

CHRISTMAS

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1. THE BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD OF JESUS

The birth and childhood of Jesus reveal secrets to the birth of particular facets of Jesus' ministry as well as to the ministries of true servants of God.

Let us look at Luke 1, at the announcement of Gabriel to Mary. Verse 30: Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."

We know that this is a virgin birth because Mary said, "How shall it be for I have known no man." What happened in Mary's womb was not a creation of Jesus but rather the coming of Jesus into this planet earth. Jesus chose to come in that manner. Jesus emptied Himself of the Godhead and came into Mary's womb. Before the angel appeared to Mary and she became an instrument for Jesus to be born, God the Son was in heaven. His name was not called Jesus Christ yet. The name Jesus was only taken after He manifested on this earth. The angel told Mary to call His name Jesus, which means, "God is my salvation." Christ means anointed One, the Messiah who is to come. Therefore, the name Jesus Christ was only taken after Jesus was manifested on this planet earth about 4 B.C. according to historians. Jesus Christ was called the Word in heaven.

God is a Trinity. We have God the Father, God the Word and God the Holy Spirit. Jesus' name before He came down was known as God the Word. The Trinity was there in heaven and the Bible says in Galatians 4:4, But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law. In the fullness of time God send an angel to prepare a way for Jesus to come. However, before that took place, something else happened in heaven. Jesus emptied Himself of His omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence. Jesus had gone back to God and in John 17:4-5 He prayed, "I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work, which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. Jesus had that glory with the Father before the world was. That was His glory. He has omniscience - He knows all things. He is omnipotent, that is, He is all-powerful. He is omnipresent, that is, He can be everywhere at the same time. Therefore, Jesus emptied Himself of His omni attributes and He came down to this planet earth. Jesus Christ emptied Himself of His omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence in heaven in order to be born on planet earth.

This was the arrangement God made in the book of Hebrews 10:5: Therefore, when He came into the world, He said, Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, However, a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin, You had no pleasure. Then I said, Behold, I have come in the volume of the book it is written of Me - to do Your will, O God.

Verse 5 tells us that a body was prepared for Jesus to come into the world. Chronologically, the process of the virgin birth took place in this order.

There was a creation of a body in Mary's womb. Then Jesus, emptied of His omnipresence, omnipotence, and omniscience, came down in spirit form into the womb of Mary. This is called the incarnation of the Word. The Holy Spirit brought Him down into Mary's body. In fact, I would venture to say that Jesus Christ has so emptied Himself of His divine attributes that He literally became hapless. He could not leap down from heaven by Himself into the womb of Mary, as one Christmas carol puts it. He had to rely on the Holy Spirit to bring Him to be born in the womb of Mary. A few verses attest to this: "She was found with child of the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 1:18) "For that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 1:20) "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. (Luke 1:35)

Please do not try to wrestle and understand it with your natural mind. Remember in the spirit realm there is no dimension. In the kingdom of darkness, a thousand or a million demons could dwell in one person. It makes no difference; there is no such thing as space in the realm of the spirit. Jesus came down in the spirit. Jesus is the only one whose spirit was not created at all. Jesus was not created in Mary's womb. Remember His name in heaven is the Word. Revelation 19 tells us that His name is still called the Word. Therefore, the Word came down. John 1 calls Him the Word too, and came into that body.

Strictly speaking, Mary's womb was an incubator for Jesus to come through. A body was created in Mary's womb, then Jesus came in and that is the full process of the virgin birth. She is a vessel of God where God chose to use her womb in much the same way as God would choose to use somebody's mouth to proclaim the gospel or somebody's hands to heal the sick. God chose to use her womb as a special instrument during that time.

Later on in the book of Acts 1 and 2, you find that Mary needed to go through the same process as any disciples. She needed to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. She needs to pray. She was an instrument. This is the process of the virgin birth as the Bible shows it.

The birth and childhood of Jesus is intertwined with the life of humanity. In each recorded episode of Jesus' childhood, we see a deeper meaning in reference to the birth of other servants. Jesus said of Himself, "I came to serve and not to be served." His purpose for being born was to serve and die for the world. Thus, when He was born, not only is the Savior of the world born, other servants of God would also be birthed through the birth of Jesus. The birth of Jesus would see the birth of many others who would serve as He did, and die as He did, for the world. Embedded in each episode of Jesus' birth and childhood are the secrets to birthing the characteristics of true men and women of God who would follow Him in service and suffering. On that Christmas morning, not only was the Savior born but the servants that would have their turn to be born down the ages were also born in Him.

Four main incidences of Jesus' childhood were recorded in the Bible. Chronologically, they are:

1. When He was a baby laid in a manger and visited by shepherds (Luke 2:8-20)

2. When He was presented at the Temple for circumcision and visited by Simeon and Anna (Luke 2:21-40)
3. When He was at home between one to two years old and visited by the three wise men (Matthew 2:1-12)
4. When He was 12 years old at the Temple with the teachers of the Law. (Luke 2:39-50)

These four recorded incidences of Jesus' childhood reveal powerful truths about the birth of true servants who imitate Jesus closely. Many of us often wondered about the silent years of Jesus. Except for these four childhood incidences, nothing else is heard about Jesus until He was about the age of 30. If the life of Jesus were recorded in detail, it would require great volumes of books. Therefore, the Bible summarizes incidences in Jesus' life. It is incorrect for us to say that the Bible does not say anything about His childhood because the Bible does. However, the Bible gives us a summary of these four incidences in the childhood of Jesus as a prophetic overture of what will take place in Jesus' ministry.

In each incidence, there is the place involved and there are the types of people present. Both the place and the people shed more light to the prophetic significance of the incidence.

1. The Baby Jesus in the Manger with the Shepherds

In the first recorded incidence, Jesus was placed on a manger after He was born. And she [Mary] brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn (Luke 2:7). And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger (Luke 2:12).

The place here is a manger. A manger is a long open box or trough to contain hay and grass for animals to feed. Symbolically, the animals represent the different forms of the devil. When Lucifer and his fallen angels were cast down from heaven to earth, they lost their celestial beauty and took the form of hideous beasts. They feed themselves on the evil that they tempt men to do. Just as Jesus' food is to do the will of Him who sent Him, and to finish His work (John 4:34), so likewise, it is the food of demons to do the will of their father Satan. The manger represents the devil's territory where demons feed themselves on the sins, wickedness, evil, and bondages of humankind. After Jesus was born, He was placed on a manger. This is a prophetic symbol of His coming to the devil's territory and His destroying the devil's works over the lives of humanity. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." (1 John 3:8). Jesus has come to the devil's tuff to overthrow him. He has come into the lion's den to shut the mouth of the roaring lions, so that they will not devour whomsoever they will.

Jesus was also born at night. Night is the symbolic representation of the works of darkness. When Judas went out of the twelve to betray Jesus, John recorded it as, "And it was night." (John 13:30) Paul also equates night with the powers of darkness in 1 Thessalonians 5:5, You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the

night nor or darkness. Jesus' birth at night is another symbolic representation that the light has come into the darkness and the darkness could not overcome it. It means that Jesus the light of the world has come into the devil's territory and the kingdom of darkness to shed light and overcome the works of darkness. He was born to deliver souls from the kingdom of darkness and transfer them into the kingdom of light.

Thus, the birth of Jesus at night and the placing of the Babe in the manger have both the same meaning of the Savior coming into the devil's kingdom of darkness to destroy the works of the devil.

The people here are the shepherds. Luke 2:8, Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Luke 2:15, So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us. And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger.

The angels told the shepherds, who were keeping watch over their flock by night, that the Savior, who is Christ the Lord, was born in the city of David and that the sign would be a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger (Luke 2:11-12). Having seen the significance of the Babe lying in a manger, now we can see the significance of the angels announcing to the shepherds keeping watch over their flocks at night about the birth of the Savior. The lowly shepherds represent all true and humble servants of God who keep watch over their flocks. While the hirelings and the false shepherds are in their "slumberland" and know not that the wolves are tearing their flocks apart by every seduction and deception, the true shepherds are wide-awake when darkness falls to guard the flocks entrusted to them. They bear the heat by day and the cold by night. They shed many tears of intercession over their flocks that the wolves and the wild beasts of the evil one may devour none of them.

The good news for the shepherds is that the Babe lying in the manger is the Chief Shepherd and Savior who was manifested to destroy the works of the devil, the roaring lions, and the marauding wolves. The good news for all true servants of God is that they can rely on Jesus who will empower them with the grace and the anointing to grab the souls of sinners from the jaws of the enemy.

Luke 2:20, Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them. Herein lies the secret of the power of shepherds who watch over their flocks effectively. These shepherds saw the Babe in the manger, and they went into a time of praise and worship. Those who serve God as pastors and ministers should see Jesus as the Babe in the manger, not literally but spiritually speaking. Jesus as the Babe in the manger means the Anointed One who has come into the devil's territory to bind the strongman and plunder his goods. He is as Acts 10:38 says, "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, and went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him."

When servants of God are strong in worshipping Jesus as the Mighty Deliverer and the Anointed One, they also grow in that anointing to do good and heal all who are also oppressed by the devil. One of the principles of worship is that when you worship

God for a particular aspect or attribute of His, God will release the spiritual substance of the same aspect or attribute into your spirit man. For example, when you worship God constantly as Jehovah Rapha or the Lord Your Healer, God will release the spiritual substance of healing into your spirit man until you experience healing for your sicknesses or you develop a strong ministry of healing. When you are ineffective in your ministry of healing and deliverance, one of your serious lacks is a life that worships Jesus as the Deliverer.

The true worth of a shepherd is seen in how he has effectively dealt with each soul committed to his care. Man tends to measure the worth of a pastor by the number of people in his congregation. If he has a huge congregation, he becomes a celebrity pastor and will be invited to numerous conventions around the world to share his secrets of how to grow a large church. That is man's ways. It is not God's way.

Recently a Christian who was sent up on a study tour of heaven came back with this report. In heaven, he was ushered into two offices belonging to two pastors who are still alive and serving the Lord. One pastor is a very famous healing evangelist who has his own TV programs, miracle crusades and is Senior Pastor of a large church too. The other pastor has a congregation of 1000 but was rather unknown by name or work in the world. In each pastor's office in heaven were two sets of files of people committed to their respective care. One set of files belongs to people whose lives were not dealt with properly and God had to continue dealing with them until they change. The other set of files belongs to people who were reforming their lives for the better and God was pleased with their progress. However, in the famous pastor's office in heaven, the set of files belonging to people not dealt properly or not making progress was stacked up very high whereas the number of files belonging to people making progress in their spiritual life was very few. In the other obscure pastor's office in heaven, it was different. The number of files belonging to people not making progress was very few whereas the set of files belonging to people making progress in their spiritual lives was stacked high. In God's sight, the second pastor was of greater worth because he is effectively shepherding and dealing his people to walk in righteousness and God's ways. The first pastor though famous in men's sight, was actually considered the lesser of the two in the kingdom of heaven because he is not shepherding his people effectively.

So, do not be proud if your church is growing. Do not look at the numbers but ask yourself whether you are effectively shepherding your flock and causing them to walk in the ways of the Lord. On the other hand, do not be dismayed if your church is not growing. Ask yourself whether you are faithfully dealing with each member God has already entrusted to your care. If you are not faithfully and effectively dealing with your members, why should God add to your congregation? It would only mean greater condemnation for you, as you have to account for more souls. So, be faithful with whatever you have, and when God sees that you are faithful, He will add to your congregation. Do not use hype, gimmicks, and Madison Avenue-type advertising to draw in the crowds. If God has called you into the ministry, God will know how to bless your ministry through your faithfulness. If you try to draw in the crowds through fleshly means, you would also probably draw in people who would prove to be a thorn in your flesh. What is born of flesh is flesh. Satan will plant his agents in your congregation to bring about your downfall.

2. The Baby Jesus at the Temple with Simeon and Anna

On the 40th day after His birth, the Child Jesus was brought to the Jerusalem temple - the center of the religious life of the chosen people of Israel. According to Mosaic Law, a woman that had given birth to a male child was forbidden entrance to the temple for 40 days. After the lapse of this time, the mother would bring the child to the temple to offer a thanksgiving and a cleansing sacrifice to the Lord.

Luke 2:25-32, And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel."

