

STEP BY STEP

*Looking at the New Testament Beatitudes
through the Old Testament Feasts*

By Chuck Latham with David Weston

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Foreword

I have 35 books on the subject of the Beatitudes of Jesus in my ministry library. After awhile, these books have a sameness and predictability about them. *Step by Step: Looking at the New Testament Beatitudes through the Old Testament Feasts* is unique among these books.

The author, Chuck Latham along with David Weston, interpret the Beatitudes of Jesus through an in-depth understanding of the seven feasts given to Israel in Leviticus 23. They employ the “process approach” in excavating the rich meaning of the seven feasts and the Beatitudes. The process approach is “a set of interrelated steps and actions...which lead to a desired output.” The authors clearly identify and demonstrate the God-ordered systematic steps in the seven feasts and the Beatitudes. I am unaware of anyone else taking this unique perspective.

Step by Step is thoroughly interesting, soundly Biblical, refreshingly humorous, contemporarily relevant, practically illustrated, spiritually powerful and fervently evangelistic. They show the vital connection between the Old Testament and the Beatitudes. The Beatitudes of Jesus are explained and illustrated using many Old Testament scriptures.

The believer will gain a deep understanding of the seven feasts and how they relate to the Beatitudes. The non-Christian will hear about the significant steps to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. This book concludes with personal applications of the Beatitudes of Jesus to real-time events. Chuck and David believe that the Beatitudes are meant to be lived not just learned!

Chuck is a consultant with a Fortune 500 firm and David is an attorney. Above all they are committed Christians who serve faithfully in their daily lives and through their local church, Vaughn Forest in Montgomery, Alabama. *Step by Step: Looking at the New Testament Beatitudes through the Old Testament Feasts* gives evidence of much prayer, research, thought, and soul searching on their part. Consequently, it greatly honors and glorifies our Heavenly Father.

I highly recommend *Step by Step* as an informational and inspirational resource on the Beatitudes of Jesus. I feel I have been enlightened by the Old Testament relevance to the Beatitudes, encouraged to apply the Beatitudes in my life step by step, and empowered to live out the Beatitudes

in real-life situations by depending on the Father's power and not my strength. May the Father use this well-written book as a catalyst in the spiritual lives of many people!

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Introduction

The purpose of this book is to teach readers new insights on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, specifically the Beatitudes and how these timeless principles may be more effectively applied in your life. It is with great pleasure that I honor the Father by writing this book. I thought it appropriate that I begin this work in prison, since this place helped to ignite my revelation into the Beatitudes. No, I am not an inmate, but a volunteer in a Federal Prison where I visit, preach, and teach others on the wonders of His great love for us. It is through this fellowship and service that I have been humbled and taught. Through my prison ministry experience, I rejoice in this opportunity to share a portion of my insight into the Beatitudes which has helped me become a more faithful servant of G-d. So I will pen these first words in the quiet setting of the prison chapel while I relish the freedom He provides me to walk out freely.

“Step by Step” takes a different look at Jesus Christ's teachings from the New Testament book of Matthew, Chapter 5. This passage of scripture is commonly referred to as the Beatitudes. For years as a Christian I had read and been taught about the sermon and the Beatitudes, but I never had received a full revelation on how they should be applied to one's life. However, several recent revelations in my life have opened up the Bible and the Beatitudes in a new way. As a result, I have discovered the true secret behind these principles given to us by Jesus himself and how He intended for them to be applied and demonstrated in the life of every Christian.

This book takes a “process view” and methodology that I have practiced over the past 25 years as a decorated Air Force officer and successful business consultant and project manager. The same concept used in business today for analyzing and improving processes to ignite continuous improvement can be seen in the process approach G-d uses in making us new creatures. The proper application of the Beatitudes and how they can transform and improve your relationship with G-d and others is demonstrated by explaining the process approach G-d has created as outlined in the Bible.

When I discovered this secret, I quickly shared my views with my good friend, David Weston, and together we have prayed over and diligently searched the scriptures and various resources in defining what I consider a revolutionary, yet simple approach. The secret is that G-d has designed a seven-step process in the form of the seven distinct characteristics of the

Beatitudes. This seven-step process mirrors His complete plan for a closer spiritual relationship. David and I know that when you read and apply what is the true process for demonstrating the Beatitudes, you will begin to experience a deeper, more fulfilling relationship with G-d, and with your loved ones. This equates to victory in your spiritual life. The key is to put them on one step at a time. We are about to take you on a journey through this revealing sermon of Jesus and explore the process of applying the Beatitudes.

David and I approach this by laying the background for understanding the Beatitudes. This background revolves around the L-rd's feasts outlined in Leviticus 23. A basic understanding of these feasts and what they mean can be directly linked to Jesus' sermon and teaching of the Beatitudes. With these basics, you will be able to see the application process for employing these principles. Our sincere desire is that you will see what He has revealed and that you would daily apply this step-by-step process leading to a more abundant and victorious life on earth for His glory. Let us look at the wonderful story of the feasts of the L-rd.

Note: David and I have had the privilege of studying with Messianic Jewish teachers and congregations over the last several years. Many Orthodox Jews are very careful not to take G-d's name in vain or even speak His Holy Name out loud. Many of our Messianic friends practice this; however, I am sure it is something uncommon for Gentile believers. Therefore, we have replaced the letter "o" with a dash as a sign of reverence and respect to the awesome name of the Holy One. You may have already noticed this spelling change and just figured something was wrong with our printer. We'll use this designation throughout this book when referring specifically to His name. Don't let this distract you.

This spelling is so out of the norm, that my wife still was a little confused after reading my initial manuscript. However, she came up with a great comparison which may get the point across better. Take for example the American flag. You are required to take great care to ensure that it doesn't touch the ground. Some people may even dispose of their flag if it touches the ground by burning it (however, the flag code does not require this). In contrast, some people do not hold the same level of respect for the flag. However, I would venture to say most military persons would not hesitate to take appropriate and perhaps Herculean efforts to prevent the flag from touching the ground. That may seem a bit far fetched to some, but it's a

perfectly understandable response for those who understand and respect the American flag.

Now take this same flag example and apply it to the name of G-d. Please don't let this distract you. It may seem far fetched, but we are not dealing with a flag, but the awesome name of G-d and there is considerable power and respect in that name!

Prologue

I serve as a prison chapel volunteer. In this capacity, I teach Bible study classes and also serve as an Assistant Pastor at the prison's Peace Community Church and their Christian worship services. It has certainly been one of my most rewarding experiences in service. I've both taught and been taught by these men in developing a closer relationship with G-d as well as more fully appreciating my family as I see my incarcerated brothers who are separated from their own loved ones. This is in itself amazing since I never thought much about inmates or prison ministry before this. It is a testimony that G-d can truly change hearts and minds.

I had just completed about a ten month study on the L-rd's feasts (outlined in Leviticus 23) at the prison. I was preparing for the next teaching module as we decided to go through *The Mind of Christ* by T.W. Hunt and Claude King. But before getting started, one of the men asked if we could do a quick study on the Beatitudes. He said there was a need at the prison for some of the younger believers to be taught these principles. So I asked for feedback, and everyone seemed receptive to the idea of doing a quick study on the Beatitudes before starting *The Mind of Christ* study.

This presented a bit of a challenge for me. I had never really taught in depth on the Beatitudes before, and I did not have any mysterious revelation about them. Dealing with this prison Bible study is different then the studies I have led in other churches outside of a prison environment. Sure, there are varying degrees of spiritual maturity, but some of the guys have a very solid foundation in G-d's word. Some have gone to seminary, many simply have a deep anointing of the Holy Spirit and a love for studying His word. Needless to say, the person who teaches them, better be prepared and know what he or she believes and why. If you teach in the flesh, you are certain to become intimidated by their knowledge.

At first, I decided to ignore the request and just start on the *Mind of Christ* study a few weeks early. Just ignoring the subject altogether seemed like a pretty good option to me. However, during my quiet times with G-d, it was clear I was to teach on the Beatitudes regardless of my fears or pride. It also made sense. Here I am, a minister of the Gospel, teaching others about the love of G-d, His wonderful plan of salvation and how to glorify Him in our lives, but I was balking at the opportunity to teach on Jesus' most popular sermon. Doesn't make sense does it? Out of all the sermons and studies in

the Bible, perhaps the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount should have been my first study. I should know what Jesus said and why?

So now I was totally convicted and realized I had fallen into the same trap that I have found myself in a few times before. I was trusting in my own skills and knowledge rather than trusting in Him to lead me and provide the insight, understanding and words to say. After about four years of teaching at the prison, I had become accustomed to relying on the Spirit to guide and teach me as I taught them. As I grew closer to G-d, He opened up the scriptures even more, and the men and I had a great time sharing and learning together. So I knew how to approach this. However, so often our success gives us a puffed-up and erroneous opinion of ourselves. It was only through His grace that I had any success, and only when I was truly humbled that He blessed me and prepared my heart to receive even more knowledge and understanding of His word. Humbled again, I prepared myself to be in "receive mode" and let Him teach while praising Him for His mercy and patience with me. The need to be liked, and my pride, along with any trust in myself faded away as I started leaning on Him again to teach me so I could effectively teach others. Why would anyone want to hear from me? I wonder what got into my mind to think I was so great and wonderful that I had to protect that image of myself. Humbled again, I told the men we would indeed begin a brief study on the Beatitudes. It seems that G-d continues to drill the same lessons into my brain until I get it right. I went home and I began to pray for preparation and then I opened my Bible to Matthew Chapter 5, and began my study.

And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,... (Matthew 5: 1-2)

Chapter 1

How G-d Revealed This Process

Before we dive into the meat of the seven-step process, we need to explain how we came to understand the true meaning of the Beatitudes. G-d chose a particular method to reveal this to us.

I began to take a close look at the Beatitudes in preparing my lesson plan for the prison bible study class I led. I noticed there are varying opinions as to whether Jesus is speaking and teaching just his disciples or a multitude of people. For our purposes, it doesn't really matter so don't get hung up on the minor details. I would like to think it was to the multitude but I haven't figured out how Jesus handled the acoustics. What we do know is the sermon is recorded in the Gospel for a purpose. I believe that purpose is to teach us a truth for application today. So whether it was delivered to a multitude at the time, it is certainly designed for the multitude throughout history, currently, and future people who hear this sermon. As a result, we should take particular heed to what is being said; it is specifically for us and comes directly from our precious Savior. His authority alone warrants particular attention on our part. I can't believe I didn't start a more in-depth study on this earlier. What was I thinking? Jesus is speaking! Instead of shying away from this, I should have been running to it. I guess He knows when we are ready to receive new things. You should prepare yourself for what is in this book so you can receive and test it.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:3)

Looking closely at this verse, I didn't find anything earth-shattering. There was no new revelation for me in this verse. I went to my concordance to look up the Greek and Hebrew translation for the word "blessed" and found that it related to being "well off" or "happy". Therefore, happy are they who are poor in spirit because they have the kingdom. I pondered this verse and the other verses noticing that each verse started with "blessed" or happy. So we are happy if we do these things. I read through the rest of the Beatitudes to see if I could find any other revelations.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see G-d. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of G-d. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:4-12)

These are great words to a great sermon. But what did it all mean? And more importantly to me at the time, what do they mean to the inmates and to myself as I was preparing to teach them? I pondered over it again. Blessedness could be seen as an end goal and character trait. The blessed or happy states are conditional promises requiring us to do something or exemplify certain characteristics in order to release the blessing. So those who are happy are truly happy because they are poor in spirit, and as a result of being poor in spirit, they have a place and portion of the kingdom of G-d. That made sense to me. So knowing that I have the kingdom as a promise because I am poor in spirit causes me to be happy and in fact, my state is one of being blessed with what is to come. In other words, being poor in spirit by standing on the promises of G-d and not by relying on my own strength, grants me happiness. Both a happiness in heaven that is promised to me, but also happiness in this life since the word says, "He came to give life that they (we) might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). I concluded that I am truly happy when I am practicing what Jesus outlines here, for example, being poor in spirit and standing on His promises of receiving the kingdom. Knowing this in your heart helps produce the abundant life of which Jesus speaks. My commentary echoed this thinking as well, outlining that true happiness consists in the promises made and not found in material things or earthly goods. Those who are poor in spirit are happy since they are emptied of self in order to be filled with Jesus. This was a good reminder for me to not get entangled in my own selfish desires which may be in conflict with what He wants me to do in the Spirit. Even in preparing this lesson for the men, I had to pause and pray to make sure my focus was on Him and not on trying to come up with some neat concept or revelation that would impress the inmates by promoting me. It seems I often have to remind myself that this is for His glory and not mine. This same principle can be applied to my

secular jobs when at times I had a tendency to toot my own horn and try to bring favorable attention to myself rather than working to glorify G-d.

I felt as if I had a solid foundation from which to approach the lesson. The next step was to start looking for ways to apply it. I wanted to discover what Jesus was really saying, and what we were supposed to be doing. I noticed that each Beatitude had the same opening blessing or promise attached. Each was followed by the condition, or what we needed to demonstrate, followed by a more specific promise such as having the kingdom of heaven. I started looking for ways to apply these traits. Looking at each of the verses (Matthew 5:3-12), my mind started to recall how I viewed this sermon when I first read these passages as a boy.

My Early Interpretation

I can't remember exactly how old I was, but I was probably a young teen when I first heard about the Beatitudes. I remember I looked hard at each one of the Beatitudes since the word "blessed" was used in front of each verse, and all of the promises were similar and desirable. I took a simple approach because some traits were harder for me to achieve and demonstrate than others. For instance, I could handle the poor in spirit one. I wasn't rich, my family didn't have a lot. I grew up thinking that if I could one day save \$10K that I would be pretty well to do. Coveting a lot of material items was never really my thing (though you can see me on occasion eyeballing the used car lots for vintage Mercedes). Likewise, when I saw people mourning, I usually felt bad and could see myself sort of mourning with them. I could do that, I thought.

The meek part in Matthew 5:5 however, never really appealed to me. There was just something about the term "meek" and our interpretation of that word in our society that turned me off. Why place that as an objective? Why be meek when I could get the same basic blessing and promise of the kingdom by exemplifying the other more achievable trait? Now forgive me if this sounds crazy. But that's how I saw it and that's how I applied it. People have different traits and characteristics. We are all different. We have different spiritual characteristics and traits. In the Beatitudes it just seemed logical that these traits applied in varying degrees to each of us. I didn't interpret it as I would never demonstrate meekness. Meekness just wasn't my day-to-day thing. As a teenager, I did not see young girls running down my school hall saying "gee that Chuck guy is the one for me...he's so meek!" Get real! At that age, they wanted a rough neck guy. Being a man and being

meek is an anomaly in our society. But I could sure be a good peacemaker. I had broken up a good fight or two, and I always had a passion for stepping in and trying to prevent conflicts. Yeah, peacemaker, that's the ticket baby! And they are called the Sons of G-d and still get blessed just like the meek people. It sounded like a good deal. What an awesome G-d we serve who knows our weaknesses. It made sense to me that my typical comfort zone is the area where I would demonstrate more often a particular Beatitude and thus I would receive the reward of the promise and be happy. I was quite happy with this interpretation, and it seemed so logical. It fit nicely for where I was in my desire to be spiritual.

Again, it was very logical to me, and I'm a very logical person. However, we need to be very careful relying on human logic when dealing with spiritual matters. I learned this lesson on logic from a cooking experience I had. One day, I was asked to cook some meat for supper. Even though my mom was a caterer, I had never learned how to cook except for a few breakfast dishes. Being clueless at how to start, I applied simple logic. I had cooked some breakfast foods and meat before so why should the time of day in which I was cooking meat make a difference? Thrilled with this revelation and application of logic, I immediately grabbed a frying pan, threw the meat in the pan, and started frying. It did not take long for someone to come out and ask what I thought I was doing. I quickly replied, "I'm cooking the meat like you told me to do."

They could not believe anyone could be that slow so they asked me where was the grease? I explained that meat makes its own grease. Totally amazed at this profound logical response, they added, "I bet you didn't even wash the meat before cooking it?"

My reply, "I don't wash my breakfast meat so there was no need to wash this meat for supper".

They finished cooking and corrected my mistake (which is what I wanted them to do anyway). But I wasn't off the hook yet. Not convinced that anyone could be so ignorant, someone later instructed me to prepare some chili. I had never prepared chili before, but learning from the earlier meat experience, I expanded my logic framework model. Ground beef is meat, so what is the first thing she told me to do last time? Ah yes, wash the meat first. Meat needs to be washed; since ground beef is meat, it, therefore, must be washed as well. You who know how to cook know the results as I started to wash the ground beef. Since then, I have seldom been asked to return to

the kitchen. I've also realized however, that our (my) logic doesn't always apply, especially when dealing with spiritual matters. This was also the case with my application of the Beatitudes. I would soon find out that my earlier logic and comfort zone was a little off.

I felt as if I was ready to prepare my lesson outline. I had read through the verses several times, prayed, humbled myself, read my commentary, and prayed briefly again. There was no great revelation, but just diving into G-d's word is exciting to me. I had great expectations that He would guide me on how to proceed. I had already remembered that it was not about me, it was about Him. I began to trust more and more that He would provide and bless my teaching and I relied less on my own understanding, skills, and biblical resources.

As I studied, I reviewed David Brown's commentary (*Jamieson, Faussett & Brown Bible Commentary*). He pointed out that the word "blessed" "points more to what is inward." This is like the concept of the difference between joy and happiness. I have joy regardless of my circumstances even though I might not be happy about it. Why? Because I know the end of the story based upon standing on the promises of G-d. I have perfect peace (Isaiah 26:3) when my concentration and focus is on Him and His promises. Understanding His faithfulness is indeed a producer of joy, and I can be happy, even though I may not be happy with my present circumstances. So this idea of an inward happiness that springs from within and can be demonstrated on the outside in our character, lines up nicely with scripture and G-d's design for us. This perhaps points to that well that never runs dry, the living water that resides within us upon our acceptance of Jesus as our Savior (John 4:13-14).

I read a little further, eager to see if there was any meat left on this Beatitude bone on which I had been chewing. I noticed Brown points out something that revealed to me that not only was there meat still on the bone, but a full seven-course meal that I had completely overlooked. This revelation ignited the energy behind this book. Brown makes a simple observation that there are eight Beatitudes. Not a big deal to most people, but a big deal to me since the number eight has significance; G-d uses the number to demonstrate His faithfulness and His redemptive plan.

Brown then says that there are "seven distinct features of character." Seven! That number may carry more significance with some of us. I do not

think it is a coincidence that there are seven days in the week. The number seven has great significance and relevance, both in symbolic meaning and spiritual application. The light bulb just went off! As I reviewed the Beatitudes again, I saw that indeed the first seven deal strictly with character traits while the eighth is more of a result (“persecuted for righteousness’ sake”) of possessing and applying the seven traits. Seven is a number that the Bible uses to indicate perfection, while eight indicates completion. Could it be more than a coincidence that there are seven characteristics in the Beatitudes that indicates perfection as well?

I don’t think it was coincidence that I had just finished teaching the feasts study and now was on the brink of learning something new about the Beatitudes. You see, there are seven feasts listed in Leviticus Chapter 23. There are seven feasts! Immediately, I pushed back in my chair in wild amazement away from the commentary on my computer screen. Could it be that these seven feasts could show me the secrets of the Beatitudes? Could the mystery I was seeking, be right under my nose? My logical nature made it easy for me to grab the number seven and leverage the feasts into the Beatitudes. But I had learned my lesson from my failed cooking logic. I needed evidence and scriptural support rather than trying to force this concept into my belief system and worse yet, onto my intended audience. Something in my spirit was assuring me that I was getting ready to be greatly blessed and that I was on the right track. Hungry for wisdom, I prayed again giving thanks for what was about to happen and for the discernment to know the truth and not cater to my own fleshy desires. The simple understanding that there are seven characteristic traits in these Beatitudes opened my mind to the idea of a strategic linkage between what Jesus was saying in his sermon and what G-d was saying in the Old Testament. G-d does not contradict Himself. He does nothing by accident, but rather by design. All of a sudden, my previous understanding and logical application of the Beatitudes was changing. I put my lesson plan and outline away. Instead of teaching, I was now ready to be taught. It was time to go behind the seven Beatitudes in a manner I had never done before.

