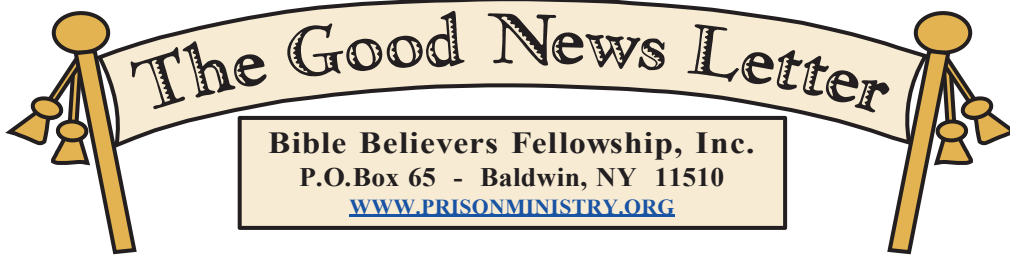




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TAX-EXEMPT

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

June 2025

## FROM US TO YOU

What a difference a year can make, especially when we have a new President in the White House! Already we have new trade deals with other countries around the world. And President Trump has said that the high drug prices for drugs Americans have been paying are expected to go way down. Besides all that, Israeli-American hostage, Edan Alexander, the last of the American living hostages taken by Hamas terrorists, has been released. Praise God! Things are getting better for this country, and there is optimism for the future. Many Christian and Jewish prayers have been answered. Of course, there is a lot more that needs to be done. However, we are now off to a good start. So keep the prayers flowing!

There is still much too much antisemitism in our colleges. Ivy League universities, like Harvard, were once considered most prestigious institutions. That has changed now, and high school graduates are starting to consider trade schools instead of college. There are many lucrative careers available for highly skilled laborers. Recently it was reported that, due to all the antisemitism, United States government grants to Harvard are a thing of the past. There should be no place in our society for antisemitism! God still loves the Jews (Deut. 7:7-9), and we Christians have so much of our faith that came to us from the Hebrews! Our Bible comes from the Hebrews. The earliest prophets, such as Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah were all Jewish. So were Daniel, Amos, Micah, Zechariah, and Malachi. Most important of all, our Savior, Jesus Christ, was Jewish. Jewish people have no greater friends than real Born Again Christians (John 3:3). Judaism is the very foundation of the Christian faith.

Gentiles are not Jewish, but it was Jews, like the Rabbi Paul of Tarsus, who brought Christianity to the Gentiles. Despite this, God still loves the Jews, and has given them back their own land in Israel. God will not let anyone take it back from them. It was a promise God gave to Abraham (Genesis 12:2, 22:17-18) long ago. So Gentile Christians should pray for Israel. They were the original branch. And Born Again Christians should have respect for the Jews and pray for them (1 Peter 3:12). *"If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, 'Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in.' Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you either"* (Romans 11:17-21 NIV).

Be not confused about who Jesus is. He is God the Son, the second person of the Holy Trinity of God. *"For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one"* (1 John 5:7 KJV). The Word of God is Jesus Christ (John 1:1-14). A few years ago, Newsmax Magazine had a cover with a man's face, and the words stated, "The Face of Jesus."



It falsely claims that as the result of a new scientific evidence, the face of Jesus has been shown on the Shroud of Turin. First of all, there is no definite proof that the Shroud of Turin was the burial wrap of Jesus Christ. There is no record of the shroud during the first centuries of the Christian era, it is first mentioned in the 14th century, having been found in the Diocese of Troyes. The Catholic Church has been keeping the story alive. Basically, strips of linen were placed on Jesus' body somewhat like a mummy. If the Shroud of Turin was saturated with myrrh and aloes, it would by now be fairly stiff and would tend to look quite different than it now does.

Moreover, the Bible prophesied, through Isaiah, that even before He was crucified, the face of Jesus was so beaten from the abuse He took when on trial that, *"...as there were many who were appalled at him—His appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and His form marred beyond human likeness"* (Isaiah 52:14 NIV). They even pulled out his beard and spit in His face. *"I offered My back to those who beat Me, My cheeks to those who pulled out My beard; I did not hide My face from mocking and spitting"* (Isaiah 50:6 NIV). The New Testament tells us that Jesus was flogged, humiliated, and crucified. But it leaves out a lot of detail. No human could have suffered so much by choice. However, Jesus had a choice. His disciples tried to save Him from being arrested. *"Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.) Jesus commanded Peter, 'Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given Me?' Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound Him"* (John 18:10-12 NIV). The drink Jesus was referring to was that *"...God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but*

*have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him"* (John 3:16-17 NIV). Jesus said to His disciples, *"Do you think I cannot call on My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?"* (Matthew 26:53-54 NIV).

