

**Basic Training Bible Ministries  
and  
Gene Cunningham  
present**

**SEATED IN THE HEAVENLIES**

**The Exalted Privileges and Responsibilities of the Christian  
The Role of Redeemed Mankind in God's Glorious Plan**



*"Since then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God." Colossians 3:1*

**Uniontown, Pennsylvania Conference**

**Abundant Life Church**

**October 26–28, 2018**

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## **The Exalted Privileges and Responsibilities of the Christian The Role of Redeemed Mankind in God’s Glorious Plan**

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### **Theme Verse: Colossians 3:1**

*“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.”*

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **The Seven Stages of Our Story—Colossians` 3:1–4**

1. Jesus Christ is resurrected and seated at the Father’s right hand.
2. You (believers) were raised with Christ (Romans 6:4–5).
3. Seek (spiritual growth) those things above (Ephesians 1:3).
4. Set your mind (spiritual focus) on heavenly, not earthly, things (Romans 8:5).
5. Your past: You have died to this world (cosmic system) (1 John 2:15–17).
6. Your present: Your life is hidden (like treasure—security) with Christ (Matthew 13:44).
7. Your future: You will appear with Him in glory (1 John 3:1–3).

## **STUDY ONE: THE KING ENTHRONED**

### **The Story**

*“So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and **preached everywhere**, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.” Mark 16:19–20 (emphasis added)*

In Acts 1:9–11, we have essentially the same account, with the added promise, “*This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven*” (Acts 1:11). We serve a risen Savior, and we have a living hope!

### **The Implications**

Just what is the significance of Jesus’ resurrection, ascension, and seating at the Father’s right hand? How does it, or should it, affect our lives today? Two prophetic passages clarify this crucial issue.

## The King and the Conflict—Psalm 2

*“I will declare the decree:  
The LORD has said to Me,  
‘You are My Son,  
Today I have begotten You.  
Ask of Me, and I will give You  
The nations for Your inheritance,  
And the ends of the earth for Your possession.’”*  
Psalm 2:7–8

1. The context of the passage is the spiritual drama throughout history of the war raging against God and His Son, vv. 1–3.
2. We see that the boast of rebellious mankind is a joke to God (vv. 4–6), because Christ crucified, buried, and resurrected has already won the victory. By the crucifixion, both God’s plan of redemption and His victory in the spiritual war (Revelation 12:7–12) are “finished” (John 19:30).
3. On the day of His resurrection (compare Acts 13:33 and Hebrews 1:3–5), God the Father seated the risen Christ as King of the universe, Psalm 2:7–8.
4. The significance of this is that He will destroy all who oppose Him, and will bless and redeem all who trust in Him, vv. 9–12. The Hebrew word for trust here is *chasah*, which means “to flee for refuge.”

## The Present Reign of Christ—Psalm 110

*“The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand,  
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’  
The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion.  
Rule in the midst of Your enemies!”*  
Psalm 110:1–2

1. Note that this exchange is between God the Father and God the Son, who is now both eternal God and resurrected humanity.
2. The “rod ... out of Zion” is the witness of the apostles we saw in Mark 16:20 and also in Acts 1:8. Paul says that “God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel” (Romans 2:16).
3. Jesus Christ presently rules “in the midst of [His] enemies,” through the Church—the Body of Christ (see 1 Corinthians 15:25). Note in Psalm 110:3, “Your people shall be **volunteers** in the day of Your power; in the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning” (emphasis added).  
Question: Are you a volunteer in the spiritual fight? Do you wage war in the beauties of “the fruit of the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22–23)?
4. At His enthronement, the Father ordained Jesus as “a **priest forever** according to the order of Melchizedek,” Psalm 110:4 (emphasis added). Just as Melchizedek held a higher position than Abraham (Genesis 14:18–20; Hebrews 7:7), even so, believers in this

present Church Age hold a higher position than even Old Testament saints (Matthew 11:11).

5. Every believer in Christ is a priest under His high Priesthood (Hebrews 8:1; 1 Peter 2:5–9), and we are ordained as witnesses (Acts 1:8) to send forth the rod of His strength (the Gospel) by which He will conquer all His enemies (see Romans 5:8, 10).

## **Conclusion**

On the cross, our Savior won the spiritual war instigated by Satan and his angels (Isaiah 14:12–15; Ezekiel 28:12–19; Matthew 25:41), and carried out on Earth by those who hate Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is now enthroned in Heaven, and those who trust and serve Him, are carrying out the “mop-up” operations of this conflict.

As believer-priests, we wage war in the armor of God (Isaiah 59:17; Ephesians 6:11–18); and through our witness, we distinguish between those who will join Christ through faith and those who will be judged for their unbelief (John 3:16–21). Those who walk by the Spirit (Galatians 5:16, 25) now share in the present reign of Christ (Romans 5:17, 21) and will reign with Him forever in His eternal kingdom (2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 3:21–22). The certainty of Christ’s final victory is pictured in Psalm 110:7, where the King, fresh from victory, drinks from the brook and is refreshed.

## **STUDY TWO: THE DOOR OPENED IN HEAVEN**

The Lord Jesus Christ, by His resurrection and ascension, was the first human being to enter into the presence of God (1 Corinthians 15:23; Colossians 1:18). He opened the door into Heaven for all who would follow Him through faith.

### **The Story/Illustration—Genesis 28, Jacob’s Ladder**

*“Now Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran ... Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached into heaven, and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And behold, the LORD stood above it ...”* Genesis 28:10, 12–13.

