



NON-PROFIT

# The Good News Letter

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TAX-EXEMPT

“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” MARK 16:15

August 2022

## FROM US TO YOU

There’s a rainstorm with flashes of thunder and lightening outside as we prepare this message for you. But there’s the warm glow of Christ and His love in our hearts as we begin another month together. We want to thank those of you who prayed for our health problems. The surgery for Anne’s endometrial polyp went well, but the yag cap laser surgery for her left eye didn’t. It is still blurry. And both of us have painful legs and backs. So please keep us in your prayers. We also want to thank our financial supporters. Without you, this work would not be possible. We love and need you so much! God knows who you are. We work together as a team. It’s like Paul’s statement of how God gives us all separate roles in His kingdom. Paul said, *“I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building”* (1 Corinthians 3:6-9 NIV).

However, please know this. We will never lie to you or engage in flattery (1 Thessalonians 2:5) to get the Gospel out, as some have (Romans 16:18)! We will always tell you the truth, even when it is unpopular. As Paul instructed Timothy, a young evangelist, *“Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage — with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry”* (2 Timothy 4:2-5 NIV).

In recent years we have lost a few of our best donors. They sent us emails asking us to take them off our mailing list. It may have been something we said that offended them. True Christianity is not very diplomatic, especially to the proud. That’s why Jesus had such a hard time with the sanctimonious religious leaders of His day. They didn’t want to hear that they were sinners, heading for an eternity in Hell unless they repented of their sins and gave God control over their lives. They saw sin in other people, but not in themselves. *“While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew’s house, many tax collectors and ‘sinners’ came and ate with Him and His disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked His disciples, ‘Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and ‘sinners’?’ On hearing this, Jesus said, ‘It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners’”* (Matthew 9:10-13 NIV).

A doctor can’t help you unless you admit that you’re sick and

willing to take the medicine or have the surgery. Sin is like a cancer. Unless it is removed it will grow bigger and bigger (1 Corinthians 5:6). And God is the only one with the knife (1 Timothy 2:5). Once removed, it will have to be washed clean through the blood of Christ. Now some people are offended by such talk. But a good doctor is not going to worry about offending you. He knows the cancer will kill you unless it is removed. So he will tell you if he knows that you are sick and what it will take to remove the disease.

Cain thought he could buy his way into Heaven by the fruit he grew himself. But it was not acceptable to God (Genesis 4:5). Cain worked harder than Abel, his brother (Ephesians 2:8-9). He worked by the sweat of his brow while Abel sat under a shady tree watching the sheep. However, when a hungry wolf comes to attack the sheep, it’s the good shepherd who spills his blood fighting it off! Abel

brought a blood sacrifice to God, symbolic of the blood of Christ, the only remedy for sin. Abel’s sacrifice was accepted.

We mentioned the good shepherd. But, ultimately, it is not Abel who is the real Good Shepherd. Christ is. Jesus used a metaphor to describe false preachers that prey on the innocent, trusting sheep. He compares them to hired shepherds who only do it for the money. He said, *“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. ‘I am the good shepherd; I know My sheep and My sheep know*



*Me — just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father — and I lay down My life for the sheep”* (John 10:11-15 NIV).

We are just humble servants of Christ. We don’t crave the lime-light. We simply love Jesus. We will not appeal to those with “itching ears” because the price of our salvation was too high! *“For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ...”* (1 Peter 1:18-19 NIV).

Christ is our solid Rock, the foundation of our faith (see Mathew 7:24-27). *“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. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames”* (1 Corinthians 3:11-15 NIV).

