reading and the beginning of a new cycle. The essence of the feast is the connection with God obtained through prayer and joy at the meals. In Israel, Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah are celebrated with the same feast, on the same day. In the Diaspora, however, two holidays are granted in order to compensate them for not having the good fortune to live in the Holy Land. The word **Atzeret** is a paternal expression of affection, as if it was something that a father would speak to say goodbye to his son. Simchat Torah or “the joy of Torah” marks the end of the cycle of readings of Torah for the year because the last part is read and completed at this section of the religious service. The last part of the last chapter is read by the “Bridegroom of the Torah” (who is honored with the reading of the last book – Deuteronomy) and the cycle begins again with the reading of the first three parts of Genesis, the first book. It is worth making clear that the eighth day of Sukkot described in Lev. 23: 36 was a day of solemn assembly established by God as a form of consecration to Him and as closing of the Feast of Tabernacles. The same way that the Feast of ‘Hanukkah’ to the Jews, the Feast of ‘Simchat Torah’ is not a biblical feast, but instituted by men and not by God, even because He didn’t establish a Feast to celebrate the giving of the Ten Commandments to Moses. This Feast came with the instructions of men by writing the Talmud in 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries. In Lev. 23: 36 it is written: “Seven days you shall present the Lord’s offerings by fire; on the eighth day (shemiyni = eight; Strong #8066, שְׁמִינִי), you shall observe a holy convocation and present the Lord’s offerings by fire; it is a solemn assembly (‘atsereth or atsarah, Strong #6116; עֲצֵרָה, solemn assembly, solemn meeting); you shall not work at your occupations” (shibh’ath yâmiym taqriybhu ‘isheh layhvh bayyom hashemiyniymiqrâ'-qodhesh yihyeh lâkhem vehiqrabhtem ‘isheh layhvh ‘**atsereth** hiv'kol-mele'kheth ‘abhdhâh lo' tha’asu).

4) **Sabbath** (Shabbat = rest, cessation, interruption). This is considered as a feast in Lev. 23: 2-3, and it is called Sabbath of rest. It was marked by solemn assembly (Isa. 1: 13) and by the cessation of all work. It was also a day of joy (Isa. 58: 13). What God really meant was to rest from the secular work that they performed as a source of survival, so that they might be free to have more fellowship with Him, to worship Him and wait for His help. Something important about the Sabbath of rest it is that it not only related to the people and the fourth commandment of God (Ex. 20: 8-11), but also to the rest of the land (Ex. 23: 10-11, where God talks about the Sabbatical Year or Year of rest, as in Lev. 25: 2-4). Thus, He warned the people to obey His laws so that this blessing was not removed (Lev. 26: 34-35; 43); they didn’t obey the Lord over the centuries and then He removed the days of Saturday all at once; therefore, the seventy years of captivity in Babylon (2 Chr. 36: 21; Jer. 25: 11-12). Other biblical references related to the Sabbath: Ex. 20: 8-11; Ex. 23: 10-13; Ex. 34: 21; Ex. 35: 1-3; Lev. 19: 30; Lev. 23: 3; Lev. 25: 2-4; Lev. 26: 34-35; Lev. 26: 43; Num. 15: 32-36; Deut. 5: 12; 2 Chr. 36: 21; Neh. 13: 17; Isa. 1: 13; Isa. 56: 2; 4-5; Isa. 58: 13-14; Jer. 17: 21-22; Jer. 25: 11-12; Jer. 29: 10; Dan. 9: 2; Heb. 3: 11.

5) **Feast of Trumpets** (Num. 29: 1). In Lev. 23: 24 days this is called a “sacred assembly with trumpet blasts”, corresponding to the civil New Year (Rosh haShannah means literally “head of the year”). Sacrifices were offered and the hard work ceased. Practically, it anticipated the after-feast of **Atonement (Yom Kippur)**, for the trumpet is a symbol of the convocation, calling the people to repent and to be in the presence of the Lord. It is customary to blow the trumpet of ram’s horn (shofar) on this day.