1. Jacob had just received “*the blessing of Abraham*” from his father Isaac, vv. 3–4. This blessing was Messianic in nature, promising God’s blessing on all who “blessed themselves” (v. 14) through the seed of Abraham. The verb “*blessed*” in v. 14 is best taken as “shall bless themselves” since the promise is given three times in the passive voice (Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 28:14) and twice in the reflexive tense (Genesis 22:18; 26:4). This blessing comes upon all who believe in the Promised Seed—the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. This offer of blessing is represented by “Jacob’s ladder,” which is equivalent to the concept of an open door into Heaven. Since angels are God’s ministers to those who believe (Hebrews 1:13–14), the angels represent our Mediator (1 Timothy 2:3–5), as He represents God to us (descending) and intercedes for us to God (ascending) (see Romans 10:5–13; Ephesians 4:8–10).

3. As a result of this vision/dream, Jacob makes a foolish vow (Genesis 28:20–22), which will later be confirmed through his “wrestling match” with the Lord in Genesis 32:24–30; Hosea 12:2–6). We all come to faith by having our foolish self-sufficiency broken; and by turning from arrogance to humility (repentance), we surrender to the power of His grace (see Proverbs 3:34–35; 1 Peter 5:5).

### **Jesus Christ, the Open Door**

*“Then Jesus said to them again, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep ... **I AM the door.** If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.’”* John 10:7, 9 (emphasis added)

1. In this passage, Jesus is affirming the same truth which He later stated in John 14:6, that He is the only way to enter into eternal life.
2. The “open door” stands as an invitation to all mankind to enter, since Jesus Christ died for all (John 3:16; 1 John 2:2). The Father desires all to be saved (1 Timothy 2:3–5), and does not desire that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9).
3. Jesus Christ as the “door of salvation” is the fulfillment of the door struck with the blood of the lamb in the first Passover (Exodus 12:7, 22). This door represents both the price that was paid, and the way of entrance into the redemptive plan of God.
4. Just as Noah and his family entered the door of the ark, and were sealed in by God (Genesis 6:16; 7:16) so, when we trust in Christ, we are sealed into union with Him by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13–14).
5. I have taken the liberty to capitalize the “**I AM,**” because Jesus used this formula at least seven times in the Gospel of John, to identify Himself as God in the flesh (see Exodus 3:14).

### **The Door of Deliverance or Judgment**

The door to Heaven remains open, both for men to come to God and for God to send down judgment on those who will not come to Him. Those who reject Jesus Christ are without excuse because He died for them, yet they refuse His offer of mercy (Romans 1:18–20; Luke 7:30; 2 Peter 2:1).

*“After these things I looked, and behold, a **door standing open** in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, ‘Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.’”* Revelation 4:1 (emphasis added)

### **The Door of Deliverance**

1. This verse stands as a hinge between the Church Age (Revelation 1–3), and the Tribulation Period (chapters 6–19). The phrase “*after these things,*” which begins and ends the verse, comes from the inspired outline of the book (Revelation 1:19).
2. In the phrase “*a door standing open,*” the word “*standing*” is supplied in the NKJV to convey the perfect tense of the verb *anoigo*, meaning, “having been opened in the past and remaining open.” Once opened, the door remains open for either rescue or for ruin.

3. Because of the placement of this verse, between the Church on Earth (chapters 2–3), and in Heaven (chapters 4–5), it seems that John, here, is capturing the Rapture of the Church (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; 1 Corinthians 15:50–54), prior to the beginning of the Tribulation in Revelation 6.

### **The Door of Judgment**

When we come to chapter 19, we see the end of the Tribulation Period with the Second Coming of our Lord to Earth.

*“Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.”* Revelation 19:11

1. Once again, the word “open” is *anoigo* and, again, it is a perfect passive participle, speaking of an existing condition based on a past action (the crucifixion).
2. The fact that the rider, Jesus Christ, is called “Faithful and True” emphasizes that both His offer of eternal salvation and of eternal condemnation was valid, based not on any merit of our own but on His Word, which endures forever (Matthew 24:35; 1 Peter 1:25).
3. His appearance (Revelation 19:12–13) is designed to convey His right and power to judge all men based on His crucifixion (“*a robe dipped in blood*”) and His Present Session at the Father’s right hand (“*many crowns*”).
4. This event describes the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. He is followed by “*the armies in heaven*” (v. 14), probably composed both of believers from this Age, and angels as well (Joel 2:3–16; 3:11; Zechariah 14:5b). Remember, He is “*The LORD of hosts*” (Psalm 24:10).
5. The name on His robe and thigh, “*KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS*” is His rightful title, since His inauguration by the Father following His ascension (Psalm 2:6–8; 110:1–2).
6. The fact that we ride with Him shows us two things about His faithfulness: First, that we share fully in His victory on the cross and, secondly, that we will—yet future—share in His judgment on evil (1 Corinthians 6:3) and His future reign (Revelation 20:6).

**Principle:** We cannot be seated with Christ unless we first enter the door by personal faith in the finished work of Christ (John 19:30). This is a personal decision for which each person is accountable (John 3:18–19).

### **STUDY THREE: SEATED WITH CHRIST**

We have seen that Jesus Christ has been enthroned in Heaven following His ascension. As a result of His victory on the cross, we also see that He will judge the Earth as the King of kings. Our attention now turns to what is happening between His Ascension and His Second Coming. In other words, how does His Present Session at the right hand of the Father affect us? This subject, which is taught very little, is of utmost significance to every believer.