Chapter 2

Building the Foundation for Understanding the Beatitudes Through the Feasts

And the L-RD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning the feasts of the L-RD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my feasts. (Leviticus 23:1-2)

Leviticus 23:1-2, probably does not do much for you at first glance. I looked at it for years and breezed through it without a clue to its real significance. Yet I tell you this verse is as important to me as John 3:16 in its significance and the picture it paints for me as one who is learning daily to stand just a bit stronger on His promises. Previously, I read the Old Testament in haste, pausing only at the good and exciting parts such as David and Goliath or Jonah, etc. Nothing in Leviticus 23 ever jumped out at me, especially since I was breezing through this on my way to the good parts. Please take the time right now to read through these verses (Leviticus 23:1-2) once again.

Do you see it yet? Even this subsequent pass through may not have opened your eyes to what I found. You may be asking yourself what is the big deal? Why are we going through this exercise? You bought this book hopefully to learn the secrets behind the Beatitudes and here I am having you dance around Leviticus. David and I want to take you on a path. The same path G-d took us down since the purpose of this book is to show you a new revelation and application for the Beatitudes to enhance your relationship with G-d and increase your faith. The Beatitudes are a daily roadmap of how we should live and grow closer to G-d. I came to this realization through an understanding of the feasts. So I must ask that you set up camp here first so you can follow the trail to the Beatitudes. I'm sure there are other trails which lead to the same conclusion as I do in this book, but I'm showing you

the trail that we found. In order to stick to the paths and streams that we know, we must set our starting point at the feasts.

Let us go back to Leviticus 23:1-2, and walk through it verse by verse. In verse one, we see that it is the L-rd Himself speaking to Moses. This alone warrants considerable attention on our part. The message is given to Moses with the intent of his passing it along to G-d's people. So we must be attentive to this message.

In verse two, we receive the opening message which is most critical. Look at each piece of the verse:

Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning the feasts of the L-RD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my feasts. (Leviticus 23:2)

First, Moses is to tell them this message. Therefore, it must be important to them. Since the children of Israel serve as an example to us (1 Corinthians 10), then certainly the message can be and in fact is relevant to us. One thing I have discovered is that G-d deals with us the same way He dealt with Israel. The expectation He had and still has for them, are the same expectations He has for us as revealed in the New Testament teachings (Ephesians 2:11-14). Several scriptures point to the similar relationship that both Jews and Gentiles are to have with G-d.

Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Is he the G-d of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is one G-d which shall justify the circumcision through faith. (Romans 3:28-30)

One ordinance shall be both for you of the congregation, and also for the stranger that sojourneth with you, an ordinance for ever in your generations: as ye are, so shall the stranger be before the L-RD. One law and one manner shall be for you, and for the stranger that sojourneth with you. (Numbers 15:15-16)

Therefore, what He wants them to know is most probably something He wants us to know today as His people, both Jew and Gentile.

The next section of verse two states “*Concerning the feasts of the L-rd,*” where we see these are not Jewish feasts. Previously, I discounted these as Jewish feasts which they were to practice but not applicable to me as a Gentile believer. We do need to understand however, the message behind these feasts. Understanding the spirit and intent of each feast provides a picture of how G-d deals with us, what He desires of us in terms of our relationship with Him and His plan for us and His faithfulness. So while you may not actively participate in a feast in the physical sense, it is something we must practice and apply spiritually. We will discuss this further a little later in this book. I must say however, that I’ve personally gained a greater appreciation of the New Testament by attending several of the feasts with my Jewish friends. David and his family often try to celebrate each of the feast celebrations with Messianic Jewish congregations.

One key to understanding Leviticus 23:2 rests in the Hebrew interpretation of two very important words. The first word is “feast.” The Hebrew for the word feast is *mow`ed* (mo-ade') or *mo`ed* (mo-ade') which means “appointed place, appointed time, appointed season or appointed meeting.” Now with this in mind, replace the word “feast” with the Hebrew interpretation of “appointment”. We could read this as “Concerning the (appointments) of the L-rd.” All of a sudden, things started to change for me concerning this verse. These feasts are indeed appointments. And they are not Jewish appointments, they are the L-rd’s appointments. This means they are “our” appointments! If someone were to tell me for example, that I have a doctor’s appointment on a certain date and time, then if I care about meeting the appointment, I prepare for it. I recall as a preteen having an afternoon dental appointment. Instead of brushing my teeth after lunch, I just ran my finger over my teeth and rinsed my mouth with water (perhaps another example of my failed logic). Not a good idea kids. Needless to say, it was not a very pleasant appointment. The dental assistant was not very pleased, and what mercy she might have afforded me seemed unavailable as she tugged, scraped, and pulled in my mouth. Food particles were flying, my gums were bleeding, and I received a good lecture through the whole ordeal on how my teeth were the worst she had seen. I never made that mistake again. I get ready for appointments. When I visit my doctor for my annual physical, I put on good underwear--not the ones with the holes which are two to three washings away from becoming car-wash rags. So if I’m concerned about my appointments here on earth, why would I not be concerned and prepared for the appointments that the L-rd has set on His and calendar for us? He is never late for an appointment. He is always on time and expects us to meet Him there.

The next section of the verse says, “*which ye shall proclaim (to be) holy convocations*”. The second word to review in the Hebrew is the word “convocations.” The Hebrew word for convocations is *miqra'* (mik-raw') which means a “calling together or a rehearsal.”

By using the Hebrew definitions for these key words, we can clearly see what G-d intends here and why I consider this one of the most critically important passages in the Bible for us as believers. The scripture would now read, “Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, concerning the appointments of the L-RD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy rehearsals, even these are my appointments.”

My study of the feasts has been one of the most revealing studies I have encountered. Today I better understand the New Testament by understanding the feasts. Studying their meanings has given me much greater confidence that G-d will do what He says as each feast points to the fulfillment of prophesy. The purpose of this book will be to give you an overview of each feast (appointment) that we will later use as the basis for examining the Beatitudes.

Chapter 3

G-d's Appointment Book (The Spring Feasts)

A walk through Leviticus 23 will lead us through an amazing revelation of how G-d's plan of salvation was outlined long ago and provides an encouraging roadmap for where we are today. We have already reviewed the first two verses which outlines that these are indeed appointments G-d has set up for us. Now we will briefly look at each of the seven appointments and their significance to us as believers. Let's get started.

Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein: it is the sabbath of the L-RD in all your dwelling. (Leviticus 23:3)

Six is the number representing man or imperfection in the Bible. Remember the mark of the beast is a series of sixes indicating that the anti-christ comes in the form of a man. Man is created on the sixth day. In six days G-d performs His work and on the seventh day He rests. We could take a side-road here and spend a great deal of time on the significance of the seventh day (Sabbath), but perhaps we will save that for another book. Consider this thought however, that while we labor for six days, we are to take the seventh day as a day of rest and reflection. G-d told the children of Israel in Deuteronomy 5:12-15 to reflect on the time when He brought them out of Egypt. It was not by their own strength that they were delivered, but through G-d's work. This is why G-d placed emphasis on the Sabbath and called it a holy convocation or assembly. Here today, we should each take notice that no matter how hard we have toiled, it is still through His grace, mercy, and work on the cross that we are delivered from our own spiritual Egypt. G-d delivered us from sin and bondage, and this is something we should reflect on, just as G-d instructed the children of Israel to do. We are to stop relying on our own strength and put our trust in Him. Trusting in

Him is part of celebrating and entering His rest. It is the key to being truly blessed and happy.

Each of these feasts or appointments are set and aligned in conjunction with the agricultural season. The first four appointments occur in the Spring of the year, while the final three appointments are celebrated during the Fall of the year. This is a great revelation which points to several passages of scripture which we will look at later. For right now, remember that the feasts are split into these two groups for a reason. G-d has set a specific time for the celebration of each feast for a very good reason.

These are the feasts of the L-RD, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons. (Leviticus 23:4)

Next we have the very first appointment which happens on the fourteenth day of the first month or the Jewish month of Nisan which corresponds to our months of March and April.

In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the L-RD'S passover. (Leviticus 23:5)

As I said before, reading this never really did much for me since I was not sensitive to dates; I was anxious to get to the good stuff. Now as a more mature believer, I have become more sensitive and curious as I see the need to improve and increase my faith. Knowing that the feasts are indeed set times or appointments, my faith is based upon G-d's faithfulness, "for I am the L-RD, I change not..." (Malachi 3:6). Will He keep His word and promises? If these are indeed appointments, then G-d has to show up on the fourteenth day of Nisan. If He keeps this appointment, then my faith is encouraged that He will do what He says He will do, and my trust in His promises is increased. Keep this verse in mind. What we will be looking for is if G-d will keep this appointment on this exact date. Let me give you a head's up. He will keep His word on this exact date--just keep reading the book!

G-d is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: bath he said, and shall he not do it? Or bath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? (Numbers 23:19)

Next we have the second appointment. Notice that the feast of Unleavened Bread falls the day after the first appointment or Passover.

And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the L-RD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread. (Leviticus 23:6)

Again, G-d has given us His word that He will keep this appointment. Later in this book we will review history to see if in fact G-d keeps His appointments. For now remember this is a roadmap, and the second appointment occurs on Nisan 15 (fifteenth day of the first month).

Leviticus 23:7 points to a special holy convocation and rehearsal. While we may understand that the Jewish people celebrate the Sabbath Day on Saturday, these special holy convocations were also treated as special Sabbath days where no work was performed. Its important to note that during some weeks where a feast day landed, you could have more than one Sabbath celebration in that week depending on whether these special holy convocations landed on a Saturday or not.

In the first day ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein. (Leviticus 23:7)

The next verses (Leviticus 23:8-9) outline how the sacrifices were to be presented. Such details are beyond the scope of this book. We will limit the rest of our march through Leviticus 23 to those scriptures which point to the appointed time of each feast.

The third feast is First Fruits. It happens on the day after the Sabbath Day during the feast of Unleavened Bread. That means this appointment will occur on a Sunday and not the day after the special convocation.

Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest: And he shall wave the sheaf before the L-RD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it. (Lev 23:10-11)

The fourth feast is called the feast of Pentecost or feast of Weeks.

And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the L-RD. (Leviticus 23:15-16)

This appointment is also called the feast of Weeks as well as Pentecost since they count seven weeks down to the time of this appointment. As a result, fifty days from the third appointment (First Fruits), the fourth feast or Pentecost occurs. Here we will take a break to go over some basics so you can see the roadmap take shape before covering the final three appointments.

Spring Feasts

Let's take a closer look at what these first four feasts/appointments mean to us as believers today. First, these appointments represent G-d's plan of redemption for us. These first four feasts are already fulfilled through Jesus Christ. Christ fulfilled these appointments on the very date outlined in Leviticus 23. From this we should be encouraged that G-d does indeed keep His word! We will look a little closer at how and when Jesus fulfilled these appointments.

Second, I believe G-d deals with processes or steps arranged in a logical order. I believe this in part because the feasts are arranged in a particular order. Also, we can see how G-d deals with Israel. He does so in a particular manner through an ordered, step process. A process by definition, is a set of interrelated steps and actions with inputs which lead to a desired output. It's the steps you take to get something done. Just about everything we do is a process. Cooking a meal or going to work can be defined as a series of steps you normally take, in a specific order or sequence, to achieve an objective (output). Since the Bible states that Israel is an example for us (1 Corinthians 10), I firmly believe that He deals with us the same way.

But with many of them G-d was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted...Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. (1 Corinthians 10:5-6, 11)

Therefore, there is a process or specific steps through which we must approach G-d in order to be in right relationship with Him. G-d desires a close relationship with us, and these feasts outline the process steps we need to take. Later you will see the same linkage with the Beatitudes. This book is still about the Beatitudes. We just need to explain the feasts to you first so hang in there.

I'm a consultant with a Fortune 500 firm. My job as a quality assurance and project manager requires me to take a process approach to satisfying my customers and designing business solutions to complex problems. On each client engagement I'm assigned to, I take a systematic, methodical approach that is varied and adjusted for the individual client's unique situation, but the process steps are basically the same. Regardless of the client environment, I can usually go into any situation with this process approach, and quickly and efficiently begin to understand the environment, analyze the situation, and design and recommend changes. This process approach is used successfully today by top organizations as they reduce start-up time and introduce best practices. As I began to better understand the feasts, I could see clearly that G-d follows a systematic process approach which He provides to us for the application of spiritual principals in reaching His desired goals and objectives. Just as I use a process approach for success in business, I began to see the feasts (and later the Beatitudes) as a process approach for spiritual success and victory. This is one of the foundational principles we wish to establish in this book and in the later application of the Beatitudes. There is a process that G-d has designed for us as believers. When we follow these process steps, we find it easier to apply spiritual truths into operation as we begin working out our salvation.

Finally, the feasts outline a roadmap or timeline as you discover where we are in the spectrum of G-d's redemptive plan. Over the next few chapters, you will see where we are today in the church age as the final three appointments on G-d's timeline approach. With these points in mind, let's look at the feasts as a process approach. Rather than take my word for it, let's see how G-d demonstrates this principle with His people Israel. He's the same G-d, not a respecter of persons, so if He desired this process for the Jews, He still desires and outlines this same process for us today.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of G-d unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16).

Chapter 4

Spring Feasts and the Process Approach

So how do I prove the point of the feasts as a process for us as believers? The fact that I use this principal in the business world should not be my sole evidence to convince you. Seeing the Beatitudes as a “process” is critical to the correct interpretation and successful application of this portion of Christ’s sermon in our lives. Without understanding the process, you will not be able to see what we discovered. First, you must understand that Israel is always a historical example for us. Once you agree with this point, then your eyes can be opened to see the process and how the feasts outline the steps for having a fruitful and pleasing relationship with G-d. Remember, they are His feasts, given to us for very important reasons. These feasts offer encouragement, assist us in our acquisition of knowledge and revelation, and most importantly our spiritual application. If you are not at this point, then I would ask you to prayerfully read again 1 Corinthians 10 and see the message He has for us. I’m convinced these Old Testament stories are not just there for our reading pleasure and entertainment alone, but point to these process steps and serve as historical examples for our use. The Bible states, “all scripture is given by inspiration of G-d, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of G-d may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). After we see that Israel is used by G-d as an example for all believers, we can then point to the process He outlined for them and how it applies to us today.

To demonstrate this, we must go back to Exodus and replay the history of the children of Israel and see the linkage between their situation, the feasts, and how it relates to our relationship today. So let’s go first to Exodus 3:18.

And they shall hearken to thy voice: and thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel, unto the king of Egypt, and ye shall say unto him, The L-RD G-d of the Hebrews hath met with us: and now let us go, we beseech thee, three days'

*journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the L-RD our G-d.
(Exodus 3:18)*

The background of our story here is the children of Israel, G-d's people, are in bondage in the Land of Egypt. They are in slavery under the Egyptian Pharaoh who was the king of Egypt. Symbolically, we were in a similar situation in the spiritual realm. As we go through this portion of the book, keep in mind the following symbols and analogies in this story and what they represent:

- Egypt – represents a place of bondage. The spiritual application refers to Egypt as representing one being a slave to sin or the “old” man and desires of the flesh.
- Pharaoh – who was the ruler of Egypt, represents the spiritual application of being a servant to Satan and sin. Satan is in control of this arena and when we are in bondage to sin, he serves as our master or ruler.
- Moses – was the Jewish leader and chosen one of G-d who leads G-d's people to freedom. He serves as a type of Christ-figure

The children of Israel find themselves in slavery in Egypt under the rule of Pharaoh. Their plight must have been difficult since the Bible records in the first chapter of Exodus that the Egyptians set up “task masters to afflict them with their burdens...and they made their lives bitter with hard bondage” (Exodus 1:11 and 14). Additionally, we see Pharaoh commanded a death sentence upon all males born to the Hebrews. In Exodus 3:7, the L-rd acknowledges that He has seen their affliction, heard their cry and understands their sorrows. Perhaps this circumstance is not unlike our own at one time. Your life may have been just one big mess with no clear purpose or direction and disappointment at every turn. I was in that state. Finally after losing hope in my own efforts to recover, I turned and called to G-d for guidance and assistance. Perhaps you have a similar salvation story or maybe calling on Him is something that you need to do today—perhaps right now (see prayer on page 197)!

At the appointed time, G-d calls Moses to lead the Hebrews out of Egypt. In Exodus 3:18, He instructs Moses to ask Pharaoh to let the people go “three days’ journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the L-rd our G-d.” Again in Exodus 5:3, Moses requests of Pharaoh to let the Hebrews

(Israel) go “three days’ journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto the L-rd...” I’m showing you this because there is scriptural significance here in the number of days it will take Israel to travel to G-d’s appointed site in the wilderness. Keep in mind it is a three-day journey for them.

Exodus Chapter 12 outlines how G-d prepares Israel for their deliverance from Egypt and the Pharaoh. Thinking again in terms of a “process approach” to the good news of Jesus, this also serves as the way we must approach G-d in order to be freed from the bondage of sin and Satan. This is necessary to be forgiven of our sins. Notice what G-d outlines in the natural and how this relates to us in terms of a spiritual approach. First, in verse two, the scripture states:

This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you. (Exodus 12:2)

If G-d changes the calendar, it means what used to be the first month, is no longer the first month. G-d has changed the calendar for Israel. A deeper study will reveal what the first month was previously, but this is beyond the scope of what we want to achieve. What we need to know is that whatever natural, original birth date the children of Israel had, G-d was giving them a new birthday. The Israelites understood that Passover celebrated this new day and their deliverance from Egypt.

Here we branch over to our process approach again. Looking at this from spiritual eyes, we are able to better understand the discourse between Jesus and Nicodemus found in John 3. In this passage, Jesus tells Nicodemus “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of G-d” (John 3:3). This statement confuses Nicodemus who asks in the next verse, “how can a man be born when he is old?” Jesus replies, “except a man be born of water and of Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of G-d.” Here we see the first step of the process. One must be “born again” before they can enter into the blessings and promises of G-d’s kingdom. Nicodemus is still a bit confused as he asks in John 3:9, “how can these things be?” Jesus rebukes Nicodemus with the statement in John 3:10, “art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?” I never really understood this saying because I always placed Nicodemus in my shoes. From my perspective, this “born again” statement would seem pretty confusing to me. However, Nicodemus was a Rabbi and held a high position among the Jews. He should have clearly understood the significance and meaning of Passover. The Nation of Israel was indeed “born again” and given a new birth date from Exodus 12:2.

If you look at John 2:23, it states that Jesus was performing many miracles during the time of Passover. Therefore, it is quite likely in John 3:2 that Nicodemus is coming to Jesus at night during the time of Passover. So while the Jews are celebrating their spiritual birthday, Nicodemus is confused over Jesus saying you must be born again. If Israel had to be “born again” to be delivered from Egypt, then spiritually, we must also follow this process step. Therefore, I have a natural birth date when I was born of my mother, and I have a new spiritual birth date, when I was born in the Spirit and taken out of bondage (Egypt). Therefore, G-d as displayed in the Old Testament, and Jesus are consistently in sync. The process did not change from Exodus 12 to John 3, and it has not changed today. The first step of the process of being in right relationship with G-d and being delivered from sin and bondage (Satan) is being born again. Yet there is even a process in place for how this “born again” process takes place. Let’s turn again to Exodus 12 to follow through these basic steps.

Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: (Exodus 12:3)

Again, we will focus on the date here. Keep in mind as we continue that something of significance occurs on the tenth day of this first month or four days prior to the Passover appointment date. During this time, the Israelites bring in a lamb from the flock on this tenth day.

When was the actual date and hour of the sacrifice of the unblemished lamb? We can discover this from the following scripture:

And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. (Exodus 12:6)

“In the evening” means in Hebrew between the two evenings. The Jewish day runs from 6:00 pm to 6:00 pm (versus our day which runs from midnight to midnight). The Jewish day is divided into several parts but from noon to 6:00 pm can be considered the evening. From our studies with our Jewish brothers, the phrase “between the evenings” would be a window of time which varies around 3:00 pm. This would be around the ninth hour since the morning hours are counted from 6:00 am. This is important to note and remember as we continue. The calculation of “between the evenings” is a range from approximately the sixth hour (noon) until around the end of the

day (6:00 pm). There are varying opinions on the exact calculation and as a result, this can be a complicated discussion. To simplify these points, based upon the above discussion, the lamb is killed during a window of time around 3:00 pm or the ninth hour. This would be in the middle or between the start and end of the evening period. Later in this book, we will show how Jesus, who John the Baptist called the Lamb of G-d, will also be killed at the ninth hour even as indicated here in Exodus. G-d is incredibly specific so we can increase our faith that He keeps His word and appointments. What an awesome G-d!