Simeon was a man not only of Holy Spirit but of great patience as well. According to history, he was a highly intelligent scholar and a deeply religious man, who knew from his interpretation of the Old Testament that the Messiah was to come. He prayed not only for deliverance, but for the opportunity to remain alive just long enough to cast his eyes on the Messiah. This was no small request made of the Lord, for it is quite certain, although estimates vary as to his actual age, that he was born many years before Christ. Simeon is estimated to have been at least 150 years old at the time of the Nativity, and only because God had given him those many years in answer to his earnest prayers that he be allowed to live to that great day.

Simeon was one of the famous Seventy, who were chosen to translate the Bible from Hebrew into Greek in the time of the Egyptian Pharaoh Ptolemy Philadelphus (285-246 B.C.). Simeon worked conscientiously, but when, translating the prophet Isaiah, he came to the prophecy:

"Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son," he was puzzled. He took a knife to scratch out the word "virgin" and substitute "young woman," and translate it thus into Greek. But, at that moment an angel of God appeared to him and held him back from his intention, explaining to him that the prophecy was true and rightly expressed. And to confirm its veracity, the messenger from God said that he, Simeon, by the will of God, would not die until he had seen the Messiah born of a virgin. The righteous Simeon rejoiced at these heavenly tidings, left the prophecy unchanged and thanked God that He had found him worthy to live to see the Promised One.

Some members of a particular local church who were sent to heaven on the instructions of the Holy Spirit came back with some reports for our learning. Apparently, a departed saint by the name of Sadhu Sundar Singh heard of the visits of these church members to heaven and yearned to meet with them. When the permission was granted to him, he met one of the sisters and told her his story. In the biography of his life, it was written that he went to Tibet in 1929 and suddenly disappeared without a trace. (For a fuller account of his life, please read his biography here.) Actually, Sadhu Sundar Singh said that some murderers killed him. They cut up his body into

many pieces and buried them in many places so that no one could trace his remains. That was how he died. He shared this in order to solve the mystery of his disappearance, which up to today, no one knows for sure what happened to him. However, the most important thing he wanted to share was about his ministry. He was a Sikh. God's plan and purposes was for him to lead his homeland to Jesus Christ. God raised him up in order to reveal the light of Jesus Christ to his people, the Sikhs. However, he did not know the ways of God. He did not know that to accomplish the plans and purposes of God, one must seek the Holy Spirit to reveal God's plans. He only knew how to cry to the Lord Jesus Christ but he did not know how to seek the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Lord of the Harvest, and we must pray to Him to send workers into the harvest field. Sadhu Sundar Singh said that because he did not know God's ways nor sought the Holy Spirit to lead him into the plans and purposes of God, he failed to accomplish God's plans and purposes for him. He further said that if he had accomplished the plans and purposes of God, today his homeland, Punjab would be at least 35% Christian. The reason why he was killed was because he had stepped out of the will of God. He was supposed to go back to his homeland and to his countrymen, the Sikhs. However, he went to Tibet and this gave the devil the legal ground to take his life. It was further revealed that his death was not considered martyrdom because he did not follow the will of God. However, the angel did tell the visiting church member that Sadhu Sundar Singh was very humble and open to learning.

It is staggering to note that this departed saint who is still greatly esteemed could have missed God's plans and purposes just because he did not seek the Holy Spirit. Even more staggering is the fact that today, many ministries do not seek the Holy Spirit at all in their work. Whatever "ministry" you are doing, if the Holy Spirit is not guiding you, your "ministry" is no ministry at all. All your work, your sacrifices, your efforts will be rejected. You have missed God's plans and purposes for your life. Rather than be caught up in the hive of activity and carrying on mindlessly to keep your "ministry" going, it would be better to stop everything and seek the Holy Spirit for divine light and wisdom for your work.

Simeon was different. Verse 25 says, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. Verse 26 says, And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit.. Verse 27 says, So he came by the Spirit into the temple.

Simeon was a layman in Jerusalem and yet, he already had the Holy Spirit upon him. Simeon had a very close relationship with the Holy Spirit. He was not called to any particular ministry. He was not a rabbi nor a Levite. He was not a priest in the temple. He was just a layman. However, he had such an intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit that the Holy Spirit "was upon him," "revealed to him," and he "came by the Spirit." Every step of the way, the Holy Spirit guided him. He would move as the Holy Spirit moves him. He would act as the Holy Spirit prompts him. He would speak as the Holy Spirit impresses upon his heart. He was the hand glove of the Holy Spirit. Yet, you would notice that although he was not called to any particular ministry, the Holy Spirit led him to minister to Jesus' parents. Luke 2:34 says, Then Simeon blessed them. He pronounced a blessing upon Jesus' parents. You can be sure that his blessings were not empty words - the Holy Spirit that was upon Simeon would back up those words of blessings. Many ministers pronounce blessings over their

congregation, but unfortunately, most do not have a relationship with the Holy Spirit to back up those words of blessings. Hence, those blessings are empty words, and the congregation goes away without any real blessing from the minister at all. However, they do get blessed in other ways since God sees their hearts - if they had prayed sincerely, if they had tithed faithfully, if they had made sacrifices to attend service, if they had stored the Word in their hearts, if they had showed love to one another - all these do give them blessings. Furthermore, Luke 2:34-35 says, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against "(yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." Simeon gave this word of prophecy to Mary although Simeon was not a prophet. However, he was so close to the Holy Spirit that the Holy Spirit naturally used him to deliver this word of prophecy. If you want to flow naturally in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, seek the Holy Spirit and walk with Him closely. The Holy Spirit would then inspire whatever words or works you speak to or do for people. That would be your ministry. Ministry without the Holy Spirit is no ministry at all.

We put before you that every group of people that encountered the Lord Jesus Christ during His childhood would both represent who Jesus Christ would be in His ministry later on and what ministers should be if they want to serve Him.

The group of shepherds that met the Babe Jesus in the manger represents Jesus Christ as the Good Shepherd. John 10:11, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep."

The group of wise men from the east who were kings represents Jesus Christ as the king. John 18:37, Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then? Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Every one who is of the truth hears my voice."

The group of teachers surrounding the Child Jesus in the Temple represents Jesus Christ as the Teacher. John 13:13, "You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am."

Having seen this, what would Simeon represent Jesus to be? Firstly, in Genesis 29:33, Then she [Leah] conceived and bore a son, and she said, "Because the Lord has heard that I am unloved, He has therefore given me this son also." And she called his name Simeon. In Hebrew, the name Simeon means heard. Secondly, the Holy Spirit was prominent in the life of Simeon. Thus, Simeon would characterize Jesus' ministry as primarily a ministry of hearing the Holy Spirit. Jesus was completely dependent on the Holy Spirit. Jesus was anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power. He healed all those oppressed of the devil. Jesus did not do any of the miracles in the ministry that He did without the Holy Spirit. But, guess what? Jesus did not even die without the Holy Spirit. The birth of Jesus was because the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary and the virgin conceived inside of her, Jesus. What was conceived inside of her was through the Holy Spirit. The birth of Jesus had the Holy Spirit. The ministry of Jesus had the anointing and the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus suffered in the garden with the Holy Spirit. Jesus did not even die or rise from the dead without the Holy Spirit.

What about Anna, the daughter of Phanuel? Her name itself is very instructive. Anna means “Grace” and her father’s name, Phanuel means “Face of God.” Anna’s name, life, and message were one. She was with her husband for 7 years before he died and then, she spent the next 77 years of her life before the face of God in the temple. The name, life and message of “Anna, the daughter of Phanuel” literally means grace born of spending time before the face of God. Her consecration and dedication to God was absolute. Her prayer life and consecration reflect the life of Jesus too.

We want to take note of something else about Simeon and Anna. We see that the Holy Spirit was prominent in their lives. In the case of Simeon, the Holy Spirit “was upon him,” “revealed to him” and he “came by the Spirit.” Anna was a prophetess, which means, she spoke by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit led them to the Temple at the precise time that the Child Jesus was presented to fulfill the requirements of the law. If Simeon and Anna did not have a relationship with the Holy Spirit, they would have missed this event. They would have died without seeing Jesus, the salvation of God. They would have missed the move of God. We want to drive home this point. If you do not have a relationship with the Holy Spirit, you would miss the moves of God. You would miss the plans of God. You would miss the events of God. As we fast approach the end times, if we do not have a relationship with the Holy Spirit, we would even miss the Rapture.

In this particular local church whose pastor sends up some of his church members to heaven, one of them was taken by the Holy Spirit to a big city in Mexico to witness some future events. He saw accidents happening all over the place. He saw a man driving a big truck and suddenly, he collapsed at the driving wheel and his truck collided with another vehicle. At the very same time, a captain at his post manning a ship also collapsed and his ship collided with another ship and there was massive destruction and loss of lives. He also saw a pilot suddenly collapsing and dying while his passenger plane went spinning out of control, with the loss of lives. In another scene, he saw a couple watching television and a man just collapsing in his seat and died. This Christian brother asked the Holy Spirit what is the meaning of all these events. The Holy Spirit revealed that this is the rapture. At the time of rapture, the Holy Spirit will snatch the spirit man of Christians all over the world and take them to meet with the Lord Jesus in the air. There they would be given new bodies to enter heaven while their old and dead bodies are left behind. The Holy Spirit further revealed that only those who have a relationship with Him would be taken up in the rapture. About 25% of born again Christians would be caught up in this rapture while the rest will have to go through the tribulations. Those left behind are deemed disobedient and rebellious, who refused to heed the counsel of the Holy Spirit and change their ways. During the time of tribulations, Christians would be hunted down like animals and they would suffer all manner of torments and killed in cruel ways.

Most end time teachers teach that Christians would suddenly disappear in the rapture. You would not find their bodies on earth. However, this is not true. They would suddenly die on the spot when the Holy Spirit snatches their spirit man away. Their unsanctified bodies would not be able to stand the presence of God’s glory in heaven. Thus, they would be provided with new and glorified bodies for life in heaven. Simeon and Anna represents all those Christians who spend much time before the face of God and are “just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy

Spirit was upon” them. They would be ready for the Rapture and Jesus’ coming in the clouds just as Simeon was ready to lay his eyes on the Messiah when Jesus’ parents brought Him to the Temple.

3. The Child Jesus at Home with the Three Wise Men

In the third recorded incidence, Jesus was a young boy between one to two years old when the three kings came to lay their gifts at His feet. And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshipped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. (Matthew 2:11)

It did not say a young baby. The wise men have come to pay homage to the child Jesus and the scene was in a house, not at the manger. Jesus was no more in the manger. Sometimes, the Christmas pageant narrates the story of the three wise men coming to visit the baby Jesus in the manger. The Bible says they saw the young child. By the time the three wise men arrived, the child Jesus was about one to two years old. That is why Herod killed all children under two. The time the wise men saw the star to the time they reached Jerusalem took two years. That was how long they took looking for Jesus. From the East when they saw the star to the time they arrived at Bethlehem, Jesus had grown. You do not expect Jesus to remain a baby all the time. Even today, people think Jesus is just a little baby in a manger, fragile and needed to be protected. You do not need to protect Jesus. In fact, Jesus is the one who is going to protect you. He is no more in the manger. He is on the throne. When John the apostle saw Him, he fainted. He had not seen this Jesus before in such glory, such power in the book of Revelation. That is where Jesus is. If your god is a god whom you need to carry and take care then that god can not take care of you. You got to take care of your god. However, a God whom we really need is a God who is bigger than us. We do not carry our God. God carries us. The Bible tells us we dwell in the secret place of the Most High God. He protects us. He shields us. He is a God we can run to in every need and every problem.

The wise men fell down, worshiped Him, and opened their treasures. They presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Then they were divinely warned to depart by another way. By the way, the Bible did not say there were three men. How the number of three wise men is arrived at is the three types of presents given to the child Jesus: Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh.

Gold points to the worship of God in the beauty of holiness; frankincense to the power of the resurrection and myrrh to the fellowship of His suffering. Gold was used for vessels in the Holy place and in the Holy of holies. God demanded that only pure gold is used in the making of Moses tabernacle and Solomon’s temple. Gold is a symbol of the worship of God in the purity and holiness of heart. Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.