## The Story/Illustration—2 Samuel 9:1–7

Someone has said that everything in the Old Testament was a “dress rehearsal” for everything we find in the New Testament. In much the same way, our lives here and now on this Earth are a “dress rehearsal” for the part we will play throughout the eternal kingdom. We need to play our part well!

*“Now David said, ‘Is there still anyone who is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan’s sake?’ ... ‘There is still a son of Jonathan who is lame in his feet’ ... ‘Mephibosheth’ ... So David said to him, ‘Do not fear, for I will surely show you kindness for Jonathan your father’s sake, and will restore to you all the land of Saul your grandfather, and you shall eat bread at my table continually.’” 2 Samuel 9:1, 3b, 6–7*

1. This event occurred after the defeat and death of Saul and Jonathan on Mt. Gilboa (1 Samuel 31).
2. David has now been proclaimed King of all Israel (2 Samuel 5:1–5).
3. Mephibosheth (his name means “exterminator of shame” according to *Unger’s Bible Dictionary*) was crippled in the panic after the battle in which his father, Jonathan, died (2 Samuel 4:4).
4. In this story, Mephibosheth is shown mercy on the basis of David’s love for Jonathan. In the same way, we who are crippled in soul by sin and shame, are shown mercy on behalf of Him who died for us.
5. Just as Mephibosheth is seated at David’s table daily, even so, all who trust in Christ are seated with Him at the Father’s right hand and are provided with a banquet of blessings and care.

## Out of Death, into Life

Mephibosheth refers to himself, in his first meeting with David, as a “*dead dog*” (2 Samuel 9:8). We who come to Christ are “*dead in trespasses and sins*” (Ephesians 2:1), but by our miraculous union with the Lord, we are “*made alive.*” Later, we will see what a transformation David’s kindness made in Mephibosheth’s life. For now, let’s see what a dramatic change has occurred in our own lives because of the love of Christ.

*“And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins ... But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us ... **made us alive together** with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and **raised us up together**, and **made us sit together** in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”* Ephesians 2:1, 4–7 (emphasis added)

1. Our natural condition prior to trusting in Christ is that of spiritual death. This condition is due to the sin of Adam and was passed on to every member of the human race (Genesis 2:17; Romans 5:12).

2. Due to the love and mercy of God toward us—based on His love for His Son—we are made alive in Christ when we believe. By spiritual birth, we have “*passed from [out of] death into life*” (John 5:24).
3. This means that we share in the resurrection life of our resurrected Lord—a life which can never end. This alone is an infinite and immeasurable blessing. But God does so “*much more*” for us than even this (see Romans 5:9–10, 15, 17, 20).
4. Not only are we united with Christ in life, but we are positionally placed “in Him,” seated at the Father’s right hand. This means that we share His victory over sin and death, but we also share in His present reign, “*in the midst of [His] enemies*” (Psalm 110:2).
5. This union is the result of the work of the Holy Spirit who, at the moment of salvation, unites us with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3–6). Theologically, our standing in Christ is referred to as “positional truth,” that is, the biblical truth regarding our position in Christ.
6. Because of our present union, Paul says that God will continue to reveal, throughout all the ages of eternity, “*the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus*” (Ephesians 2:7). This can only mean that for we who trust in Christ, the best will forever be yet to come!

**Principle:** Without assurance of our **security** in Christ, we can have no **stability** nor effective service in life (2 Timothy 1:6–7, you can’t serve in fear!).

### **Out of Poverty into Infinite Wealth**

Because of the defeat of the house of Saul, Mephibosheth had lost everything. But when David took him in, all was restored to him (2 Samuel 9:7). Through Adam, the human race lost our privileged standing with God. However, through the cross of Christ, all has been restored, and “*much more*” (Romans 5:9–21). To be one with Christ means that we share in all that He is, and in all that He has. We share in His riches, His power, and His purpose.

Let us look first at our spiritual bank account, and see how rich we really are:

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.”* Ephesians 1:3

*“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.”* 2 Corinthians 8:9

1. When we speak of the riches of Christ, we are speaking of His infinite and eternal wealth as the God of the universe.
2. When Paul speaks of poverty here, he uses the strongest word in the Greek language for extreme and desperate poverty. The word is *ptochos*, and was pronounced with a “spit,” like “ptui.” It speaks of our total lack of merit, and of the depth of Christ’s condescension (Philippians 2:5–9). He took out poverty, so that we could share in His riches.
3. Just as David reached down to rescue a poor cripple, so Christ has brought us to the banquet table of His grace and mercy.



4. When Paul says we have been blessed with “*every spiritual blessing,*” he means that absolutely nothing has been withheld. The storehouse of Heaven is open to us, it is our spiritual bank account. We draw on these resources when we write checks of faith.
5. Like any wealth, the riches of Christ (Ephesians 1:18; 2:7; 3:8, 16) may be consumed or invested (compare 2 Corinthians 9:10, are we the eater or the sower?). We can rejoice in what they mean to us, or we can utilize them for their intended purpose, which is to invest in eternity. Either we will multiply their value, or we will hide them in the ground, to no avail (Matthew 25:14–29). This will be the topic of our next study.

## **STUDY FOUR: CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE**

The Bible has a great deal to say about the plan of God. He is working to accomplish His eternal purpose in and through history. This plan is for the ultimate reconciliation of all things in and through Christ (Ephesians 1:10). It is His good pleasure to include His creatures—both angels and men (Deuteronomy 32:7–8; Psalm 82:1)—in this plan, not only as recipients of its blessings but also as participants in its achievement. Now that we know our position and privileges in Christ, let’s consider the grand purpose behind these privileges.