Exodus 12:7-11 is also significant and we could spend a significant amount of time reviewing each verse with its application for us today. Since this book is about the Beatitudes, we will bypass an in-depth analysis. What we want to understand from these verses is that G-d instructed Israel to place the sacrificed lamb's blood on the sides and top of their door posts. According to Exodus 12: 22, the blood is applied with a bushy plant called hyssop. Hyssop represents our faith when we apply the blood of Jesus to our lives and no longer rely on our own might. Trusting in the blood of Jesus is an act of faith.

The whole lamb is to be eaten and then the Israelites are to prepare to leave in haste out of Egypt. The spiritual application from this historical account is again significant to us and demonstrates G-d's step-by-step process for salvation and delivery from sin and bondage. So we must be born again, or get a new spiritual birthday. We get this new birth by:

- Examining Jesus and seeing that He is the way and without blemish,
- Using our faith (hyssop) to apply His sacrificial blood to the door posts of our hearts (Spiritually, this means accepting and trusting in Jesus Christ alone and His sacrifice for us and repenting from sin and stop trusting in our own works).
- Accepting the entire Gospel and not just the parts that sound good (Do not just get saved and accept Jesus' sacrifice. We must also trust and accept a new life that He gives.), and
- Leaving the life of sin and self works we were living before (i.e. leave Egypt in haste).

The results of following these process steps are outlined in Exodus 12:12-13:

For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the L-RD. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. (Exodus 12:12-13)

What an awesome promise from these scriptures! When we apply the blood of Jesus to our hearts (trust and believe in Him), G-d promises to do something. While executing judgment, He will pass over us, meaning we receive a pardon when He sees the blood applied to our hearts just as He passed over the Israelites and others who applied the blood on the outside of their dwelling places. It is important to note that this Passover or pardon comes when G-d “sees” the blood. Therefore, just knowing about the blood, knowing the instructions alone in Exodus 12, did not save the Israelites from judgment and death. It was only when the blood was actually applied where He could see it did the pardon take effect. The same is applicable in the spiritual sense today with us. Just because we hear and know G-d’s word, doesn’t obligate G-d to pass over us. There are many people today who know about Jesus and even respect and regard His ministry and work in high esteem. However, knowing and applying what you know are two different actions. Knowledge without application is of very little use. Therefore, to complete this “born again” process, you must apply the knowledge of Jesus Christ and His sacrifice to your life. G-d who sees the heart and true intent of every person can search those hearts to see if the blood has been applied. When the blood is applied, the first steps in the redemption plan (Passover) and the start of a right relationship with G-d occur.

Jesus as the Fulfillment of Passover, the First Appointment!

The feasts or appointments we mentioned earlier are both a roadmap for G-d’s plan and a step-by-step process for how to establish a fruitful relationship with Him. But we still need to show how G-d is faithful and always on-time in keeping these appointments. Since the first four appointments have been fulfilled, we need to show how and when they were fulfilled. We have been discussing Passover as both the first appointment

and the first step in the process of G-d's plan for us, so we will look now at when and how G-d showed up to meet this appointed date.

In the Gospel of John it tells us that Jesus represents this sacrificial lamb that we have been looking at in Exodus. The verse states, "behold the Lamb of G-d, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). The book of Revelation also has several references to Christ as the slain Lamb (Revelation 5:6-12, 7:14, 12:11). So we see that Jesus is this Lamb of G-d whose sacrifice is the basis for our pardon (Passover). But there is more proof to support this idea. Move now to John 12. Here is where the analysis of the Jewish day starts to come into play.

Then Jesus six days before the Passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. (John 12:1)

We see that the Gospel of John places Jesus at Lazarus' home six days before Passover or the eighth day of the first month (Nisan). Now please recall how we said earlier, from Exodus 12 that the lamb is brought into the house on the tenth day of the month.

There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. (John 12:2)

I take some liberties here based upon the fact that the Jewish day starts and ends at 6:00 pm. The verse above indicates that Jesus had supper at Lazarus' house. I don't know about you, but I normally have supper in the evening. So we could assume here that Jesus stays into the next day past 6:00 pm in the evening. In other words, he arrives at the house sometime before 6:00 pm on the eighth day of the month, and stays through supper which at 6:00 pm would be the ninth day. This was confusing to me at first since I was still thinking in terms of our typical day, which runs from midnight to midnight. But we must remember during this time in the Bible that 6:00 pm begins a new day and not midnight.

"On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem" (John 12:12). Here we see that on the next day, Jesus has his triumphant entry into Jerusalem. We typically call this "Palm Sunday." But when is this next day? If Jesus has supper and it is assumed he stayed past 6:00 pm or spent the night, which would be the ninth day, the "next day" here in verse 12 would be the tenth day of the month. If indeed it is the tenth day, which I'm convinced it is because of the

consistency of the word, then we can see that the timeline outlined to the children of Israel in Exodus 12 is being fulfilled by Jesus as he enters the great city of G-d on the same day that the Passover lamb is brought in from the fields and into the house. And where does Jesus go once he enters the city on this date? In Luke 19:45-46 (see also Matthew 21:12 and Mark 11:15), Jesus arrives at the temple and casts out the money changers. Isn't that interesting! The lamb in Exodus 12 is brought into the house on the tenth day of the first month. The lamb is then examined for any faults or blemishes during the four-day period between the tenth day and the actual Passover on the fourteenth day (Exodus 12:5). Additionally, the children of Israel were to remove all leaven from their homes in conjunction with the feast of Unleavened Bread (Exodus 12:15). So here in the book of John we see Jesus coming into the city on the tenth and he purges the leaven (leaven represents sin in the Bible) out of the temple by chasing the sinful money changers from G-d's house.

What about the search for blemishes? We can find in the Gospels that during the time from his entry into Jerusalem until his death, Jesus himself is examined for blemishes and no one can find any fault in him (1 Peter 1:18-20). Jesus in the Gospels is examined by a number of persons and groups to include the chief priests, two high priests, scribes, Pilate, even the thief on the cross. None could find anything wrong with Jesus. Remember he was killed and accused of calling himself the Son of G-d! Today, thousands of years later, I too have examined Jesus for myself and for my own life, and I can find no fault in him or his ministry. As such, we see John the Baptist's claim that Jesus was the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world starting to take shape, just as the Passover Lamb symbolically atones for our sins. The comparison between Jesus and the Passover celebration outlined in Exodus does not stop there. When Jesus was crucified, we find in Matthew 27:45-50 and Luke 23:44-46 that Jesus actually died during the ninth hour on Passover or 3:00 pm on the fourteenth day of the month. Remember the explanation we provided earlier from Exodus 12:5 that "between the evenings" meant between the afternoon hours which would be around 3:00 pm or the ninth hour when counting down from 6:00 am (when the Jewish morning begins). So what we have is when the Passover lambs are killed around 3:00 pm or the ninth hour, at the exact same time the Son of G-d dies on the cross. Truly he is the Lamb of G-d. This can not be mere coincidence! It proves that what G-d shows us in the Old Testament is truly fulfilled in Christ--He keeps His word!

After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished:...(John 19:28-30)

Appointment Number Two, Unleavened Bread

We mentioned in Leviticus 23 that the second feast or appointment falls the day following Passover. This appointment or feast is called Unleavened Bread and occurs on the fifteenth day of the first month (Nisan). As we mentioned earlier in Chapter 4, the first four feasts have already been fulfilled. If we agree under such insurmountable evidence that Christ through his death on the exact date outlined in Leviticus 23 and at the time instructed in Exodus 12, fulfilled the Passover, let's see when the second appointment which occurs on the very next day, is fulfilled.

John 19:31, states that "The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away" (John 19:31). We must study this verse closely to see the link between Leviticus and Exodus. The situation is that Christ has been hanging with the two thieves on the cross. The Jewish leadership is concerned however because the Sabbath day is approaching. What Sabbath day? Was Saturday approaching and was Christ actually crucified on Friday? John makes a point to clearly state this was a special Sabbath and not the normal Saturday Sabbath. This was a high day or special convocation which was treated as a Sabbath day. Remember our earlier explanation on this matter. If it is already Passover, then what is this special Sabbath high holy day mentioned in John 19:31? Leviticus 23:7 states the first day of Unleavened Bread is treated as a holy convocation and no work is done on this day. It's pretty clear to me that the Jews are concerned with the preparation for the second feast or appointment which is Unleavened Bread. The land would be considered defiled if the bodies were left on the cross during this special day. The Jews took great precautions to remain ceremonially clean when celebrating the feasts. An example of this is found in John 18:28 when Jesus was sent to Pilate, the Jews would not enter the judgment hall to prevent being defiled before they could eat the Passover meal. Therefore, it was critical to the Jews that the bodies not be left on the cross. It makes sense when looking at John 19:31 why the leaders approach Pilate and ask him to break the executed men's legs. During a crucifixion,

those hung could find temporary relief and more air by pushing up with their legs. Breaking the legs prevented this option and hastened death. The Roman officials certainly would not take the condemned men down prior to their death sentence being carried out; the Jews then requested that the soldiers break their legs so the men would die more quickly. This would allow the dead bodies to be taken down before the next feast/appointment, which was Unleavened Bread.

This presents a problem if Jesus is truly the Passover Lamb of G-d. In Exodus 12:46, we see that no bone of the lamb can be broken. No bone in Jesus' body should be broken in order to be consistent with G-d's instructions. The Jews desire to break his bones. Reading further into John 19:32-34 reveals that while the soldiers broke the legs of the two criminals who were crucified with Christ, when they came to Jesus, he was already dead. We have already seen that Christ died at 3:00 pm. But why were the Jews in such a rush? Well, remember the next day for the Jews begins at 6:00 pm; therefore, they had only three hours before the next day begins. Christ was crucified on the fourteenth and 6:00 pm would usher in the fifteenth day or the second appointment which is Unleavened Bread. This would have been a special holy convocation as we saw earlier in Leviticus 23 where these feasts were treated like special Sabbath days. This also explains why Jesus' body may not have been fully prepared for burial. Joseph and Nicodemus requested permission to take Jesus' body. They must have been in a hurry to prepare the body since John 19:42 states: "There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulcher was nigh at hand."

They laid Jesus in Joseph's tomb because it was nearby, and they too were in a hurry to put the body away and prepare for the feast. This is consistent with Luke 24:1 where we see the women coming early to the tomb on Sunday bringing spices. This was probably to complete the body preparation since it was likely done hastily by Joseph and Nicodemus. So what do we have after looking at all this? Simply that G-d was on-time again for the second appointment (Unleavened Bread), which Jesus fulfilled yet again when he was buried on the fifteenth day of the first month. Therefore, Passover represents Christ's death (first appointment), and Unleavened Bread represents Christ's burial (second appointment). Just as unleavened bread represents bread without leaven (sin), Jesus is the sinless example of the bread of life.

Appointment Number Three, First Fruits

Jesus was raised from the dead on the feast of First Fruits. Why? G-d told Israel thousands of years earlier when He set up these feasts or appointments. Because of this we can say with full assurance, these first three feasts have been fulfilled through Jesus Christ.

Leviticus 23:11 says “And he shall wave the sheaf before the L-rd, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.” There are different opinions on when First Fruits actually occurs. Some of the confusion lies in determining which Sabbath G-d is referring to. It is unclear whether this is the weekly Sabbath (Saturday) or the high holy convocation day which we mentioned earlier when discussing the second appointment, Unleavened Bread. We personally believe G-d intended for the feast to be celebrated the day after the weekly Sabbath, which would allow Jesus to fulfill His three days and nights in the earth or grave (see Matthew 12:40, 17:21, 20:17; Mark 8:31, Mark 10:32, John 2:18-23). The other theory of celebrating the feast after the special High Holy Day of Unleavened Bread would place the feast on the sixteenth day of the month of Nisan and just two days after Passover. Another reason we believe that First Fruits occurs after the weekly Sabbath is the wonderful way G-d delivers Israel out of Egypt and the number of days it takes from their deliverance from Egypt to their own physical and spiritual baptism. We will look closer at this journey a bit later.

John 20:1 states: “The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark unto the sepulcher, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulcher.” When is the first day of the week? My calendar says it’s Sunday, the day after Saturday. Mary comes and sees that Jesus has risen on this day. Appointment day! Just as the first cuttings (a sheaf) are waved before the L-rd, Jesus represents the “first fruit” of those who are resurrected in Him. First Fruit is a promise of more to come. From an agricultural perspective, it is the promise of a good harvest. For us, Jesus’ resurrection is the promise that more believers will follow. James 1:18 says “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruit of his creatures.” Jesus is also called our first fruit in 1 Corinthians 15:23. Acts 26:23 says “That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.” Why would the Bible and New Testament make these references and comparisons if there was not a strategically designed link between Jesus’ resurrection and this feast day? Indeed, we are firm believers Jesus fulfilled this appointment.

There is so much, much more we could say on this. David and I have taught several classes on the feasts and its taken months to complete. We still seem to leave significant bits of information off. An in-depth feast study is not the purpose of this book. For now we want to continue to lay the foundation for better understanding the Beatitudes and raise your interest level in the awesome story and intent behind these feasts which G-d calls His appointments with us.

Appointment Number Four, Weeks or Pentecost

And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the

L-RD. Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals; they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baken with leaven; they are the firstfruits unto the L-RD. (Leviticus 23: 15-17)

This fourth feast or appointment in the cycle is known by several names. Indeed, several of the feasts are recognized by more than one name much like Christmas and Thanksgiving celebrations. This feast refers to the counting of the *omer* which is a Hebrew word meaning “sheaf or measure.” This feast is referred to as the feast of Weeks since the Bible states seven weeks are counted from First Fruits until this fourth feast begins. After counting seven weeks (forty nine days), Leviticus 23 states the day after the counting of weeks (or counting of the omer) shall be when this fourth appointment will be fulfilled. This would be day fifty from the feast of First Fruits. The Greek word for fiftieth is Pentecost, hence the name that we often call it today. For purposes of this book, we will call this fourth feast Pentecost.

It is during Pentecost that G-d “marries” Israel and establishes a covenant or agreement with them when He gives them the Torah or Law. When Israel agrees to the terms of G-d’s covenant (see Exodus 24:7-8), they become a nation under G-d at Mount Sinai. Notice also in the scripture we printed at the top of this section from Leviticus 23:15-17 that two loaves of bread are part of the offering on this day. Also notice that the two loaves are of equal size and baked with leaven. You may recall earlier that when we covered Passover and the feast of Unleavened Bread, the leaven represented sin in the Bible (1 Corinthians 5:6-8). So why would G-d accept any leaven in a

sacrifice to Himself if leaven represents the very thing which hinders our relationship with Him? We will answer this question shortly.

As we mentioned before, these first four appointments have been fulfilled as G-d promised. So when was Pentecost fulfilled? This one is pretty easy to track. In the New Testament, Jesus points to the fulfillment of Pentecost by referring to the sending down of the Holy Spirit upon them. In John 14, Jesus speaks about the Father sending the Comforter or Spirit of Truth. Later in the same chapter he calls this Comforter the Holy Ghost which will dwell inside of us. John 16 also shows Jesus stating that when he leaves, a Comforter will follow and he outlines some of the roles this Comforter or Spirit of Truth will play in our lives. The book of Acts however, is where we see the fulfillment documented quite clearly. In Acts 1, Jesus has been seen for forty days after his death (Acts 1:3). He tells his disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the coming of G-d's promise of the Holy Ghost (Acts 1:4-5).

Why Jerusalem? We could spend a whole chapter on this as a study by itself, but briefly, Pentecost was one of only three of the feasts where the Jews were instructed to come up to the city of Jerusalem to celebrate. The other two feasts were Unleavened Bread and the feast of Tabernacles (see Deuteronomy 16:16). The city would be packed during Pentecost so you can imagine G-d using this time and place to get His message across to a larger audience. Jesus tells them the purpose of this gift, which is to give them power to be witnesses for him throughout the earth (Acts 1:8). Acts 2:1-2, records the account where the disciples receive the promise of the Holy Ghost. In Acts 2:1, it plainly states that "the day of Pentecost was fully come." Acts 2:4 states that at this time they were filled with the Holy Ghost. What Jesus had promised and they had been waiting for was delivered at the appointed time, a feast day first revealed in Leviticus 23. Notice in Acts 2:5 that in Jerusalem on this same day, there were Jews from every nation. Why? Because Pentecost was one of the three feasts where they all would have gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate. The rest of Acts 2 features Peter's sermon and the conversion of about 3,000 people believing in the risen Jesus Christ and trusting in him as the Messiah or promised one to come (Acts 2:41). With this, the early church is started and later Gentiles are included in the body of believers as the Gospel is spread. We see clearly that G-d has remained faithful in meeting each of the first four appointments as outlined in Leviticus.

What about the two loaves? The Jews become a nation when they received G-d's covenant. Evidence of this covenant is the giving of G-d's

Commandments. What day do you suppose these commandments were given? On the day of Pentecost! When does the church get started? In Acts 2, on the same day thousands of years later, it's fulfilled at Pentecost. The two equal loaves represent the Jewish and Gentile believers who are both united to G-d on this same day, the feast of Pentecost. Why the leaven? Look around. Is your church or body of believers perfect? Do you know of any perfect Gentile or Jewish believer? Are you perfect? Absolutely not, and there is no perfect church out there. Yet in Ephesians 5, it states that Christ died for this imperfect church. Jesus Christ died for you and me. Even though we are imperfect, He died for us. Because of His sacrifice, when we enter into a covenant relationship with G-d through the application of faith and trust in His word, we are accepted by G-d even though some leaven or imperfections remain in us and our fellowships. The reconciliation work of Jesus is seen in his fulfillment of the first three feasts (appointments). Does this mean G-d accepts or condones our sins and imperfections? No, of course not! The Bible teaches this in Galatians 2:17 and Romans 6:1-3. Instead, He desires that we strive to be holy and perfect like Him. Understanding that there are times when we fail and fall short, our attitude should be one of striving to continuously please G-d and protect our relationship with Him (which is so precious) by obeying and standing on His promises. This is the outworking and demonstration of our faith. And how do we protect this relationship, grow in faith, draw closer to Him, and become more Christ-like? One way is by rehearsing these feasts/appointments and to get ready for them. Another way is by applying the Beatitudes (we will show you how to apply the Beatitudes, I promise!). Again, we are using the feasts to demonstrate this step-by-step process that G-d has designed, which is the backdrop for better understanding and applying the principles of the Beatitudes.

There is another aspect of this that we should not overlook. G-d chooses the children of Israel. He delivers them through many miracles to serve as a witness to other nations. By being glorified through these mighty acts--the deliverance of the Jews, provision for their needs, and the gift of victory after victory among their enemies--G-d is glorified so that other nations might be saved. We see the same principles at work at Pentecost after the church is formed 3,000 souls are saved. We, like the Jewish nation are to be a light to the world. We do this under the power of the Holy Ghost provided on the day G-d appointed it--Pentecost!

The Steps or Process Approach to a Relationship with G-d

Earlier we mentioned a “process approach.” This is one of the foundational thoughts behind this book and understanding the Beatitudes. At this stage, we will again use the feasts to establish the basis for why we believe G-d uses a process approach. Through the basic understanding of the feasts, we can better appreciate and understand this step action approach that G-d uses to bring us into “right” relationship with Him. These steps outline the type of relationship He desires to have with us, as well as how to get there. That is why I call it a process approach. Since the children of Israel serve as our example, let’s see how G-d uses this process approach to demonstrate the steps we must take in both approaching and having a healthy relationship with Him. To do this, we must start again in the book of Exodus. Remember the key points we mentioned before:

- Egypt – represents a place of bondage. The spiritual application refers to Egypt as representing one being a slave to sin or the “old” man.
- Pharaoh – who was the ruler of Egypt, represents the spiritual application of being a servant to Satan and sin. Satan is in control of this arena and when we are in bondage to sin, he serves as our master or ruler.
- Moses – was the Jewish leader and chosen one of G-d who leads G-d’s people to freedom. He serves as a type of Christ-figure

Our position and basis for this book is that G-d has designed a step-by-step action plan or what we are calling a “process approach” to the application of the Beatitudes and a more abundant life and relationship with Him. We can see this process approach in how He deals with Israel. Exodus 12 shows us that the Passover occurred on the fourteenth of the first month (Nisan). It is on the fourteenth day that the lamb’s blood was applied to the door posts as directed by G-d. So the first step in the process for a right relationship with G-d is application of the blood of the lamb. Exodus 12:29 states that at “midnight the L-rd smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt.” Since the Jewish day begins at 6:00 pm and G-d executes judgment at midnight, the judgment comes on the fifteenth day of the first month. Pharaoh calls Moses and Aaron that same night (Exodus 12:31) and tells them to leave Egypt. Finally, they are free to go! They must leave in haste.