Gold is able to survive the fire. The Apostle Paul uses this analogy when he writes to the Corinthian church concerning Christian works, “For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be

shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work." (1 Corinthians 3:11-13)

Job is the man in the Bible who was perhaps the most sorely tested man of all time. He lost all his worldly possessions, his children had died, and his health was gone, his friends made his burden heavier by trying to lay a guilt trip on him, and his wife advised euthanasia. But in the midst of his suffering, listen to what he says, "He knows the way that I take: when He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold." (Job 23:10)

In a wonderful Messianic passage in Zechariah, there's a prediction and a promise: "In the whole land," declares the LORD, "two-thirds will be struck down and perish; yet one-third will be left in it. This third I will bring into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are my people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is our God.'" (Zechariah 13:8-9)

The Laodicean church's members had become lukewarm in their relationship with God. Jesus' message is, "I counsel you to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and white raiment, that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness do not appear; and anoint your eyes with eyesalve, that you may see." (Revelation 3:18)

Peter gives a different slant on this, because he points out that there is something which, like gold is refined in fire, but unlike gold, this other substance never perishes. "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith - of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire - may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed." (1 Peter 1:6-7)

Peter points out that there is something more valuable than gold, or even the testing of gold it is the process whereby our faith is tested and strengthened, the adversities, sorrows, hardships, trials of this life which test and strengthen our faith which will hold us through eternity. Notice this about faith, it grows, and bears fruit, unlike gold, which, as enduring as we think it to be, will nevertheless someday perish.

Frankincense is a very costly and fragrant gum distilled from a tree that is found in Persia, India and Arabia, as well as the East Indies. It is a white resin or gum, and is obtained by slitting the bark of the "Arbor Thurisfrom," and allowing the gum to flow out. The word actually means "whiteness," referring to the white colored juice which flows out of the wound in the tree. This gum hardens for three months, and is gathered at the end of the summer, and sold in the form of "tears," or clumps of hardened resin.

Frankincense is highly fragrant when burned, and was, therefore, used in worship, where it was burned as a pleasant offering to God. "Aaron must burn fragrant incense on the altar every morning when he tends the lamps. He must burn incense again when he lights the lamps at twilight so incense will burn regularly before the LORD for the generations to come. (Exodus 30:7-8) "He is to take a censer full of burning coals from the altar before the LORD and two handfuls of finely ground fragrant incense and take them behind the curtain." (Leviticus 16:12).

Frankincense and myrrh are two of the ingredients used to prepare the anointing oil of Moses in the book of Exodus. Frankincense is also used in its pure form to be placed upon the twelve loaves of bread on the table of showbread in the Holy place in Moses tabernacle and Solomon's temple and they were changed once a week. Frankincense has some qualities to preserve that bread. It symbolizes the redeeming resurrecting power of the Lord Jesus Christ. It also symbolizes in that sense the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ. See in redemption and in resurrection, it can only take place when a higher realm of authority takes dominion over the lower law of sin and death. It is when the law of the Spirit of life, Zoe, supercedes the law of sin and death. In gold, we see cleansing and purity. In frankincense, we see life and righteousness. Gold speaks about the purifying and cleansing process. After we have been put into the fire and the dross comes up to the surface and removed, we become clean vessels. Now God takes His life, takes His resurrection power, and takes His righteousness and now He puts it into us. That is frankincense. Therefore, gold represents the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus to purify us from sin. Frankincense represents the power of Jesus to pour Himself, His life and His righteousness into us so that we be like Him.

The primary lesson from frankincense is that our worship is to be pleasing to God. Remember, this sweet smelling resin comes as the result of the tree's wound and pain. When we can worship God in the midst of our sorrow, our brokenness, then it is a sweet smelling offering. That's why David said, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." (Psalms 51:17)

Much emphasis in worship today is on "celebration." No time for agonizing and tears, only for shouts of joy and victory. While joyful praise is acceptable to God, tears, like frankincense resin, oozing out of our hurts, broken hearts, and tears of repentance are especially pleasing - a sweet smelling sacrifice to the Lord. Anyone can dance and shout when their team is winning, and everything is going their way. But true worship happens when it must overcome feelings of self-pity, fear, and doubt.

I have always been a bit mystified by this idea in the Old Testament that God wants a "sweet smelling sacrifice." In the book of Leviticus, at least 16 times reference is made to the offerings being a "sweet savor". And when God pronounces His judgment on unfaithful Israel in Leviticus 26:31, He indicates that He will turn away from their offerings. "And I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation, and I will not smell the savor of your sweet odors."

Do you really think God cares about the smell of the smoke? We might care - it would not be very pleasant to attend a worship service where there is the horrible smell of burning flesh filling the air. So maybe it was for the benefit of the people that the burning of frankincense was instituted. On the other hand, God is interested in the condition of our hearts when we pray and worship Him. Is it with sweetness, or without of a sense of duty, or even bitterness because we do not feel that God is dealing with us fairly.

Myrrh speaks about suffering. In the Jewish custom, the bodies of the dead were anointed with myrrh and aloes. (That the body of the Lord was anointed with such things, and was encompassed with them, together with a linen cloth, and that this was the custom of the Jews, may be seen in John 19:39-40; Luke 23:53, 56.)

Myrrh is an aromatic gum produced from a thorn-bush that grew in Arabia and Ethiopia, and was obtained from a tree in the same manner as frankincense. This thorny tree, called “balsamodendron myrrha”, is similar to the acacia. It grows from eight to ten feet high, and is thorny. When it oozes from the wounded shrub, myrrh is a pale yellow color at first, but as it hardens, it changes to dark red or even black color.

However, if frankincense represents sweetness, myrrh represents bitterness, at least to the taste. In fact, the name itself was given to it on account of its great bitterness. The Hebrew word is similar to the name given the waters that were bitter when Moses and the people were coming out of Egypt. “And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. (Exodus 15:23) Hear also what Naomi says to her daughters in law - “Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. (Ruth 1:20)

It was used chiefly in embalming the dead, because it had the property of preserving them from putrefaction (John 19:39). It was much used in Egypt and in Judea. It was at an early period an article of commerce, (Genesis 37:25) and was an ingredient of the holy ointment, (Exodus 30:23). It was also used as an agreeable perfume (Esther 2:12; Psalms 45:8; Proverbs 7:17). For many of the ancients, myrrh was considered to be a favorite perfume, said to keep its fragrance for several hundred years when kept in an alabaster pot. Myrrh also had medicinal qualities, sometimes mingled with wine to form an article of drink. Such a drink was given to our Savior, when about to be crucified, as a stupefying potion, (Mark 15:23; Matthew 27:34).

It’s also interesting to note that the Greek word for myrrh, “smurna”, is the same as the name of the city and church which received a letter from the Apostle. Smyrna was the second of the seven churches of Asia that John was instructed to write to in the early chapters of the book of Revelation. This church was distinguished by it being persecuted (Revelation 2:8-11) - they understood the bitterness of being mistreated for the sake of the Gospel.

Myrrh then is brought as a gift to acknowledge the human suffering that Jesus partook of when He came into our world. Why did He refuse the drink? Because He had already drunk it. He had prayed at first that He could be spared the cup, but then He submitted to His father’s will and drank it - the bitter cup of His suffering.

We too drink from the cup of suffering, and it is bitter. Knowing that He drank it too, and in a fuller amount than we can ever comprehend, helps give us courage to go on. But may we, like the Magi of old, also bring this as a gift to Jesus.

We bring gold to honor Him as King, and to yield to the purification process of the fiery trials. We bring frankincense to worship Him even in the midst of our brokenness.

And we bring myrrh to recognize that He has identified with us in our pain and sorrow.

The picture of the shepherds praising the Baby Jesus lying in the manger reveals the secret of workers becoming true shepherds that will flow with the anointing to do good, and heal all that are oppressed by the devil. Likewise, the picture of the three wise men or kings from the East offering gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to the Child Jesus reveals the secret of men attaining to kingship and sitting down with the King of kings on the many thrones in heaven. Not everyone is given to sit on the thrones with Jesus. It is given to those who have overcome. To be worthy to sit with the King of kings, one has to constantly offer gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to Him, not literally but spiritually speaking. These gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh means the purity, the righteousness and the suffering respectively that one must work out in one's life with the help of the Holy Spirit as an offering to the King of kings. There must be the gold of purity, the frankincense of righteousness, and the myrrh of suffering and dying in one's life to be worthy to be made a king and to sit with the King of kings on the thrones in heaven. The Bible calls them "wise men from the East" (Matthew 2:1). To produce a life of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, we need wisdom. We need to seek Wisdom, walk with Wisdom and speak with Wisdom. Wisdom is a person. Wisdom is not just wise sayings. Wisdom is Jesus Christ. Wisdom is the Holy Spirit. Walking in wisdom means walking with Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, the place was the home. The Bible mentions that the wise men visited the Child Jesus at home. It was at Jesus' house that the kings offered gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The home represents one's private life. It is in one's private life that one cultivates a life of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

By the way, who are these three wise men? Where are they from? Interestingly, a local Chinese pastor recently sent up some of his church members in the Spirit to heaven at the direction of the Holy Spirit. This was another learning experience for the church. These church members were brought to see Mary in heaven and they were prompted to ask Mary what race these wise men were. Mary told them that they were three Chinese kings, one from the north of China, the second from the east of China and the last from the south of China. They were guided by ancient writings that the Messiah would be born in the west. The star that they saw in the sky, which led them to Bethlehem, was actually made up of six huge, bright angels traveling together. The journey from China to Bethlehem took two years, which explains why when they arrived, Jesus was around that age. That explains why Herod killed all children below two years, as that was the time between the birth of Jesus and the arrival of these Chinese kings. In this particular visit to heaven, these church members were made to understand that because of these Chinese kings' visitation to the Child Jesus, God was pleased but Satan was furious with the Chinese race. He stirred up much strife, warfare, and bloodshed in the Chinese kingdom to exterminate the race. However, the more Satan tried to do that, the more God prospered the Chinese race and multiplied it to become the most numerous race. It was like how Pharaoh tried to exterminate the Jewish nation in its land by killing all the male babies. The more the Egyptians tried to kill the Jewish babies, the more God multiplied their race and they grew very mighty (cf. Exodus 1:19)

On hindsight, we could understand why God was pleased with these three Chinese kings. They came from a faraway land. They looked to the promise of the Messiah

based on ancient writings. They were kings themselves but they would acknowledge the King of kings. They undertook an arduous and difficult journey. They brought gifts to the King of kings. They had very little light from the ancient prophecies yet by great faith and tenacity, they made the journey. They saw the boy Jesus, who by all outward appearances, looked like another common Jewish boy. However, their faith made them acknowledge that He was the Messiah. Contrast the attitude of these Chinese kings with the attitude of the Jews. The Jews had all the light from the prophets and the Old Testament regarding the coming of the Messiah. They lived in the vicinity and proximity of the birthplace of the Messiah. They saw the great star shining in their land. They were expecting the Messiah around that time. They even knew that Bethlehem would be the place of the birth of the Messiah. Despite all these, they did not even bother to find the Messiah when He was born nor prepared for His coming.

These church members were also made to understand that China would feature very prominently in the end times. There is a spiritual battle over China. On one hand, because of these three Chinese kings' visit to the Messiah, God is pleased and has regard for what they have done. He is causing a mighty revival among the Chinese in China. It is estimated that there are at least 100 million Christians in China as a result of revival fires spreading from village to village. For this reason too, Satan wants to use China to hit back at God. Satan had planned this ahead of time and this is one reason why the Chinese has such an attachment to the symbol of dragon in their land. Satan has planted the symbol of the dragon in the Chinese culture. It is somewhat a cultural masking of the whole nation to accept that the dragon is a symbol of good and prosperity but in the long run, it is to make the Chinese nation play into his demonic plans. Some Christian churches invite Chinese cultural troupes to perform dragon dances in their church compounds during the Chinese New Year services or special occasions under the guise of enculturation. Normally, after a dragon dance is performed in a compound, there will be a spiritual dragon encircling and dominating the place as its own territory since an official welcome has already been given to the dragon. Such Christian churches do not know what abomination they are committing. Kathleen Baxter visited hell and she said that she saw the serpent circling around hell. The serpent and the dragon are manifestations of Lucifer.

Even in these times of impending economic recession in the new millennium, where many countries are reporting lower or negative economic growth rates, China is experiencing a tremendous boom time. Actually, Satan is behind China's strong economic growth while causing the other nations to experience negative growth and recession. Satan wants China to prosper in order to enable them to grow strong militarily and to stockpile military hardware for the last showdown of man's history.

4. The Boy Jesus in the Temple with the Teachers of the Law

The fourth recorded incident was when Jesus was 12 years old. Luke 2:40 And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom and the grace of God was upon Him. Luke 2:46, Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers.

You would notice that in the life of the Child Jesus, there is a progression from being “strong in spirit,” followed by being “filled with wisdom,” and then being filled with the “grace of God.” With these three characteristics, He was able to engage in a dialogue with the teachers that simply astounded them. This episode reveals the secret of strong biblical teachers who flow with wisdom and revelation.