### **The Story/Illustration—Matthew 9:35–38**

The Lord Jesus repeatedly stated the purpose of His coming, which was “*to seek and to save that which was lost*” (Luke 19:10). In calling His disciples, He conferred upon them this same purpose. If we are to be conformed to His image, it is here that the transformation must begin.

*“The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.”* Matthew 9:37–38

1. In the story, we see Jesus engaged in three activities of ministry: teaching, preaching, and healing. The act of teaching provides further instruction to those who already believe. Preaching is the presentation of the Good News to those who are unbelievers. And the work of healing is meeting both physical and spiritual needs of all.
2. Behind the works He was doing was the attitude of compassion. This speaks both of the ability to identify with another, as if suffering the same sorrows and afflictions, and the determination to do something about it. Compassion is much more than just a feeling of sympathy. It is a passionate commitment to undertake on behalf of the one who is suffering.
3. Jesus enlists His disciples in His ministry. This begins first of all with a call to pray. By praying, they not only admit their own helplessness, but call on God for His guidance and enablement. The best way to prepare to be a missionary is to begin by praying for missions. Certainly, this will be followed by a program of study and preparation, but even this, if pursued without prayer, is bound to fail.

### **The Call and Purpose of God**

*“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”* Romans 8:28 NASB

1. This verse is a critical hinge between everything written up to this point, and all that follows. Unfortunately, Romans 8:28–30 has often been twisted beyond recognition to support faulty theological positions.
2. These verses are written to those who are “in Christ,” as is evident from Romans 8:1, 2, 9–10, 15–17. It is only the believer who loves God (1 John 4:19), and only the believer is “*called according to His purpose.*”
3. This ultimate purpose is that we be “*conformed to the image of His Son*” (Romans 8:29). This also includes an immediate purpose, stated earlier in v. 17, that we “suffer together,” that we might be “*joint heirs [together]*” and that we be “*glorified together.*” These three phrases, along with the word “*conformed*” in v. 29, all use the prefix *sun* to emphasize our total union with Christ. Again, all that He is and has is ours.
4. When we understand this, we are able to see the flow of thought in the five-fold nature of God’s plan:
  - a. **Foreknowledge.** This is essentially first. This does not refer to God knowing in advance what will happen, though He surely does in His omniscience. Rather, this term is used of knowing someone in a relationship sense. In Ephesians 1:4, Paul says that “*He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world*” (emphasis added). When God chose His Son to be the Savior of the world and to inherit an eternal kingdom, He also chose all who would be “in Christ.” The word “foreknew” cannot mean to “choose for salvation,” as it is often presented, because in Romans 11:2, Paul speaks of unbelieving Israel as “*His people whom He foreknew.*” By virtue of God choosing Christ, “*My Elect One*” (Isaiah 42:1, emphasis added), all who are “in Christ,” share in His election.

We can illustrate this in human experience. When a man chooses a wife, he automatically chooses the children they will have together. While we do not possess the power of foreknowledge, we do have foresight. When a newly married couple sit down and determine how they will raise their children before those children are born, they predetermine how those not yet in existence will be trained. In our case, the saying is true: “Hindsight combined with insight results in foresight.”

- b. **Predestined.** This word simply means to set or establish a destiny in advance. It is never used in the New Testament for predestination to salvation or to Hell. Here, it refers to the destiny of those who “*love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.*” In short, it is to those who believe in Christ. God determined, before the world began, both His immediate and eternal purpose for those who trust in Christ. Specifically, God pre-determined that all who trust in Christ would be “adopted as sons” to share both in the work and in the inheritance of Christ (Romans 8:15–17; Galatians 3:29; Ephesians 1:5).
- c. **Called.** This word is used both for the extending of an invitation and for those who respond to the invitation. As evidence of this, Jesus said, “*Many are called, but few are chosen*” (Matthew 22:14). Jesus clearly illustrates both the meaning of “*called*” and “*chosen*” in the parable of Matthew 22:2–13. The king sends out his servants to invite his people to the feast. They refuse to come, so the servants are sent into “the

highways and byways” to invite everyone. Those who accepted the invitation are “the called.” This is why Jesus said of His disciples, “*Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?*” (John 6:70). Judas was “chosen/called” but rejected his invitation.

- d. **Justified.** This speaks of all who believe in Jesus Christ being declared righteous by God. He took our sins on the cross, and we receive His righteousness through faith. Paul says, “*Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God*” (Romans 5:1). Justification in every age of human history is based on faith (Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:3–5). In other words, we are not justified because we are called or invited to trust Christ, we are justified when we respond to the call by faith alone, in Christ alone.
- e. **Glorified.** Most people think of this only as a future hope. We will one day be glorified in the presence of our Lord. However, in the sense that we are seated “in Christ” in heavenly places, we are even now sharers of His glory. Certainly, we look forward to the full and final glorification, when we shall “be like Him” (1 John 3:3). In the mind of God, this is already a reality.

### **Conformed to His Image**

The process that we call “sanctification” speaks of a gradual transformation by which we take on the characteristics and nature of Christ. While we have already “been sanctified” in Christ positionally, yet we are also in the process of “being sanctified” in life (Hebrews 10:10, 14). It is God’s purpose to make us like His Son, and the chief quality in that likeness is humble service.