In Christ’s Service, *Eric and Anne Kaestner*

# Precious Gems for Jesus

By Anne Kaestner

One of the great controversies that has split up the Body of Christ over the years, has been in regard to the position of the Apostle Peter in the church. Many Christians have believed incorrectly, that St. Peter is the foundation of the Church of Christ. But he is not. Christ is the Rock on which our faith is to be anchored! (See John 3:16, 14:6, and 1 Timothy 2:5-6.) The reason why Peter is said to be the foundation of our faith is due to the scripture in Matthew 16:13-20. Jesus had asked His disciples who people thought He was. They answered with various prophets of the past, such as John the Baptist or Elijah. Jesus then asked them, *“Who do you say that I am?”* (vs. 15 NIV). Then Simon Peter responded, *“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”* (vs. 16 NIV). This delighted Jesus because the Hebrew word for “Christ” means “Messiah.” So Peter was stating that Jesus is, in fact, the Messiah who was prophesied all throughout the Old Testament, by Jewish prophets that date back as far as Job (see Job 19:25-26). Every mention of the “Redeemer” or “Savior” that was made by Hebrew prophets of old, was referring to the promised Messiah, the “Christ” that was promised to them as a final remedy for their sins forever. Peter clearly knew this. He knew that Jesus was the prophesied Christ. So Jesus told him, *“Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in Heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on Earth shall be bound in Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on Earth shall be loosed in Heaven”* (Matthew 16:17-19 KJV).

The New Testament was written in Greek. And the Greek word that had been translated “Peter” in our English language Bibles of today, is “Petros,” which is defined as “a piece of a rock.” In other words, it means “pebble,” the type found on rocky beaches. So Jesus was in effect, saying to Simon Peter, “On this incredible supernatural faith that you have demonstrated to Me, I will build My Church. You are a part of Me, a chip off of the Solid Rock of Christ Jesus!” If you take a look at the Christian Hall of Fame mentioned in Hebrews chapter eleven, it is speaking about the suffering or blessings that the church has received for, or through, Christ. And the entire theme of the chapter is built on the incredible, supernatural faith of its members. Because, faith is not that which is tangible, or that which you can see, feel, touch, smell, or hear with an audible voice. It is supernatural. And the only way that Peter could have possibly known that Jesus Christ is the Son of God is through faith. Due to that faith, God the Father, revealed to Simon Peter, the deity of His Son Jesus! *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”* (Hebrews 11:1 KJV). Consequently, it was that seed of faith that Peter demonstrated, on which Christ built His church. Peter isn’t the foundation of the church. Christ is! But without faith, our church is worthless. Yet with faith in Christ, and true fellowship with God, through His Holy Son Jesus, there are no limits to the power and strength we can achieve, even while in this world. To the rest of the people, we may be seen as fools for Christ, *“But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things — and the things that are not — to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before Him”* (1 Corinthians 1:27-29 NIV).

As little baby rocks, or “pebbles,” we are precious stones to Christ.

The Apostle Peter later explained it to the church this way. He said, *“Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ”* (1 Peter 2:5 KJV). Now if you take a look at the process that is necessary for a regular piece of rock, or coal, to become a diamond, or similar precious stone, you’ll realize that it takes several important ingredients, (1) a very long time, (2) intense pressure, and (3) incredible heat. The Lord has compared mature Christians to pebbles. But a pebble generally isn’t shiny or sharp. It won’t cut your bare feet when you walk on it. For as many years of exposure to the elements have rounded off the pebbles of the beach, sin and false doctrine have also rounded off the defenses of many of God’s human pebbles these days. God’s children are being walked on, and trodden under foot by the devil, the way beach pebbles are ground under the foot of vacation goers! That’s because today’s crop of believers are looking too much to the church to give them answers, and not enough to Christ! That wouldn’t be so bad if most churches were looking toward God for direction, but the vast body of believers these days, have been distracted from Christ by the cares and troubles and problems of the world (Matthew 13:22). Consequently, the church has developed the ludicrous habit of opposing powerful spiritual attacks through the use of politics and human education instead of using the weapons of “spiritual warfare” that Christ has given to us (Ephesians 6:10-17).

As you know, bare-footed beach goers always avoid stepping on sharp stones. So if we, the Church of God, had the “Sword of the Spirit” protruding from us, we wouldn’t be getting walked on so much! The “Sword of the Spirit” is the Word of God (see Ephesians 6:17). And the Word of God is Jesus Christ (John 1:1-14). The religious leaders of His day constantly tried to trap Him, but they were astonished at His answers (Matthew 22:17-33). He was so full of the Holy Spirit. For

Jesus temporarily left His own power and glory behind in Heaven when He entered this world. That’s why when the hypocrites said His power was from the devil, Jesus replied, *“...every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven”* (Matthew 12:31 NIV). It was through the Holy Spirit that Jesus did His miracles. And Jesus said that He was giving the anointing power of the Holy Spirit to those who love Him (John 14:16, 26, 15:26, 16:7). Of course, the stronger your love is for Christ, the more powerful the Holy Spirit will be in you.

