



Volume VI

By

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Chapter Forty-Nine

‘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.’ Acts 1:8

Jesus spoke those words to His followers just prior to being ‘taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.’ To understand the importance of what Jesus said, we need to go back about six weeks before His Ascension.

Jesus and the Holy Spirit

On the night before Jesus died on the Cross, He told His apostles that He was going to leave them but would send the Holy Spirit to them as ‘another Helper’ – ‘the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.’ (John 14:15-17)

Jesus told the apostles that the Holy Spirit would –

- ‘teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.’ (John 14:26)
- ‘But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.’ John 15:26-27
- ‘He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and

you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.’ John 16:8-11

- ‘when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.’ John 16:13-15

After Jesus rose from the dead He met with His disciples and commissioned them for their ministry –

So Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.’ And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’ John 20:21-22

As Jesus prepared to return to His Throne in Heaven, He commanded His followers not to depart Jerusalem but ‘wait for the Promise of the Father.’ He said that John baptized with water, but He would baptize them with the Holy Spirit ‘not many days from now.’ That led the apostles to ask Jesus if He would ‘at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?’ Jesus replied – ‘It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. 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.’ (Acts 1)

The Apostles and the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit did 'come upon' the disciples about a week after the Lord's Ascension –

When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. Acts 2:1-4

The Apostle Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, preached a powerful message on the streets of Jerusalem about Jesus Christ – beginning with quotes from the prophet Joel –

And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy.

Acts 2:17-18

Peter began by saying, ‘But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel.’ What the Jews in Jerusalem were witnessing on that Pentecost was the beginning of what Joel had prophesied centuries earlier. Peter went on to say that the Jews had killed the Messiah, but that God had raise Jesus from the dead. Their actions would have repercussions, thus the need for immediate repentance that would lead to their receiving the ‘gift of the Holy Spirit’ –

Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.’ Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’ Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call. Acts 2:36-39

The 'Acts' of the Holy Spirit

Many people call the Book of Acts the 'Acts of the Apostles.' I understand why they think that, but I prefer to think of Acts as the 'Acts of the Holy Spirit.' You will find the Holy Spirit mentioned more times in the Book of Acts than any other Writing in Scripture (about 70 times). You'll find references to the actions of the Spirit in these chapters (sometimes multiple times in chapters) –

- Acts 1
- Acts 2
- Acts 4
- Acts 5
- Acts 6
- Acts 7
- Acts 8
- Acts 9
- Acts 10

- Acts 11
- Acts 13
- Acts 15
- Acts 16
- Acts 18
- Acts 19
- Acts 20
- Acts 21
- Acts 28

The Spirit of God did exactly what Jesus said He would. The Spirit taught the apostles ‘all things’ and brought to their remembrance what Jesus had said to them. The Spirit consistently ‘testified about Jesus.’ The Holy Spirit convicted the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. The Spirit guided the apostles ‘into all truth.’ The Holy Spirit did not speak on His own authority, ‘but whatever He hears He will speak.’ The Spirit told the apostles ‘things to come.’ The Spirit ‘glorified Christ.’ The Holy Spirit took of what belonged to Christ and ‘declared it’ to the apostles.

The Holy Spirit's 'Inspiration'

The Holy Spirit guided and directed the apostles in their ministries. That's quite evident in the Book of Acts. The Holy Spirit also 'inspired' (moved) the apostles as they taught, prophesied, and wrote –

'... knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 1:20-21

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17

This means that the Spirit of God directed the writing of the apostolic letters, Gospel accounts, and Book of Acts. That's important for us to remember and consider. God guided the minds of the apostles to record spiritual truths for all who will read and believe.

Chapter Fifty

The Holy Spirit often inspired the apostles to speak of or write about Jesus Christ as ‘King’ and His ‘Kingdom.’ The Spirit also inspired the apostles to write that Christ’s disciples were ‘joint heirs’ with Christ and would ‘reign’ with Him as ‘kings and priests.’

However .. look around you. What do you see in your community? Your region? Your country? The world? Does it look like Christians are ruling and reigning with Christ as kings and priests? No, it doesn’t appear that way at all. In fact, Christians are finding themselves on the receiving end of hatred and persecution across the world – just as Jesus said would happen. So, how can the Spirit say we are ‘joint heirs’ and will reign as kings and priests when the world wants to destroy us?