Remember, every childhood episode of Jesus reveals the secret or birth of different aspects of servants of God. The Babe in the manger being worshipped by the shepherds reveals the secret of becoming true shepherds. The visit of Simeon and Anna at the temple reveals the secret of hearing the Holy Spirit and standing before the face of God. The visit of the three wise men reveals the secret of becoming overcomers and kings. Now this dialogue of Jesus in the Temple with the teachers reveals the secret of becoming true teachers of the Word.

First, the Child Jesus grew and became “strong in spirit.” Herein lies the secret. Before you can be filled with wisdom, your spirit man must grow strong to be able to absorb wisdom. Wisdom is Spirit and your spirit man must be strong to be able to retain Wisdom in your spirit man. When your spirit man has a clear conscience and is sensitive and been constantly exercised by praying in the Spirit, your spirit man receives spiritual substances to grow strong. The three functions of the spirit man are conscience, communion, and intuition. These three functions can only grow strong when you are in constant fellowship with the Holy Spirit.

If you sideline the Holy Spirit, and you think you can grow strong spiritually by yourself, you are sadly mistaken. You can never get anywhere spiritually without the Holy Spirit. You may read the Word, confess the biblical promises, claim your rights by faith, pray, fast twice a week, intercede but if all these are done without inquiring of the Holy Spirit and seeking His counsel, you are merely wasting your time. You will not achieve much spiritual breakthrough despite your doing much of these spiritual exercises. The Holy Spirit is merely watching you from the sidelines but is unable to help you because you did not inquire of Him. You did not invite Him. You thought you could do it yourself. In fact, you are afraid to ask the Holy Spirit because you fear that He would suggest something to you that you may not like, your flesh finds it hard to die and yield to, or you simply want your own way. The Holy Spirit will step aside and will let you have your own way but you will not make much progress spiritually. After years of doing spiritual exercises your own way, you find you have very little progress and breakthrough.

In fact, I would say that if you had been doing spiritual exercises your own way without consulting the Holy Spirit, at the end of the day, you would be proud, puffed up and Pharisaic in attitude. You would look down and despise others who are not of your class. You would think you know more than others. Actually, what has happened is that you were doing your spiritual exercises in a fleshly way. Your spiritual pursuits were inspired by carnal and fleshly desires for recognition and worldly fame. This is an abomination to the Lord. The devil has deceived you. He has planted seeds of deception in you. You thought you were super-spiritual. Normally, such people go around creating a lot of strife and confusion because they give prophecies, revelations, and visions from the flesh. What is born of the flesh is flesh. In the Charismatic world,

you will find many of these kinds of people because they seek the Charismatic gifts without seeking the Holy Spirit.

Powerful ministers of God who flow in the real anointing and the genuine gifts of the Holy Spirit may have inspired them. Seeing such anointed ministers of God, some people entertain ideas of fame, and recognition and therefore, they seek the gifts without seeking the Holy Spirit. When such people sideline the Holy Spirit by not fellowshiping with Him, the Holy Spirit can only stand aside and watch them. Such people are on dangerous grounds. In many cases, their ancestors may have dabbled with the occult and developed powerful witchcraft abilities. These abilities are carried down to the descendants through their bloodline and will remain dormant in them in “chips” form. When these people start seeking and exercising the so-called gifts of the Holy Spirit without a relationship with the Holy Spirit, the devil activates the “chips” in them and suddenly they flow in these inherited witchcraft abilities. They have become the devil’s agents planted in churches to destroy the churches from within. They have all the outward appearances of being good ministers but in the long run, by their fruits you will know them.

They can tell the future, and the undiscerning thinks they are prophesying. They reveal knowledge about you and you think they have the word of knowledge. Actually, they have a spirit guide masquerading as the Holy Spirit. Their spirit guide will communicate with the demon accompanying you, and your demon will reveal your secrets to that spirit guide, who will in turn inform them. To the undiscerning eye, they appear like the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Normally such an activated devil’s agent will have a network of demons at his disposal without his knowledge. They will cooperate with one another to bring about false signs and wonders to promote that person’s so-called “ministry.”

Scripture is clear on the matter of obeying and disobeying the Holy Spirit. When you obey the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit will work in and through you. Acts 5:32, And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him. If you disobey the Holy Spirit, the devil will work in and through you. Ephesians 2:2, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience.

You can distinguish the true ministers from the false ministers by this acid test. Observe their lives and ministries carefully. See whether they are under control of the Holy Spirit; they are constantly walking in the Spirit; they won’t do anything without consulting the Holy Spirit; they bring any idea and program and decision to the Holy Spirit; they won’t say or do anything unless they know the Holy Spirit has given or permitted them; there is uprightness in their walk; there are tangible results after they said the Holy Spirit has told them to do this and that and they do accordingly. If the answers are positive, they are the true ministers of God. If the answers are negative, then you know they are false ministers.

Growing spiritually is a matter of fellowshiping with the Holy Spirit and yielding to Him constantly. The Holy Spirit is your trainer and your coach. He knows your weaknesses and strengths. He has a personal development plan for you. He has goals for you to achieve. He knows the Father’s will for you. He will draw up your personal

prayer life. He will tell you when to go into worship or when to put your petition before the Lord of Heaven. He will lead you to specific passages in the Word in line with your personal spiritual development. You grow strong in spirit by constantly sowing to the spirit realm. What is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Many students preparing for the ministry make a fatal mistake of putting the cart before the horse. They seek for teachers before seeking the Teacher, who is the Holy Spirit. Notice that before the Child Jesus was in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions (Luke 2:47), He grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom and the grace of God was upon Him (Luke 2:40). Jesus grew strong in spirit by constantly fellowshiping and yielding to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was His Teacher. Remember, in heaven, Jesus has already divested Himself of His divine attributes of omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence before He entered the womb of Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. He was as helpless as any newborn baby. He still has to grow in knowledge as any other child. However, He knew how to listen and yield to the Holy Spirit and thereby, grow strong in the spirit. He progressed by becoming strong in spirit, then filled with wisdom, then filled with the grace of God before finally going to the temple to seek the teachers. Probably many of these teachers were men of great repute, famous teachers, famous authors, teachers that any ordinary Jew would stand in awe. They are the equivalents of famous teachers and authors today that people are running after. However, these Jewish teachers stood in awe of the Child Jesus because Jesus was taught by the Holy Spirit, and not by mere men. Luke 2:47, And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers.

This is where many Bible students and seminarians preparing for the ministry make this common mistake. They buy up many books to read, hear many tapes, go for one seminar after another, run after famous men and women of God, subscribe to their magazines, read their Bibles and even memorize whole passages but failed the one most important thing - seeking the Holy Spirit as Teacher. In the end, they wonder why they have no power in their preaching and in their ministry. Actually, most of them would be very smug and satisfied with their own preaching but they know not what they lack. They have all the theological degrees and doctorates but they have no wisdom from the Holy Spirit. Then they come across a poor uneducated Christian who is always on his knees, seeking for God's wisdom and truths. They are astounded to find this poorly educated Christian speaking one truth after another - truths they never heard of, truths they themselves took so long to find out, truths they finally found after so many hard knocks and mistakes and failures - and this guy is just pouring these truths out like living water. This guy depended on the Holy Spirit whereas the others depended on men's teachings.

I once read in church history about a very famous professor of theology in Europe during the middle Ages. I forgot his name. He used to hold his audience spellbound simply because he could quote long passages from the Bible and from church fathers by memory. One day, he happened to meet an ordinary layman and asked him how his preaching was. That layman took him aside and patiently taught him the truth from the Word of God. He taught this mighty professor where he had gone wrong, where he was missing the mark, where he was inaccurate, and this astounded him. He resigned from his post and submitted himself to this layman who taught him how to allow the

Holy Spirit to teach him. His resignation caused a great consternation in the hall of academicians and theologians. They despised him too for associating with and learning from an unlearned layman. In the end, he was vindicated when he moved powerfully in the realm of truth and revelation that stirred a great revival in his country.

Paul also had a similar experience. He sat at the feet of Gamaliel, the most outstanding teacher at that time. He was above his peers in terms of intelligence, brilliance of mind, learning, zeal for the law and was carved out for a very illustrious career as a rabbi. He may have been seen as the most likely successor to Gamaliel. All this ended when he met the Lord Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus in Acts 9 and said that he considered all his learning as dung compared to the supreme knowledge of knowing Jesus Christ as his Lord. He then went to Arabia to sit at the feet of the Holy Spirit for three years and the result was most outstanding. He wrote one third of the New Testament and released much revelation for us.

Bible graduates should take an example from Paul. They should go away and sit at the feet of the Holy Spirit for a few years.

When I was in school, I was an average student. Later, I went to the seminary. If you had heard me preach when I was in the seminary, you would have gone to sleep. After seminary, I started preaching. I did not preach like I do now. Back then, I was following the crowd and preaching like the rest of them. I thought you must shout, holler, and preach fire and brimstone. There is a lot of hot air, hype and clichés but little substance in such preaching. Later, when I preach the truth extracted from the Word, I found it had a greater impact of the congregation.

After I was expelled from the Baptist seminary in Penang, Malaysia for “practicing extreme Charismatic practices” according to the letter I received from the administrator of the seminary, I began to seek the Lord. The Lord showed me a vision of my spirit man that looked skinny, oppressed by thousands of demons pressing against me. Although I was getting high grades in my seminary subjects but spiritually, I was underdeveloped. High grades and degrees will not get you anywhere spiritually. When I got out from that vision, I determined to do two things: pray in the Spirit for long hours and meditate on the Word for long hours.

Something happened when I started doing both of these. When I fellowshiped with and prayed in the Spirit for long hours and meditated on the Word for long hours, in the ninth month or so, suddenly there was a burst of light and understanding that came to my mind on the Word that I never saw before. The light began to work in my soul and spirit that I did not fully understand then. However, one thing I do know: the Holy Spirit and the Word imparts wisdom. The Bible declares in Psalm 119:99-100, I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Your precepts.

During those 30 years, Jesus had to learn the Word of God like we learn. Jesus was not born with the knowledge of the Word. He even had to learn the Hebrew or Aramaic language in those days. Jesus had to learn to speak and then He had to learn all the scriptures. That is one point in His life where He is very similar to us. He had

to learn like we learn. By growing strong in spirit and by meditating on the Word, the Child Jesus was filled with wisdom.

In addition, you see that the grace of God was upon Him. How did the grace of God come? Grace comes through walking in the Spirit and walking according to the Word. If we keep a child away from the pollution of T.V. and wrong videos and feed that child the Word, that child will grow wiser than any other children because the Word will feed his spirit and give him a supernatural wisdom. The Word gives wisdom. The Word produces wisdom. Let me encourage you that the understanding that the Word is sharpened through meditating on the Word of God constantly.

Man uses only about 5 to 10 percent of their brain. The rest is actually wasted. We know one key that can tap on all your full potential of your soul - the Word of God. The Bible tells us in Eph. 4 that in reference to the gentiles who were in sin that they were in darkness. Their souls were darkened because they were alienated from the life of God. That happened in Adam's time. When Adam fell a light was shut up from his understanding and we all inherit that darkened mind. Jesus restored that light.

Summary

These four episodes of the childhood of Jesus Christ can be summarized by Isaiah 11:2, "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. The prophet Isaiah was speaking of the coming of the Messiah who would have this seven-fold Spirit of God. This seven-fold Spirit of God is categorized into four classifications:

1. The Spirit of the Lord
2. The Spirit of wisdom and understanding
3. The Spirit of counsel and might
4. The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.

Since the child in the womb of the Virgin Mary was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, we would expect the seven-fold Spirit of God to be with the Child Jesus as well. In each of the childhood episodes of Jesus, there is a manifestation of each classification of the seven-fold Spirit of God.

Firstly, there is the Spirit of the Lord. This is seen in the visit of Simeon and Anna at the presentation of Jesus at the temple. Simeon and Anna are full of the Spirit. Simeon is a lay believer whereas Anna represents the five-fold ministry. The Holy Spirit was upon Simeon, who revealed to him the baby Jesus who would be the salvation of Israel and the Gentiles. Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, was a prophetess who spoke by the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:14). Anna, daughter of Phanuel represents a life of grace born of spending time before the face of God. Simeon represents the life of Jesus who was filled with the Spirit (Luke 4:1) and came in the power of the Spirit. Anna represents the life of Jesus who was full of grace and truth (John 1:18). The Spirit of the Lord

would lead Jesus to be filled with the Spirit and with grace. This same Spirit of the Lord would enable us to be filled with the Spirit and with grace too.