6) **Day of Atonement** (Yom Kippur, Fasting – Acts 27: 9; Lev. 16: 1-10; 29-34; Lev. 23: 26-32; Num. 29: 7-11). It was kept on the tenth day of the seventh month and was day of convocation during which people afflicted themselves and an annual atonement for sin was made. It was held only once a year (Ex. 30: 10).

7) **Feast of Purim**, described in Est. 9: 21-22 and established by Mordecai at the time of Xerxes (Persian king), to commemorate the great deliverance of the Jews of the intrigues of Haman, being days of festivity and rejoicing. It was celebrated on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of the month of <sup>a</sup>dhar (the last month = February-March).



First night



Second night



Third night



Fourth night



Fifth night



Sixth night



Seventh night



Eighth night

8) **Feast of Hanukkah** is the celebration of the recovery and purification of the temple of Jerusalem by Judas Maccabee around 165 BC, after its desecration by Antiochus Epiphanes (1 Maccabees 4: 52-53 – apocryphal book), also called Antiochus IV. It also received the name of **Feast of Lights**. In Greek, the term used in Jn. 10: 22 is **Enkainia = Dedication**. Unlike the Feast of Purim, where the purpose is to celebrate with gifts and food, for life (the physical body of the Jews) was requested by the enemy, the Feast of Lights is a celebration of spiritual nature, where one seek the light of the presence of God in the midst of His people. It is celebrated for eight days; on each of them, one of the nine lamps of the lampstand (Hanukiah) is lit, and the middle one, called Shamash (Hebrew = sun), is used to kindle the others. It is the first one to be lit.

This Feast was not instituted by God but by men, during the ‘God’s period of silence’ (400 BC until the birth of Christ). According to the Jewish tradition, during the consecration of the altar by Judas Macabee the Menorah of the Temple had to be lit, and for this it was necessary olive oil ritually pure. However, there was only one bottle that had not been desecrated by the Greeks, enough for one day only. Even so, the Jews lit the lampstand. It was then that the great miracle occurred and the oil burned for eight days.

The most important of all for us, who live under grace, instead of the law, is to be able to interpret through the light of divine wisdom the spiritual meaning of these feasts because our spirit may can rejoice not only with something that was the Lord’s blessing in the past, but continues to be for everyone who believes in Him.

**Passover** is no longer a ritual to be obeyed as a physical release from captivity in a foreign land, but the spiritual liberation won by Jesus on the cross, freeing us from the eternal captivity of death in the hands of the devil. Living Passover is to live His resurrection and His victory over sin in our lives. It is to conquer the right as children of God through His forgiveness and to have authority over all evil.

The Feast of Firstfruits or **Pentecost** is more than rejoicing in the fruit of our work, offering them as an act of gratitude to the Lord; it means to receive His Spirit that fills us with gifts and spiritual fruit and with all the power that was in Jesus, giving us the capacity to accomplish here on earth the same miracles He performed.

Celebrating the **Feast of Tabernacles** means to remember everything that He has already done for us until today in our spiritual desert, in search of our ‘promise land,’ and to rejoice by knowing that in our pilgrimage on earth He will be always guiding our steps, giving us victory and deliverance.

**Shemini Atzeret** means the joy of reading the word of God, each day a new cycle, a new revelation, to be ‘the bridegroom of the Torah’, that is, to feel privileged for being chosen by the Lord to know His teachings and, more than that, what His Testament contains for us, that is, His legacy, His inheritance, our rights as children of God.

We should not forget the **Sabbaths** that God puts in our lives, that is, the period in which the only alternative we have is to rest in Him, for He alone is able to direct us and supply our needs. We should give rest to our land, our soul, periodically, as it was prescribed in the Law, after a period of spiritual struggle so that our soul can be restored because of the exhaustion it suffered; it means to give rest to our ‘inner land’ and get away from everything that does not please the Lord, in order to be in the altar in intimacy with His Spirit, receiving His comfort, His guidance and His strength.

Living the **Feast of Trumpets** is to hear His call to be in His presence in praise and prayer, especially when our soul is weakened by so much outrage from Satan and so many obstacles he puts in our path. It’s to summon our brothers to holiness planned by God to His people, leading them to the altar through worship and repentance so that the covenant made with Him is not broken; it is to start all over again (a “New Year”).