What Jesus did He did for you and for me. He didn't have to do it. He could have stayed in Heaven and let the rest of us spend all eternity in the Lake of Fire, which is in Hell. But God the Father loved us too much to let that happen. God the Son, Jesus Christ, had a choice. He took our punishment for us. He was the only one valuable enough to pay the price for our sin. But our only salvation comes when we repent of our sins directly to God, humble ourselves and ask for His forgiveness (Matthew 4:17). *"But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death"* (Revelation 21:8 NIV).

In the Lord's service, *Eric and Anne Kaestner*

# BEING SAVED AND BORN AGAIN

By Anne Kaestner

It was late at night. The streets were empty. No one was around, except a man named Nicodemus, who was a local Pharisee, and Jesus of Nazareth. Nicodemus had secretly gone to talk to Jesus alone. Most of the Pharisees hated Jesus. They were jealous of His miracles, and they resented His popularity with the people (see Mark 6:56). However, Nicodemus had felt a strange compulsion to take the risk. He was intrigued by what Jesus had been telling the people. Nicodemus had become a Pharisee because he wanted to learn more about God. But, so far, what he had learned through his religion, wasn't enough. Something was missing. And deep inside he felt that this strange carpenter (Matthew 13:55), Jesus, had the answer. Nicodemus began by asking questions of Jesus. The questions were from deep in his heart. He had not spoken of such things to anyone before. He was a Pharisee. Nicodemus was a member of the Jewish ruling council, a religious leader. He was supposed to have all the answers so he could teach the Jews their religion. But there was so much he still didn't know. Despite the circumstances, it was easy talking to Jesus. Jesus seemed to sense his confusion before Nicodemus even formed his question.

Nicodemus wanted to know how he could be right with God. How could he be sure that he would go to Heaven? "...*Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with Him*" (John 3:1-2 NIV). Jesus' answer seemed strange to him. "...*Jesus declared, 'I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.' 'How can a man be born when he is old?' Nicodemus asked. 'Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!'*" (John 3:3-4 NIV). What Jesus was talking about was spiritual and Nicodemus, though a religious leader, could only think in terms of the physical world, flesh and blood humans. "*Jesus answered, 'I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at My saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit'*" (John 3:5-8 NIV).

"*How can this be?*" Nicodemus asked. "*You are Israel's teacher,' said Jesus, 'and do you not understand these things? I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life'*" (John 3:9-15 NIV). Nicodemus was still confused. He had never heard anyone talk this way. It certainly didn't sound like anything he had heard in the synagogue. This was more than just religion. He was a Pharisee. He had been trained in Jewish law. He knew about the Ten Commandments. But this was different. It didn't feel like it was of this world (John 18:36).

However, "the miracles of Jesus were in this world, and Jesus spoke as one with knowledge of the Jewish law and He had spiritual authority," Nicodemus, thought to himself. So this must make some kind of sense. Eventually, after Jesus was crucified, what Jesus said

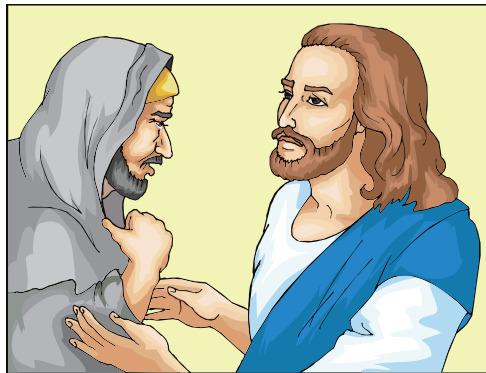
about Moses and the snake began to make sense to him. Jesus had been lifted up on the cross. But this was all new to Nicodemus. And he pondered the thought. However, this changed his life. And after Jesus died on the cross, Nicodemus and another Pharisee, "...*Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jews. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. ...Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid*" (John 19:38-41 NIV).