Secondly, there is the Spirit of wisdom and understanding. This is seen in the visit of the three wise men from the east who had the wisdom to seek the Messiah and the understanding to follow the bright light in the sky. They had the wisdom to offer gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to the Child Jesus, as this was a prophetic overture to Jesus' life and ministry. They also had the understanding that the only gifts that are acceptable to the King of kings are the fruit of gold, frankincense, and myrrh in their lives. The Spirit of wisdom and understanding caused Jesus to produce a life filled with the gold of purity of worship, the frankincense of sweet fragrance of pleasing the Lord and the myrrh of drinking the cup of the Father's will. This same Spirit of wisdom and understanding will lead us also to produce a life of gold, frankincense and myrrh, which would also qualify us to become overcomers and kings.

Thirdly, there is the Spirit of counsel and might. This is seen in the counsel given by the angels to the shepherds keeping watch over their flocks at night that the sign would be a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths lying in a manger. We have seen that the light that appeared at night and the Babe lying in a manger were the same sign that the Messiah had come into the devil's territory to destroy the works of the devil. With this counsel comes the might. The shepherds rejoiced and worshipped the Babe. The Spirit of counsel and might upon Jesus led Him to preach, heal and deliver under the power of the Holy Spirit. Shepherds would need this Spirit of counsel and might if they are to preach, heal, and deliver as Jesus did.

Finally, there is the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. This is seen in the 12-year-old Child Jesus in the temple, engaging in a question and answer sessions with the teachers of the Law that simply astounded them. Jesus said that He was about His Father's business. From an early age, Jesus was already filled with the fear of the Lord that made His consecration to His Father's business absolute and unwavering. He grew, became strong in the Spirit, and was filled with wisdom and grace. This made Him filled with right knowledge that corrected the faulty knowledge of the teachers of the Law in the temple. When there is right knowledge of God, there will also be the fear of the Lord. The Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord in one's life will cause one to be filled with knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

2. THE PEACE OF GOD

What we want to see this Christmas morning is the announcement of the angel to the shepherds. Something spoken there may be of significance to us today. Luke 2:10: Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you. You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger."

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men."

Of all the things the heavenly host could say, they emphasized on the glory to God in the highest and peace and goodwill to all men. This is putting in a nutshell what Jesus' coming to our planet earth in the redemption plan of God means. Of all the many things that they could have announced, they announced peace on the planet earth. They could have announced prosperity. They could have announced other blessings. However, they announced peace. Why is peace so important that the angels especially mentioned peace to all men?

Men lost the peace of God when men fell. When Adam fell, the peace of God was lost. Here God wants to restore peace through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, sometimes we think about peace as a lack of strife. That is what we think of. Peace between nations in the world is a lack of strife where they do not harm each other. Sometimes, we think about peace in the same context. However, the Bible speaks about peace in a stronger way than you think. It is not just being neighborly although it includes that. The Bible speaks of peace not as a fragile force. Today the peace on this earth is very fragile. Just a little bit of shaking in one nation against another and the peace will be upset. We think about peace as a force that is not strong.

However, the Bible speaks about peace as a conquering force. Peace is a conquering force. It is not something fragile. There is power in peace because Jesus Christ brought this peace. One of the last words of Jesus Christ to His disciples was in John 14:27 and He says: Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you, not as the world gives do I give to you. It is a powerful peace. Jesus had come to bring this special peace. Not a natural peace. Peace is a spiritual supernatural force that is supposed to transform this whole earth. Rom. 16 shows us the significance of peace. Romans 16:20 - the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. See peace is not a fragile force. It is supernatural and it is powerful. It is a supernatural force that Jesus is releasing and that is what the angels were announcing. Powerful peace that will come upon all men. Paul used the phrase the God of peace. He could have used a different phrase to speak about God. He could have said the God of power will crush Satan and we would have understood it. He could have said the God of strength will crush Satan but instead he said the God of peace. Who would have imagined that the manifestation of God as peace is involved in our victory over Satan? The God of peace will crush Satan under our feet. Therefore, peace is a powerful force as far as the Word of God is concerned.

I asked the Lord why is it that Paul mentioned peace. What we are interested in is how is that peace connected to our victory. The Lord began to show that unless we have

peace we could not discern God's will. The opposite of peace will be confusion. The only place in the world where we can hear God clearly is the position of peace. There is peace in our life. The only evidence of being in God's will is peace. One of the powerful evidences is stillness and calmness. One of the manifestations that faith is in a person's life is peace. Someone striving in the flesh to do something is different from someone in peace who just flows along with what God wants to do. In the former, you could see all the effort and struggles. There is a world of a difference. Therefore, peace is also the result of faith.

Whenever something takes place like a healing in Mark 5, Jesus pronounces peace on the woman. He says, "Daughter, peace be with you." He announces peace upon people's life because He is the Prince of Peace. Now there are many titles to our Lord Jesus' name. However, there is one title that we must appreciate very much - Jesus is the Prince of Peace. Unless we are in the will of God there is no peace. There is no peace outside of the will of God.

The Bible calls peace a way. Right at the end of the prophecy of Zacharias in the gospel of Luke 2:79 To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death. To guide our feet into the way of peace. Now his prophecy was about John the Baptizer but here is a wonderful truth. The phrase says to guide our feet into the way of peace. Do we think of peace as a way? We think of peace as a condition. However, he says peace is a road. To put it in our terms today, it would be the road of peace. We think of peace as a condition, which is true. Peace is a condition but it is more than a condition. Peace is a force, peace is a substance, which can be imparted, and peace is a road that we walk in. It is the road called the will of God for your life.

You and I could be doing different things. However, as long as the things that you do and the things that I do are in the will of God, we will both have peace. The only peace that is possible is when people are in the will of God. When people do not want to do God's will, they can not have peace in themselves and neither can they have peace with others. Do you realize that the only possible way for me to have peace with you and with all the people around is when I am at peace myself? If you do not have peace, you can not give peace. You can not give what you do not have. Only when peace rests in our hearts, we are cool and calm in the things of God and in the will of God that we can bring peace to people and then can we have peace with others. However, when we are in strife, we will bring strife to people. We can not give what we do not have. Therefore, peace is a way, a way that we walk. It is the will of God. No other place is more powerful than to be in God's perfect will. When we are in God's perfect will, we are in the shadow of the Most High or the secret place of the Most High that David talked about. In that place no evil shall be found neither shall any plague come near your dwelling place. You shall not be afraid of the arrow that flies by day or the pestilence that walk at night. That is the place of peace. It is found in God's perfect will.

Satan can not touch you but that is not all you become a trap to Satan. You could trample him under your feet and there is nothing he can do to you. The most powerful demonstration of the kingdom of God in people's life is when they walk in God's will. When you walk in God's will, you become a tremendous force to crush Satan under your feet. Therefore, here is the connection - the God of peace will crush Satan under

our feet. How will that happen? See when we are in peace we are in God's will. When we are in God's will, we become an awesome force. We become a fear and a threat to the devil and we are in a position where we can crush Satan under our feet. Therefore, all is channeled through the will of God in our life.

Turn to Philippians 4 it gives us more details about this peace that Jesus has come to bring. Verse 7: the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. It is amazing that every epistle starts with grace and peace and there are truths inside. We understand that grace is not just favor; it is a substance imparted and it brings us to accomplish things beyond our ability. Peace is also one of the forces that is imparted at each greeting. Peace is a tremendous force in Christianity. The angels announced this powerful peace that Jesus came to bring. It says the peace of God will garrison your heart and your mind. The word guard means a garrison around a fortress. Peace guards us.

Peace can come in two areas. It can come in your heart and in your mind. Sometimes you have peace in your heart but your mind is not at peace. Sometimes your mind thinks peaceful but your heart is troubled. What God desires is for us to have peace in our heart and in our mind. See the heart is always the important factor. When we have peace in our heart and there is not much quietness in the mind, God could be telling you to walk in some thing that your mind does not understand. Your carnal mind wants to limit God. Therefore, when your mind does not understand some thing there is no peace. When your mind has no comprehension, the peace in the mind is not there yet. In such a state, you have to walk by faith without your understanding. Peace has not come into your mind yet but your heart is at peace. Just keep doing whatever you are doing because the peace is the confirmation.

On the other hand, when you have peace or quietness in your mind but no peace in your heart, you have to check yourself. Stop right where you are. You may be outside the road of peace. See peace is a road - the road of your life and my life. If you walk outside of that road, you will straight away lose your peace. The first area you lose your peace is in your heart. Our minds are not so clever; our spirits are smarter than our minds. Our mind may not understand that some thing has gone wrong yet. Our mind may be quiet and peaceful but your heart starts being troubled. The moment you move out of it, your heart starts being troubled. Peace leaves your heart. Please stop and check yourself because you may be outside the road of peace in your life.

If Christians will be more obedient to peace, they will never get into trouble. It is because we walk outside the road of peace that we get into position of defeat by the enemy. However, when you walk in peace, the enemy is the defeated foe. The only way you can defeat Satan is to walk in the path of peace. If you walk outside of that, you are a prey. Therefore, when you have peace in your mind, do not follow it; check your heart. Wait on the Lord in prayer until peace comes. Unless there is peace, you are helpless. You can not do anything unless your heart is at peace. What you do will not have any success involved. Jesus came to bring an all-powerful peace.

Can you think of peace as some guarding force? It says the peace of God garrison your mind.

We never think of peace as a powerful conquering force. However, the Bible says peace guards us. Peace is a powerful force. Peace is not a fragile force that is easily broken. The peace of God is powerful. Peace is supernatural since it defeats the enemy.

Another phrase to look at is in Colossians 3. The most powerful manifestation of peace is in the heart and in the mind. However, if there is only one manifestation only in your heart follow your heart. Blessed are you when you have peace in your heart and in your mind. Colossians 3:15 - Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body, and be thankful. It says the peace of God rules in our hearts. The word rule is from a Greek word that is translated in the Amplified Version as umpire. You know what an umpire does. An umpire will be there in a game and whenever there is a foul in the game, the umpire will call out. Therefore, an umpire tells you whether it is in or out. Peace rules in our hearts. Peace is the umpire in our hearts. Peace is guarding your life and my life. Jesus has brought this peace. Every time you move outside of God's will, peace shout "out." Better pay attention to peace in your heart. Many people want to be led by the Spirit but they are thinking of some supernatural spectacular thing. When they are thinking of being led by the Spirit, what they actually want is to see an angel, or Jesus. Or they want to have lightning bolt flashing, thunder rolling, angels singing, God's voice booming and they say, "I have heard God." Most of your life will be led by peace.

Jesus started the cycle of peace in our lives. It is a supernatural, godly, and spiritual peace in our hearts. When did it start? The Bible tells us in the book of Romans 5:1 - Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Peace starts when you were born again and when Jesus Christ came into your life and washed all your sins away. Unless sin is removed, there is no peace in the heart. Many people out there have an outward form of peace and tranquility but it is not real. Many of the people out there have sleepless nights. They are depending on pills to sleep. Many of those people are troubled. Therefore, some of them try to forget their trouble by drinking. Some forget their troubles through friends. They keep on mixing with people. However, every time when they are alone, they can not even face their own self and their own life. Why because peace is not in their hearts. You can only have peace when your sins are cleansed and under the blood.

Christmas time is an announcement of peace. Peace can only come into your heart when Jesus comes into your heart. Why? He is the Prince of Peace. When the Prince of Peace comes in, He brings peace. A cleansing of sins will come and that is the beginning of peace. It is the beginning of the walk of peace on the road of your life. Far too long we have walked outside the road of peace when we did not know God. However, the day you knew God, the gates were opened and you started walking in a way of peace. However, too many people do not realize such power in peace. They do not realize that to be sensitive to peace in their hearts and in their lives so they never walked in God's perfect will. The only place to seek to be in is God's perfect will. Do not seek fame, do not seek fortune, and do not seek anything else in the world but to be in God's perfect will. Unknown or well known, honored or dishonored, the best and safest place in the world to be is to be in the will of God, which is the peace of God. Peace of God that the world can not take away.