*“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”* Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45

*“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus ...”* Philippians 2:5

1. Every action is built upon an attitude. The right act with the wrong attitude (motive) is worthless.
2. Jesus Christ exemplifies the attitude of humility. Humility is sacrificial in regard to self, in order to render service to another.
3. Before we can ever offer effective service to God, and fulfill the purpose of our calling, we must learn to “*esteem others better than [ourselves]*” (Philippians 2:3).
4. True greatness is in direct opposition to having a great opinion of ourselves. Greatness begins in the mind, and is expressed in the labor of a servant (Matthew 18:4).

### **Beauty for Ashes**

*“... To give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they may be called trees [oaks] of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.”* Isaiah 61:3

If we compare passages like Isaiah 42:1–4 and 58:6–8 with Isaiah 61:1–3, we get the impression that the ultimate goal of all ministry is healing. First, it is the healing of man’s relationship to God, which we call reconciliation. Then, it is the healing of the individual’s soul, which we call sanctification. Finally, it is the healing of one’s relationship to others, by the inner working of the Spirit, replacing hate with love and indifference with compassion.

1. Note that in Isaiah 61:1, we have the Trinity working together to accomplish the plan of God. Jesus quoted this verse in His first public message (Luke 4:16–21).
2. We see the emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit, both in the prophecy of Isaiah, and in the immediate context of the Luke passage.
  - a. Jesus was filled with the Spirit, and the Spirit led Him into the wilderness, where He was tempted by the devil (Luke 4:1).
  - b. After His temptations, He came up from the wilderness in the power of the Spirit (Luke 4:14).
  - c. It was then that He quoted Isaiah, about the role of the Spirit in His ministry (Luke 4:18).
3. It is significant to see that the first objective mentioned by Isaiah is the proclamation of the Gospel—the “good tidings,” to the poor. The reference to poverty here is not speaking of financial status, but rather those who are “*poor in spirit*” (Matthew 5:3), or humble and receptive.
4. When the Good News of the love of God and the finished work of Christ is received with humility and faith, a radical transformation begins to take place in the inner life, replacing all the spiritual damage of our brokenness with healing, liberty, joy, and praise. Such is the work of the Spirit in bringing conformity to Christ into our lives.

**Note:** This session deals only with the beginnings of His purpose. More on the end-game in study 6. Prepare to be surprised!

## **STUDY FIVE: ENLIGHTENED, EMPOWERED, AND ENGAGED**

I find that many Christians have a deep desire to do the will of God, but are discouraged by the lack of definite guidance and uncertain goals. So often I hear statements like, “I know God has a plan, but how can I discover it?” This is one of the most crucial needs of our generation.

Jesus said, in John 7:17, “*If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God, or whether I speak on My own authority.*” In the context of the passage, the Jews were questioning His credentials as a spiritual leader. But as it relates to discerning the will of God, He hits the nail on the head. The discernment of the will of God always begins with knowledge of the Word of God, coupled with the desire to do it.

## **The Story/Illustration—2 Samuel 19:24–30**

After the revolt of Absalom against David, Mephibosheth came to meet David at the River Jordan. In this brief exchange, we see the evidences of the amazing transformation, which the love of David brought into the life of this crippled man.

*“For all my father’s house were but dead men before my lord the king. Yet you set your servant among those who eat at your own table. Therefore what right have I still to cry out anymore to the king?”* 2 Samuel 19:28

Here, Mephibosheth includes himself as one among the dead. Remember that in 2 Samuel 9:8 he called himself *“a dead dog,”* making himself the least of the house of Saul. Yet he became the greatest of Saul’s house by his loyalty to David, which was greater even than Jonathan’s.

1. He lived in expectation of the day his king would return, 2 Samuel 19:24. Every day that Absalom, the pretender, came to the table, there sat Mephibosheth—a rebuke to his ambition and an example of selfless loyalty.
2. He endured the shame and slander of one not even worthy of his presence, and left his reputation in the hands of his lord, vv. 25–27. Go back to 2 Samuel 16:1–4 to see how unfairly he was treated by his servant, Ziba.
3. His concern was not his own status nor gain, but the desire to uphold the interests of his king and kingdom, 2 Samuel 19:28–30. In his conduct in the absence of David, we have a beautiful picture of what it means to share Christ’s sufferings (Romans 8:17; 2 Timothy 2:12).

Through David’s mercy and kindness, Mephibosheth had his eyes opened to his true worth, he had taken up the mantle of personal responsibility, and, though a cripple, had become the greatest warrior in a family famed for warriors. Such is the power of a transformed life!

## **Enlightened by Truth—Ephesians 1:15–20**

*“Therefore I ... do not cease to ... [make] mention of you in my prayers: that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling ...”* Ephesians 1:15–18

1. The first step to understanding either God’s Word or His plan is prayer. We need, as does Paul, to pray for others and ourselves.
2. The focus of our prayers to the Father should be a request for the Spirit of God to give us wisdom, which comes from revelation (God’s Word), and results in understanding. We call this process spiritual enlightenment or illumination.
3. The *“hope of His calling”* refers to His specific plan and purpose for each of us. It reveals how we personally are to utilize the *“riches”* of His glory entrusted to us, by which we enhance the *“inheritance of the saints,”* v. 18.

4. As we learned earlier, we can either consume or invest the spiritual wealth that has been committed to our care. When our “*hope*” is fixed on eternal values, there is no other option but to use our spiritual capital for eternal gain.
5. Take note how Paul immediately connects the idea of our purpose to God’s provision of power (v. 19). We need to always keep in mind the warning words of Jesus, “*without Me, you can do nothing*” (John 15:5b, emphasis added).