The **Day of Atonement** may be every day, for it is the day that we can consecrate ourselves to Jesus and come closer to the cross through fasting and sincere prayer, cleansing ourselves of what bothers us; it is the day of living His forgiveness. It is the day when we can intercede for other brothers, who may be in need of divine intervention in their lives.

Celebrating the **Feast of Purim** is to give thanks for the material blessings that the Lord puts in our hands, not only for our own benefit, but to bless His work, sharing what we have with those less fortunate. It is to know that the enemy cannot withhold

what belongs to us and all that he tries to steal unfairly of our lives, including our physical health, can be reversed by the power of God. Jesus (in the figure of Mordecai) may determine the deliverance of His children and break the whole decree of the devil on them.

**The Feast of Lights** is a continuous thing that a Christian has the right to celebrate when he is full with the Holy Spirit. It means to live in the Spirit and not in the flesh, letting the power of the Spirit of God carry out His will in us and through us. It includes understanding, wisdom, might, prudence, knowledge and fear of God in our soul and our spirit, driving away all kind of darkness that tries to prevent us from seeing clearly the divine direction for our lives. It is to be sure that His revelation will always be available to us and that the strength of His Word will not let us slip into the snares of the devil, on the contrary, it will bring us safe to the end.

Sacrifices were offered to the Lord in almost all the feasts: burnt offering, sin offering, guilt offering, grain offering and fellowship offering. This means for us that Jesus has offered Himself as a living sacrifice before the Father, paying the price for our salvation, but it is up to us to offer ourselves as living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to Him, as the Word says, daily, giving Him the best we have. In doing so, we are fulfilling what is written in Lev. 6: 12-13: "The fire on the altar shall be kept burning; it shall not go out. Every morning the priest shall add wood to it, lay out the burnt offering on it, and turn into smoke the fat pieces of the offerings of well-being. A perpetual fire shall be kept burning on the altar; it shall not go out." This means that the flame of revival of the Spirit in our hearts will not be quenched because we, as priests, will light the wood of prayer, supplication and thanksgiving; over them we will put not only our lives available to the Lord as well as our sacrifice of praise ('burnt offering'), our anointing and the most precious we have that is the intimacy with Jesus ('fat') so that it is multiplied by Him, coming to strengthen us.



## THE SEVEN CANAANITE NATIONS



In Gen. 12: 1-4 it is written: “Now the Lord said to Abram, ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’ So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.”

In the book of Nehemiah we can find reference to Abraham: “You are the Lord, the God who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and gave him the name Abraham; and you found his heart faithful before you, and made with him a covenant to give to his descendants the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Jebusite, and the Girgashite; and you have fulfilled your promise, for you are righteous” (Neh. 9: 7-8).

There is also reference to those nations in Deut. 7: 1-2: “When the Lord your God brings you into the land that you are about to enter and occupy, and he clears away many nations before you—the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations mightier and more numerous than you—and when the Lord your God gives them over to you and you defeat them, then you must utterly destroy them. Make no covenant with them and show them no mercy” ... “After he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance” (Acts 13: 19) ... “Joshua said, ‘By this you shall know that among you is the living God who without fail will drive out from before you the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites, and Jebusites’” (Josh. 3: 10).

God gave Abram the land of Canaan because the idolatrous people that were there didn’t please Him, and for their abominations, they should be expelled and destroyed. The Canaanites were the first inhabitants of the Promised Land before Israel arrive. They lived in the region near the Great Sea (Mediterranean Sea) to the north, so were also called Syro-Phoenicians. In the times of the Old Testament, Phoenicia was called Canaan (Hebrew, Kena’an), and its inhabitants, Canaanites (Hebrew, Kna’aniy; Strong #3669), which means ‘trader,’ ‘peddler.’ And just as a merchant takes care of his goods so that they are not stolen and that he does not suffer financial loss with them, we can extend its meaning to ‘zealous.’ In Greek, Phoenicia is called Phoiníkē, Φοινίκη, ‘land of the palm trees.’