Do you know peace comes first and then joy? You can not have joy unless you have peace. How can you have the true joy when your sins are not forgiven? Do you know people do not have joy because they do not have peace? However, when you have peace you have the potential to have joy. If you already have peace, learn to move in the joy. I observed this unless we can sit together, laugh, and cry together easily we can not work together. Do you notice that when your relationship with somebody is strained one of the things that stop is that you can not smile and laugh together anymore? You can not even face each other. Every time you see that person, that smile goes upside down. We need to do something about that. I find in church relationship and in church working together one of the things that I always seek to preserve is for people to be able to pray together, cry together, and laugh together. When that happens the oil of love will lubricate our working together so that when we get together in the Lord, our gears, our spokes, our character come together in the Lord. Although we work together and our gears churn one another because of the oil of love and flowing together we will not feel the pain. It is when the relationship loses joy and when members lose their peace, they can never work together. Can two walk together unless they agree? They can not. Therefore, peace is an important force in our life. It is powerful when you understand that peace can crush Satan under your feet.

The Bible tells us that today as you visit each others' homes that peace is a substance that you can impart. Jesus said in Matthew 10:12 - when you go into a household, greet it. When Jews meet one another, they always say, "Shalom." However, Jesus takes it further and shows that it is a powerful force in verse 13: If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. However, if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. Jesus treats peace like a substance that you could give out and take back. Make sure today when you give out your peace, you do not take back your peace. The homes you are visiting should be worth it.

Here is where Jesus talks about peace as something you can impart. Some times when people have been to your home they seem to bring an atmosphere and a blessing. When they leave, they leave an atmosphere of change in your home. You should open your house to people who walked with God and lived with God. You notice that they impart peace and blessing into the atmosphere of your house. If Jesus Christ were to manifest just once in your prayer closet, do you know that your prayer closet is never the same again? He leaves something behind. Of course, He is with us all the time whether you see Him or not. I am illustrating the power of impartation that we can impart peace as a substance. When you visit one another, pray for one another. When you go to one another's home, you do not have to pray long prayers like the Pharisees do. However, make this a habit when you visit one another and fellowship with one another. When you go in or before you leave, have a short prayer to bless the Lord and bless that home. You do not have to be a preacher or a five-fold minister to do that. Any believer could do it. As you visit one another, pray before you leave. Impart the blessing of God to the home and on the family. There will be spiritual blessings that come back into your life.

3. EPIKAIZO - THE SHADOW OF THE ALMIGHTY

Luke 1:26-38 - Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!" However, when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that the Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible. Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

This morning we will consider verse 35. Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you."

The angel Gabriel said that the virgin birth will take place when the power of the Highest will overshadow her.

I want you to notice he is not saying the power of the Holy Spirit but he says the power of the Highest. For a long time I have thought that, the power of the Holy Spirit and the power of the Highest were synonymous. However, as I began to meditate more in this area the Lord began to show me that the power of the Highest is another realm beyond the power of the Holy Spirit. It will be called the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. It is still of the Holy Spirit but it is what I call the extreme end of the scale. The greatest power possible demonstrated by the Holy Spirit is that it touches between eternity and the natural world. The power of the Highest will overshadow you and then this miracle will be wrought.

We are going to consider the word overshadow because that is the key word to understand this kind of power that the angel Gabriel is talking about. The word overshadow comes from the Greek word epikaizo. This Greek word here epikaizo has been used three times in the New Testament. Every time it is used, it refers to a special manifestation of God's power. It is not the ordinary level of manifestation. What is the ordinary level? It is found in Acts 1:8, But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. A lot of people think that Acts 1:8 is the powerful level. However, Acts 1:8 is just the first step of the degree of power that God can manifest. It is just the beginning. Remember it starts in Acts

chapter one. That is the beginning but here the word overshadow talks about the fullness possible of God's power.

If God were to manifest in all His fullness, this natural world would explode. It can not contain or take God's fullness. Therefore, what God does is He manifests a certain measure of His power on this earth. Later, when our bodies are perfected we can see God's power in greater and greater measure in the heavenly places in eternity. However, now when this earth is in its imperfect stage, God only manifest a certain amount of power.

Now that amount of power is what we are talking about. Let us say the starting amount of power in Acts 1:8 is one volt. Let us say that the maximum voltage is just 240 volts. Then at the point where there is 240 volts of power is where the word overshadow with the power of the Highest takes place. In other words, that is the point where the natural contacts the spiritual at its highest level. That is the point that Enoch reached just before his body was translated into heaven. The power level of Acts 1:8 is not going to translate you. It is only going to enable you to be a witness here. However, translation and rapture has to take place not at the one-volt level of power.

It has to take place at the 240 volts where the spiritual power is manifested so much that it transforms you from the natural to the spiritual. Therefore, what the angel was saying if you understand that the release of the baptism of the Holy Spirit in Acts 1:8 is God's power at one volts, then at the end level at the 240 volts level, the power of the Highest is going to overshadow Mary. The overshadowing of the power of the Highest is not just that one-volt level but it is at the 240 volts level. At this level, it is going to cause a creative act upon Mary. Notice that the word epikaizo has been used two other times. Both of those times are special occasions. In other words, it is far beyond Acts 1:8.

Let me illustrate with Luke 9 where we see the transfiguration. Verses 28 and 29: Now it came to pass, about eight days after these sayings, that He took Peter, John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening. I want you to know that the power of God was already working. It took the power of God to transform His robe, to transform His face so that the glory began to manifest to His disciples. When they looked at Jesus, He did not even look like Moses when he came down from Mount Sinai with his face shining. However, Jesus did not only have His face shining. He had every part of His face and clothing shining. His glory was greater than the glory that Moses had. Therefore, there was a tremendous amount of power working. Yet, there is a greater level.

Verses 30-31: behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Isn't it interesting that he is talking about Jesus going from the natural world into the spirit world? How Jesus will die on the cross and after three days, He is going to be resurrected, overcome this natural world with its natural laws and natural limitations and translated into the spirit world. In verse 31 these people were appearing in glory. Therefore, it was more than one volt. It could be two volts, three volts or about 40 volts by that time. There was a great amount of power demonstrated that day on the mountain.

Meanwhile verse 32: However, Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep; and when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men who stood with Him. Now they saw all these glory yet there was one more level that suddenly came. While they were talking in verse 34: While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them. Epikaizo was taking place. They already had so much glory. They already saw this glory on Jesus and His clothes. They saw the glory of Moses and Elijah who were there. The glory was shining all over the Mount of Olives and yet there was another level of glory. While they were talking about putting tents up, a cloud of glory came and epikaizo them. It covered them until they could not see anything but the cloud. That is the 240 volts. The point nearest to eternity was coming into their lives. When it came in verse 34 they were filled with fear. They have never seen this amount of glory and this amount of power so thick that they could not see anything but glory.

Verse 35: a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!” You could see obviously from Luke 9 that there are different degrees of glory. However, the word epikaizo meaning overshadowed is used for the highest manifestation of God’s glory and God’s power. That word is interesting because that word is from two Greek words epi and kaizo. The word kaizo means to block out something. What is a shadow? A shadow scientifically is defined as the absence of light on a place because some opaque material has absorbed the light. Let says right now with this light shining down, I could see a faint shadow over there. It is my shadow. That shadow is there because my body is blocking those light rays from touching the ground over there. In other words, there is a cancellation or blocking of that light. When that word is used in the spiritual world in a sense it means that when the end level the 240 volts level of the power of the Highest manifests, it brings a “cancellation” of the natural world. That is why before we are raptured, God is going to show that amount of glory. There will be a cancellation of the natural world to enable the Holy Spirit to snatch the spirit man of those called to the rapture. I believe that was what happened to Enoch as he walked with God. As he began walking with God, he tasted the glory of God. Day by day as he walked closer and closer with God, the glory increased until one as he reached that 240 volts level the end degree and he walked one more step and his body was just transformed and translated into heaven. Every natural law became cancelled. Every natural cells became cancelled and was replaced by spiritual cells. Every thing was transformed because of the power of epikaizo or overshadowing that took place.

Turn over to the book of Acts 5 where we see the third time the epikaizo manifests. You can see here in verse 12 of Acts 5 that there was already power demonstrated. There was already Acts 1:8 demonstrated. You will never have epikaizo until you move into Acts 1:8 first and Acts 1:8 becomes normal with you. As you walk with God, it is normal for you to know authority over diseases, germs, viruses, sicknesses, and over demon power. It becomes normal for your life. Wherever you go demons are afraid of you. You have the authority to lay hands on the sick. It is the normal part of your life. You live in divine health and you know God’s power upon your life. It is normal to you. However, as you continue walking at that level and increase it, you will reach epikaizo.

In Acts 5, they were already having a normal special demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit including the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In verse 12: through the hands of the apostles, many signs and wonders were done among the people. They were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch. Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly. And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them.

As many as the shadow comes upon they were healed. There was a special demonstration in Acts 5:12. In other words, as Peter walked with God and demonstrated the power of God, there came a time when the voltage increased and reached 240 volts. Suddenly even before he could touch them the healing took place. However, it became even more powerful because it reached the epikaizo level. This is what happened. It may not have been a natural shadow. It may have been that there was such a glory that came upon that place that literally there was demonstrated a glory and a light greater than the sun. That manifestation did not happen after that. It was only on that occasion. Wherever that shadow was, the natural world was cancelled. Every natural law becomes subjugated to the spiritual and higher law. Under that law, there can be no sicknesses. There can not exist any demon. There can not exist any disharmony. There can not exist anything that contradict the presence of God. Now how did they reach that level?

Firstly, in all three incidences in Luke 9, Luke 1, and Acts 5 especially in Luke 9 and in Acts 5 that they already were very deep in prayer. Jesus in Luke 9 was praying. As He was praying, His countenance was transformed. As you look at the greeting to Mary in Luke 1, Gabriel said, "Thou highly favored one." If you examine that title from Genesis to Revelation, you will find that it is reserved only to those who had spent a lot of time with God. It was used of Daniel when Gabriel met him and said, "Daniel, thou greatly beloved of God." That greeting had the same sense of being highly favored. So just from that greeting, you could tell that Mary was a woman who loved God, loved to spend time with God, and loved to pray. That harmonizes epikaizo and the ability to tap into that. The prayer level was extremely high. Daniel spent so much time with God that God gave him a special title, "Thou greatly beloved." To Mary, it was "Highly favored one." That is the first thing. And when you begin to move into that 240-degree volt level, you notice that the natural world becomes afraid. On all three occasions fear came. In Luke 1, it says that Mary was troubled. Mary began reasoning to herself. Then the angel had to say, "Fear not, Mary." Now it was not the normal fear that you will have of natural things. However, it was a fear because the natural world is about to be absorbed by the spiritual world.

In Luke 9 when the three apostles, Peter, James, and John saw the glory of Jesus, it didn't say that they were afraid. When they saw Moses and Elijah, it did not say that they were afraid. However, when the cloud came and they can not see anything they were afraid because there is something about the highest point where the spiritual contacts the natural and the natural becomes afraid. It is going to be cancelled, dissolved and absorbed and transformed. In Acts 5, you could see that as they move from the point of laying hands and having signs and wonders deeper into the powers of the Highest, the people became afraid. It was not out of natural fear but the fear of

God. At that point, where the natural totally yield to the spiritual, you notice immediately that special manifestation took place. However, we see the first point here - prayer is an important avenue. I will guarantee you that if you spend 10 to 16 hours a day for 365 days in prayer, just see what you will get next Christmas. You may be among the epikaizo. There is something about spending time in God that no natural program or activity can replace. There is something about spending that time with God and letting the glory that is on Him transform your life.

The second thing is Mary's response. In order to tap on that Mary said, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it onto me according to your word." That was total surrender and submission. That is the second thing. A lot of people pray but their lives are submitted to God only 70 percent. So, 30 percent of their prayers are out. Some people submit 90 percent. Their prayers are 10 percent off track. Some people submit to God a hundred percent of their life a few seconds a year. They reached that point and then they come out again. The things of this world grip them so they come out of that 100% surrenderedness. Surrenderedness is not a position that is once made. Tomorrow you will have to make that decision again. When you got more blessings and when you have more things about this life you have to make a choice to surrender more. Therefore, yesterday you may be surrendered but today you may not be surrendered. However, I am talking about this. If you live a life that is 100 percent surrendered 365 days a year not just a few seconds or a few weeks constantly day in and day out, something is going to happen. The epikaizo of the power of the Highest is going to happen to your life.

The third thing that takes place is worship. Even though the presence of God has just begun, Mary was filled with the supreme presence of God and she blessed the Lord. When she met Elizabeth, praise just welled out within her. Even Peter did not forget the experience of the transfiguration in Luke 9. Later on in the epistle of Peter, he mentioned that experience how they saw the kingdom of God. In Acts 5, if you examine it very carefully the disciples were people who constantly worshipped God and praised God. That is the third area. We are not talking about prayer, surrender, and worship once in a blue moon or just once in a while. If you continue in steadfast prayer, if you continue in steadfast surrender, if you continue in steadfast worship, then you will reach epikaizo.