### **Empowered by the Spirit—Ephesians 3:14–19**

*“For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ... that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man ...”* Ephesians 3:14, 16

1. The book of Ephesians is built around the prayer of the Apostle Paul for the Ephesians. The prayer is in two parts, first for enlightenment (Ephesians 1:15–21), and then for enablement (Ephesians 3:14–19).
2. In Ephesians 1:19, Paul uses four different words for power, each adding a different dimension to God’s enablement for our service:
  - a. “Power,” *dunamis*, speaks of **inherent**, latent power. It is power waiting to be utilized. We might say, available power.
  - b. “Working,” *energeo*, is **energizing** power. We might speak of it as motivational. It moves us to call on our resources for the task at hand.
  - c. “Mighty,” *kratos*, refers to rule or **authority**. We have full authority from Jesus Christ to carry out the plan of the Father (see Matthew 28:18–20).
  - d. “Power,” *ischuos*, is **displayed** strength—power being exerted.
3. In Ephesians 3:15, Paul picks up on his previous references to power but directs us to the purpose of divine power—the abiding presence of Christ in our lives. We must never forget that unless Jesus Christ is a living reality in our own lives, we will never be able to make Him real to others.
4. The climax of Paul’s prayer is reached in v. 19, that we might “*know the love of Christ,*” which cannot be comprehended by mere human intellect or reason. When we attain to the place where the love of Christ—both for ourselves and for others—is the bedrock of our existence, then we will be prepared to serve.

### **Engaged in the King’s Service—Hebrews 10:19–25**

With spiritual **enlightenment** from God’s Word and **enablement** from His Spirit, we are prepared to enter into effective service and ministry. Without diligent and thorough preparation, ministry is bound to be a frustrating and discouraging experience.

*“Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus ... and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near ... Let us hold fast ... let us consider one another ... not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together ...”* Hebrews 10:19–25

1. As in all spiritual endeavors, ministry begins with prayer. The author’s reference to “entering the Holy place” goes back to Hebrews 4:14–16, where we are exhorted to “*come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*” Oswald Chambers said, “*Prayer is not the beginning of the work of God. Prayer is the work of God.*”
2. Our boldness rests in “*the blood of Jesus,*” which is a phrase loaded with meaning, as it speaks of the totality of His sacrifice and finished work on the cross on our behalf.
3. Further, all ministry must be built on the conviction that our labors are an extension of Christ’s High Priestly ministry from the Father’s right hand.
4. On this foundation, we can engage in the three spheres of Christian service, to which the author directs our efforts:
  - a. Our **Priesthood**. “*Let us draw near*” is terminology, which pictures the priest approaching the altar of sacrifice. Since every believer is a priest (2 Peter 2:5–9), we exercise our priesthood through effective, intercessory prayer. Before we approach people for God, we should be lifting them up to God.
  - b. Our **Ambassadorship**. “*Let us hold fast*” speaks of consistent and faithful witness. Here, we are directing the confession of our hope in Christ toward the unbeliever. Paul speaks of our ambassadorship in 2 Corinthians 5:14–21. As ambassadors for Christ, we implore others to be reconciled to God through Christ.
  - c. Our **Ministry**. “*Let us consider one another*” addresses our ministry to fellow believers. We not only need to maintain our own spiritual momentum in growth and service, but we also seek to stimulate believers in our sphere of influence to do the same.

All ministry is an effort and extension of the entire Body of Christ. So, the final command of the author is that we must not fail to function as a team. Christianity and Christian ministry are not “lone ranger” activities. There are no spectators—no one is to “sit on the bench”—because we all have a part to play in the plan of God. Some good passages to consider in this regard are 1 Corinthians 12:12–31 and Ephesians 4:11–16.

## **Conclusion**

God has an eternal plan for the redemption and reconciliation of not only mankind but, in fact, the entire universe, to Himself (see Romans 8:18–23; Ephesians 1:10, 21–23). It is His will to include those who trust in Christ as co-workers in His purpose (2 Corinthians 6:1–2).

An essential part of our preparation involves our own personal sufferings. In being conformed to our Savior, we also must be conformed to His sufferings (Hebrews 5:8; Philippians 1:29–30; 3:10).

**Principle:** God intends to use our sufferings for the blessing of others (2 Corinthians 1:3–6; Philippians 1:12–14, 27–30).

Never forget that life on this Earth is a dress rehearsal for the age to come.

*“What we do in time echoes in eternity.”* Maximus, in the movie “Gladiator”

## **STUDY SIX: THE TRUE KNIGHTS OF THE ROUND TABLE**

*“Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil for we do not wrestle against flesh and blood ...” Ephesians 6:11–12*

We are engaged in a spiritual war that engulfs all of human history and every aspect of our lives. We are born onto a battlefield, and there is no escape from its chaotic and disruptive effects. We must choose; either to be a victorious combatant, or to be a victimized casualty. Spiritual warriors overcome, but victims succumb, to their circumstances! Throughout the Bible, we are encouraged to arm ourselves, to be valiant, and to be a hero of the faith.

In the legends/stories of King Arthur (historians and archeologists differ), the round table was designed to insure the equality of all the knights and nobles. No one was superior, none inferior. Though all were equal in principle, each was distinguished by their feats on the field of battle. Each was charged with a Code of Chivalry, which was to guide their every action. In no other place in history or on Earth are these principles so true as they are in the Body of Christ. We who believe are the true knights of the “found” table.