“And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste; for they said, We be all dead men” (Exodus 12:33).

As a result, Israel had to move out quickly on the fifteenth day of the month of Nisan. They took dough for baking and did not have time to put leaven or yeast in it to make it rise. G-d had earlier instructed that no leaven should be eaten or even on them during this time. Exodus 12:34, 39 show that they were in such a hurry, they didn't have time to prepare their food or add in the leaven. This all points to the second step in the process and G-d's consistency in having them rehearse the appointment of these feasts. What day do they leave Egypt? They leave on the fifteenth day of the month of Nisan, one day after Passover. Exodus 12:41 and 51 reveal they left on the “selfsame day.” What day is the selfsame day? Exodus 13: 3-4 states that Moses gave instructions for celebrating the feast of Unleavened Bread and links the exodus and flight to freedom from Egypt as occurring on this same day (Note: Exodus 13:4 says the name of the month was Abib, this was changed later to be called Nisan as seen in Nehemiah 2:1). You may still have some doubts even though all of these signs point to their exodus on the fifteenth day of the month. To drive this point home further, Numbers 33:3, replays Moses' account of the journey and states clearly that they departed “in the first month on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the morrow after the Passover.”

So now we have the first two steps in the process for relationship and abundant life. The first, is applying the blood of the lamb; the second is to leave the place of your bondage. For Israel, this is leaving Egypt. You may recall earlier we told you that it was a three-day journey into the wilderness (Exodus 3:18 and Exodus 5: 3). Exodus 13:17-18 shows that G-d led Israel by way of the wilderness to the Red Sea rather than letting them take a more direct route through the land of their enemies. This way the thought of war would not cause them to change their minds and return to Egypt.

And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that G-d led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for G-d said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt: But G-d led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt. (Exodus 13:17-18)

If we go back to the book of Numbers 33, we can follow the timeline for the children of Israel's journey to the Red Sea. Remember, Moses has

already told Pharaoh it was three-day's journey into the wilderness to sacrifice unto the L-rd. Exodus 13 confirms that G-d indeed led them by way of the wilderness. So its three days journey to get to the Red Sea. Numbers 33: 5-8 shows the three-day journey map. These verses show that they "pitched" camp three times. I don't know about you, but if I'm pitching camp, then I'm spending the night. So after they leave Egypt on the fifteenth, they pitch camp on the evening of the fifteenth in Succoth. They pitch again (sixteenth day of the month) at Etham (Numbers 33:6), and pitch camp again on the seventeenth before Migdol. So at the seventeenth day of Nisan, three days after Passover, they find themselves at the banks of the Red Sea. We know this since Numbers 33:8 states they departed from before Pihahiroth and passed through the midst of the sea into the wilderness. This is again consistent with the account in Exodus 14:9 where it states Pharaoh and his horsemen, and his army, pursued them (Israel) and overtook them camping (pitched) by the sea (Red Sea), beside Pihahiroth. In Exodus 14:13 of this same chapter, Moses says, "Fear ye not, stand still and see the salvation of the L-rd, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever." What day is this? We believe the "today" Moses is talking about is Nisan 17, or three days after Passover. The feast of Unleavened Bread (fifteenth day) is actually a travel day for Israel. Israel passes through the Red Sea and is saved. They bury their past and on the third day and they cross through the Red Sea on the other side. This is consistent with Jesus' fulfillment of these first three feasts/appointments and G-d plays it out in demonstration. So the exodus is a foreshadowing of what Jesus would do later. Israel celebrates Passover on the fourteenth, they start travel on the fifteenth where they in haste leave Egypt and leave their past behind. Jesus is likewise crucified on the Passover or the fourteenth day, buried for three days and is resurrected on the third day. Just as the Israelites celebrate a new life on the other side of the Red Sea, Christ arises into his new body as an example of first fruit for us. We see an earlier example of a new life out of baptism with Noah's Ark in Genesis 8:4 where the ark is described as resting out of the flood waters on the seventeenth day of the seventh month (after the calendar change in Exodus 12, this would now be Nisan 17). The flood serves as a type of baptism and it is interesting the G-d chooses what will later be Nisan 17 to be the date that the ark comes out of the flood waters.

The journey does not stop here, however, but instead, Israel is led through the wilderness to Mount Sinai. Since Leviticus states that the fourth appointment takes place 50 days after First Fruits, and we have already seen that Israel passes through the Red Sea during First Fruits, then it is safe to

conclude that they are at Mount Sinai on day 50 which would have been on the day of the feast of Pentecost. Since we know that G-d keeps His appointments, why not?

David and I believe children of Israel travel through the wilderness and arrive at Mount Sinai on the third day of the month (Sivan) which would have been around day 47. How can we know this? Exodus 19:1 helps support this view. "In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai" (Exodus 19:1). Now, understanding that Leviticus 23 states that 50 days after the Sabbath during the feast of First Fruits we are to celebrate Pentecost and that three days after Passover the children of Israel crossed the Red Sea, we can start tracking the timeline from Nisan 16. If we count the remaining days from Nisan 16 to the end of the month of Nisan, then adding the 30 days of the second month (each month of the Jewish lunar based calendar is 30 days), takes us up to 44 days (14 + 30). When Exodus 19:1 states "in the third month...on the same day," this "same day" means the third day of the month called Sivan. There are different opinions about whether the counting of the omer begins on the special high holy day (Sabbath) or the weekly Sabbath. This would place the counting at Nisan 17 and assume that Exodus 19:1 is really the first day of the month of Sivan and not the third. Both ideas place the giving of the Law on or about day 50, which is Pentecost. We prefer the idea of Pentecost being counted from First Fruits and Exodus 19:1 which points to the third day of the month and Israel at day 47.

And all the people answered together, and said, All that the L-RD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the L-RD. And the L-RD said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the L-RD. And the L-RD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes, And be ready against the third day: for the third day the L-RD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai. (Exodus 19:8-11)

The passage of scripture above shows how the children of Israel agreed to the commandments of the L-rd and gives them instructions to take three days to prepare themselves. On this third day after preparations, the L-rd would come down to confirm this covenant. Exodus 19:16 shows how on the third day the L-rd indeed reveals himself on the mount with thunder,

lightening, and clouds along with the sounding of the trumpet (called the First Trump). The commandments are given to Moses on this day at Mount Sinai. Now recall they camp on day 47, so adding the three days of preparation would make the giving of the Law on day 50 or Pentecost. We believe this because the scriptures we have shown you points to it, and we have a profound reference point in Leviticus 23, which outlines the appointments of the L-rd. Since G-d cannot lie (Hebrews 6:18) then we have safe assurance that He will keep His promises and appointments with us. Here we see the consistency of the word of G-d through the feasts and how He deals with Israel and believers. You may remember that we mentioned the scripture (Acts 2:41) shows that 3,000 are saved through the outpouring of the Holy Ghost in Acts. We can see that around the time of this same feast in Exodus 32:28, Israel became impatient and sinned, and about 3,000 men died. While the Old Testament and covenant shows death as our fate as a result of being unable to keep the L-rd's commandments, accepting Christ and the new covenant brings life and salvation to the believer.

The Process Approach

Looking at the story of the Exodus, we can see that G-d takes Israel through several specific steps which make up the process of salvation. All of these steps are spelled out in the feasts and appointments of the L-rd in Leviticus 23. This salvation process or the steps we must go through to have a right relationship with G-d, are demonstrated both through the feasts and the exodus story. Let's review these process steps and see how they relate to us today.

- Step one, Israel must apply the blood of the lamb to the doorposts and celebrate Passover.
- Step two, requires Israel to leave Egypt behind quickly, which points to repentance.
- Step three, is to bury the old desires and be baptized into a new life of trusting G-d's leading.
- Step four, is to obey His commandments and enter a relationship of faith in His promises. This produces righteousness based upon our faith (Genesis 15:6). This step also represents being filled and led by the Holy Spirit.

This same process holds true for every believer and every person who desires a real relationship with G-d. Our very salvation is based upon these process steps. In fact, we have practiced them perhaps totally unaware of the strategic linkage between the exodus of the Jews or the feasts. Let's examine the process steps as they apply to us today.

Step One: Step one is to have Passover by applying the blood of Jesus to the doorposts of our hearts. That means to turn from trusting in sin, the world, and our own strength, and trust instead in Jesus and his work on the cross. All of us who are saved believers had to perform this step first. Those reading this book who have not performed this in truth in their hearts are still lost and do not have the proper relationship with G-d. They are subject to judgment rather than being "passed over." This is indeed the first step in the process approach to abundant life. Each step has to be taken in order. Everything else you try to do for Christ is in vain without performing the first step. Unfortunately, that's why there are some people in the church who are still not ready and properly prepared for this appointment. What disappointment there will be when the Rapture occurs and people are left behind despite their good intentions and church attendance. This is because they have missed this critically important first step in the process. Again, knowledge of Jesus' sacrifice and actually applying it are two very different things. The feast we must rehearse related to this is Passover. The Jews in their exodus from slavery went through this step first; they had Passover!

Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.
(1 Corinthians 5:7-8)

Step Two: The second step is to leave the life of sin and trusting in oneself. That means repent! Repentance is choosing life instead of death! The children of Israel left Egypt immediately. We too must follow this step and leave behind the bondage of sin by burying the old self, the person we used to be. We must now walk in freedom by committing to abandon the sins that have placed us in the poor situation in which we may find ourselves. Too often we can find believers who have applied the blood, but remain in a long-distance relationship with G-d because they never change their mailing address from Egypt. These are the fleshy Christians of whom Paul speaks. They do not operate in the spirit, but are still in bondage in Egypt as slaves

to sin. This is not what G-d intended. He did not sacrifice His son for us to stay in bondage, but to be free. So the second step is to repent and leave the old sinful life and selfish pride behind. The feast or appointment we must rehearse related to this is Unleavened Bread. This is one area where we can do much damage. There are many who will not come to Christ and have Passover because of the hypocritical behavior of so-called Christians.

Step Three: The third step is to be baptized in the spirit. We see this same order in the normal process within our churches. Someone accepts the invitation to receive Christ, they claim repentance from their sins, and we baptize them. Step three requires that we do this truthfully in our hearts. While baptism is an outward sign and witness, unless it is done in the heart and in the spirit, all a person has done is get wet. Therefore, Step three requires that we walk in newness of life, putting off the flesh desires (old man or life) and beginning our new life in Jesus Christ. We must trust in His word and promises for our needs and salvation (Matthew 6:33). We have to live changed to be in the position of blessing and abundant life with G-d. A closer relationship with Him means completing this step. The feast we must rehearse related to this is First Fruits.

Step Four: Finally, you must put G-d's word in your heart and be a witness to others by showing them the way to truth and eternal life. This step requires that we do more than simply go through the motions of church attendance, but look to be an example by meeting the spirit and intent of G-d's commandments. The feast we must rehearse related to this is Pentecost. By living this appointment, we are obedient and we practice being led by the Spirit of G-d.

Now we have the foundational evidence to support the idea of a process approach and how the exodus and feasts demonstrate this. We do not believe it is a mere coincidence that the exodus steps are in the same order as the feasts. It is by design. G-d created this process to show us the steps to the type of relationship He desires to have with us. Since this is a book about the application and process steps for the Beatitudes, we will begin our discussion of them in the next chapter.

We have laid a foundation to prove the idea that G-d works in a designed process approach. We have also shown you the basics behind the first four feasts. There is so much more we would like to discuss about these feasts as we have just touched the surface, but this is beyond our scope at present. From the exodus and the feasts, we have now laid the ground work to begin

examining the Beatitudes in greater detail. Since we only have covered the first four feasts, we will next take the first four Beatitudes and see if there is a strategic link. We believe there is!

Chapter 5

The Beatitudes Linked to the Spring Feasts

So in Matthew 5, we see Jesus speaking to his disciples and probably the multitudes that had gathered. Regardless of the audience, He is certainly preaching this sermon to us today. Jesus ties each Beatitude to the word ‘blessed’ or happy. Let’s look at the first Beatitude and see if there is a link to the first feast.

*Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
(Matthew 5:3)*

We need to first get an understanding of what it means to be “poor in spirit.” I really enjoy David Brown’s description of this phrase from his Bible commentary. He points out that frequently, G-d’s true people are labeled “the poor” (the oppressed, afflicted, miserable) or the needy. Remember the state of the children of Israel; they were poor and certainly afflicted. When I think of a person who is physically poor, he or she is in need and cannot sufficiently meet their own basic needs. Webster defines it as “having little or no wealth and few or no possessions; poverty stricken; inferior, inadequate, humble, etc.” So we can see that being poor means you are someone who is in need and probably can use assistance. But how are the people Jesus speaks of poor? The verse states they are “poor in spirit.” So while they may also be physically poor or poor in the natural sense, the people Jesus describes in the first Beatitude are poor in spirit or poor on the inside. So the wealthy, while rich on the outside, may indeed lack true joy and satisfaction on the inside.

We can conclude that this is a deeply inward condition. Consider the design of the Old Testament tabernacle, which was outlined in three major parts (Outer Court, Holy Place, Holy of Holies). Paul describes believers as temples where G-d’s spirit dwells (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:19-20, and 2 Corinthians 6:16). Therefore, I will compare our structure to the way as G-d

designed the temple as described to Moses in Exodus 25:8-9. We have three parts as well, the flesh (Outer Court), soul (Holy Place), and spirit (Holy of Holies). Figure 1 below provides a basic outline of the relationship between the temple and our own bodies. We could spend another book writing about the relationship and strategic linkage between G-d's plan of salvation and the set up and furnishings of the tabernacle. I mention it here to prove a point and not engage in a full tabernacle study at this time. If G-d dwells in the inner most part of the tabernacle which was the Holy of Holies, where the ark of the covenant and the Mercy Seat are located (Hebrews 9:1-7), then where does G-d's presence dwell within us? Certainly it is not in the flesh, and not in our emotions and feelings. He dwells in our spirits. Remember Jesus told the woman at the well, "G-d is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). He did not say in soul or emotion, or in the flesh, but in the spirit is where true worship is found. When we worship in spirit and in truth, our emotions and flesh also fall in line with the leading of the spirit and participate in true worship. Any other worship is not what G-d is seeking. We could spend yet another book discussing worship, but the point is that "poor in spirit" describes a condition from deep within our inner most being. It's not a matter of being physically poor because even rich people with great wealth need Jesus. We all need Jesus! G-d is interested in a real relationship, not just whether you go to church or your fellowship and punch the clock without any conviction from within your spirit. In Figure 1 I added the "Way, Truth, and Life" in the arrow to show the type of relationship and life G-d desires to have with you. The "poor in spirit" appear to be those who are humble on the inside. They are broken and in need of assistance within their very spirits, which is the inner most part of a person.

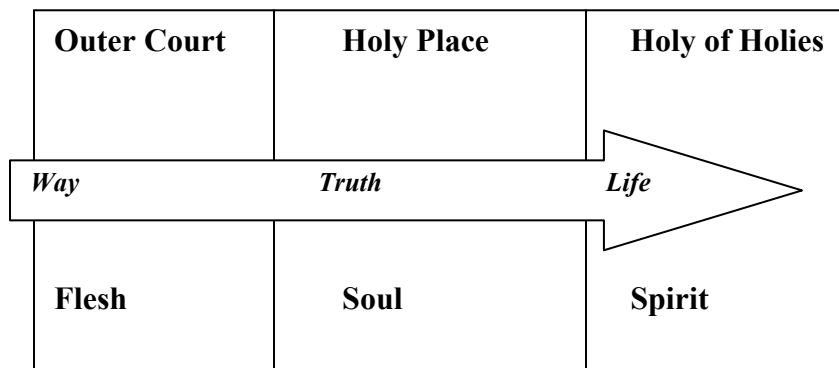


Figure 1, Tabernacle Diagram

As I considered the meaning of “poor in spirit,” the first thing that came to mind was horses. I have watched a few westerns in my day and my wife loves watching a good Saturday western. I remembered seeing wild horses on TV. I’ve only ridden a horse a few times and the ones I ride are truly broken and tame. I even had trouble getting my horse to gallop. But the wild horses I’ve seen are just that--wild! We often refer to a wild horse as a horse with a lot of “spirit.” A spirited horse is one that is not yet broken or tame. They are hard to ride and will not let you do so willingly. They will throw off their rider if they can. Now with these definitions and comparisons, let’s examine the connection to the feasts.

We believe being “poor in spirit” is the first step in G-d’s process approach for a relationship with Him. Jesus is reaffirming these process steps through the Beatitudes. Let’s look at the comparisons with the exodus. The children of Israel are in bondage in Egypt, and under affliction. They are physically poor, but certainly “poor in spirit” as well. While they may have been trusting in their own abilities and strength before, they surely have found their own efforts fruitless in easing their burdens. So Moses instructs them to place the lamb’s blood on their door posts and in doing so, G-d would pass over them in His judgment. Next they begin their new journey and relationship with G-d and follow His leading out of Egypt and into the wilderness toward the Promised Land. If the children of Israel were not poor in spirit and humbled, they could not have applied the blood. They would not have come into relationship with G-d. Instead they would not have relied on G-d and continued to trust their own efforts for relief and freedom. They certainly would not follow His leading if they were not humble enough to submit to His instructions. The result of not following His instructions or choosing His way through the application of the lamb’s blood would have meant death and judgment. The spirit of Passover and the meaning for us today is that we must take this first step which takes place on the inside. We must decide from deep within our spirits, to choose G-d.

How do we choose G-d if we are in bondage to sin and trusting in ourselves? We must come to a place in our lives where we realize we are in need. Not necessarily physical or material need, but a need deep within ourselves. We realize that our own strength and actions have placed us in a condition from which we can’t find a way out. We have fallen short, way short, of where we want to be and should be. We find ourselves humbled, our hearts are broken. Where our hearts were hard and unreceptive to G-d’s plan and love before, they are now broken up where the seed of His word can be sown.

High spirited people do not arrive at this point. People who still rely on their own works for salvation do not truly apply the blood of the Lamb. In essence, we are “poor in spirit” when we truly come to Jesus and accept his sacrifice by applying his blood to our hearts. Many have made this profession of faith, but remember the words in Exodus demonstrate that G-d looks to see if the blood has been applied and not simply what we know about Jesus. How does a person apply this blood again? We apply the blood by choosing to trust in G-d through Jesus Christ’s sacrifice, and turn from choosing our own self and sin for salvation. We stop doing things in our own strength. We then find the peace and blessed happiness promised in this first Beatitude. People who are poor in spirit deny themselves. Jesus states for us in Matthew 10:38-39 “And he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.”

One symbol of the cross is self-denial. Jesus again says, “...If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matthew 16:24). Here again we see the concept of a process approach demonstrated by Jesus’ words. He puts the steps in their proper sequence. You cannot achieve a secondary step and receive the true benefit without taking each step in its proper sequence. Therefore, taking the process approach, Jesus is saying quite simply:

First Step: *First, you must deny yourself.* That means you must stop trusting in your self. Your resources or your good deeds are not going to save your soul from judgment (Ephesians 2:8-9). In fact quite the contrary, it is sometimes our own works, and selfish desires that land us in situations in which we never intended to be in. You don’t need to have a prison sentence to figure this out.

Second Step: *The second step is take up your cross.* Jesus shows us how to do this by his example of taking up his own cross and walking to Calvary to be crucified. Jesus denied himself. He came to earth in a humbled state, under humble conditions. The Bible tells us he took off his glory (Philippians 2:3-8), was obedient to the Father, and earned perfection through this. Not that he wasn’t already perfect, but was even more perfected through obedience (Hebrews 5:4-9). He did not trust in himself as demonstrated during his temptation by Satan in the wilderness, but trusted in the living G-d. So we are to follow this example. We are to saddle up our proud spirits, selfish desires, and what we have been trusting before, and put it on the cross. In other words, through our

belief in G-d and the work of Jesus through his death and resurrection, we apply the blood of the Lamb. In effect, we take up our cross each day (Luke 9:23). We do not do this through daily, physical trips to Calvary, but through a spiritual journey where each day we sacrifice our self as Jesus did and continue to trust in Him. Each day we are to pour out our spirits.