Nicodemus must have been Born Again, for he and Joseph of Arimathea to take such a risk as to show such love for Jesus and do this. It was their own fellow associates, the Pharisees, that had conspired together to have Jesus crucified (see John 7:1). And when you show affection for someone who is hated, the ones who do the hating will hate you as well. It happened that way with Presidents Nixon and Trump for example. In the case of President Nixon, even his secretary was mocked. I remember a disc jockey on the radio saying at that time, "If Miss Lincoln had been secretary to Moses, we would have only had nine commandments" (Exodus 20:1-17). However,

the love of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, was strong enough that they felt it was worth taking a chance. Nothing had changed physically. They were born again **spiritually**. Only their values had changed. The Romans were a terrifying power. Their method of execution was beyond any method of agony anyone had ever conceived of before. And, although the Jewish religious leaders had compelled the Romans to execute Jesus, (by telling Caesar that Jesus claimed to be king of the Jews) they just might turn against Nicodemus and Joseph as well.

Becoming Born Again changes your spiritual status entirely. Your birth parents are no longer related to you spiritually, unless they are also Born Again. A Jewish woman I met years ago said to me, "We're all God's children." No. We're not! Only through Jesus can we become God's children. He "...*was in the world, and though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognize Him. He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him. Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God*" (John 1:10-13 NIV). There are many erroneous notions about God. Demons, who are fallen angels (Revelation 12:9), deceive people into thinking they are "gods" and that explains why there are so many false religions. They also influence people to make idols out of entertainers. Celebrities are called "stars" because, in the Bible, it's another name for angels (such as Job 38:7). However, "...*there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all men...*" (1 Timothy 2:5-6 NIV).

The devil and his fallen angels (demons) also use seemingly good things to deceive people (2 Corinthians 11:13-14). False doctrines in the church is one of them (Matthew 7:15). People think that if it is taught in a church, the teaching must be from the Bible (Acts 20:26-32). The problem is that most of the public does not read the Bible personally. They just listen to what their religion teaches them. However, referring to false prophets, Jesus said, "*Leave them; they*





are blind guides. If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit" (Matthew 15:14 NIV). Many people think that you get to Heaven by doing good works. Catholics are taught this with the false doctrine of Purgatory, which says it is a place that you go to after death to **work** your way into Heaven. The word Purgatory isn't even in the Bible! By contrast, in his letter to the church he started in Ephesus, Paul reminded them, "...it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this **not** from yourselves, it is the gift of God—**not** by works, so that no one can boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9 NIV). Even the tiniest bit of sin will send you to Hell after you die and "...all have sinned and **fall short** of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23 NIV). You cannot pay for your own sin! Sin is so evil to God that the price is too high for any of us to pay. When you sin, you are a slave to the devil (John 8:34). Everything a slave owns belongs to his master, even his talents and his children. If you could pay for your own sin, Jesus Christ wouldn't have had to leave Heaven and come into this evil world to die such an agonizing, humiliating death for you and me (John 3:16). Only God the Son had the price because only His precious blood was valuable enough (1 Peter 1:18-19). The rest of us were born through the seed of Adam. Only Christ could wash us clean of sin in His own blood. He was the second, or last Adam (see 1 Corinthians 15:22-45). He did what Adam was **supposed** to do, but Adam corrupted it instead (Genesis 3:1-24).

So, does that mean that we are not supposed to do good works for God? Of course not! We are to be so obedient to Christ that we do the works that God **created us** to do, which were planned by Him before we were even born. "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10 NIV). People make so many mistakes when **they** decide for themselves what they will and will not do for God. I remember hearing about a soup kitchen one ministry started for the homeless. They had many people go into the building to have their free bowl of soup. But they wouldn't hang around long enough to hear the Christian message. As soon as they finished their soup they would just leave the building. What a waste of time and funding!

To illustrate the point I am making, I'll give you a personal example of what I am talking about. Many years ago, about a year or two after our marriage, my husband, Eric, had a birthday coming up. I wanted to please him with a special day. So, along with a gift, I prepared his favorite food. It was a hot summer day and we had no air conditioning. But I closed the windows in order to drown out street noise. I darkened the room to create a romantic atmosphere, and put some love songs on the stereo. It was the kind of atmosphere that I thought he would like. But it didn't work out that way! As soon as Eric came home he complained, "Why is it so hot in here? Why is it so dark?" And he went around the apartment opening windows and turning lights on. "I don't want to listen to music," he said, "I want to watch television." Then, seemingly oblivious to the linen tablecloth, fancy stemware, and my fine china, he took his shirt off and sat down bare chested at my carefully set table. So much for my romantic mood! However, it taught me a valuable lesson. When we want to please someone else, we need to find out what will please them, not necessarily what **we** would like! That's especially true with trying to please God.