### **The Round Table**

The “round table” (or our royal knighthood) is the communion table. On the foundation of the finished work of Christ, we all stand on equal ground (see Ephesians 4:3–6; Colossians 3:11).

### **A Table of Communion—1 Corinthians 10:16–17**

*“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.”*

1. The key word here is “*communion*” from *koinonia*, which means “to have in common, to share equally.”
2. The “*cup of blessing*” was a common Jewish term for the cup of wine, blessed by the most honored guest, and shared by all. Here, it speaks of the Passover cup, which Jesus blessed to commemorate the new covenant established by His death (Matthew 26:28).
3. The bread spoke not only of the body of our Lord, the incarnation of God into human flesh, but also of His incarnation into His spiritual Body, the Church, made up of all who believe in Him.

### **A Table of Conviction—1 Corinthians 11:23–31**

In the Arthurian legend/story, the knights were held accountable to a code of conduct, called chivalry. The greatest dishonor fell upon any who violated the precepts of that code. We who are the Royal Family are also held accountable, but it is we who must judge ourselves.



*“For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes ... But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup ... For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.”* 1 Corinthians 11:26, 28, 31

1. The emphasis of Paul in this section is that of self-examination—to partake of the Lord’s table in a worthy manner. This specifically relates to some of the misconduct that was going on in the Corinthian church (vv. 17–22). There were divisions and factions in the church while at the “love feast” in which communion was observed: some were hungry, others were gluttonous and drunken!
2. Since the Lord’s table emphasizes the unity of the Body (Ephesians 4:3) and the equality of the members, these wrongs needed to be corrected.
3. It is evidence of the privileged status of each and every child of God that Paul, rather than calling on the leadership to resolve these wrongs, urges each believer to individually stand accountable before the Lord.
4. The solution was that by self-examination there would come self-correction. Failure to live by the “Code of Chivalry” for the Church, would result in divine discipline. Our “code” could well be summarized by the five commands of 1 Corinthians 16:13–14.

*“Watch [**vigilance**], stand fast in the faith [**loyalty**], be brave [**courage**], be strong [**maturity**]. Let all that you do be done with love [**Christ-like**].”*  
(emphasis added)

### **The Field of Battle**

As well, in the Arthurian legend/story, the goal was to unify many warring factions into one harmonious kingdom. This is precisely the task we have been given by our Lord and King, Jesus Christ. In the prophet-priest-king example of our Lord, we fulfill our purpose as we preach the Gospel, pray for those in need, and protect the interests and honor of the Lord.

*“That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are **in heaven** and which are **on earth**—in Him.”* Ephesians 1:10 (emphasis added)

**Note:** It is interesting to notice that Paul, in both parts of his prayer, mentions both Heaven and Earth (Ephesians 1:10 and 3:15).

1. With the revolt of Satan and his angels (Isaiah 14:12–15; Revelation 12:7) and the fall of man (Genesis 3:6; Romans 5:12), a condition of revolt spread through God’s creation (Psalm 89:9–18).
2. His expressed, original intent was to share His reign over Heaven and Earth with both angels (Deuteronomy 32:7–9 in the Hebrew; Psalm 82:1; 89:6–8) and with men (Genesis 1:26–28).
3. In the event of this spiritual revolt, God implemented His plan of redemption and reconciliation, through the coming of Jesus Christ and His crucifixion and resurrection.

4. Through the cross, God created a “*new creation*” (2 Corinthians 5:17), called the Church, or Body of Christ, which would share with Him in reigning over a Heaven and Earth reconciled to Him (Romans 8:18–23; Revelation 20:4–6).
5. This life is preparation for how we will reign in eternity. We shall all reign with Him (Revelation 20:6), but not to the same degree.

### **The Order of the Morning Star**

Our faithfulness in this life will determine our rank and function in eternity. Just as there are various ranks among the angels of God (Daniel 8:16; 9:21, 10:10–21; Jude 9), so there will be ranks involving various roles for believers in eternity.

*“But hold fast what you have till I come. And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations ... and I will give him the morning star.”* Revelation 2:25–28

### **The Story/Illustration—Daniel 2:48–49; 3:30**

*“Then the king promoted Daniel ... and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief administrator over all the wise men of Babylon ... Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon.”*

1. Here, Nebuchadnezzar promotes Daniel to the highest position in the land.
2. Daniel’s friends are also promoted, but to lesser positions.
3. These four, by their faithfulness to God, have been raised from abject slavery to rulership in the kingdom. This is a picture of what God has done for us in Christ.

### **The Morning Star**

*“I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.”* Revelation 22:16

1. In Job 38:1–7, the Lord declares to Job that when He created this present world, “*the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy*” (v. 7).
2. This speaks of a host of angels, holding the highest positions of authority in Heaven. As “*morning stars*” they herald the coming of a new dawn in God’s redemptive plan.
3. The Lord Jesus, as “*the Bright and Morning Star,*” is the highest authority in all of God’s kingdom.
4. Going back to Revelation 2:25–28, the “order of the morning star” will be reserved for those “overcomers” (1 John 5:4–5 = believers) who do two things:
  - a. “*Hold fast*” (*krateo*, “firmly grasp”) what has been committed to them (Revelation 2: 25). This is a command to grow in spiritual insight and understanding.
  - b. “*Keep His works*” until the end. The word *tereo* means “to guard, preserve, observe.” It requires that we live in light of what we learn. The word is a present,

active, participle, which refers to a way of life—that which characterizes the overcomer.