Let me close by reading Psalm 91 to show you that David knew about that place. Psalm 91:1 - He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High.

Those three things will bring you into the secret place. He will not overshadow you first and then you enter the secret place. You must enter the secret place and remain there then He will overshadow you. The key into that secret place was given by Mary - constant in prayer, constant in surrender, constant in worship. David had all those three things. He fell a few times but he always returned to God. He was a person who sought God. He was a man of prayer. He was a person surrendered to God and he was a person who worships God. Moses made this statement but it was included among David's Psalms that he sang. You will notice that Psalms 90 and 91 were attributed to Moses. How did Moses get that revelation? Moses only had it for a few moments. When he said, "Lord show me your glory," God said, "I will hide you in the cleft of the rock. When I pass by, I will not show you the front part of My glory. I show you

the back part of My glory.” When Moses saw that glory, epikaizo was taking place. My friends, if epikaizo takes place in your life, your very skin will be transformed.

John G. Lake touched on epikaizo. When a plague raged through the land, he boldly allowed some scientists to drop some drops filled with germs from that plague on his hand to test the Spirit of life in him. When the scientists took the drops filled with germs from his hand and placed them under the microscope, they saw that all the germs died. That my friend is epikaizo.

He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. Verse 4: He shall cover you with His feathers. And under His wings you shall take refuge. Therefore, understand the blessing of epikaizo this Christmas and even as we worship God and bless one another and fellowship together may we remember that it was all made possible because one woman called Mary was yielded enough to allow epikaizo to take place. Every time you talk about creative miracles and the growing of new limbs, you are talking about epikaizo the creative highest power of God. The spiritual creates the natural. The natural is dissolved by the spiritual.

4. WELCOMING JESUS

According to scholars, the time that Jesus actually came to this earth was most probably April. Since Christmas is set aside to remember Jesus and it is a holiday, it is a good time to remember the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to this planet earth. I thought and prayed about it. I said, "Lord, your coming to this planet earth was prophesied nearly four thousand years of recorded Bible history. From the time of Genesis, right up to the time of John the Baptist the last prophet before Jesus, many men of God have prophesied before You came to this planet earth. An entire nation of Israel has been prepared for Your coming. All heaven looked forward to this majestic event. God the Father also looked forward to this event. However, when the Lord Jesus actually came to this planet earth nearly two thousand years ago, who were there to welcome You? If it is that important to heaven, if it is that important to all the prophets of old that men of God had looked forward to that event for four thousand years, when You actually came Lord, who were there to welcome You?"

As I look at who were those that welcome the Lord Jesus I felt disappointed. I said, "Lord, this world did not give you that kind of welcome that the angels had given you. Why were there not people welcoming you?" There is a spiritual truth there. The same hindrances that prevent people from knowing and welcoming His first coming will be the same hindrances that will prevent people from welcoming His second coming. The same principles in the spirit that prepare some people to welcome Him are the same principles that will guide us to learn to welcome every move of God. We need to learn to welcome Jesus when it is time for Him to come again the second time. However, the same situation that hindered those people are going to hinder some people from being ready for the Lord Jesus when He comes again the second time. Therefore, we can learn from the Lord Jesus' first coming to the planet earth in order to prepare for His second coming.

Let us look first at the gospel of John 1:10. John is talking about Jesus the true Light of the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. When He came the world did not know Him. The One who made the world, the world did not know Him. Verse 11: He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. The very people who should be the first to welcome Jesus were not there to welcome Him. Instead, other people welcomed Him. What a sad fact. However, there is a lesson we have to learn from the historical event of Jesus coming into the world. Let us look at those people who did not welcome Jesus. Why did they did not welcome Him? What cause them not to be ready to welcome Him? He says in verse 11: He came to His own people the Jews and there was no welcome waiting for Him. Why was there no welcome among the Jews the Israelites His own people? There were people to whom the Word of prophecy has been given, to whom the law has been given, and to whom the Lord Jesus say that I am sent to the lost sheep of Israel. They were the first people to be given the opportunity to receive Jesus. Why didn't they welcome Jesus?

Let us look over here at the gospel of Mathew 2. The people who was supposed to welcome Jesus when He came were the Israelites. When it was time for Jesus to come to this earth, they were not ready. It took some strangers from far away. By that time, it was two years before they arrived at Jerusalem. They saw the star from far away

when Jesus was born. By the time the three wise men reached Jesus, Jesus was at least one to two years old. It says Jesus was standing in the house. That is in Matthew chapter two. The old story that the wise men came to the manger is not scriptural. They saw the star that was manifested when Jesus was born in the manger. However, they traveled so far that by the time they reached the place Jesus was between one to two years old. This was another reason why Herod had all children under two killed. That was about the age of Jesus. You can see that the wise men came to Jesus in a house not in the manger in Matthew chapter two.

However, the surprising thing is two years has passed after Jesus has manifested and they still did not know. They still did not know, just like some people do not know when the Holy Spirit shows up in a service. One hour after the Holy Spirit came, they still did not know that the Holy Spirit or the anointing is already there. Sometimes, we are waiting for the move of God and the move of God has started from a place that we never expected. The move of God caused fire in a place or a group of people who were insignificant and who were not recognized and that we never recognize it. Therefore, some times one or two years passed by before we recognize that the move of God has come.

God has already moved and two years later, here comes the wise men. We are not sure whether they were three. How did they get the number three? Was it because there were three gifts. They may have been more than that. When they came in verse 2 Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.” When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Instead of being excited, they were troubled. Look at that - they were already two years delayed welcoming Jesus. Now the wise men came to honor the Lord. They wanted to worship the Lord who has come to this earth. It was so important to them that they traveled for nearly one and half years to two years. The response of the Jews all Jerusalem was fear and anxiety. Herod was troubled because in that day Herod was known as the king of the Jews. He had done a lot of favors of the Jews. They sort of acknowledged him as king. Therefore, here was someone to challenge him. Therefore, Herod and the Jews were all one crowd who never welcome Jesus, never look forward to His coming. Why didn't they look forward to His coming?

Firstly, they were happy as they were. They were not ready to change themselves in order to welcome Jesus. Every thing was highly organized and highly planned. They have organized themselves to the extent that they do not need the Holy Spirit any more. They planned their lives in such a manner that they do not need God to move any more. They are doing all the moving. This is also the state of many churches, denominations, and ministries. They may be highly organized by men and women, but little was inspired or approved by the Holy Spirit. This is actually lawlessness since many works are done without seeking the Lord's counsel and approval. In such highly organized human enterprises, lawlessness has been institutionalized and established. It is therefore not a surprise that when there is a genuine move of God, the first to react negatively are these human enterprises that call themselves Christian.

Secondly, you notice here that when the wise men asked where to find the king of the Jews, this caused Herod to do some asking himself. Matthew 2:4-6 And when he had

gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. Therefore, they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet:

However, you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will be shepherd My people Israel."

The Jews have the Word of God but they do not practice the Word of God. The Word told them where Jesus was going to be born. If they had been sensitive to the Word of God, they will know the time is right. First, they were comfortable in themselves. They had every thing they need. Every thing was going nicely - they had food on the table and shelter above them. They do not need God; they were just comfortable as they are. They have the Word but they do not practice the Word. They were hearers of the Word but they were hypocrites. Jesus later in His lifetime rebuked them. You have the Word but you do not do the Word. They were hearers of the Word but not doers. If you hear the Word long enough but never practice it, some thing will happen to your heart. You would be worse off than never hearing the Word. It means that now even the mighty Word of God has no effect on you. It means that now you will be many times as hard as you were before. Not to hear the Word is one thing. However, to hear the Word and not be moved by the Word will cause our hearts to harden against the Lord. When we receive a Word or command from the Lord and we refuse to obey, we choose to be a hearer and not a doer. We will move into this group that never welcome Jesus when He manifests. We will not be ready when Jesus comes.

Thirdly, here is Herod in verse 7: Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. He did it for a wrong motive. He did it because if he could find out where Jesus was he wants to get rid of Jesus. Jesus was not crucified by the masses that He healed, touched and blessed in His ministry. The crucifixion of Jesus was a plotted by this same group of scribes, Pharisees, and the high priests. The third reason these people did not welcome Jesus is that they have locked themselves into a position that if God wants to do something, God has to do it their way. If God manifests any other way, or if the voice of God comes from a carpenter and not from one of the Pharisees, they will not accept it. In other words, they are saying, "God, I want you to work my way. Yes, Lord we are looking forward to welcome You but if you want us to welcome You, You come on our terms and conditions. Please do not ask us to come on Your terms and conditions." They have made themselves bigger than God had. They have built their thrones higher than God's throne. Therefore, when God came lowly on a donkey they rejected Him while the crowds accepted Him. The third thing why they did not welcome Jesus is that they wanted Jesus to come on their terms. This group that did not welcome Jesus represent hearers of the Word but not doers. They have hardened their hearts to God's plans and purposes. They have planned every thing so well that they were not ready to welcome Jesus when Jesus came. In fact, His coming was considered an intrusion into their lives and unsettled their plans and programs.

The wise men - who do they represent? They represent the people of the world. They represent people who are hungry for God. Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be filled." These people who were hungry for God had followed the star. They saw the star and they made a commitment to God.

Therefore, these wise men represents people whose hearts are sincere towards God. When the light comes to them, they would gladly accept it and be born again. They will come to accept Jesus and accept the move of God when He comes. They have a hunger for God. For those who are neither hungry for righteousness nor hungry for God, the move of God can come and go and will make no difference to their lives. Those who are hungry for God will obey their spiritual hunger and go on a spiritual search.

I came from a Buddhist family. When I was young, I did believe in God. In primary school, I believed in God although no one told me about God. I looked up the sky and knew that there must be a God. By the time I was 16, I became an atheist and did not believe in God any more. Too much education, too much scientific experimentations and too much materialism made me doubt the existence of God. I thought atoms and molecules were the stuff of life. However, when my sister got demon possessed, I heard the demons speaking through her. I saw the demons manifesting through her. Something in my philosophy cracked and I saw that science could not explain that unseen demonic presence. I went on a spiritual search. I became hungry for the truth. I yielded to that hunger and went on a spiritual search. Along the way, some friends brought me to church and I was born again. There are people who are hungry but will pay no attention to that spiritual hunger. Every night before they sleep, some thing asks them where they are going in eternity. What will happen when you die? They try to rub it out of their mind with distractions. They will have to face that question and resolve it.

Secondly, these wise men had obeyed the Word as soon as they had the opportunity to hear the Word. The first time they heard the scriptures, it was from the most unlikely people - the chief priests and the scribes. The wise men asked, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him." (Matthew 2:2) The chief priests and the scribes said that the Christ would be born in Bethlehem. Straight away, they went to Bethlehem. Look at the way the wise men obeyed God's Word. The moment the scribes and Pharisees said, "Bethlehem," the wise men said, "All right we are going there now." They are not going to delay. They are not going to procrastinate. They are going there now to look for the King of the Jews. These wise men represent people who hear and straight away obey the Word of God.

The same scenario will be played out in these end times. Many students of prophecy will be able to give outlines of the end times with Bible chapters and verses. However, when the rapture were to take place now, most of them would not be ready. There is something deceitful in the hearts of man. Like the chief priests and the scribes, they take pride in knowing chapter and verse of Scriptures to predict the birth of the Messiah and other coming events. But unfortunately, like the chief priests and the scribes, they would also be unprepared for the very events they can predict so accurately. What gives? Their intellectual and spiritual pride have deceived them into thinking that they are smart enough to be caught up in the rapture.

Today, many churches are running their church life in their own flesh. Many think they are right. However, one day after the rapture, many would realize how wrong they had been. But it would be too late.

Thirdly, in Matthew 2:11 - And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. When they had opened their reassures, they presented gifts to Him, gold, frankincense and myrrh. Then being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way.

The third point is they were worshippers of the Lord. There is no calling higher than being a worshipper of God. God brought them into true worship.

The gospel of Luke 2 shows two groups of people in the world - those who are hungry for God and those who are not hungry for God.

Luke 2:1 - it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria.