Let's look at our earlier example of the tabernacle. The tabernacle had three major sections. Each had different furnishings, which also points to our process approach theory. In the outer court which represents our flesh, we find a particular piece of furniture, which is the Brazen Altar. The Brazen Altar is where the sacrifices are brought and burned to the L-rd. Interestingly, the Brazen Altar is the first piece of furniture where the Passover lamb would have been slain and sacrificed. This again points to a designed process approach and not mere coincidence. Just as the sacrifices were made in the outer court, we too must sacrifice our fleshly (outer court) desires. Just as Jesus' humility was evident before He went to Calvary to die on the cross, our first steps are to have a humble heart, and a poor spirit before we come to the place of sacrifice. The altar again points to the consistency of G-d's plan throughout the whole Bible. The sacrifice is the first step to relationship with G-d and we believe the first step in properly applying the Beatitudes.

Taking another look at our spirited horse example, a proud horse is difficult to ride and attempts to throw off its rider. A broken horse can be led and follows the directions of the rider. We cannot be led and we will not follow G-d's instructions for long if we maintain a proud spirit which continues to operate under its own guidance. A broken horse will not attempt to buck off its rider, and likewise, the true believer will follow the direction of the Holy Ghost. We will not try and throw off the author of our faith and salvation but will trust in His leadership rather than our own strength. In fact, the joy of the L-rd and His salvation through the work of Jesus Christ is our strength (Nehemiah 8:10).

What about the feasts? We have spent so much time reviewing the first four appointments of the L-rd, what is the link? Here again, Passover as the first appointment is consistent with so many other passages in the Bible. Passover represents the freedom of Israel from bondage. It represents how people who are poor in spirit were delivered by applying the blood of the Lamb. Jesus is the Passover Lamb who fulfills this appointment by being crucified on the very date and hour outlined in Leviticus 23 and Exodus 12.

He takes up his cross on Passover. This is all by design that Passover is listed as the first feast or appointment in Leviticus. It's a design consistent with the structure of the tabernacle, the words of Jesus, and his life and ministry. It is indeed the process approach used by G-d to show us the way and assure us that He will keep His appointments, word, and promises to us.

Being poor in spirit is a frame of mind. It means taking an honest look at yourself. Some people are vain and take a false view of themselves. However, the poor in spirit are rich in the knowledge of their real situation. Now there is a benefit associated with this first step of the process. Those who are poor in spirit and have applied the blood of the lamb, are happy and blessed because they now have a right to something they didn't have before. They receive the kingdom of heaven. They not only have it now, but they will have it also in a future state (see John 10:10). What does this mean to us? When does a believer get "saved" from G-d's judgment and their sins? When is a person saved from hell and eternal separation from G-d? It is when we sincerely accept and apply the blood of Jesus to our hearts and G-d sees it, that we are saved (Romans 10:9-13). Being saved means becoming an heir to the promises of G-d. One of these promises is that we inherit the kingdom of G-d!

If we have the kingdom of G-d and His promises by taking just this first step, why do we have six other feasts and six other Beatitudes? G-d didn't intend for us to have a long distance relationship with Him. If we are in the outer court where the sacrifices are made and G-d dwells in the Holy of Holies, how do we get closer to where G-d is so we can have a closer relationship and greater blessings? In His mercy, G-d shows us the way through a process approach. The feasts and the Beatitudes map out the specific process steps we are to take to live in close fellowship with G-d and have a more powerful faith walk. Too many believers are content to escape hell and not draw any closer to full freedom in Christ. Jesus didn't die and have the veil of the temple that protected the Holy of Holies torn in two so we would not enter into a closer fellowship with G-d. Instead, the Bible calls us to come boldly before the throne of G-d (Hebrews 10:19-23). What is the path to this throne? If G-d dwells in the Holy of Holies or in our spirits, then how we get to the innermost part of the tabernacle is already laid out for us in the Beatitudes, the feasts, and even the tabernacle structure itself. All three outline the same step-by-step process that we take to be led by the Spirit instead of the flesh. Christians who stop at the first step in the process, and hang out in the outer court, are those same Christians who Paul calls carnal believers (Romans 8 and 1 Corinthians 3:1-4). They are not led

by the Holy Spirit; instead they still are controlled by their fleshly desires. They are still living in bondage in Egypt. This is not what G-d intends for us. Jesus in his sermon tells those listening and now us, exactly what we must do to be saved, happy, and blessed! Don't you want to be blessed?

So with our review of just this first Beatitude, we can see the linkage between not only the feasts, but this process approach that we believe G-d has designed to help us reach Him and be blessed. We are convinced that the feasts are a step-by-step process approach to G-d's plan of salvation and the steps we as believers must take for a more abundant life and to secure the promises of G-d. We also believe that this same process approach applies to the Beatitudes as well.

Let's look at the second Beatitude in relation to the second feast we covered earlier. The appointment of Unleavened Bread was fulfilled in the burial of Christ on this same day. It is also the same day the children of Israel left Egypt. The second Beatitude tells us that:

Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted. (Matthew 5:4)

David Brown in his commentary observes that this second Beatitude is a compliment of the first. Our mourning is the emotional response that follows from being poor in spirit. Looking for linkage between this Beatitude and the second feast (Unleavened Bread), I started to ponder what the term meant to me personally. When I think of mourning, it's usually associated with death. I typically use the term when pertaining to a funeral or the loss of a loved one. Then it hit me! Unleavened Bread is associated with the burial of Christ. He died on the cross and on the feast of Unleavened Bread he is buried in a tomb borrowed from Joseph (John 19). Certainly this was a time of mourning for his disciples. I now had a link between the second feast and the second Beatitude, but I still needed to understand what the spiritual application and message might be.

To seek the spiritual application, I began to think back at my own conversion experience. Isaiah 6 came to mind. In this passage, Isaiah has a vision of G-d sitting upon His throne in the heavenly temple. Isaiah observes G-d's glory and being in His presence, he sees his own unworthiness. In verse 5 he cries, "Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the L-rd of hosts" (Isaiah 6:5). I then thought about the popular song by Mercy Me called "I Can Only Imagine."

A wonderful song about how we might react when we who believe come face-to-face with our L-rd and Savior. I don't know about you, but when I see Him, I think I will be very apologetic, when comparing myself to such glory.

In the book of Nehemiah, the Bible outlines the restoration of Israel. At this point in history, a small number of Israelites have returned to their homeland from their bondage in Babylon. They were sent into captivity as a result of their sins and disobedience. Now as former captives, they arrive to find their once proud homeland in ruins. They are broken hearted or for our purposes they are "poor in spirit." It is then that the Book of the Law is read to the people. Please note their response in Nehemiah 8:8-9:

So they read in the book in the law of G-d distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. And Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the L-rd your G-d; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law. (Nehemiah 8:8-9)

So why did the people mourn and weep? They heard and understood the Law which was G-d's word and expectations for them. After hearing and understanding G-d's will, they clearly saw that they had fallen far from the mark and expectations of the Most High G-d. They mourned because they realized their present state. The closer we grow in relationship to G-d and observe His glory, the more unworthy we see ourselves in comparison. Isaiah stated that our righteousness is as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). It is interesting to note that previous generations of Israelites did not respond the same humble way when prophets like Ezekiel and Jeremiah presented the word of G-d. Instead of seeking understanding and repentance, they persecuted these anointed messengers. But now in their broken condition (poor in spirit), they can receive it. Again, we can see the step action process approach at work. You do not arrive at this point of repentance and mourning until you have first been "poor in spirit." Therefore, the natural response after the brokenness of being poor in spirit is to mourn. We mourn over the destitute spiritual state (and often the physical state) in which we find ourselves due to our previous choices to rebel against G-d and serve sin.

As I recall my own conversion I believe I mourned for several reasons. First, I mourned because I recognized my sorry state and how much I needed G-d. One of my daughters recently received this same revelation

when she attended a Christian youth rally in Washington, D.C. When I asked how she enjoyed it, her reply was, “Dad, I realize I’ve got a long way to go! I’m not living close to where I’m supposed to be in G-d.” From her anointed experience at the rally, she came to realize that while she was a good kid, she was far from where she was supposed to be in G-d’s eyes. When you start to acquire the mind of Christ, you can see clearly how far you have strayed and how far you still have to go. Thank G-d for His grace and mercy.

Second, I also mourned over the past pleasures I was giving up which had previously fueled my fleshy desires. Remember, something is dying when you mourn and in this case, it was pride and self as I turned to trusting in Jesus for my salvation. You don’t want to look back with pleasure at your time in bondage. So I not only mourned the loss of the old life that I had buried, but I also mourned the fact that I had taken pleasure in these old sinful activities. I mourned over my previous mistakes now that I had a better understanding of the truth. Let’s go back quickly to Exodus 12 and see what happens during the celebration of Passover. After the children of Israel apply the blood of the Passover Lamb, the next verses outline G-d’s instructions for the elements of Passover (Seder Meal). “And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it” (Exodus 12:8).

The bitter herbs represented the bitter bondage that the children of Israel faced in Egypt. After learning the spirit and intent G-d has for celebrating our own individual Passover, I realized that I was missing the mark. Many times I had traveled home to my old stomping grounds or visited old friends from my neighborhood or college. We would talk about the “good old days.” I spoke of them with fondness even though these were wild times (certainly not a spirit of brokenness) when I was in bondage. I realized that instead of longing for or celebrating these days, I should have thought of them “with bitter herbs” as a reminder of how lost and deep in sin I was. They were certainly not the good old days, but instead the times of my renewed relationship with G-d have become the true “good old days.” In my youth, I was full of myself but not filled with G-d. My self had not been poured out yet, so there was no room for G-d to dwell. To help us make this more personal, when you think of the song “I Can Only Imagine,” can you imagine yourself standing in the very presence of G-d and the Son celebrating your sinful past? “Hey Jesus, remember that high school prom I went to, my date, and how I wanted to talk about the hereafter (but I didn’t mean heaven). Remember the fun I used to have when I went bar-hopping

and I left you outside the bar because you were not invited in? That was a great time huh L-rd?" These times are not what we would be celebrating or reminding the L-rd about.

Instead, we should mourning the time we wasted and weeping over the sins for which He died. Is that more in line with what you would imagine yourself doing in the presence of His glory? There are and will be times when we rejoice in His presence, but the process begins when we first become poor in spirit and then mourn over our failure to measure up to G-d's standards. I praise G-d that He doesn't leave us in this broken state of mourning. He instead He extends His grace and mercy.

We also see a link between the promises associated with this Beatitude. They who mourn shall be comforted. We find comfort in knowing that we are forgiven. Recall in the book of Nehemiah that as the people are weeping, they are instructed to not weep, but rejoice. Reading further into that passage, they are to rejoice just as G-d and the angels rejoice at the repentance and salvation of one lost soul (Luke 15:10). We too should be comforted. By comparison, the disciples mourn the death and burial of Jesus, but those who mourn are soon comforted. They mourn the loss of their leader and their actions in deserting Him in the garden and Peter mourns his denial. Yet they are later comforted. Indeed, they who mourn shall be comforted. We see the same concept at work with Israel. They are trapped by Pharaoh's army, which is in hot pursuit. They experience despair, mourning, and even a lack of faith as they see no way out. However, Moses instructs them to stand still and see the glory of the L-rd. They are delivered, and their mourning turns to joy and comfort as they sing songs of their deliverance. Yes, they are comforted. Now back to the song "I Can Only Imagine." After mourning, there is joy that I can stand before His throne boldly by the blood of Jesus (see Hebrews 10:17-22).

This thought takes us into the third Beatitude which we look at in relation to the third feast, First Fruits. First Fruits has been fulfilled since this was the appointed day that Christ rose from the grave. It also corresponds to the crossing of the Red Sea by the children of Israel. When mapping the timeline, their crossing of the Red Sea corresponds to the timing of this feast and is consistent with the message G-d has communicated throughout His word. After they crossed the Red Sea, their Egyptian enemies were destroyed behind them. Their old life of bondage was over and they began to walk in a new life led by G-d's presence.

Again, we see 1 Corinthians 10 confirms Israel's spiritual journey is the same one that we as believers today must take in order to have a proper relationship with G-d. The Bible declares that Israel is an example for us. From their example in history, we learn how to respond and how not to respond to G-d. Their history points also to future prophesy. There is much we can learn about our own walk from these historical examples. We need to apply their spiritual messages. Solomon wrote "There is no new thing under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:9). Israel's history gives us a better understanding of what is going on around us and what will occur in the latter days, which I believe are unfolding before us. The feast of First Fruits is also the promise of more to come. Through the feasts and the Beatitudes; G-d reveals His plan for the future to us. In fact, Isaiah writes, "He declares the end from the beginning" (Isaiah 46:10). We can also see in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-5 shows that we should have knowledge and be aware of the timing of His plans for us. He is so amazing! With the background of this feast established, let's see the possible linkage between the third Beatitude and this feast.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. (Matthew 5:5)

The trait of meekness is not something I would yearn for in the natural sense. The very thought of being called "meek" makes my flesh crawl, yet my spirit rejoices and seeks to emulate this trait. By definition, meekness indicates people who are humble, soft, gentle, pushovers, etc. Therefore, I think it important to get more of a biblical definition for this trait. I recall two examples of people who are called "meek" in the Bible. One person is Moses. Numbers 12:3 states Moses was very meek above all men on the earth. That's interesting since Moses once killed a man, stood up before Pharaoh, and faced ridicule from the children of Israel. Certainly he was no pushover.

The other person is Jesus Christ himself. In Matthew 11:28-30, He states "for I am meek and lowly in heart." Certainly our Savior was no pushover. He confronted the spiritual leaders of the day, chased out money changers from the temple, and placed himself in dangerous situations. How many of us, knowing the price of following and obeying G-d's will, would have willingly submitted ourselves to such a fate and continued to stand on the promises of G-d? This same Jesus merely spoke the words "I am He," and the guards in the garden fell over (John 18:3-6). He was no pushover!

Perhaps a better definition may be that those who practice meekness show mercy and kindness to others. Yes, they are humble and may suffer, but they are not weak. The meek are strong as they serve others and help those who are truly weak. The sad thing is the people who they serve probably do not know they are weak. Galatians 6:1 shows us how we are to respond to a person who has backslidden, but returns to the fellowship of believers. We who are spiritual are to restore them in the spirit of meekness. That means showing them mercy and kindness. We who are truly spiritual and walking in the Spirit understand that we need the same mercy extended to us.

Here we begin to see the logical progression from the first two Beatitudes. How is it that we can demonstrate meekness to others? If are poor in spirit (broken), and understand and mourn over our own sins, we can demonstrate mercy and kindness to others who are in the same state. We have come to realize that even as we mourn, we know that G-d has passed over us in judgment. This helps produce the spirit of meekness that we should be demonstrating to others. The Bible supports this further. Look at the parable of the unmerciful servant in Matthew 18:

*Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.
(Matthew 18: 23-35)*

This parable shows us what not to do. We are to demonstrate kindness and mercy. As the parable states, we should have compassion on our fellow servants even as the L-rd has had pity on us. We put ourselves in a very dangerous situation and outside the will of G-d when we do not practice such meekness.

So there is a logical and natural (perhaps I should say spiritual) progression. We were once poor, broken, and in need of having our unpayable debt forgiven by the King. The same Master forgave us of this debt and we found mercy with Him. As we look at the mercy we have received, we should mourn over our situation with bitter herbs and not repeat the actions that got us in the terrible situation in the first place. With our debt forgiven, we should move out in life with a new attitude. Walking in newness of life means we remember the great mercy that forgave our debt and enables us to demonstrate the same mercy to others. The unforgiving servant in the parable failed to apply the third (and perhaps the second) Beatitude and he faced the King's wrath and judgment. This parable describes our own spiritual state at one time. In fact, Jesus states the kingdom of heaven is like this scenario. We had a sin debt we could not pay and therefore we were subject to judgment. By applying the three feasts of Passover, Unleavened Bread, and First Fruits, we can demonstrate the characteristics that the unforgiving servant failed to display. By applying the first three Beatitudes, we can achieve the proper results. In effect, Christ is showing us the step-by-step process for putting on the characteristic of meekness.

In Colossians 3, there is another link between the third Beatitude and the feast of First Fruits.

Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all. Put on therefore, as the elect of G-d, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. (Colossians 3:9-14)

I've heard this passage preached in a sermon or used as a teaching tool numerous times. It is excellent in teaching what to put on and take off after we are saved. Look at the progression of the verses. The chapter opens with

the following verse, “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of G-d” (Colossians 3:1). So if we overlay the feasts as a template here, we can see how this chapter relates to First Fruits. There are several verses in the chapter that reminds believers of our salvation by stating, “for ye are dead” (Colossians 3:3) and “mortify therefore your members” (Colossians 3:5). The rest of Colossians 3 points to what we should “put off” or bury. This is consistent with Unleavened Bread which occurs after Passover (after you submit yourself to Christ).

Next, the chapter points to what to “put on” or the traits you should start to demonstrate after salvation. Notice the order; this is not a coincidence. G-d remains consistent with His word throughout the Bible. The same order we see in the feasts is the same order we see with the children of Israel. It is the same order we see here in Colossians, which is the same order we also see in the Beatitudes. This is a process, ordained and designed by G-d which commands both our understanding and application. Therefore, after burial, we take off the old man (old clothes and characteristics), and must put on new clothes or the new man. The unforgiving servant did not put on new clothes, since he never took off the old man despite receiving the King’s mercy. What a lesson! In Colossians we see we are to change our garments. Colossians 3:12-13 tells us we are to put on bowels of mercies (sincere and heartfelt mercy), kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, and long-suffering. Again, the order is important. You must first die and put off the old man before putting on your new suit of spiritual clothes. The process cannot be taken out of sequence to be effective. We would not normally put clean clothes on top of dirty ones to wear outside. However, we do great damage to the gospel by portraying ourselves as Christians, but still walking in the old man, wearing old clothes.

I often think back to a story about my own son, when he was about twelve, he began getting active scent glands. I told him he needed to start using deodorant. One day when I picked him up from school, he brought with him a most pungent odor. To be specific, he stunk! I quickly ordered him to get home, get into the bathroom, wash under his arms, and put some deodorant on! Several minutes later, I went back to check on him. By now, the whole living room smelled like him! I was furious and asked him if he had done what I instructed. He said he had washed up and put on deodorant. I inspected the bathroom for evidence, and he indeed was telling the truth. I just couldn’t figure out why the smell was still there. Then I noticed something--he still had on the same funky shirt! He never changed

his shirt! From this life experience, there is a spiritual lesson for us all. We do much damage to the kingdom when we accept Christ, but do not give Him control of our lives by wearing the same old slave clothes.

Now we see that we put on meekness only after the old clothes and old man have been buried. Therefore, the third Beatitude fits nicely with the third feast. We walk in newness of life bearing first fruit to the L-rd after our deliverance from the bondage of sin. Also notice that the traits outlined in Colossians 3:12-13 are consistent with the biblical definition of meekness which means to extend mercy, kindness, and humbleness of mind. This is also consistent with Jesus' depiction of himself where he says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

Imagine if Jesus said this to the children of Israel during the exodus. Where would he be speaking to them? Certainly the first phrase is an invitation to them while they are still in Egypt and under the heavy yoke of the Egyptian Pharaoh. Christ states if they come to Him, He will take off the yoke of bondage and put a new yoke on them which carries a much lighter burden. Look at the order of his statements. He addresses them using the same order outlined in the feasts. He uses the same order that the children of Israel actually followed, and remains consistent with the first three Beatitudes. The spiritual application is awesome! Christ calls to us to stop doing things under our own strength, to stop trying to repay a sin debt that we cannot possibly repay. He wants us to put off the yoke of our sin and bondage, and take on His yoke. Therefore, we must put on the yoke of Christ. What is this yoke of Christ? It is his example of meekness and humbleness of heart. It is having the mind of Christ. In putting on his yoke, we find rest for our souls, comfort for our mourning, and the promise of inheriting the earth as outlined in the third Beatitude.

Now what were the children of Israel promised? They were told that G-d would lead them into a new promised land flowing with milk and honey. Here too we see the meek shall inherit the earth or this Promised Land where they find rest. Just as the children of Israel found rest from the pursuit of their enemies when the Egyptians drowned in the Red Sea (during First Fruits), we can receive similar rest and the promise of a greater rest to come. This is only a partial fulfillment as we enjoy rest from relying on our own strength through trusting in G-d as He provides for us in the

“wilderness.” Remember He came to give us more abundant life (John 10:10). This inheritance also points to a future and greater fulfillment when we actually receive the promise of the Father and enter into His eternal rest. The feasts and the Beatitudes both point to a partial fulfillment and a greater fulfillment as outlined in end-times prophecies. Be encouraged! He loves us so much that He has laid out, step-by-step, how we can approach Him, have a fruitful relationship with Him, and enter His rest both now and in the promises to come. Truly He is faithful to keep His promises when we commit to trusting Him and following His word through these process steps.