The Call to Suffer

Christians are not above their Master. Jesus came from Heaven to earth to ‘suffer’ and so will we –

A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household! Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. Matthew 10:24 – 26

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Romans 8:16-18

It's important that Christians understand this principle. We will suffer with Christ and we will be glorified with Christ. When Jesus began His earthly ministry of 'suffering,' He met face-to-face with the devil showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and said – 'All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me' (Matthew 4:8-9). Jesus did not tell the devil that the kingdoms of the world were not his to give. Instead, Jesus replied – 'Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve' (Matthew 4:10).

The fact is that the devil is the 'god of this age' who has blinded the minds of those who are perishing (2 Corinthians 4:3-4). The God of Heaven gave this world to the devil for a short time, with certain limitations in what he can do (similar to what we read in the Book of Job). The Apostle Paul also referred to this as the 'present evil age' (Galatians 1:4). Jesus suffered and died to give Himself for our sins 'that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.'

Paul left Titus on Crete to ‘set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city’ (Titus 1:5). What did Paul want Titus to tell the Christians on Crete?

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.

Titus 2:11-13

We live during a time of great spiritual suffering. It’s been that way for thousands of years. The people of God have been suffering since the devil deceived Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3). Jesus was as ‘Man of Sorrows’ who was ‘despised and rejected by men.’ He was ‘acquainted with grief’ (Isaiah 53:3). Christians for the last two thousand years are also people of sorrows, despised and rejected by men. We are also acquainted with grief. We are hated and

persecuted because the world hated and persecuted our Lord (John 15:18-20; 17:14). We should not expect to be treated differently than our Master.

So, how should we think about these sufferings?

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what

we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.

Romans 8:18-25

We are waiting for day when we will be saved from the sufferings of this world. So, as God's people living in this present age, what does He want us to do? How can we 'train to reign' in our current condition?

The Call to Subdue

‘fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over...’

Genesis 1:28

It's been awhile since I've mentioned the importance of 'subduing,' so let me remind us of this important truth. The Hebrew word translated 'subdue' is **קָבַשׁ** (kabash). It means to 'bring into bondage, bring into subjection.' Why did God mention 'subduing' the earth before having 'dominion' (rule, reign) over it? Because God knew His people would need to do that. How did God know that? Because God declared 'the end from the beginning' (Isaiah 46:10). God knew from Eternity what would happen in the Garden. He knows what's happening in your life right now and what will happen. He knows better than you do what you need to fight the spiritual battles you face now and will face in the future.

That's why the Holy Spirit inspired the apostles to write about how to 'subdue' our spiritual enemies –

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled. 2 Corinthians 10:3-6

Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Ephesians 6:11-13

But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: 'God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.' Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. James 4:6-8

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. 1 Peter 5:8-11

According to discussions I've had with Christians through the years, along with extensive national polling, it's sadly apparent that most people who identify as Christians don't understand what I just explained above. They don't understand suffering. They don't understand the origins or purposes of evil. Thus, they are not involved in spiritual warfare. They are living a cultural religiosity rather than the reality of the battles raging around us in the spiritual realms.

Given that fact, what hope do Christians have? What did the Holy Spirit inspire the apostles to teach that helps us understand what will one day save us from this evil age?

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself. Philippians 3:20-21

As I quoted earlier from Paul's letter to Titus, we are 'looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.' What we're doing now is learning to 'subdue,' which is vital to 'having dominion.'

Chapter Fifty-One

Our 'everlasting' hope is always Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit made that abundantly clear in the Scriptures He inspired the apostles to write. What we are NOT doing is 'living our best life now' – no matter what some preachers may tell you. We struggle and suffer in this life, just like Jesus did – just like the apostles did – just like Christians have done for the last two thousand years. For anyone to think differently is ignoring the plain language of Scripture.

The Holy Spirit will not lie to us. He guides us into the truth – all of it – the good, the bad, and the hard to face. When Jesus said His followers would be hated for His sake, that was the truth. When the Lord said His disciples would be persecuted, that was the truth. The 'seeker friendly' preaching of today is an abomination to the truth. The 'prosperity preaching' of today is an abomination to the truth. Don't believe it because all of it is a BIG LIE.