We are to have hearts that reflect the Son of God, like gemstones reflect the Sun, and sparkle with purity and brilliance. Take a look at an Old Testament scripture in which God is complaining about the terrible sins of His people. He had gone out of His way to provide a method of redemption for those who would accept Him. In those days that only consisted of the Hebrews, as every other race of people were idol worshippers. God wanted to make a comparison between the pure state in which they had been after coming to Him in repentance and being washed clean in the blood of Christ (Isaiah 1:18 and 1 Peter 1:18-19), and the condition sin returned them to after their rebellion from God. The Lord stated, *“Her Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk, they were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing was of sapphire: [then the Lord begins to compare that to the state His people were in after falling into sin] their visage is blacker than a coal; they are not known in the streets; their skin cleaveth to their bones; it is withered, it is become like a stick”* (Lamentations 4:7-8 KJV). Remember that Jesus told Peter,



“...Upon this rock, I will build My church...” (Matthew 16:18 KJV). Jesus wasn’t saying that He was going to physically stretch Peter out on the ground, pour cement on him, and start constructing a building. He was speaking spiritually. That’s why the religious leaders of His day didn’t understand Him when, “*Jesus answered them, ‘Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.’ The Jews replied, ‘It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and You are going to raise it in three days?’ But the temple He had spoken of was His body*” (John 2:19-21 NIV). They heard the word “temple” and saw a building. But the Holy temple Christ was referring to was not made by humans, but by God. When Christ returns to Earth to set up His kingdom here, there will be a whole “city” of beautiful temples coming down out of Heaven to be with their Bridegroom. Those temples will be made of “precious stones” anointed by God.

Here’s where the church has become confused so much over the years. In Revelation 21:9-11 (NIV) an angel told John, “*Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb*” and then he proceeded to show him what John described as a city named “New Jerusalem” coming down out of the clouds. To our human minds a “city” is a bustling, busy piece of land, where many people live and work. It contains many buildings that produce goods or services to sell to others. However, while talking with the angel, John was not in his human body, but “in the spirit” (Revelation 1:10 & 21:10). He would never have been able to enter into Heaven and witness all the futuristic events that will take place if he had been in his natural human body (1 Corinthians 15:50). Because his natural body was contaminated with sin, which is why he had to be reborn in Christ to enter into Heaven (John 1:12-13, 3:3), as do we all. So, although his body was still connected to his silver umbilical cord (Ecclesiastes 12:6), his spirit had temporarily left his body, and he had been transported through supernatural means, under the direction of God, into the spirit realm.

Therefore, that which John gave an account of was not carnal, but spiritual! What was this “city” that John witnessed? Take a look at the next verse down, where John, referring to the angel, states, “*And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of Heaven from God, Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal*” (Revelation 21:10-11 KJV). Now go back to 1 Peter 2:5. Remember those precious stones Peter was talking about? He was writing to fellow believers in Christ who were suffering terrible persecution at the time. Yet due to the intense fire of the persecution they were going through, their faith had become much stronger. So they were no longer weak little pebbles on a beach that were getting stepped on. They had been developed spiritually, through bitter trials and tests of faith, into “precious stones.” They had been under intense pressure, for that is what turns dirty coal into a diamond of faith, capable of cutting glass! They had been forced to make heart-wrenching decisions to live for Christ, even when it meant they would be crucified or fed to lions. They had also been forced to put Christ totally first in their lives, despite the fact that their decision could doom to death their children and spouse as well. It went way beyond one individual being willing to die for Christ. It meant he or she would also see their loved ones tortured and put to death too!