We’ve looked at the first three feasts in comparison with the first three Beatitudes. Let’s now look at the fourth Beatitude and determine if there is a consistent link with the fourth feast, which is the feast of Pentecost or the feast of Weeks to support our theory of a process approach.

The historical aspects of the fulfillment of Pentecost can be found in both the Old and New Testaments just as we have seen in the previous three appointments. Pentecost was partially fulfilled at Mount Sinai. As we outlined earlier in this book, G-d presented the Torah or the Law on this appointed feast day. Pentecost celebrates the giving of the Law. The final fulfillment of Pentecost was in Jerusalem. The disciples received the baptism of the indwelling Holy Ghost on this same appointed feast day as recorded in Acts 2. Let’s take a closer look at what has been accomplished by examining other scriptures. Jeremiah 31:31 outlines the new covenant or agreement G-d will establish with His people.

Behold, the days come, saith the L-RD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the L-RD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the L-RD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their G-d, and they shall be my people. (Jeremiah 31:31-33)

G-d says in these scriptures through his prophet that He will write His laws on their hearts rather than on tablets of stone. This passage points to the new covenant we have through the work of Jesus Christ as the mediator of this new agreement with G-d. While G-d’s commandments gave us the letter of the law which we could not satisfy or obey because of our sinful nature, this renewed covenant demands obedience not from mere outward

compliance, but a change in our nature and attitude. It is an inward change of our hearts. Jesus' ministry was designed to reach our hearts and cleanse us from the inside, rather than simply dealing with the outside. For example, it was not enough to simply not commit the act of adultery; Jesus said if we lust within our hearts, we have already committed the sin in our hearts (Matthew 5:27-28). Which would you rather have, children who obey the letter of the law you have established in your home, or children who have committed in their hearts to obey? I would prefer the latter. Why would G-d desire anything less? He doesn't! In the book of Hebrews we see the same message repeated:

But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the L-rd, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the L-rd. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the L-rd; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a G-d, and they shall be to me a people: (Hebrews 8:6-10)

How will G-d write His laws and the new covenant on our hearts and inward parts? The answer can be found in the book of Joel and its partial fulfillment in Acts 2.

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. (Joel 2:28-29)

But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith G-d, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: (Acts 2:16-18)

Here we begin to see the link between Pentecost and the out pouring of G-d's spirit. If G-d will write His laws on our hearts, what laws are these? Jesus explained several times in the Gospels that the greatest commandments were to love (John 13:34-35). We are to love G-d with all our heart, soul, and mind, and to love each other as we love ourselves. We are also to walk in the Spirit and to produce the fruit of the Spirit. Notice the Bible doesn't say the "fruits" of the Spirit, but the fruit. I believe this is because all of the produce from walking in the Spirit stems from love. Love is the "fruit" of the Spirit which produces the other spiritual traits (Galatians 5:22-23). How do we get this spirit which produces love that enables us to produce fruit, which is evidence of His laws written on our hearts? It is through the outpouring of His Holy Spirit which follows the first three steps of our spiritual transformation. Our new walk of trusting and believing in Jesus Christ as our L-rd and Savior, produces the fruit of love.

When did G-d pour out His Spirit upon us so we might begin obeying Him from inside our hearts and produce spiritual fruit? In Acts 2, Peter states that in the last days G-d will pour out His Spirit, but Peter also points out that the prophesy of Joel was being partially fulfilled on the very day that he is speaking to the Jews. And what day is that? It's Pentecost. Here we see the connection between G-d pouring out His Spirit and this appointment. Now let's compare this "filling" with the fourth Beatitude which states:

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. (Matthew 5:6)

Being filled is the link between the feast of Pentecost and this Beatitude. The blessing is that if we are hungry for righteousness, then we shall be filled. Acts 2:2 and 4, states that a mighty rushing wind "filled" the house where the disciples were sitting. It also states they were all "filled" with the Holy Ghost. This filling occurred during Pentecost, the fourth feast in the cycle, and the promise of the fourth Beatitude is that we shall be filled. Is this just another coincidence that Jesus promises us that we shall be filled in the fourth Beatitude and yet He also promises the Disciples would be filled and receive power during the fourth feast? I think not! In Luke 24:49 Jesus tells his disciples, "and behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." This indwelling presence and filling gives us the power to produce spiritual fruit by walking in the Spirit rather than the flesh.

And being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. (Acts 1:4-5)

Now how does a person receive righteousness? A quick look at Abraham points to the answer. In Genesis 15, G-d makes a promise to Abram (whose name is later changed to Abraham). G-d promises that He will give Abram an heir, that he will be father of many nations, and that his descendants will inherit the Promised Land. Abram believes in these promises. The result is, "...he believed in the L-rd; and he counted it to him for righteousness" (Genesis 15:6). Abram's belief, which translates into faith in G-d's promises, earned him righteousness. It is not by works, but through our faith. Standing on the promises of G-d is not a flesh response. In the natural world, standing on the promises of G-d doesn't always make sense. There is always the temptation to not trust in Him, or to get impatient while we wait on an answer. We can begin to doubt His word and faithfulness to us. These are all signs of a lack of faith. It takes a spirit-filled person to be able to stand on His promises, kill the flesh's desire to take charge again, and continue to find rest in His promises knowing that He is faithful. This is why an understanding of the feasts has been such an encouragement for me. When I start to waiver in my faith and wonder if G-d will provide, I am encouraged when I see how He has kept each of these first four appointments. This lets me know He will keep His word in fulfilling the final three steps in His redemptive plan for us. G-d is faithful, He cannot lie, and His promises are true.

We see further evidence of righteousness being obtained through our faith in Romans:

For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before G-d. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed G-d, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. (Romans 4:2-5)

Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. (Romans 4:9)

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. (Romans 10:9-10)

Through the scriptures, we see that our righteousness is a direct result of our faith in G-d. Romans 10 highlights the step-by-step approach for true believers. Using these verses as further evidence, I feel I can support the point that those who are hungry for righteousness (meaning those who have a sincere desire to serve G-d and please Him by standing on His word and trusting in Him rather than in ourselves), will be filled. He will baptize us with the power to stand on these promises. He will strengthen our faith by helping us to kill the sinful nature (mortify the flesh) by walking and being led by the Spirit. In other words, if we truly desire to stand on His promises and trust Him, He will give us the power to do so by filling us with His Spirit. This filling was promised and fulfilled during Pentecost, the fourth feast of the cycle. The same promise is given by Jesus through the fourth Beatitude. It is not a coincidence that the feasts are given in this exact order and that Jesus announces the Beatitudes in the same order so far and ties them to the same promises for fulfillment. How awesome!

To make a final point about these events occurring in a process approach, we need only look at Israel again as our example. Let's take one more look at 1 Corinthians 10.

Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. (1 Corinthians 10:1-4)

Using Israel as an example as we are instructed to do in this chapter of Corinthians, let's use this journey once more as a benchmark. It states that they passed under a cloud and that they were baptized or filled in the cloud. They drank from a spiritual rock. We saw when they were baptized in the Red Sea during First Fruits represented their water baptism and new life, but when did they receive a spiritual baptism in the cloud? The cloud is the key to this answer. Exodus 13:21-22 mentions this cloud.

And the L-RD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people. (Exodus 13:21-22)

G-d guided them through their wilderness journey using a pillar of fire and a pillar of a cloud. Exodus chapters 19 and 20 outlines the day G-d gives Israel the Law. Exodus 19:16 states that, “And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled” (Exodus 19:16). G-d’s presence is again described in terms of a cloud. We see similar references through the Bible as in Exodus which states:

Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the L-RD filled the tabernacle. (Exodus 40:34)

For the cloud of the L-RD was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys. (Exodus 40:38)

The presence of G-d and His leading is represented by this cloud. Corinthians 10 refers again to this cloud. Just as G-d’s Spirit led Israel through the cloud, we too are to be led by His Spirit. The way He deals with Israel is the same process approach in which he deals with us today. When we choose to stand on G-d’s promises and seek Him from a sincere heart, He will fill us with His Spirit which will lead us through our present wilderness into the Promised Land. This filling of His Spirit promised both in the fourth feast and fourth Beatitude gives us the power to walk in the spirit and stand upon His promises.

Summary of the First Four Feasts

This completes our comparison of the first four feasts called the spring feasts. The prophet Joel refers to this as the former rain (Joel 2:23). As outlined in Leviticus 23:22, we are currently living in the period of time between the spring feasts and the fall feasts. The Apostle Paul frequently uses feast language in his writings which demonstrate the link between the feasts and New Testament teachings. The feasts are designed around the agricultural season. After the spring feasts, comes the summer of the growing season. We are now in that season where we have seen the first four

feasts completed and are experiencing the church age where G-d's word is going forth and we are bringing in more sheaves for the upcoming harvest (remember the promise of more to come from First Fruits). We continue to grow during these summer months until the fall harvest. Our role during this season is to share our spiritual food which is the Gospel to others. The Beatitudes are growing instructions to help us reap greater fruit for the King prior to the fall harvest. This concept provides greater insight and understanding when we read Jesus' own reference to crops and agricultural examples in His teachings.

The Jews were very dependent upon rains for proper crop growth. In Joel 2, the prophet speaks about the former and latter rains. "Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the L-RD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month" (Joel 2:23). The Hebrew term for early rain is "mowreh" which means teacher or teaching. The first or former rains or feasts then teach us as we use these instructions to stand on His promises while we await the fall harvest. The book of James links the second coming of Christ to these latter rains and the fall festivals.

Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the L-rd. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the L-rd draweth nigh. (James 5:7-8)

This waiting for the precious fruit is a reference to the harvest which comes in the fall of the year and points to the fall feasts or appointments of the L-rd. We are to be patient as we wait for the Rapture. We are His precious fruit of the earth growing in this current summer growing season. Yes, we are precious. He loves us so much He sent His own Son to die to redeem us. That is how precious we are to the L-rd. His coming is near as we approach the end of the summer months and head toward the prophetic times outlined in the fall feasts. The first and second comings of Christ would be like the former and later rain on the earth.

So what does all this mean to our study and application of the Beatitudes? There is a strategic linkage between these first four feasts (former or early rains) and the Beatitudes. The first four Beatitudes represent the saints or believers recognizing the need for salvation and beginning their faith walk with G-d. The next three Beatitudes represent the believers (saints) conducting themselves as true Christians. Taking the concept of the latter

rains with the early rains as a teacher, we conclude that these first four feasts teach us:

- The first steps to right relationship with G-d, is through the work of Jesus Christ and accepting him as L-rd and Savior.
- The step-action approach to a closer relationship to G-d as well as His plan for us is revealed.
- The spiritual path we are to take which points to the “Way, Truth, and Life” are revealed (see Figure 1).
- G-d demonstrates faithfulness to His promises which encourages us to stand on them and not be moved as we await the fulfillment of the Fall feasts and the outpouring of His Spirit in the latter rains.

We now have laid the foundation for linking the spring feasts to the first four Beatitudes. We see the promises tied to the feasts are also the promises in the Beatitudes. We have also seen that the same steps for salvation through the feasts exactly mirror what Christ teaches in the first four Beatitudes. We will now turn our attention to the latter day appointments, which comprise the unfulfilled fall festivals. G-d will keep His word in meeting these final three appointments just as He has been faithful in His promises in fulfilling the first four feasts. Next, we will look at how each Beatitude links with the respective feast. This will provide the proof of G-d’s process approach, which will open the door for us to correctly apply the Beatitudes to our lives the way Jesus intended. Let’s move to the prophetic fall appointments of the L-rd. Table 1 below provides a cross reference between the feasts and Beatitudes, along with the historical and spiritual application.

Table 1, Feast and Beatitude Matrix

| Feast | Link with Israel | Fulfillment by Jesus | Beatitude | Your Responsibility (Rehearsal) |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Passover | G-d passes over them in judgment when blood is applied | Death of Jesus, blood of the Lamb is shed | Poor in spirit | Accept Jesus as your L-rd and savior and only trust in him. Pour out as a sacrifice the sinful desires of your heart. Stop trusting in self; repent |
| Unleavened Bread | Israel departs Egypt | Jesus is buried | Mourn | Reflect on your sinful life and mourn your past disobedience to G-d, freely accept His forgiveness |
| First Fruits | Israel crosses Red Sea | Jesus is resurrected | Meek | You are a new creature, understand that your old ways of dealing with life are over |
| Pentecost (Shavuot) | Israel receives the Law | Outpouring of the Holy Spirit | Hunger and thirst for righteousness | Hunger for His word, let the Holy Spirit lead you as you seek His will; practice obedience by walking in the Spirit; empty self and replace with His Spirit |
| Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah) | Jewish New Year | Rapture (soon to be fulfilled) | Merciful | Accept His calling for your life, show mercy to others |
| Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) | Priest goes into Holy of Holies | Jesus' second coming (soon) | Pure in heart | Seek righteousness through greater faith; strive to live sin free and holy as you grow closer in relationship |
| Tabernacles (Sukkot) | Temple dedicated; season of joy | Jesus millennium reign; partial fulfillment with Jesus' birth | Peacemakers | Rest in Him knowing the end of the story; build up others, promote peace. Enjoy the peace of knowing a heavenly reward is prepared for you |

Chapter 6

The Fall Feasts

Feast of Trumpets (Fifth Feast)

Speak to the children of Israel, saying: In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, shall ye have a Sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation. (Leviticus 23:24)

The fifth feast which is the first of the fall feasts is called the feast of Trumpets or Rosh Hashanah. Since this is the first feast after the summer season has ended, and we are currently in the spiritual summer growing season, Trumpets points to the Messianic fulfillment when Christ returns in the clouds to gather His people (see 1 Corinthians 15, Isaiah 26, and 1 Thessalonians 4). We often call this appointment the Rapture. There are several themes and celebrations associated with this feast which indeed point to the Rapture occurring on this appointed day. Let's take a look at some of the major themes and practices surrounding this fifth feast of the L-rd.

Of all the feasts, the feast of Trumpets is the only one celebrated on the first day of the month (this Jewish month is called Tishri). Although G-d originally established the feast to be celebrated on one day, it was celebrated on not one, but two days. The beginning of each month was dependent upon seeing the new moon. This was not always easy to verify. Mitch and Zhava Glaser in their book *The Fall Feasts of Israel* (page 32) note that according to the Talmud, the high priest, had the authority to proclaim the new moon. The custom was to proclaim the new moon on the testimony of at least two witnesses before the priest could declare a new moon. Since it would have been difficult to let everyone know when the new moon arrived, they built in an extra day in the ceremony to ensure they would not observe it on the wrong day. As a result, the feast was sometimes referred to as the day that no man knows. We mention these facts associated with the feast because they point to the Rapture. Jesus tells us in Mark 13:32-35 that no man knows of the coming of the Messiah except the Father. The uncertainty of the exact occurrence of Trumpets, and the fact that it is the only feast

which starts on the new moon, link this celebration to the Rapture and end-time prophesy. This feast is also known as *Yom T'ruah* or the day of blowing (or Awakening Blast).

A look at the Jewish wedding betrothal also links the uncertainty of this celebration to the Rapture. An extensive study of Jewish wedding traditions is beyond the scope of this book. However, we would like to cover some of the highlights of this important ceremony, which reveal the meaning of Christ's ministry even more.

Wedding Custom and the Feast of Trumpets

There are many references in the Bible to G-d being married to His people as an example of His redemptive plan. This is seen specifically in the book of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 3:1-14, 20). If G-d is married to Israel and they are our example, then He is also betrothed (or engaged) to us. We are the bride of Christ as believers.

When a bride was chosen according to older Jewish traditions, a certain set of steps were taken. The first part of the process was the betrothal, which preceded the actual ceremony. As part of the betrothal, the bridegroom would arrive to secure the bride from her father. The groom would bring several items, one of which was the bride price. A price was required to be paid to secure the bride. There are several scriptures in the Bible where Jesus' sacrifice is compared to this concept of securing the bride by paying a price. One scripture is found in 1 Peter 1:18-19, "forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Also, 1 Corinthians clearly points to Christ paying our "bride price." "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify G-d in your body, and in your spirit, which are G-d's" (1 Corinthians 6:20).

The groom also brings a written document referred to as the betrothal contract. This contract was signed prior to the actual wedding ceremony. The bride must agree to these terms. As she accepts the life given to her by the groom, she in turn gives her life to the groom. This is the same spiritual agreement we make with the L-rd. It is also the agreement that the children

of Israel made with the L-rd on Mount Sinai at the giving of the Law when Israel was betrothed to G-d.

The next step in the betrothal process was the giving of a gift by the groom to the bride. The gift was originally a coin but traditions later changed to giving a ring. This valuable gift was left with the bride. The wine served as a seal to the betrothal contract. The bride and groom drank the wine and this was later known as the cup of the covenant. One can see the relationship between this betrothal ceremony and what Jesus has done for us. When Jesus institutes the L-rd's supper, he took a cup of wine and stated, "...this cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:20). Jesus establishes a new betrothal contract with believers through this act which Christians call communion. In actuality, when a Christian takes communion, they are in effect rehearsing the marriage vows between themselves and Christ. This revelation put the communion ceremony in a brand new light for me. When Jesus left, he gave gifts to men just as the groom did during the ancient Jewish betrothal ceremony. The gifts Jesus leaves us are in the form of the Holy Spirit and other spiritual gifts. This can be seen in the scriptures below:

And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth;...(John 14:16,17)

But not as the offense, so also is the free gift. For if through the offense of one many be dead, much more the grace of

G-d, and the gift of grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. (Romans 5:15-16)

But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Ephesians 4:7-8)

An interesting point during the betrothal is the departure of the groom. After the bride is secured, the groom leaves the bride to return to his father's house to build and prepare an additional room where the wedding chamber will be. According to tradition, the groom makes a statement which mirrors the words of Jesus in John 14:1-3. The statement the groom makes is "I go to prepare a place for you; if I go, I will return again unto you." Jesus also

uses these same betrothal terms which the disciples should have understood to explain his first coming to betroth us, and His coming to Rapture us in the clouds to receive his bride and hide them away for a week in the wedding chamber. This is seen in Genesis when Jacob marries and completes the week long marriage ritual, “and Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week: and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also” (Genesis 29:28). When the Rapture occurs, we who have a contract with Jesus will be taken away for a week (seven years) to the wedding chamber which is in heaven being prepared for us. The groom’s father would have to inspect the work of the room and would not allow the groom to return until the house met his approval. So if we were to ask the groom when the big wedding day would occur, he would reply, “no man knows but the father.” Again, we see the same correlation between this ceremony, the gospels, and what we know of the Rapture to come (Matthew 24:36). The feast of Trumpets reflects many of these teachings.

While the bride waited for the return of the groom, the betrothal contract was a binding agreement. Unlike our engagements today, if the man or woman wanted out of the contract, they would have to get a divorce, even though the marriage ceremony had not been completed. We can see this in the betrothal relationship between Mary and Joseph when they were betrothed and Joseph pondered putting her away or divorcing her quietly (Matthew 1:18-20). Tradition outlines that when the groom returned for his bride, he would not go all the way into the city to retrieve her. Instead, he would return with a gathering of friends about a mile or two outside the city and return with a shout and the blowing of the trumpet (Shofar). This again points to end-time prophesy seen in Thessalonians 4:16-17. We also see this in the parables of Jesus in particular, the parable of the ten virgins. The virgins come out with their lamps to meet the groom (see Matthew 25:1-13).

Link Between the Fifth Beatitude and the Feast of Trumpets

Since we are in the summer season of the church age with the feast of Pentecost already fulfilled and seeing that the Rapture is still before us, this fifth feast (Trumpets) points to the future fulfillment of prophesy accomplished through the Rapture. During the Rapture, G-d’s chosen people are taken from the earth and escape the coming tribulation. There are several theories about when the Rapture will occur in relation to the tribulation. But when studying the appointed feasts we find evidence that the Rapture occurs before the tribulation begins. Strong references can be seen in the Bible. Noah’s ark is just one example of G-d providing refuge for

His people during the flood which served as a time of judgment and tribulation on the earth. G-d will again extend this same mercy to believers in the form of the Rapture prior to the tribulation. Certainly the order the feasts occur also point to the timing of the Rapture. Nothing happens out of sequence. Further evidence includes the Jewish wedding traditions. If the bride and groom upon his return remain in the wedding chamber of the father's house for one week or seven days, then when Jesus comes again in the clouds (not all the way to the earth), and with a blast of the trumpet (shofar), we will be gathered up to meet Him in the air. We who are raptured will spend seven years in our heavenly wedding chamber while the tribulation takes place on the earth. Just as Noah received G-d's mercy through the ark (which also had many rooms in it), He will extend His mercy to us by covering or protecting us who believe through the Rapture in the Father's house that has many rooms. We see evidence of this through the prophet Joel who speaks of the bride coming out of the wedding chamber in heaven after the tribulation.

Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet. (Joel 2:15-16)

A good friend who is a pastor asked me several years ago why I thought the Rapture would take place prior to the tribulation. I couldn't muster a better answer than, "Because that's what I've always been told or taught." I knew my answer was weak. He proceeded to explain his position which supported a "mid-tribulation" Rapture. The basis of his argument was that he found it hard to believe that G-d would not allow the church to suffer a bit and be purged, but then pull them out prior to the great tribulation. I saw his point. However, it didn't sit well with my spirit but I didn't have any argument to counter with except to disagree on the interpretation of certain scriptures. Perplexed and disappointed in myself for not having the answer, I began to research by first prayerfully seeking the truth. I found the answer through my study of the feasts. As I looked at the order of the feasts, it became quite clear to me that the Rapture indeed will occur before the tribulation. As I looked further, I gleaned more and more evidence pointing to a "pre-tribulation" Rapture. I reviewed Abraham's offering of Isaac, the three horns (Shofars) mentioned in scripture pointing to the timing of the Rapture, Noah's ark, and the timing of the opening of the scrolls in Revelation chapters 4-5. Additionally, the wedding references throughout scripture, provided substantial evidence for the Rapture occurring before the

tribulation. The sequence of the Beatitudes also points to the timing of the Rapture since they are indeed linked to the L-rd's feasts. Of course, I eagerly went back to my friend to boldly explain why I believed in a "pre-tribulation" Rapture. This was now based on more than just someone telling me from the pulpit, but on evidence I found clearly outlined in G-d's word.

The reason I mentioned my friend's question here is two fold. First, you should test what you hear against the scriptures and let the Holy Spirit guide your understanding. Even in the writing of this book, while we refer to certain Jewish traditions and ceremonies not clearly outlined in the Bible, we have pointed to and cross referenced scriptures to support our approach to the proper application of the Beatitudes and the feasts. Regardless of this, test it for yourself. Second, my friend based much of his thought not only on his interpretation of certain scriptures, but also on a logical opinion that G-d would allow or intends for the church to face a portion of the tribulation. Instead, I see the Beatitudes, as linked to the feasts, pointing in another direction—one that demonstrates G-d's great mercy and grace. The same mercy and grace He provided to Noah by shutting him in the ark during the time of judgment, which is exactly what the tribulation will be. Genesis 7 shows that Noah was taken into the ark for seven days or one week before it began to rain on the earth.

And the L-RD said unto Noah, come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation. For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth. And it came to pass after seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth. (Genesis 7:1,4,9-10)

G-d's great mercy will be displayed by pulling out His people prior to this period of judgment. Look at the fifth Beatitude again, which points to the fifth feast (Trumpets) and future prophesy of the Rapture.

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. (Matthew 5:7)

We, who have "put on" the first four characteristics of the Beatitudes, are those who can truly exercise and demonstrate mercy to others. Surely we who have practiced the first four feasts and established a relationship with G-d will obtain mercy. Jesus promises that we will. What is this mercy we shall receive? The Rapture! Surely this can't be mere coincidence! To have the feasts line up with the Beatitudes, and they demonstrate the same sequence

and characteristics. This provides further evidence of both end-times prophesy and the spiritual application of the Beatitudes in order to have a fruitful relationship with G-d. We have a measure of this fulfillment in this life as we practice mercy toward others, and a greater fulfillment to come in the Rapture itself, when we are rewarded with the promise that Jesus has given us; we shall obtain mercy when we are merciful. We will be raptured before the tribulation time of judgment on earth.

There is clearly a link between the feast of Trumpets and this fifth Beatitude where Jesus promises mercy for those who practice mercy. The Rapture will be a sign and demonstration of G-d's mercy. Look closely at Isaiah 26: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead" (Isaiah 26:19).

Well, the dead coming to life again and living with the resurrected Savior sounds like what we describe as the Rapture as outlined in 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4, where the dead in Christ shall rise first. Now look at Isaiah 26: "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast" (Isaiah 26:20).

The verse following this (Isaiah 26:21) points to the coming time of indignation as a time of judgment. Clearly this points to end-times prophesy. Notice verse 20 mentions "my people." Not everyone will be considered G-d's chosen people. Not everyone is betrothed to Him. The word "chambers" in my lexicon means bedroom. Wow! Did you see that? It is pointing back to the Jewish wedding ceremony when the groom comes to collect the bride and they go to the wedding chamber or "bedroom" for one week. In the same way, Jesus will return for His bride to save us and take us to the chamber or our mansion of many rooms (John 14). Isaiah indicates that G-d's people will stay there until the time of indignation is passed. Revelation 21:1-7 states the bride is presented coming out of heaven after the defeat of the Anti-christ at the end of the seven year tribulation period. Just as the Jewish wedding ceremony celebrates the bride and groom hidden away for one week, so will the Bride of Christ be hidden for a week, or seven years, until the time of indignation is passed. The concept of a week representing the tribulation is also seen in the book of Daniel where the Anti-christ makes and later breaks a covenant with Israel.

And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.
(Daniel 9:27)

Who are these chosen people G-d has picked as His bride? Upon whom will He show this great mercy? I believe it will be spread upon those who are true believers in G-d and the work of Jesus Christ. Isn't it interesting that the Rapture points to G-d's great mercy toward us in saving us from the time of wrath and indignation? I think it is also interesting that it is the fifth feast, the feast of Trumpets, which also points to the timing and fulfillment of the Rapture. It cannot be another coincidence that the only Beatitude that mentions mercy is none other than the fifth Beatitude! The feasts are in order for a reason. G-d designed them this way to outline not only His plan for us, but also His expectations for how we are to approach Him. Jesus, whose mind is totally and perfectly linked to the Father, gives the same order in the Beatitudes. This is by G-d's design! When we demonstrate mercy, we receive mercy. God's children will receive a great outpouring of His mercy when we are raptured; it is promised through this fifth Beatitude.

We see the children of Israel following and being led by G-d through each of these first four feasts in order, prior to their arrival in the Promised Land. We have also demonstrated this "process approach" because G-d expects us to follow these same four feasts in the spirit in which they were intended. That's how we establish a right relationship, with G-d. There appears to be a definite break between the first four Beatitudes and the final three. Likewise, since we believe they are linked to the feasts, we see a both natural and spiritual division between the first four feasts (Former Rain) and the final three feasts (Latter Rain). The feasts are in the same sequence as the seasons with the first four feasts occurring in the Spring while the final three occur in the Fall season. There are several biblical references pointing to these seasons (Jeremiah 5:24, Hosea 6:3, and Joel 2:23). Brown also highlights that the first four Beatitudes appear to represent a believer being conscious of their need for salvation and putting on a Christian character, while the final three represent believers conducting themselves appropriately, meaning, exercising the tools and talents as the Spirit leads.

The application of a process approach is clear. People cannot truly demonstrate mercy, unless they have clearly discovered their own need for G-d's mercy and have obtained it through Jesus Christ. Going through the

step-action process outlined in the feast and the first four Beatitudes is how you arrive at the point of extending, showing, and receiving mercy. You cannot bypass the process steps. You cannot practice true unconditional mercy unless you have traveled the whole road leading up to this fifth Beatitude, which starts at being poor in spirit and recognizing your need for salvation. As one of my favorite songs states, "The ground is level at the foot of the cross." We all need Jesus and we all have to start at the same place before progressing further--the cross and acceptance of our Passover Lamb. No wonder G-d rejected Cain's offering. He tried to bypass the process. Let us not make the same mistake!

Therefore, we can conclude that mercy is a by-product of having the characteristics of the first four Beatitudes by practicing the heart of the first four feasts. There's no real difference in their intent and spiritual meaning. There is truly a reward and promise attached to being merciful as Jesus taught in the parable of the talents in Matthew 25. He reminds us that the blessed of the Father are invited in for the mercy they showed unto those who were hungry, naked, strangers, sick, and imprisoned (Matthew 25:31-46). As believers, this becomes the calling for our life.

Chapter 7

The Day of Atonement (Sixth Feast)

Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the L-rd. And ye shall do no work in that same day: for it is a day of atonement, to make an atonement for you before the L-rd your G-d. (Leviticus 23:27-28)

The Day of Atonement also known as Yom Kippur, is the most solemn day of the Jewish calendar. In actuality, it was not really a feast but was instead a time of fasting and self-denial. *Kippur* in Hebrew means “cover” or atonement. Since the feast of Trumpets points to the Rapture, the next logical progression would be for Yom Kippur to point to the second coming of Christ in end-times prophesy. The feast occurs during the Jewish season of repentance which lasts 40 days. The fortieth day ends on Yom Kippur or the tenth day of the seventh month. Many believe that Yom Kippur will be fulfilled when Jesus steps foot on the Mount of Olives at the time of the deliverance of the Jews when they are surrounded by their enemies at the start of Armageddon. One scripture reference for this time is found in Zechariah 14:1-7.

The Jewish celebration of this feast is described in Leviticus 16. We will review some of the highlights from this chapter to gain a better understanding of the meaning of this feast. In Leviticus 16:2, G-d instructs Moses to tell Aaron that he is not to come into the holy place within the veil any time he wants. Therefore, Aaron was to have very limited access to the presence of G-d.

And the L-rd said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the veil before the mercy seat, which is

upon the ark; that he die not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat. Thus shall Aaron come into the holy place: with a young bullock for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering. (Leviticus 16:2-3)

There was only one time a year when Aaron as high priest, or any high priest after his order, could enter into the inner most part of the tabernacle. This is later called the Holy of Holies which contained the Ark of the Covenant with the Mercy Seat on the lid of the ark. This special time once each year was on the Day of Atonement or Yom Kippur. Figure 1 (page 52) shows the basic outline of the tabernacle.

The remainder of Leviticus 16 outlines the ceremony to be performed by the high priest on that day. An offering was made for the high priest, the people, and the tabernacle itself. This was performed through the sprinkling of blood from the sacrifice of one of two goats. These two goats (Leviticus 16:7-22) represent the two fold ministry of Jesus' sacrifice for us. The first goat represents Jesus' sacrifice which atones for our sins and covers us, making us clean. The other goat, the scapegoat, represents the work of Jesus' sacrifice; through his blood the reproach of sin is not only covered, but is taken away from us. Jesus separates us and frees us from our sins when we accept his sacrifice. Comparing Leviticus 16 with Hebrews 9 offers a deep and revealing presentation of the glorious redemption of Christ's sacrifice for us. There is so much symbolic and spiritual significance here, which we wish we had the time to cover. Leviticus 16:11-12 shows that the fire for the burning of incense came from the Brazen Altar which was outside the tabernacle. This altar represents the sacrifice of Christ. This again points to a process approach to entering G-d's presence.

The Day of Atonement was critically important for the Jews. Any failure or uncleanness by the high priest would mean Israel's sacrifices would not be accepted and the people's sins would remain uncovered for the year. Therefore, it was very important for the high priest to be properly prepared for service on this day and he took great caution during this time. The Mercy Seat sat on top of the ark, which contained the items of testimony (see Hebrews 9:4) including manna (representing G-d's sustaining power, Exodus 16:33), Aaron's rod (representing G-d's choice for priest; Numbers 17:10), and the Ten Commandments (representing the Law and contract that we could not keep, Deuteronomy 31:26). It is interesting that while our sins make us unworthy and show our failure to keep the Law (Torah), the Mercy Seat where the presence of G-d would sit is placed on top of the ark containing these items. Therefore, the Mercy Seat served as a covering

which “trumps” the effects of our failure when we are redeemed by the blood of Jesus. Indeed, the blood of the goat is sprinkled upon the Mercy Seat from an eastward direction (Leviticus 16:14). Remember in the Gospel, the sign of Jesus’ birth was his star was seen in the east (Matthew 2:2,9). It is sprinkled seven times. Remember seven represents perfection. This is why we have seven feasts and seven Beatitudes.

While the high priest under the Old Testament made intercession and atonement for the people once a year, Jesus, as our high priest, performs this same function today, but serves as a better and higher order of priesthood. A study of the book of Hebrews clearly outlines Jesus’ priestly function and is supported by the Old Testament prophets and in the Psalms. While the Old Testament provides a covering for sins, the New Testament, put into effect through the death of Jesus, provides for the removal of our sins. We can see an example of this in Genesis 3:21 where G-d uses an animal’s skin to cover the sin of Adam and Eve. We understand from Jewish tradition the animal sacrificed was a lamb. Remember in John 1:29, Jesus is described as the Lamb of G-d. Jesus serves today as our great high priest after the order of Melchizedek who was a priest-king in the Old Testament. The following scriptures are several of my favorites pointing to Christ’s role as our high priest: Hebrews 2:17, Hebrews 3:1; 4:14-16, Psalm 110:4, Genesis 14:18-20, Hebrews 5:1-10, Hebrews chapters 7, 9, and 10, 1 Peter 1:2, and Matthew 27:50-51.

A study of these passages reveals that we indeed have a great high priest, who is superior to the Levitical priests who served under the Old Testament. This points to the better covenant G-d established through the ministry of Jesus. Jesus, unlike the Aaronic high priests, only needed to enter the Holy of Holies once. His sacrifice was perfect, not requiring the annual rituals needed before. Instead of coming and going once a year under the fear of rejection by G-d, our great high priest, Jesus, sits and dwells at the right hand of the Father to make constant and continual intercession for us. What a deal! Not only does our high priest have constant access, but the veil which separated us from the presence of G-d has been torn in two through the work of Jesus. The earthly high priest only could go behind the veil once a year, and now we are invited to come boldly to His throne by the blood of Jesus. So how do we enter into His presence since we cannot literally or physically go into the temple today? We perform this in the spirit through our hearts. The process has already been laid out in a step-by-step approach through the feasts and the Beatitudes. The first step is accepting the sacrifice of Jesus by becoming poor in spirit. What a privilege to communicate and

dwell with G-d in spirit whenever we desire and to come boldly, without fear knowing the blood of Jesus sprinkled for us, cleanses and removes our sins. How sad it is when we suffer and don't take advantage of entering behind the torn veil to be in G-d's presence. Instead we often stay outside in the flesh rather than moving into a closer relationship with Him behind the veil. This is reflective of a carnal Christian.

Yom Kippur also points to end-times prophesy. Notice again in Leviticus 16 the actions of the high priest. These are some of the same symbolic actions which Jesus will fulfill upon His return. Let's take a closer look at some examples to support this point of view. In Leviticus 16:23, Aaron was to come into the tabernacle and change clothes. "And Aaron shall come into the tabernacle of the congregation, and shall put off the linen garments, which he put on when he went into the holy place, and shall leave them there" (Leviticus 16:23).

Why was it necessary for the high priest to change clothes? Looking at the ceremony up to this point, the high priest has been handling the sacrifices and sprinkling blood all around the tabernacle and the ark. Undoubtedly, the white linen garments that he wore would have been splattered with blood. Looking at prophesy, we can see that G-d's purpose and design was to point to Jesus through these instructions. First, the high priest did not wear the usual priest's garments, but a more simple white linen garment during the Day of Atonement. On every other day of the year, the high priest dressed in a formal uniform, but on the Day of Atonement, he wore only a white linen robe. Now let's compare this with Isaiah 63.

Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me. And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth. I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the L-RD, and the praises of the L-RD, according to all that the L-RD hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he

bath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses. (Isaiah 63:1-7)

This passage in Isaiah 63 is a reference to end-times prophecies during the second advent of the Messiah. Notice the verses closely. The person coming from Edom with dyed garments is Jesus. Why are His garments dyed? Because they are white linen covered in blood. Isaiah 63:2 asks the question, why are the garments red like someone who has been squashing grapes in a wine-press? The next verse explains the dye and stain is blood “sprinkled” on his garments. Notice the same word “sprinkled” was used to describe Yom Kippur services. Isaiah 63:4 ties these events to the second coming of Christ. The verse describes a time of vengeance and the year of redemption. During the second advent of Christ, the Jewish nation will be redeemed and saved from the invading Gentile nations that come against them as they are re-gathered again as a nation. So we can see a link between Yom Kippur and the time of judgment and redemption which is ushered in during the second coming of Christ. From this connection and several other scriptural references, we can conclude that The Day of Atonement will be fulfilled on the exact day when Christ returns to defeat his enemies.

How do we know for sure that this blood covered person represents Jesus and His second advent? Let’s take a look at Revelation 19.

And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of G-d. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND L-RD OF L-RDS. And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great G-d; That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and

with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh. (Revelation 19:11-19)

First, notice these events are recorded after the marriage supper of the Lamb showing the timing of the Rapture occurring before this. Also, the bride of the Lamb is dressed in clean, white linen (Revelation 19:7-9). Next, we see the heaven's opened, which is a reference to entering or exiting heaven. The person sitting on the white horse to "judge and make war" is Jesus who is described later in Revelation 19:16 as King of Kings and L-rd of L-rds. Revelation 19:13 shows he had clothes dipped in blood. So here we have another similar reference back to Leviticus 16 and Yom Kippur. The armies which follow are dressed in clothes similar to what the high priest would have worn that day. Revelation 19:17-19 describe what we commonly refer to as Armageddon. Comparing the language, symbols, and ordinances for Yom Kippur with the prophesy of end-time activities, we have concluded with many others that Christ's second coming will occur on this feast or appointed day. Other scriptures to support the timing of this event and link to Yom Kippur include Joel 2.

Therefore also now, saith the L-rd, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the L-rd your G-d: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth Him of the evil. (Joel 2:12-13)

In these verses, the prophet Joel mentions a time of fasting and repentance. The time he is describing is the future restoration of Israel and a call to repentance. Throughout history, G-d has brought judgment to urge His people to exercise repentance. We see this again here. Remember while it is considered a feast day, The Day of Atonement was actually celebrated as a time of fasting. In Joel 2:12 we see the connection to this feast through the identification of the word "fasting." We also see the call for repentance. Joel goes further in linking this timeline to the feasts from a scripture we referred to earlier.

Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children and

those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of His chamber, and the bride out of her closet. (Joel 2:15-16)

Here we see the sounding of the trumpet to usher in Yom Kippur. This is the Great Trump, mentioned by Jesus in Matthew 24:31 which also points to the restoration of Israel. There were three primary times when the shofar is to be blown. The First Trump was blown at Pentecost (at the time of the giving of the Law in Exodus 19:16), the Last Trump (1 Corinthians 15:52) is associated with the feast of Trumpets or Rosh Hashanah; and the Great Trump is linked to Yom Kippur. We see also the reference to a time of fasting, which points to the fulfillment of this prophesy at Yom Kippur. In Joel 2:16, we see the bridegroom, who is Christ, and the bride, representing the believers coming out of the wedding closet during this time. This again supports the idea that raptured believers escape the time of tribulation, and do not come out of the chamber until the judgment (Armageddon) has been executed. More scriptures that mention “sprinkling,” the sounding of the great trumpet, and prophesy concerning Yom Kippur include: Zechariah 12, 13, 14, Zechariah 9:9-16, Isaiah 27:1, 12-13; Isaiah 52:7, 13-15, and Ezekiel 36:22-28

So from the scriptural evidence, we have presented the foundation for the case that Yom Kippur or The Day of Atonement, points to the second coming of Jesus Christ the Messiah. We have also shown how the sequence of each feast is in its proper order as designed by G-d; the Rapture or fifth feast occurs before the sixth feast or second coming of Christ in end-times prophesy. Now let’s examine the link between this feast and the sixth Beatitude.

The Sixth Beatitude and the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur)

Only on this day, once a year, the high priest risked his life to carry the blood into the Most Holy Place of the L-rd’s house of worship. This is seen in Leviticus 16:2 and Hebrews 9:6-7. It was only on this day that the high priest could go into the Holy of Holies and be in the presence of G-d. The high priest met G-d “face-to-face” as His presence would appear in a cloud. Yom Kippur is sometimes referred to by the term “face-to-face.” Let’s now look at the link between the sixth feast (Yom Kippur) and the sixth Beatitude?