Look to God's Word, inspired by God, to find truth. Don't listen to the liars who call themselves 'gospel preachers.' They don't know the true Gospel of Christ. They are deceivers and liars. They do not preach or teach the same message that Jesus and His apostles taught. As Jesus said –

'Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. John 8:43-45

Many of today's preachers and teachers are children of their father the devil. Don't fall for their lies. Learn the truth and stand on it. You may think you are alone in the battle, but you are never alone because God's Spirit is always with you. The Holy Spirit lives in the real children of God. He does not live in the children of the devil – no matter what they call themselves.

We are currently in a mode of 'subduing.' We are fighting the good fight. We are engaged in spiritual warfare. However, that's just the first part of our lives as God's people. We are also 'kings and priests' to God and Father because Jesus Christ 'loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.' It is to Him that we can say – 'to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.' (Revelation 1:5-6)

On Earth As It Is In Heaven

Here is part of a prayer Jesus taught His disciples –

Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven. Matthew 6:9-10

The ‘Kingdom’ of God is coming to the earth because the King of Heaven is returning to rule and reign. God’s ‘will’ will be done on earth in the same way it is in Heaven. That’s Christ’s promise to us.

Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,’ says the Lord, ‘who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.’ Revelation 1:7-8

Jesus Christ is coming back to earth, but not as a baby. He will return as the Conquering King. That's why all the tribes of the earth will 'mourn' because of Him. The Lord will return to earth to 'strike the nations.' Jesus will 'rule them with a rod of iron.' He will tread 'the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God' (Revelation 19:15). That is the truth that the Holy Spirit teaches us in His Word. Jesus will return in a blaze of GLORY that will shine across the earth so that everyone will see Him and those who come with Him.

Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness

and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. Revelation 19:11-16

Question – what will Christians do while Jesus is striking the nations and treading the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of God? We find the answer in Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, a letter inspired by the Holy Spirit –

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

Many people speak of this as the ‘rapture’ of the saints. The Greek word for ‘caught up together’ is ἀρπάζω (harpázō – seize by force; snatch up, suddenly and decisively; catch up; caught away). Notice that once we are raised (if already passed away) or snatched up if still alive, we will ‘always be with the Lord.’ Based on other Scriptures in the New Testament, I believe we will go where Jesus goes. When He’s in Heaven, we’re in Heaven with Him. When He’s on earth, we’re on earth with Him. Christians will serve Jesus and rule and reign with Him.

Luke wrote that Jesus will ‘reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end’ (Luke 1:33). Angels told the Lord’s disciples that – ‘This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven’ (Acts 1:11). Jesus ascended into the sky from Mount Olivet and He will return to the same place before making His way into Jerusalem to take His rightful place on the Throne of David – and we will be with Him. Why? Because we will ‘reign’ with Him.

Our Reign with Christ

Paul wrote the Corinthian Christians that they would one day ‘judge the world’ and would ‘judge angels’ (1 Corinthians 6:2-3). What right will Christians have to judge anyone? We will have that right because the Lord gives us that right. Part of reigning with Christ is participating in His judgment and rule of this world.

Before our heads begin to swell, let’s remember that our ‘righteousness’ comes from Christ – not from ourselves (see the Book of Romans). Whatever ‘right’ we have to reign with Christ is because of God’s grace and goodness toward us. We are saved by grace ‘through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast’ (Ephesians 2:8-9). Should you get the urge to boast a bit, don’t. As Paul wrote the Galatians – ‘But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world’ (Galatians 6:14). No boasting allowed, unless we are boasting in what Jesus Christ did for us.

Remember – you received what you didn't deserve and didn't receive what you did deserve. So, no boasting except in Christ and His accomplishments.

Based on the knowledge that Christians will accompany the Lord Jesus wherever He goes, and that we will judge nations and angels with Him, look at these Scriptures and see your future self there –

When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. Matthew 25:31-32

And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived

and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book

was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. Revelation 20:4-15

Once the Lord's work (and ours) is done on the earth, God will do away with the first heaven and first earth. He will create 'a new heaven and a new earth' (Revelation 21:1). God will reveal a new city, the New Jerusalem, 'coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband' (Revelation 21:2). The 'tabernacle of God' will be with men, and 'He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people' (Revelation 21:3). God will 'wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away' (Revelation 21:4). What will become of us? 'And they shall reign forever and ever' (Revelation 22:5).