The implication of these things is that our lives here and now have eternal significance. What we think, say, and do matters—far more than we can comprehend. The Bible makes it clear that while all believers share in the same eternal life, not all will have an equal share in eternal reward. Our rewards in eternity are what we have to offer to our Lord and Savior as evidence of our gratitude for His sacrifice on our behalf. They are a love-offering, a demonstration of the value we placed, during our lives, on His grace and faithfulness to us. John tells us (Revelation 19:8; 21:2) that the wedding gown of the Bride of Christ is composed of *“the righteous acts of the saints.”* What cosmetic of the *“beauty of holiness”* (1 Chronicles 16:29; 2 Chronicles 20:21; et al) will we add to the Bride of Christ?

## **STUDY SEVEN: THE ACTION PLAN FOR THE CHURCH**

Most believers have some awareness of what Christ has done in His life, death, and resurrection. Tragically, few are well instructed in even the spiritual implications of these past events. But what if we asked the question: “What is Jesus Christ doing now?” I fear that even most pastors and Bible teachers would struggle to give a detailed answer.

The reason this question is so critical is that what our Lord is doing now from His position at the Father’s right hand defines the strategy for our effective ministry and victory in the ongoing spiritual war against Satan and his legions. The following are just a few of the works the Savior is doing from His Present Session in Heaven.

### **The Story/Illustration (John 5)**

*“My Father has been working until now, and I have been working’ ...  
‘Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself,  
but what He sees the Father do; for whatever  
He does, the Son also does in like manner.’”* John 5:17, 19

The Jews were persecuting Jesus because He was healing on the Sabbath (John 5:1–10). They had a false assumption, based on Genesis 2:1–3, that once the work of creation was finished, God entered into a continual rest. Jesus told them that the Father had always been working, and so had He—the Son. What the Father did, the Son was involved in.

Then, because Jesus spoke of God as His Father, they persecuted Him even more because He *“said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God”* (John 5:18). In response, Jesus began to declare the ways in which He was equal to the Father:

1. They were engaged in the same work (v. 19).
2. The Father revealed His plan to the Son (v. 20).
3. Both the Father and the Son are involved in giving life to the dead (v. 21).
4. The Father has committed all judgment to the Son (v. 22).
5. The Father and the Son share in equal honor (v. 23).

6. Both the resurrection and the judgment are shared by the Father and the Son (vv. 24–30).
7. As the Son bears witness to the Father, even so the Father bears witness to the Son—through John the Baptizer, through His works, and by His Word (vv. 31–39).

The great point of this chapter is not just that Jesus is God and, therefore, equal in authority and power with the Father, but that this equality was expressed in a cooperative labor between them.

By the baptism of the Holy Spirit, we who believe have been made one with Christ. Certainly, no one in their right mind would claim actual equality with Him. But God sees us as one with Christ, sharing all that He is and has done. The expression of this to the world is that we are co-workers with Christ (2 Corinthians 6:1). What we “see” Him do, through our understanding of His Present Session, we are to do also. As Paul said, “*Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ*” (1 Corinthians 11:1). So, what do we see Him doing?

1. He is reigning in the midst of His enemies (Psalm 110:2–3).  
Our missionary mandate as His ambassadors is based on this (Matthew 28:18–20; Acts 1:8; 2 Corinthians 5:20–21).

We must first learn to let Him reign in us, then we help extend the borders of His kingdom as we win His enemies to allegiance to Him.

2. He is the High Priest of the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 5:5–10; 7:1–7). All believers form a royal priesthood of this ancient and eternal order (1 Peter 2:5–9):
  - a. It is an order greater than Abraham and his descendants.
  - b. It is an order greater than the Levitical priesthood.
  - c. It is an order that combines the functions of prophet, priest, and king (see 1 Peter 2:9 and Revelation 20:6).
3. He is ministering to His Body as the Great Shepherd of the sheep (Hebrews 13:20–21; Psalm 23). We are to faithfully abide in His daily provisions to us, using them to bring forth spiritual fruit to God (John 15:1–5; Romans 7:4–6; Galatians 5:22–23).
4. He is the acting Mediator between God and men (1 Timothy 2:1–7; Hebrews 9:13–15). We are His active agents in presenting God to men, and in leading men to God.
5. He is our Intercessor and our Advocate (Romans 8:33–34; 1 John 2:1–2). We are also to intercede on behalf of others, and be defenders of the weak, the wayward, and the helpless (1 Thessalonians 5:15; 1 Timothy 6:4; James 1:27; 4:11).
6. He is the Captain of the armies of God—Jehovah-Sabaoth (Joshua 5:13–15; Isaiah 59:15b–19; Hebrews 2:10; James 5:4; Revelation 19:11–16). We, as His soldiers, are to put on the full armor of God and resist the wiles of the devil (Ephesians 6:10–18).

## **Conclusion**

We who have believed in Christ have been seated with Him in the heavenly realm. Due to our exalted position, we have been given great spiritual riches, as well as weighty responsibilities.

Our position in Christ is secure and can never be shaken. However, our spiritual diligence and faithful conduct in this life will determine what our rank and role will be as part of the Royal Family of God throughout eternity.

Let us be diligent and faithful, that we might have much to lay at the feet of our Savior—a token of our gratitude for His matchless grace and mercy!

*“Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.”*

**Revelation 3:11**