Hittite (Hebrew, Chitti; Strong #2850) means ‘descendant from Heth.’ And Heth (Hebr.: Cheth; Strong #2845) means ‘fear, terror.’ Therefore, we can say that Hittite means ‘he who does not fear to show who he is.’ Amorite (Hebrew, Emori; Strong #567) is a word derived from a primitive root that means prominence; consequently, mountaineer, mountain dweller, climber; symbolically, visionary. Perizzite (Hebrew,

Perizzi; Strong #6522) means ‘inhabitant of the open country’, as the kingdom of God is for us. Hivite (Hebrew, Chivvi; Strong #2340) means ‘a villager.’ Village is a symbol of what is small, customary, limited, traditional, that judges; that does not surrender; that opposes change. Jebusite (Hebrew, Yebusi; Strong #2983) means inhabitant of Jebus (Hebrew, Ybuwc or Yebus; Strong #2982), the ancient name of Jerusalem (‘the city of peace’); and Jebus means ‘trodden place, threshing floor.’ As Ornan or Araunah was the last Jebusite to remain in the place where the temple of the Lord would be built, Jebusite can mean ‘he who resists’, ‘he who remains until the end.’ Gergashites (Hebrew, Gergashi; Strong #1622) means ‘he who occupies clayey ground.’

God was saying to Abram, “In that land there are blessings and characteristics that I want to give you as well as your descendants. Those who are there stole what I previously separated exclusively for my people.” Anyway, Abram had to leave everything he was accustomed to and all that held him to false assurance and false blessings to achieve what was really precious.

The word ‘*blessing*’ comes from the Hebrew *Brakah* (Strong #1293), which means benediction; by implication: prosperity, blessing, present. *Brakah* derives from the primitive root *barak* (Strong #1288), which means ‘to kneel; by implication: to bless God (as an act of adoration) and man (as a benefit); bless, congratulate, kneel (down), praise, salute, thank.’ God was giving Abraham the same thing He gave to Adam and Eve: the condition to be like Him, to live His full and abundant life.

When God gave the Law to Moses and Joshua made the people enter the Promised Land, the guidelines were maintained so that the land would actually be in the possession of the chosen people. For us today, according to what we saw above, it means to remove from our lives, demons and works of the flesh that are preventing the Spirit of God from acting with power. It also means taking back the blessings that belong to us and have been stolen by the enemy. Canaanite means ‘trader’, ‘peddler.’ And just as a merchant takes care of his goods so that they are not stolen and that he does not suffer financial loss with them, we can extend its meaning to ‘zealous.’ Thus, we are the ones who have to watch over the promises of God and the spiritual gifts that He bestows on our lives.

Hittite means ‘descendant from Heth.’ And Heth means ‘fear, terror.’ Therefore, we can say that Hittite means ‘he who does not fear to show who he is.’ We have been given a spirit of power and boldness, so we must use that anointing to take possession of what we want, our rightful place on earth. We need not be afraid to show who we are or to show God’s power and authority in the spiritual world through our lives. Even though the enemy threatens us and tries to scare us, we have a Father in heaven that defends us from all oppression and violence:

- 2 Tim. 1: 7: “for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.”

- Rom. 8: 14-17: “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.”

Amorite is a word derived from a primitive root that means prominence; consequently, mountaineer, mountain dweller, climber; symbolically, visionary. We are the ones who were prepared to climb spiritual heights and see our life from above, from the perspective of God. Thinking only about material things keeps us stuck with mediocrity and human wisdom without value. Furthermore, it does not allow us to have



a greater goal in life, but to be born, grow up, study, work to earn money and accumulate wealth, get married, see offspring and die. God's work is a little bit bigger, because it makes us discover our spiritual identity and know that the divine goal for us is to gain lives for His kingdom, while He works the transformation of our soul, making us be more like Him for developing true love in our hearts.

Perizzite means 'inhabitant of the open country', as the kingdom of God is for us. We have received the kingdom of God as an inheritance, a large place, where the devil's oppression and the human limitations no longer have power over us. And the bible says that the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, and that it is not a matter of talk but of power. Thus, the time has come to break down the limiting barriers in our lives because of the wrong actions of those who, in fact, never knew the one and only true God. The one who is in us is greater than the one who is in the world.