The benefit of all our training to reign with Christ is to serve Him in this life and the next life. We will judge nations. We will judge angels. We will serve Him based on our training throughout the Millennium. We will reign with Him forever and ever. That is why we train – to serve and glorify.

As Jesus said before He went to the Cross – ‘I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do’ (John 17:4). May that be our desire as well.

Chapter Fifty-Two

I started this series one year ago by asking several basic questions about life as a human being –

- Why do we exist?
- Why are we here on planet Earth?
- What's my purpose in life?
- What does the future hold for me?
- What will happen to me after I die?
- Why is there evil in the world?
- Why did God create the devil?

My hope is that I've answered these questions to your satisfaction in the previous 51 chapters. You'll find a link to all of the chapters at the end of this article. What I'd like to do in this last chapter of 'Train to Reign' is look again at the basics of our training during these years on earth. Based on what we read in Scripture, God's people need to be reminded – often.

The Seed

God promised the human race that He would send 'the Seed of the woman' to destroy the seed of the serpent (Genesis 3:15). As we follow God's plan through the generations we learn that the 'Seed' would come through the Jewish tribe of Judah

Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise; Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; Your father's children shall bow down before you. Judah is a lion's whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bows down, he lies down as a lion; And as a lion, who shall rouse him? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him shall be the obedience of the people. Binding his donkey to the vine, And his donkey's colt to the choice vine, He washed his garments in wine, And his clothes in the blood of grapes. His eyes are darker than wine, And his teeth whiter than milk. Genesis 49:8-12

But one of the elders said to me, 'Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.' Revelation 5:5

Jesus Christ is that Royal Lion. He has the Name that is above all other names in the universe –

... and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. Ephesians 1:19-23

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:5-11

Jesus is also the Root and Branch that came from Jesse – the father of King David of the tribe of Judah –

There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots. 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. His delight is in the fear of the Lord, And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, Nor decide by the hearing of His ears; But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, And decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, And faithfulness the belt of His waist. Isaiah 11:1-5

Jesus Christ is the Promised Seed, Promised Root and Branch of Jesse, and Promised King of Israel – the Son of David who will reign over Israel forever and ever –

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. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end. Luke 1:31-33

Jesus Christ is the Eternal Son of God. He is ‘above all things’ and ‘holds all things together’ –

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all

things He may have the preeminence. Colossians
1:15-18

The Five Training Basics

I chose FIVE training basics for this series. Most all of the training skills we will need to ‘train to reign’ are found in these five –

1. Believe in the Only True God (Monotheism)
2. Fear God and Obey Him
3. Worship God and Serve Him
4. Listen to God and Trust Him
5. Love God and Devote Your Life to Him

Believe

You may remember in some of the early chapters of this series that God's people struggled with believing that God is the Only True God. Paganism (idol worship) was a primary belief of the ancient world and impacted God's people as well as the rest of the human race.

When God gave His Law to Moses, belief in God alone topped the list –

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. 'You shall have no other gods before Me.' 'You shall not make for yourself a carved image – any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them.' Exodus 20:2-5

The other nations of the world were bowing to carved images of false gods, but God commanded Israel not to do that. Israel was supposed to be different than all the other nations.

Unfortunately, Israel disobeyed for centuries and paid terribly for their disobedience. It's also unfortunate that many Christians today are disobeying this training basic and turning their 'churches' and homes into places for pagan-style worship. They may not have a 'carved image' on the nightstand, but they are more committed to New Age thinking and practices than real Christian teaching. They have bought into 'doctrines of demons' over the teachings of Christ and His apostles.

The Galatians had a similar problem –

But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods. But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? Galatians 4:8-9

Why would Galatian Christians want to return to the very things that once held them in spiritual bondage? I could ask the same question of a majority of Christians in churches across our country today. Why practice those things now that kept you from knowing the love and mercy of God in the past? Why?

Believing in God is far more than intellectual assent. As James wrote – ‘You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!’ Real belief in God is a deep and abiding commitment to the God of Heaven. To believe is to obey.