The question has been in the mind of people for thousands of years. "How can I please God?" The unredeemed ask, "What can God do for me?" But the spiritually mature in Christ ask, "Lord, what is Your will for my life?" So it's not about what we can do for God, but what God can do **through us**. Even most Christians make a mistake when they do the choosing of how they can please the Lord.

Cain thought that growing his vegetables and fruit would please Him. But it was not what the Lord wanted (Genesis 4:3-12). God wants good **spiritual fruit** from us, not carnal! And Jesus said that no one will enter the kingdom of God unless the Lord has been able to grow good spiritual fruit in their heart. Contrary to popular assumption, Christ was not referring to good works (Ephesians 2:8-10) or regular church attendance (Acts 7:49-51).

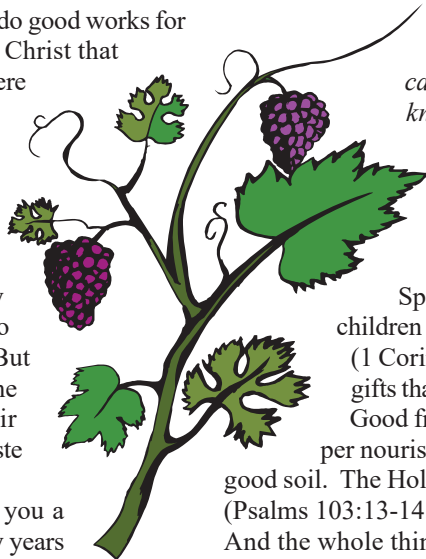
Jesus said, "I am the true vine, and My Father is the gardener. He **cuts off every branch in Me** that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit He prunes so that it will be even more fruitful" (John 15:1-2 NIV). The Lord was **not** referring to the unsaved. He was talking to His own disciples when He said it! He told them, "You are already clean because of the Word I have spoken to you. **Remain in Me**, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must **remain** in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you **remain in Me**" (John 15:3-4 NIV). When His disciples accepted Christ as their Savior and Lord, their sins were automatically forgiven, and they were spiritually washed clean. Jesus was with them most of the time. Therefore, He was able to teach them what God expected from them and move them in the right direction. However, there came a time when the Lord told them that He would not remain with them much longer. That He would be returning to His Father. Yet, when He saw how sad this made them, He said, "...I will ask the Father,

and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you... Before long, the world will not see Me anymore, but you will see Me. Because I live, you also will live" (John 14:16-19 NIV).

Jesus was referring to the infilling of the Holy Spirit in their hearts and lives. God has gifts for His children through the indwelling Presence of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:4-11). I want to also tell you about the gifts that God expects from us. They are called good fruit! Good fruit comes from healthy branches that receive proper nourishment from the Vine. But they must be grown in good soil. The Holy Spirit is the Sower. The soil is the human heart (Psalms 103:13-14, 2 Corinthians 4:7). The Vine represents Christ. And the whole thing begins with the seed of the Word of God (see 1 Thessalonians 2:13). The earth in which the Vine grows has to be rich with the soil of faith. Jesus said, "...A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. He who has ears, let him hear" (Matthew 13:3-9 NIV). The seed that fell along the path is the seed that is rejected right away and doesn't take root in the human heart. The seed that falls in rocky soil represents the person who is enthusiastic when they first hear the Word. But as soon as problems come into their lives, they reject Christ and return back to their previous life of sin. The seed does not take root because the rocks in their heart prevent the seed from developing good roots.

The person who receives the seed that falls among thorns is the person who is discouraged from developing good roots in their relationship with Christ. The thorns are the lies of the false prophets who give them bad doctrine (Matthew 7:15-23). Then, because their faith in Christ is not forming good roots, they become distracted by all "...the worries of this life and

(Continued on Page 4)



*the deceitfulness of wealth [which] choke it, making it unfruitful”* (Matthew 13:22 NIV). However, “...*the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown*” (Matthew 13:23 NIV). He is the one who grows delicious spiritual fruit for Christ. And he goes on to influence the growth of new branches that grow up and enable the plants to grow even more good fruit.

This reminds me of another personal experience I had. When Eric and I moved into our house in January 1999, I was thrilled to have a garden of my own! In the small apartment we had lived in, I had longed to have such a place to feel closer to God through nature. Therefore, I decided to plant a vegetable garden. The vegetables included some string bean plants. One problem I had were the snails and slugs that liked to eat the plants. Toward harvest time I went out to the garden one day to pick some string beans for dinner. Never did I ever think that I could become emotional about a string bean plant! But God can use anything to speak to us! There were several string bean plants. I looked at about four of them. They were beautiful, with pretty purple flowers and lots of leaves. But they had little or no string beans.