- "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." (Lk. 12: 32)

- "For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." (Rom. 14: 17)

- "For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace" (Rom. 6: 14)

- "For the kingdom of God depends not on talk but on power." (1 Cor. 4: 20)

- "Little children, you are from God, and have conquered them; for the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world." (1 Jn. 4: 4)

- "because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of persons we proved to be among you for your sake." (1 The. 1: 5)

Hivite means 'villager.' Village is a symbol of what is small, customary, limited, traditional, that judges; that does not surrender; that opposes change. Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, "Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses" (1 Tim. 6: 12). Paul himself, before being arrested and beheaded wrote to Timothy, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4: 7).

He also says, "But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and save me for his heavenly kingdom (2 Tim. 4: 17-18)."

In this way, a true child of God does not yield or surrender to negative and sinful things, but perseveres in believing in victory and in divine protection over himself. A true child of God breaks the limits and destroys everything that opposes the work of the Holy Spirit and God's novelties for his life.

Jebusite means inhabitant of Jebus, the ancient name of Jerusalem ('the city of peace'); and Jebus means 'trodden place, threshing floor.' As Ornan or Araunah was the last Jebusite to remain in the place where the temple of the Lord would be built, Jebusite can mean 'he who resists', 'he who remains until the end.' Jebusites symbolize the enemies that Satan puts in our way and that fight against God's purpose for us, that try to prevent the rebuilding of our soul, the place that was already established as the temple of the Lord. Jebus ('trodden place, threshing place') symbolizes our soul that was once wounded by the enemy, the stage of our spiritual struggles, but that is now the city of peace (Jerusalem), because we know how to exercise God's authority, casting the enemy out of it. The interesting thing is that Araunah (or Ornan) was the last Jebusite in the place where there was Mount Moriah ('chosen by God, seen by God').

There, Abraham had given Isaac to sacrifice. And there was the place chosen by the Lord to build the temple: “Solomon began to build the house of the Lord in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the Lord had appeared to his father David, at the place that David had designated, on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite” (2 Chr. 3: 1). David bought that place at a high price: six hundred shekels of gold (1 Chr. 21: 25); fifty shekels of silver for each tribe of Israel (2 Sam. 24: 24). We also have to learn to resist everything that keeps our souls trapped in sin and idolatry, and everything that hinders our journey. In the same way that it is the word of God that remains forever, it is we who will remain firm in it until the end, persevering in the promise that has been given to us and, by faith, bringing it into existence. Therefore, the only one who can teach us to fight properly and cover us with his protection is the Holy Spirit. He left us His spiritual armor. Every part of it is Jesus Himself, through every loving attitude He has taken for us:

- Eph. 6: 10-17: “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (NRSV).

- Jam. 4: 6b-7: “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

Finally, Girgashite means ‘he who occupies clayey ground.’ Clay is a soft material, composed of several minerals, from which the clay vase is made. Therefore, the Lord said, in the Old Testament, that He is the potter and we are the clay vessels molded by His hands (Jer. 18: 6). Girgashites are the enemies that affront our soul, preventing it from being shaped with humility in the hands of Jesus. When we understand this, we begin to cooperate for our own spiritual growth, for we humble ourselves before Him and surrender to His will. It is written:

- 2 Cor. 4: 7-11: “But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh.”

The Spirit of God is the one who enables us to walk with our heads held high in the face of the trials of life and to manifest the power of Jesus before men.

Source of research for the meaning of names:

- Novo Tempo – Bíblia Online – advanced research: <https://pesquisa.biblia.com.br/> (KJV with Strong)
- Os nomes bíblicos e seus significados – Evandro de Souza Lopes – CPAD, 8ª edição 2002.



## EPILOGUE

This book ends opening doors before us that will never be shut, for the word of God is not chained (2 Jam. 2: 9) and there are no limits to ask Him what we want. His knowledge is infinite, also making our potential unlimited to contribute to His Creation. Jesus said, “My Father is still working, and I also am working” (Jn. 5: 17). Therefore, we, as co-workers of His harvest, will also continue to work for Him. He gave us His authority to put our enemies under our feet and we will no longer accept the limitations and failures. I hope you begin to love God’s Word and learn more from it every day because it is the force that assures us victory and teaches us strategies for our way to be perfect.

See you soon.

*“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him – these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God... Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God.... For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2: 9-10; 12; 16).*