Obey

Israel disobeyed God for generations and centuries. The Apostle Peter called the religious leaders on their disobedience when they faced the Sanhedrin and the potential of more imprisonment and even death for their belief in the risen Christ –

But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: ‘We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him. Acts 5:29-32

God gives the Holy Spirit to those who ‘obey’ Him. How do we obey God? We believe and ‘do’ what He says. God’s offer is not hard to understand, though it does seem hard for many to do.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household. Acts 16:31

But what does it say? 'The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart' (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, 'Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.' For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For 'whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.' Romans 10:8-13

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:8-10

Continued obedience to God is expected within the teaching of the Bible, but what about those Christians who do not obey?

But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good. And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

2 Thessalonians 3:13-15

We have a responsibility to admonish and guide our fellow Christians toward a life of obedience to God and His Word.

Worship and Serve

Belief in God and obedience to Him should lead to a lifestyle of ‘worship and service.’ Jesus said this to the Samaritan woman at the well –

But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.’ John 4:23-24

The Greek word translated ‘worship’ is προσκυνέω (*proskunéō*) and means ‘do reverence to, do obeisance to.’ This carried the idea of falling to the ground (either on one knee or prostrate) and kissing the ground before a superior. It is an act of ‘adoration.’ Belief in and obedience to God will lead to a worshipful adoration of our Creator.

During the time that the devil ‘tested’ Jesus in the wilderness, Jesus replied – ‘Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve’ (Matthew 4:10). Worship of God should also lead to ‘service.’ To say that we love God and worship Him, yet do not serve Him, is a contradiction of terms and intent. Service naturally follows worship.

Listen and Trust

One of my favorite Bible verses is Proverbs 3:5-10 –

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.

The wisdom from King Solomon for us today is that we should listen to God and not to others. We should not ‘lean’ on our own understanding of things, but trust in the Lord ‘with all your heart.’ We should ‘acknowledge God’ knowing that He will direct our paths.

Question – how do you know what to trust if you haven’t been listening? How do you acknowledge something you haven’t heard?

Listening to God means ‘hearing’ what He says. How do we know what God says? By reading what He says –

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds. Hebrews 1:1-2

Notice that God ‘spoke’ in time past to the ‘fathers’ by the ‘prophets. In these ‘last days’ God has ‘spoken to us by His Son.’ We ‘trust’ God by ‘listening’ to what He has said through the prophets and through His Son, Jesus Christ. We know from what Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would guide the apostles into ‘all truth’ and that they would record that truth for us to hear.

When you read the Bible, you are ‘listening’ to God. When you are praying, you are ‘speaking’ to God. When you pray Scripture, you are listening and responding. That’s how God will ‘direct our paths.’

Love and Devotion

Jesus answered him, 'The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. Mark 12:29-31

To love someone with 'all' your heart, soul, mind, and strength is certainly a great love. It is also a great devotion. To love and devote yourself to God with every part of yourself means there is no place for selfish love. There is no place for loving anything that would distract or remove you from the full devotional love of God.

This sounds humanly impossible given our tendencies toward selfish behavior, so how do we do it? We learn through imitation –

Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. Ephesians 5:1-2

God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – is our example to imitate. We walk ‘in love’ (live our lives in love) by imitating Jesus Christ who loved us and gave Himself for us. Will that be a challenging thing to do as long as we live in this body of flesh? Yes, but that doesn’t mean we should not strive toward being like Christ –

For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:10-11

Subdue and Reign

An important part of ‘subduing’ as we ‘train to reign’ is to learn the lessons of ‘reckoning’ ourselves to be dead to sin, ‘but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.’ The Greek word translated ‘reckon’ is λογίζομαι (*logízomai*). It means ‘to consider’ based upon logical and reasonable thinking. It comes from the root word for ‘logic’ and carries the idea of using reason to reach a logical conclusion.

To ‘reckon’ ourselves dead to sin is a reasonable and logical conclusion to reach based on what God has done for us through Jesus Christ. We have no reason to consider ourselves alive to sin given that Jesus defeated sin and death through His crucifixion and resurrection. A Christian who thinks differently than that is illogical and unreasonable in their conclusion.

Free eBooks

My hope and prayer is that this year-long (52-part) series has been helpful as you seek God's will for your life. The eBooks that have come from this series are available free of charge, so please download and share with others as God leads.

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