Firstly, these people had a big event taking place in their midst. The world had never done this before. No such census has happened in the world before. This is the first time they were having a census. It was also a time of celebration. You can see that all the major towns and cities were filled. All the hotels in town were booked. We all know what it is like. If your city were to host the Olympic Games, guess what? All the hotels in town would be booked months ahead. It is such a big event in the life of the city. It would be the talk of town. The bus drivers would be talking about it. The taxi drivers would be talking about it. Now here is something exciting - the whole world was having a census. Everybody is going to the towns of their tribal origins and at the same time, they make use of the season to visit their friends.

This group of people who did not welcome Jesus was the worldly people. Firstly, they never read the signs of the times. God is ordering some things in the world today. Behind the headlines, the back lines and in the middle lines of the newspaper is the hand of God. However, the carnal mind is not sensitive to the times and seasons that are happening. Do you know that this whole census is for one reason? There is only one reason for the census. The Roman Empire thinks the census is for their records. However, there is only one reason - God wanted Jesus to be born in Bethlehem. He moved an entire Roman Empire for that census to take place. An angel must have come to the Roman Caesar and whispered the call for a census. Therefore, in the end he called for a census. The entire reason for that census is because Jesus is to be born in Bethlehem. However, the world never saw it. The world saw the census but not the Lord. There are many out there in the world that are not sensitive to some things happening out in the world. They do not read the signs of the times and the seasons we are living in. The nations in the world are moving in a way for God's end time plan to be fulfilled. They are not getting themselves ready. Instead of being hungrier for God, they get busy with the affairs of this world. In the time like the census, they took the opportunity to do more business. They do not understand everything so that they could welcome Jesus. They got trapped in the hassles and the concerns of this life.

When Jesus actually came the sad thing Luke 2:7 tells us is that everybody else had a hotel room but none for the One for whom the census was planned for. The whole purpose of the census was planned for the birth of Jesus to take place in Bethlehem. However, the One for whom the entire heaven and earth was moved to plan for, there

was no room for Him. That shows how unwelcome He was. There was no room because everybody was busy. There was no room for Him. That is the second thing that takes place in Luke 2:7, they relegated Jesus to a humble manger.

They put Him in a place fit for animals. It was a place where the animals' dung and dirty smells were. Mary had to make the best out of her worst situation. That happens when we become too busy for God and do not know the times and seasons

Secondly, we will relegate Jesus to a time of convenience. It is not convenient for us now to have time for Jesus. We are not ready for You. Some people worship the God of convenience. "I will only think about eternity when I make my living." They are worshipping convenience. "When it is convenient for me, then I will come to church." "When it is convenient for me, I will think about future things." You do not talk about the Almighty God, the heaven, and the earth that way. You do not talk to the boss you work for that way. "Boss, although you employ me I will serve you when it is convenient." You will be fired that very day. Yet we talk to the Creator who gave us life who gave us breath and we say we will worship You when it is convenient. We will welcome You when it is convenient. That happened to them.

The third thing that happened is that which is not recorded here because Jesus came and went and they did not know it. They never experience Jesus. They never saw Him. When you choose to draw near to God, God will draw near to you. God did say this in the Old Testament, "If you reject Me, I will reject you." He will have a grace period before He does that. However, if you constantly reject God there will come a time when we will be like Pharaoh and He will put us in the second level of pre-destination and say that's it you are now set aside for the judgment. Those who love God, God will love them. Those who hate God, He will still love them but then judgment will come upon them because God will take His hand of protection away from them after a season.

What about those who welcome God? This group was the shepherds. Why did God specially go to the shepherds? As I looked at it, I asked, "Lord, why did You specially go to the shepherds? Why didn't you send the angel right to the Town Hall where the people gathered?" On that day, the King was born and laid on a manger. Why go to the shepherds in the country when everybody was in the city? Remember the census was on and everybody was in town. Just like on Christmas Eve night when we were driving through town to get to church, there was a huge traffic jam and it looked like a morning rush hour. I do not know what the world is doing on Christmas Eve night when they do not know the Lord. It looks like rush hour traffic. What is the world doing? It is busy. I asked, "Lord, why do not You appear to the world?" The Lord said, "If He sent His angels to them they would have ignore the angels because the world would not receive Him and God knows it." Therefore, God do not waste time. God does not waste time sending angels to the Town Hall and the hotels. They were too busy for God's plans. Those three points were working against them. They are not interested in God so God did not bother to send angels to them. However, out in the country there was a group of people the shepherds. They were away from the world. Firstly, they were people who were not caught up with the things of this life. Some shepherds took off to town but this group of shepherds were not interested in those things. There are special stall opened today for the shepherds. These shepherds in the

country said, “No, we are not interested. We just like to look up into the sky above thinking about God.” Therefore, the first thing why these shepherds had a special manifestation they were not tied up to the world or the world system. They were simple folks who just love God more than things. However, the people in the world love things more than God.

Secondly, these shepherds were faithful. Luke 2:8 - Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. They knew they had a job to do and if nobody does that job, the sheep will be lost. These people had a high measure of faithfulness. They were sacrificial and they were faithful. They said to the other shepherds who wanted to go to town, “Never mind, you go ahead. Somebody has to do this job. We will sacrifice and we will look after the sheep. We will take all your jobs for you while you are away.” They were faithful people. Luke 2:9 - And behold, an angel of the Lord stood them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord. This will be the sign to you. You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger. Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: “Glory to God in the highest. And on earth peace, goodwill toward men.”

The shepherds responded in verse 15: Therefore, it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one other, “Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us. What the world could not attract them to leave their jobs the Lord could. Every thing Satan had offered to them, to draw them away from their jobs could not. However, when the Lord sent His angels and talked about His glory, they were willing to let go and let God rule them. They said, “Let us go.” What about the sheep? Let us commit that to God. If it is God who sends us there God will take care of our sheep. The only reason we go to Bethlehem is to see the Lord. They do not want to see the new stalls. They do not want to see the festivities, the carnival, the circus, the clowns in town. Seeing such a commitment, I am sure the Lord will take care of the sheep for them. That day the angels were doing the shepherding for them to make sure no bears, no lions would attack their sheep. You can see the third response. They immediately responded to God. They were right and ready for the harvest. They were people who trembles at God’s Word and who loves God. The moment God says anything, they were willing to drop everything and just say, “Lord Jesus, I will follow you wherever You lead.” That is why God blesses the shepherds. They went very quickly. They were not going to postpone for two years. I mean if its important for the angels, then it is important for them. If it is important for Jesus, then it is important for them.

Now there was a fourth group of a person who also responded correctly and that is Simeon and Anna. How did this fourth group respond to God? Verse 25: behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. Firstly, this fourth group has set themselves apart. They have kept all the conditions that the shepherds kept but they went further. The shepherds only saw the manger but Simeon and Anna saw the Lord and they even know the future. That is what the church should

be like. Firstly, Simeon waited for the coming of Jesus. Every day he looked forward to that. He will be like the Christians today getting up in the morning and saying to God, "Lord, when are you going to come back? We miss you, Lord Jesus. We know that you are delaying because there are more people who should be saved when You come back. However, O Lord we look forward to Your coming. We keep ourselves consecrated separated for your coming." That is the first thing they look forward and they prepare for Jesus coming. Whenever God does anything new or bring a fresh move of God or fresh revelation, they will always be the first people to move into it.

Verse 26: Therefore, he came by the Spirit into the temple. When the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God. Secondly, the Spirit leads this group of people. They learn to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit. That day Simeon may have been praying and the Holy Spirit said to him, "Simeon, I want you to go now to the temple because the Messiah is being dedicated there." When he heard the voice of the Holy Spirit and he followed it, the Holy Spirit led him to see Jesus. It is important to be led by the Spirit. I was just sitting with a brother in the Lord. He was a successful man beginning to do some ministry. Then he made this statement, which I know to be true since he is serving the Lord since January 96. He said, "I find that not many people led by the Spirit. A lot of them walk in the flesh. Even some ministers claim to be led by the Spirit but they do not know the Spirit. They do not know His sweet gentle voice. They do things that are in the flesh. The Spirit leads a small percentage." However, bless God the day is coming where the Spirit is leading more and more people. You are going to be led by the Spirit. You are going to hear His voice. You are going to hear His call. They will be at every place the Lord leads them to go.

The Italian mystic, Maria Valtorta, had a series of visions of the life of Jesus, which she wrote in a five volume book called, "The Poem of the Man-God." She described the following scene of Simeon beholding the Babe Jesus as follows:

Simeon, whom I always thought belonged to the sacerdotal class, and is instead a simple believer, at least according to his garments, takes the Child and kisses Him. Jesus smiles at him with the typical smile of sucklings. He seems to watch him inquisitively, because the old man is crying and laughing at the same time and his tears form a sparkling embroidery running along his wrinkles and beading his long white beard, towards which Jesus stretches His little hands. He is Jesus, but still a child, and whatever moves in front of Him, draws His attention so that He wants to get hold of it to see what it is. Mary and Joseph smile and so do all the others who praise the beauty of the Child.

I hear the words of the holy old man and I see the astonished gaze of Joseph, the deeply moved look of Mary as well as the glances of the little crowd, partly surprised and moved, partly laughing at the words of the old man. Amongst the latter there are some bearded and conceited members of the Sanhedrin, who shake their heads giving Simeon an ironic pitying look. They must think he is a dotard.

Jesus says: Truth is not revealed to a priest engrossed in rites, but absent with his spirit, it is instead revealed to a simple believer.

The priest, always in contact with Divinity, devoted to what concerns God and to everything which is above the flesh, should have realized at once who was the Child Who was being offered that morning in the Temple. But it was necessary for him to have a living spirit, in order to realize it. A mere robe covering a drowsy spirit, if not a dead spirit, was not sufficient.

The Spirit of God can thunder if He wants, and rouse like a thunderbolt and shake like an earthquake the dullest spirit. He can. But generally, as He is an orderly Spirit, as God is Order in each Person and way of acting, He inspires and speaks, not where there is sufficient merit to deserve His effusion - in which case His effusions would be most rare and not even you would know their light - but where He sees the "good will" to deserve such effusion.

How is such will exerted? With a life devoted, as far as possible, entirely to God: in faith, obedience, purity, charity, generosity, and in prayer. Not in practices: in prayer. There is less difference between night and day than there is between practices and prayer. The latter is communion of the spirit with God, from which you emerge with fresh strength and a decision to belong more and more to God. The former are common habit exerted for various purposes, which are always selfish, and they leave you exactly as you were, nay, they aggravate your burden with the faults of falsehood and sluggishness.

Simeon had such good will. He had not been spared troubles and trials in his life. But he had not lost his good will. Age and misfortunes had not impaired or shaken his faith in the Lord and in His promises, neither did his good will to be more and more worthy of God tire or falter. And God sent Him the ray of the Spirit to guide him to the Temple, that he might see the Light that had come to the world, before his eyes of a faithful servant closed to the light of the sun, awaiting to be reopened to the Sun of God glowing in the Heavens, which I had reopened when I ascended after my Martyrdom.

"Prompted by the Holy Spirit" says the Gospel. Oh! If men only knew what a perfect Friend the Holy Spirit is! What Guide, what Teacher! If they only loved and invoked Him, this love of the Most Holy Trinity, this Light of Light, this Fire of Fire, this Intelligence, this Wisdom! How much more they would know of what is necessary to know!

The third point is found in Anna's life in verses 36 and 37: Now there was one, Anna, prophet, the daughter of Phanuel, the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity, and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but serve God with fastings and prayers night and day. She had all the same conditions as the shepherds had. However, she went further. The group of people who will be there to welcome Jesus Christ are those who give themselves to prayers, to worship and fasting. She gave Jesus the kind of welcome that He deserves when He came into the world. Many believers today keep remembering the day Jesus came. We give Him the welcome that He so deserves. However, how sad that when He actually came there were so few to welcome Him. Although all heaven was praising God and rejoicing that night, however, on earth only a handful were rejoicing and praising God. However, that handful today has grown to ten thousand times ten thousand. Many believers in Jesus

really understand the spirit of Christmas. We know that Jesus may not have been born on December 25 but today we want to say, “Lord Jesus, we missed welcoming You when You came. However, we want You to know how grateful we are when You came into the world. We want to welcome You. Again and again those ten thousands times ten thousand voices welcome You today this December 25. We want to give You that welcome that You missed. A welcome that was not accorded to You.” We want to remain a group of people who will welcome the Lord when He comes the second time. We want to be the group of people that welcome the Lord and the Holy Spirit whenever He does some thing in our lives. Let us be like the shepherds, lets be like Simeon and Anna. Let us not be like Herod and all those scribes. Let us not be like the people of the world who are not hungry for God. Let us be like these groups that welcomed the Lord Jesus.