Then I noticed a skinny, pathetic looking plant next to the others. There were few leaves on it. So many of them had probably been eaten by pestilence. It looked like it had suffered a lot. But as I looked upon that sad, scrawny plant tears filled my eyes. It had more string beans growing on it than all of the healthy plants put together! God was using this metaphor to remind me of the suffering Christians have endured throughout the centuries in order to bring forth the good fruit of the Gospel of Christ. They suffered a lot for Christ, but their fruit was very good! There were those who were burned alive at the stake. Others were crucified, or fed to hungry lions. However, they left a precious legacy for us to follow! Yes, there is suffering as we produce good fruit for God’s kingdom (Matthew 10:28). However, Jesus suffered so much for us! And the blessings in Heaven make it all worthwhile (John 14:2, Revelation 21:1-8). As Jesus said, “...*unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves Me must follow Me; and where I am, My servant also will be...*” (John 12:24-26 NIV).

However, there is one very important point I want to make. I have known several seemingly strong Christians through the years who ended up disappointing me before they died. I don’t know what made them backslide so badly but obviously the devil had something to do with it. They each had one thing in common. Each of them had a turn for the worst with their health. It seemed to affect their personalities. Even so, they each had enough of a background in the Gospel that they should have known better. Because being Born Again changes your heart and attitude when you first come to Christ, and points you in the right direction. But you are not “saved” until you physically die! Jesus said, “*If anyone does not remain in Me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to My Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be My disciples*” (John 15:6-8 NIV). It doesn’t matter how strong a

Christian you were most of your life. At the time of your death you simply have to be on the “straight and narrow,” the right road to Heaven (see Matthew 7:13-14). Your heart must be right with God, through love and obedience toward His Son.

When God used Moses to deliver the Jews out of Egyptian slavery, He took all of them. But they didn’t get to the promised land right away. They had to be tested first. It took 40 years for the Jews to reach their final destination. Yes, they were **all** released from Egyptian slavery. However, the only Jews from that generation that reached the promised land were Joshua and Caleb (Numbers 14:30-31). The children of the rest of them made it there, but the rest of the original slaves didn’t pass the test. They didn’t have enough faith in God, who worked miracles to deliver them. And they continually griped and complained to Moses every time there was a problem. The people wailed and complained at everything. God was very angry at them. Not only did they not give God the glory and love, He deserved, but they didn’t even respect Him for the things He gave them. When they were hungry they complained to Moses to give them food. So Moses asked God for food for the people, and He gave them bread. However, after a while they tired of the bread and started complaining again. They even lamented the fact that they left Egypt, and kept on complaining all over again. They didn’t consider the miracles God had used to bring them out of slavery. With all that God did for them, and the miracles He had performed since they left Egypt, they were never satisfied.

*“Now the people complained about their hardships in the hearing*



*of the LORD, and when He heard them His anger was aroused. Then fire from the LORD burned among them and consumed some of the outskirts of the camp. When the people cried out to Moses, he prayed to the LORD and the fire died down. So that place was called Tabernacle, because fire from the LORD had burned among them. The rabble with them began to crave other food, and again the Israelites started wailing and said, ‘If only we had meat to eat! We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost—also the cucumbers, melons,*

*leeks, onions and garlic. But now we have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna!’ The manna was like coriander seed and looked like resin. The people went around gathering it, and then ground it in a handmill or crushed it in a mortar. They cooked it in a pot or made it into cakes. And it tasted like something made with olive oil. When the dew settled on the camp at night, the manna also came down. Moses heard the people of every family wailing, each at the entrance to his tent. The LORD became exceedingly angry, and Moses was troubled. He asked the LORD, ‘Why have You brought this trouble on Your servant? What have I done to displease You that You put the burden of all these people on me? Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? Why do You tell me to carry them in my arms, as a nurse carries an infant, to the land You promised on oath to their forefathers? Where can I get meat for all these people? They keep wailing to me, ‘Give us meat to eat!’”* (Numbers 11:1-13 NIV).

This is a metaphor for the Born Again experience. It is **not** God’s job to serve you. It is your job to serve Him! So develop such a good relationship with the Lord that He is able to use you. Heaven is your destination, your Promised Land. Please the Lord with all that you do. So trust God and love Him with all your heart so that He will eventually say to you: “*Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!*” (Matthew 25:21 NIV). Only then will you be saved!