There was no fence sitting in those days! Jesus said, “*Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn ‘a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law — a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household. Anyone who loves his father or mother more than Me is*

*not worthy of Me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it*” (Matthew 10:34-39 NIV). You couldn’t be lukewarm (Revelation 3:16). You had to either love Christ enough to give it all up for Him, or remain unsaved. As a result, these early Christians became “*A chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people...*” (1 Peter 2:9 KJV). They had been called by God “*...out of darkness into His marvelous light*” (vs. 9). Please remember that intense, concentrated light causes a lot of heat! So we now know what John meant when he described the “city” New Jerusalem “*...descending out of Heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal*” (Revelation 21:10-11 KJV). Please note that clarity, or that which is clear, is usually pure as well! This “city” that John was describing wasn’t built by flesh and blood humans, but by God. It was built of stones, stones most precious, living stones! St. John was describing the “Bride of Christ,” the spiritual Church of the living God! In fact, there were so many “precious stones” that had been built by God, coming down out of Heaven, that John referred to them as a city.

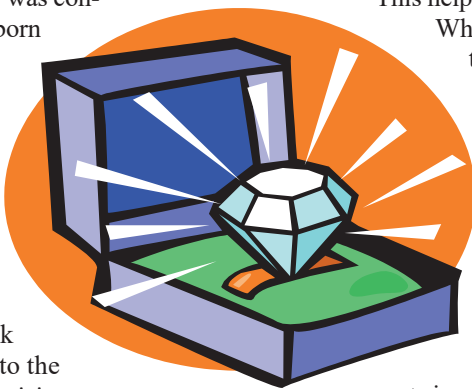
Keep in mind that the Bible tells us, “*There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. God is in the midst of her, she shall be moved; God shall help her, and that right early*” (Psalm 46:4-5 KJV).

This helps us understand the real meaning of the scripture.

When compared to Revelation 22:1, we discover that the river mentioned in Psalms 46:4 is referring to God’s capital city, New Jerusalem. And in the same verse it states that this is, “*...the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.*” Please notice the word “tabernacles” here. Although it starts out talking about a city, it then refers to this city as the holy place of the “tabernacles” of the most High. It does not say that this city is THE “tabernacle of the Most High.” But it refers to it as the “dwelling place,” or home, of “the tabernacles,” plural,

not singular. In other words, there are many tabernacles, or temples, of God in this holy city, New Jerusalem. “*Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body*” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20 NIV). When you have the Holy Spirit living inside of you, your body becomes His home, or tabernacle! So, the scripture in Psalms 46:4 is actually referring to God’s people who are living in this city, New Jerusalem. However, there are so many of these precious stones, or saints of God, that the Lord also views them as a city. What is a city mostly made up of? Buildings, usually made of some type of stone. Inside those buildings people live and work. Take a look at Hebrews 12:22-23 (NIV), which reads, “*But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in Heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect...*”

We, God’s people, are New Jerusalem! Also, please take a look at Isaiah 54:1 (NIV), “*‘Sing, O barren woman, you who never bore a child; burst into song, shout for joy, you who were never in labor; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband,’ says the LORD.*” The words are being addressed to a “woman,” not a building or a city. In verse five we find out who this woman’s husband is. He is also her “Maker.” “*For your Maker is your husband — the LORD Almighty*” (Continued On Page 4)



is His name — the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; He is called the God of all the Earth” (Isaiah 54:5 NIV). Since this scripture refers to the “Redeemer” we know that it refers to Christ, the second person of the Holy Trinity. For those of you who didn’t know that Christ Jesus existed long before He became flesh and entered into this world, read John 1:1-18. Not only did Christ die for you, He also created you as well! And He had a part in the creation of planet Earth noted in Proverbs 8:22-36. It wasn’t Solomon who was there beside God the Father at the time of Creation. It was His only begotten Son, Christ! Christ is the “wisdom” the scripture is referring to in Proverbs chapter eight. It is not speaking abstractly or figuratively in this passage!

I know that this is all very spiritual, and you will need the Baptism in God’s Holy Spirit to really understand it properly (Acts 19:1-6, 1 Corinthians 2:11-12). But keep in mind that Christ is the second Adam (1 Corinthians 15:21-47). In other words, God’s only begotten Son (John 3:16) became the ransom for our sins, to buy us back from the eternal death we had been sold into through our original father, Adam. Now, as Christians, we are part of the body of Christ, or His bride. Just as Eve was Adam’s bride, we are Christ’s bride. And just as God removed part of Adam (a rib) in order to form his wife Eve, we Christians are little pebbles that have been chipped away from the solid Rock of Christ Jesus! Going back to Isaiah 54, it’s easy to see that this chapter is speaking of a “woman” who is the creation and wife of Christ, the Redeemer. Now, continue in the same chapter, which reads, “O afflicted one, storm-tossed, and not comforted. Behold, I will set your stones in antimony, and your foundations I will lay in sapphires; moreover, I will make your battlements in rubies, and your gates of crystal, and your entire wall of precious stones” (Isaiah 54:11-12 NAS). In Christ, we are a “wall,” a “fortress” from the world. In ancient times castles were well-protected palaces, usually with moats. They were often built as a safe haven from foreign invaders. They were generally made up of large stones or rocks for strength. And they were built on a firm foundation!

Christ is our foundation, our Cornerstone (Ephesians 2:19-22)! He is our imperial strength against any attack Satan may launch against us! Also notice that the stones that form the walls of a castle are all cemented together in unity. One little rock could be easily stepped over by an enemy. But we, as united stones built on the solid Rock of Christ Jesus, have a strength in Him that we simply don’t have any other way. On our own, Satan can destroy us. But united in Christ, we are a fortress of strength. So strong in fact, that the gates of Hell shall not overpower us! For Christ has given to us the keys of the kingdom of Heaven; and whatever we “...bind on Earth will be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on Earth will be loosed in Heaven” (Matthew 16:19 NIV). People, keys to the family home are not given to strangers. But they are given to mature children who live there. While we are here on Earth, we are strangers, or aliens (1 Peter 2:11) in this world system run by Satan. Our real home is in Heaven. We are the Bride of Christ, and the children of the living God. Through the redemption that Christ accomplished for us on Calvary, we are no longer separated from God, our Creator. We are now His family! Christ, our Bridegroom, has given to us, His Bride, the keys of His Heavenly kingdom! “And the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18 KJV).

When I was a little girl I use to like fairy stories, like Cinderella.

She was a pretty young woman who was mistreated by her step-mother and half sisters and forced to work among the ashes. She was saved from the ashes by a loving, caring prince who married her and took her to his own royal palace to live “happily ever after.” Christ is our real prince who will come back for His holy bride. For the Bible says, “As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy’” (1 Peter 1:14-16 NIV). So how do you get holy? You get to know Christ and allow His Spirit to live in you. As the apostle Paul boldly stated, “I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:10-14 NIV).

Christian singer, Larnelle Harris, used to sing a song that beautifully gets the message across. The song is “[I Want to Know Christ](#).” Here are the words - “I know that I know that my life is redeemed. I know I have found what some only have dreamed. I hold in my heart the pearl of great price. Dear God, hear



my cry, I want to know Christ. I want to know Christ. I keep Him before me. I lift up my eyes I drink in His glory. I press toward the goal. His goodness unfolds. March on, oh, my soul I want to know, I want to know Christ. I know that my path is the way of the cross. So I count what I gain and forget what I’ve lost. In pain there is joy, in death there is life. Dear God, hear my cry, I want to know Christ. I want to know Christ. I keep Him before me. I lift up my eyes. I drink in His glory. I press toward the

goal. His goodness unfolds. March on, oh, my soul, I want to know, Yes, I want to know Christ. And the things that entangle me, I lay them down. All the treasures and trophies of life. Let them be lost. Only let me be found in Christ. For I want to know, Yes, I want to know, I want to know Christ. I keep Him before me. I lift up my eyes. I drink in His glory. I press toward the goal. His goodness unfolds. March on, oh, my soul. I want to know, Yes, I want to know, Oh, I want to know Christ!”

There are still many people who want to hang on to this current world and don’t want to give it up. “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Peter 3:10 KJV). This evil world that Satan has been running will implode! However, “...in keeping with His promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness” (2 Peter 3:13 NIV). “And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Now the dwelling of God is with men, and He will live with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’ He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!...’” (Revelation 21:3-5 NIV). And God said, “He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be My son” (Revelation 21:7 NIV).