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see G-d. (Matthew 5:8)

The sixth Beatitude promises that the “pure in heart” shall see G-d. Of all the Beatitudes, why is this the only one that mentions “seeing” G-d? The only Beatitude that mentions seeing G-d is this sixth one. After seeing how each of the previous Beatitudes have been linked to the feast, we would not consider this similar terminology to the Day of Atonement to be a mere coincidence. This connection provides overwhelming evidence through the scriptures that indeed Jesus has linked the Beatitudes in the same sequence as the Father has established the feasts in Leviticus. During Yom Kippur, the priest is face-to-face with G-d or sees His presence. Now we see in this Beatitude that those who are pure in heart are rewarded by being blessed (happy) with seeing G-d. In order to see G-d, the veil is taken away and we stand before Him “face-to-face.” The connection between the feasts is clear!

Hebrews 10 points to the Day of Atonement as well by comparing the role of the high priest on this day with the ministry (better ministry) of Jesus who serves as our great high priest. As a result of Jesus being our high priest, we are exhorted to enter boldly into the Holy of Holies. “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say his flesh” (Hebrews 10:19-20). This passage is a reference to the Day of Atonement as described in Leviticus where the high priest enters behind the veil into the Holy of Holies to sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice on the Mercy Seat in the presence of G-d. But what does this all mean to us as believers today? The answer can be found in the following verses:

And having an high priest over the house of G-d; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. (Hebrews 10:21-22)

It is an inward purity of the heart that has been sprinkled which G-d requires. This cleansing is a call for us to live holy. We are called to be holy and set apart as He is holy. Hebrews 12:14 states we are to, “follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the L-rd” (Hebrews 12:14).

Yom Kippur is a day to acknowledge our sins and the cleansing we receive from the ministry of Jesus. This should be a caution to believers that while we may have had a salvation experience, we are not to practice sin. We must truly repent which is a major theme for both the sixth feast (Day of Atonement) and this sixth Beatitude. Sincere repentance is seen by a change in our behavior. G-d’s Holy Spirit is to inhabit our personal temple, our

hearts. When we accept the sacrifice of Jesus personally, we are washed clean, our sins are taken away, and we have free access to the presence of G-d. The guilt of our sins is removed, but we must also exercise the privilege we have to enter into His presence daily. We can approach Him and by doing so see His glory revealed in our own lives on earth. We display holiness by walking in the Spirit and not walk in our old fleshy ways. As I have grown in my personal walk, I have a desire to live holy and to please the Father. As I follow the spiritual application of the feasts and the Beatitudes, step-by-step I learn more about G-d and can enjoy His presence in my life. I don't want to be an Outer Court Christian any more. His great sacrifice has opened the door that we can have close relationship with G-d through His Spirit within the veil. I want to take advantage of this opportunity and privilege every day. This is only a partial fulfillment because one day soon we will see G-d and live in His presence. A person must have repentance first though before entering into His joy. This leads us to the final feast and the subsequent linkage to our seventh and final Beatitude.

Chapter 8

The Feast of Tabernacles or Sukkot (Seventh Feast)

Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the L-rd. (Leviticus 23:34)

While the Day of Atonement was a serious and somber period, the feast of Tabernacles was a time of great joy. This can be seen in Nehemiah 8:14 where the people dwelt in booths during the feast in the seventh month (this is a reference to Tabernacles). Nehemiah 8:17-18 show that there was great gladness and celebration during the eight days of the feast of Tabernacles. Notice the contrast where earlier in this same book, the people were in mourning and an attitude of repentance for their sins.

The feast of Tabernacles has many other names associated with it. These names are as follows:

The Feast of Booths: The Hebrew word for booth is “Sukkot.” G-d commanded that the children of Israel live in booths during the seven days of this ceremony. We see this in Nehemiah and in the instructions outlined in Leviticus. “Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths: That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the L-rd your G-d” (Leviticus 23:42-43).

Living in booths was to remind them to depend on G-d for their needs. It was also a reminder of their temporary dwelling places before they would enter into the Promised Land. There is certainly a spiritual application here for us. We still need to remember G-d’s provisions for us both physically and spiritually as we dwell in our temporary bodies (or booths) on this earth awaiting His return and our entry into the Promised Land.

The Festival of Ingathering: Tabernacles or Sukkot was celebrated at the end of the year, which was the end of the growing season. It was a time when the crops and produce were gathered. Jesus makes reference to harvest time in several of his parables and teachings. These references to harvest time point to the future re-gathering of Israel. Remember, the feasts have an agricultural theme as seen in the spring plantings and first fruits of the former rains, and the final harvest of the latter rain. This re-gathering takes place during Christ's one-thousand-year reign, which is commonly called the Messiah's millennial reign. Romans 11 speaks about the re-gathering as do many of the prophets in the Old Testament. Therefore, this seventh and final feast of the L-rd points to end-times prophesy and Christ's reign on the earth. The following passage from Leviticus supports this idea of ingathering. "Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the L-rd seven days: on the first day shall be a Sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a Sabbath" (Leviticus 23:39).

The Season of Our Joy: Tabernacles was a time for celebration and joy. In Deuteronomy 16:13-15, the people are commanded to rejoice during this feast. The harvest was completed, crops were all collected, and the work in the field was now done. Just as the seventh day or the Sabbath was a day to rest from six days of earlier labor and reflect on the goodness of G-d, so this seventh feast was a time of celebration and rest. It is also a season of joy for us, since we have passed through the season of redemption and can rejoice that our sins have been forgiven; we now can dwell in the presence of G-d. This feast is partially fulfilled today with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit for those who are true believers, but will have greater fulfillment to come during the Millennium.

The Feast of Nations: This reference and name for Tabernacles can be seen in Zechariah 14:16-18 which indicates that this will be the one feast celebrated by all nations during the Messianic age or the Millennium. Nations that fail to come up to celebrate this feast will be punished by not having rain fall down upon their lands. The reference to rain and water is important in this feast and we will briefly discuss this aspect in a moment.

The Festival of Dedication: When reading 1 Kings 8 and 2 Chronicles 7:8-10, we see that King Solomon dedicated the temple during Tabernacles. Since Tabernacles was celebrated for eight days, the reference to the twenty-third day of the month in Chronicles places the temple dedication and celebration around the time of this feast. The temple was built as a place of

worship and sacrifice where the presence of G-d was to dwell in the Holy of Holies, the inner most section of the temple. It is called the House of G-d, since this is where He dwells when He reveals Himself in a cloud over the Mercy Seat. The temple represents G-d dwelling with His people, therefore, it was most appropriate for this feast to be chosen as the time for the dedication of G-d's house or dwelling place on the earth. What an advantage we have today when we invite Him to dwell in the inner most section of our own personal temple, which is our heart.

The Festival of Lights: There was a ritual of lighting the temple at this time. According to Jewish tradition, the priests would gather at the Court of the Women and light four large golden candlesticks with large bowls. The light from these bowls was so bright that it would illuminate a large area surrounding the temple and the city. As a result, Tabernacles was also known as the Festival of Lights.

The Feast: The joy and celebration surrounding Tabernacles was so great that it was known as the feast of the L-rd or simply, "the feast." The many different names for this feast is something we also do for our own celebrations. If I were to say "Turkey Day," most Americans would know that I was referring to Thanksgiving even though I never said the formal name given to this celebration. The features surrounding Thanksgiving and some of our other holidays provide for secondary common names by which these celebrations are sometimes referred. This same principle exists with the various names associated with Tabernacles. Each name has a specific spiritual meaning and application.

There were a number of different celebrations performed during Tabernacles. While some of these activities may not directly tie into our study of the Beatitudes, they are so refreshing to study that we can't help but briefly mention some of them here.

Different animals were offered as sacrifices each day of the feast as outlined in Leviticus 23:36 and Numbers 29:12-35. Mitch and Zhava Glaser point out in their book *The Fall Feasts of Israel* (page 163), that never before Tabernacles were such a great number of sacrifices offered on one day. Seventy bullocks were offered, which was understood to represent the seventy known nations at the time. The Glaser's note that of all the animals offered, their number can always be divided by seven. The Glaser's point out that "it is no coincidence that this seven-day holiday, which took place in

the height of the seventh month, had the perfect number, seven, imprinted on its sacrifices” (page 163).

One of my favorite stories surrounding Tabernacles is the celebration of water pouring. The Mishna (a code of traditional Jewish law sometimes referred to as the Oral Torah) describes this ceremony as a ritual that was added to the celebration of the feast and was practiced during the time of Christ. The Glaser’s describe the ceremony in their book (page 174). As part of this ceremony, the priest carried a large golden pitcher from the temple to the pool of Siloam. Surrounded by worshippers, he drew water from the pool and returned to the temple by way of passing through the water gate which led to the inner court. While this was being performed, other priests would chant from Isaiah 12:3 saying, “Therefore with joy shall ye draw water of the wells of salvation.” The worshippers were also accompanied by a band of flute players. There is tremendous symbolism in the fact they are led by an instrument which is pierced.

During our Messianic studies, we learned from the Mishna that the priests were divided into divisions. One division performed the work of preparing the many sacrifices. A second division of priests gathered outside the temple and cut down willow branches. They formed a line holding their willow branches. The priests then marched back toward the temple while swinging the willow branches back and forth. Another division of priests performed the water-drawing ceremony at the pool described earlier. The willows of the second group of priests made a swishing sound in the wind as they came closer to the city. I can’t help but recall the disciples on the Day of Pentecost awaiting the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. They waited as instructed by Jesus in Jerusalem and the Holy Spirit came upon them as a mighty rushing wind. This was not coincidence, but designed by G-d. The ceremony then is symbolic of the Holy Spirit coming upon Jerusalem. During Messianic services we’ve attended, they often retell the story of these divisions of priests being led back toward Jerusalem by the flute player called the “pierced one.” This ceremony points to the mission of our Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Soon all three divisions were gathered at the Brazen Altar in the court where the sacrifices are laid. As the sacrifices are laid upon the altar, water from the pool of Siloam and wine together are poured out over the altar as the priests with the willows start laying them against the altar. This ceremony is fascinating. It adds significance and increases our understanding of what Jesus did and is saying to us in the Gospels. I now better understand what was happening when Jesus’ side was pierced and the blood and water poured

out. This also provides a better understanding of what Jesus was saying in John 7.

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.) (John 7:37-39)

This passage used to confuse me because I wondered how the Jews would be able to understand what Jesus was saying. But now it makes perfect sense to me. He was speaking in terms that the Jews of that day would have clearly understood. It would have been like saying “Turkey Day.” While the Jews are celebrating the water ceremony, they are praying for the physical rain to come which will be needed for future crop growth. They were also praying for the spiritual rain to come as described in Joel 2:20-29 where the prophet states that G-d will pour out His Spirit upon all flesh. Rain was a representation of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Jesus directly links water with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in these passages from John 7. John 7:40 states that many of the people remarked when they heard Jesus’ statements that he truly must be the long awaited Prophet. How would they come to this conclusion? The timing of these events and statements is the key. “Now the Jews’ feast of tabernacles was at hand” (John 7:2).

It was during Tabernacles, the last day of the celebration of this feast, that Jesus makes his statement as a partial fulfillment of prophesy. The people would have some understanding of this. For while they are celebrating the procession of the priests and praying for rain and the Holy Ghost to come down, Jesus declares to them that what you are practicing and hoping for is now here! From this connection to the feasts, the scriptures in the New Testament become even more revealing and alive. This connection provides so much insight! Since Jesus is the fulfillment of prophesy and the feasts, even the question of what Jesus wrote with his finger in the sand in the following chapter of John (John 8:1-12), can be answered by seeing the connection with this feast and looking at the book of Jeremiah 17:13. Also notice what Jesus says in John 8:12, during the time of this great celebration. He declares himself the light of the world during this feast. Remember one of the names of this feast is referred to as the Festival of Lights.

Partial and Future Fulfillment of Tabernacles

As mentioned before, Tabernacles points to end-times prophesy when Jesus will establish his kingdom on earth ushering in the Messianic Age. However, there has been a partial fulfillment as well. We see consistently in the Bible and history how G-d gives a “down payment” to remind and encourage us through our wilderness journey that He is faithful and will keep His word. You would think that with the first four feasts being fulfilled so accurately that it would be understood that He is the perfect promise keeper. But G-d goes further to demonstrate and reveal His promises to us through these partial fulfillments. As we discussed earlier from the book of John, we see some of this fulfillment in Jesus’ statements on the last day of the feast. Let’s take a look at another partial fulfillment to this feast in history.

A closer look at scripture and this particular feast points to the timing of the birth of Jesus. Jesus’ birth during the time of Tabernacles would certainly be a partial fulfillment while we await a greater fulfillment during the Messianic Age. In the book of Luke, we see further evidence to support this opinion. The first chapter of the book of Luke tells the story of Zacharias a priest and the father of John the Baptist. The priesthood was divided into 24 courses or groups who would perform temple services on a rotating schedule throughout the year. In 1 Chronicles 24:1-19 and 1 Chronicles 28, it mentions the division of the priests and the schedule sequence. Luke 1:5 states that Zacharias was of the course of Abia, also known as Abijah, which was the eighth course on the temple service schedule. From our Messianic studies, we found that each group of priests would start their tour of duty on the Sabbath for a duration of one week. During the three required feasts where all males were to report to Jerusalem (see Deuteronomy 16:16), all 24 courses would be on duty due to the amount of work and sacrifices offered. After all of the courses fulfilled their duty during these three feasts (Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Tabernacles), then the regular schedule would resume.

Since the Jewish calendar begins in the month of Nisan, the first week of duty would have been for the course of Jehoiarib and followed in turn by the course of Jedaiah. The third week would have been the feast of Unleavened Bread with all the courses of priests on duty since Passover and Unleavened Bread occur during the middle of the Jewish month. The following week, the schedule would resume with the third course of priests, Harim, in service. Using this logic, we can determine the approximate week that Zacharias and his course would have been serving in the temple at the time indicated in Luke. Allowing for all the priests to be on duty during the feast of Pentecost, we can conclude that Zacharias served in the temple during the second week

of the third month or the tenth week of the year. When Zacharias finished his tour after seeing the angel and hearing that he would have a child in his late age, he went to his own house. Shortly afterwards, his wife Elisabeth conceived a child who would be John the Baptist.

In Luke 1:31, the angel Gabriel comes to Mary and tells her that she will conceive a son and call his name Jesus. In Luke 1:36, the angel goes further to describe that Mary's cousin Elisabeth (John the Baptist's mother) was already six months pregnant. Assuming Mary conceives immediately after this visit from the angel, this would make John's birth six months prior to Jesus'. If we work ahead from what we determined was the conception of John in the third month of the Jewish year (near the feast of Pentecost), and advancing six months, this places the conception of Jesus in the ninth month of the Jewish year (Kislev, or our November/December timeframe). Assuming a normal pregnancy of a term of ten lunar months or 40 weeks from the time of John's conception puts his birth during the month of Nisan. If he were born near the middle of the month as many believe, then John may have been born during the time of Passover. This is interesting since a part of the Jewish celebration of Passover is to set out a special glass of wine during the Seder Meal in the expectation of the prophet Elijah returning based upon Malachi 4:5. John was referred to as one coming in the spirit and power of Elijah (Matthew 17:10-13). If John the Baptist is born around the middle of Nisan as our calculations suggest, then adding six months (since John was conceived six months earlier as we described) puts Jesus' birth around the fifteenth of the seventh month in the Jewish calendar. The seventh month (Tishri) and the fifteenth day of this month is none other than the start of the feast of Tabernacles as outlined in Leviticus 23:34.

While the calculations were enough for me to believe Jesus wasn't born in December, but during the feast of Tabernacles, some of you might not be convinced. There is further evidence pointing to this which is tied directly to several of the themes of the feast.

“Therefore the L-rd himself shall give you a sign; Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14). The word *Immanuel* means “G-d with us.” This indicates G-d in the form of Jesus would come dwell or tabernacle on earth. John 1:14 states, “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.” The Hebrew word for dwelt is *succah*, and one of the names of the feast in Hebrew is Sukkot. Remember that the children of Israel were instructed to dwell in booths (sukkots) during the feast to remember G-d's providence in the wilderness and their temporary

dwelling place. Jesus also dwelt or tabernacled among us in his temporary body. While I'm careful not to try and fit pieces together to make them work because it sounds good, I'm also learning G-d is not a god of coincidence; He is a G-d of design and purpose. All of these references to the feast and Jesus' first advent are a demonstration of His merciful plan for us.

Further evidence pointing to Jesus' birth around the time of Sukkot can be seen in other passages in Luke. Luke 2:7-11 outlines several facts surrounding the birth of Jesus which links back to the feast of Tabernacles.

And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the L-rd came upon them, and the glory of the L-rd shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the L-rd. (Luke 2:7-11)

There are several points to be taken from this passage. First, why was there no room at the inn? Could it be that Jerusalem was full since Tabernacles was one of only three feasts which required all men to attend and celebrate in Jerusalem? This would have been a time when the city was crowded.

Next, shepherds would not normally have been in the fields during December since it would have been too cold. It was customary to send the flocks out until the first rain in October. This would have been around the time of the feast of Tabernacles. Notice also there was a bright light of glory that surrounded the shepherds. Remember, Sukkot is also known as the Festival of Lights and in John 8 during this feast, Jesus announced He was the light of the world. I don't think its coincidence that the feast language is used to describe events surrounding the birth of Christ. The angels bring tidings of "great joy," and Tabernacles is known as the Season of Our Joy (see Deuteronomy 16:13-14). According to the angels, this joy was to be for all people and not just the Jewish nation. Remember again that the feast is also known as the Festival of Nations and the Festival of the Ingathering. Do you still need more proof? Let's look a little further into Luke 2. "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising G-d, and saying, Glory to G-d in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:13-14).

From this scripture we conclude that Jesus indeed partially fulfilled this feast through His first advent. A greater final fulfillment will come when Jesus reigns on the earth. We know there are myriad differing opinions on this topic, which is not to be a source of contention in this book. We present this support to show the connection between the feast and its past and future fulfillment. The feast will be fulfilled completely when Jesus establishes His millennial reign. What a wonderful time that will be! It will be a time of peace and joy. Believers experience partial fulfillment of this peace when we repent, are redeemed, and enter the joy of His forgiveness, grace, and mercy. We are then at peace with G-d. During this time, the complete fulfillment of Joel 2 will be realized as well.

But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the L-rd shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the L-RD, and to the house of the G-d of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the L-RD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the L-RD of hosts hath spoken it. For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the L-RD our God for ever and ever. In that day, saith the L-RD, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted; And I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation: and the L-RD shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever. (Micah 4:1-5)

We know that the prophet is referring to the latter days because he states that in the first verse. Micah tells of many nations coming up to worship the L-rd on the temple mount. This is a clear reference to the feast of Tabernacles and the millennial reign of Christ. Micah 4:3 mentions turning swords, which are weapons of war, into plowshares (a digging instrument for farming like a hoe). This is symbolic of the universal peace that will exist during the reign of Christ on the earth. In fact, the verse specifically states “neither shall they learn war any more.” So Tabernacles is associated with a time of peace. Isaiah 2:4 also has a similar passage referring to the peace to be found during the Messianic Age. Isaiah 11 paints an even clearer picture of the concept of the peaceful Messianic Age.

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the L-RD, as the waters cover the sea. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the L-rd shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.
(Isaiah 11:6-12)

In this passage, we see references to the re-gathering of the nation of Israel. This is a common theme for the feast of Tabernacles. We also see that the promised one Jesus, who comes out of the line of David (whose father was Jesse), ruling and judging the nations of the world. This will be a time of peace not only for mankind, but also among the wild animals, as the wolf and leopard will lie down with their former prey the lambs and young goats. The feast of Tabernacles is irrevocably linked with end-time prophecies, and it will one day usher in a time of peace. Tabernacles will be celebrated by all nations as outlined in Zechariah 14:16-19.

The Seventh Beatitude and the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot)

“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of G-d.”
(Matthew 5:9)

Here in this final beatitude, we find references which link back to the seventh and final feast of the L-rd. While we have established that the feast of Tabernacles will usher in a time of peace, spiritually we receive the peace of G-d when we are reconciled to Him. We are called His children today when we practice and apply these feasts and/or Beatitudes in their proper sequence, step-by-step. We will be called His children again in the Messianic Age. This is part of our inheritance. As with the other comparisons, the language surrounding the corresponding feast can be compared to the

language and order of the Beatitudes. We see the same instance here between the seventh feast and the seventh Beatitude.

This feast points to the reward and promise we receive when we are obedient. Our obedience and repentance generates the favor and blessings which are promised from G-d. G-d is a god of relationships. Just as He had a close relationship with Adam in the garden when He would come down to visit with him, G-d still desires a close relationship with His people. It is unfortunate that often we are content with a long distance relationship rather than drawing closer behind the veil. We pray for those who have absolutely no relationship with Him and have not had their Passover (i.e. experienced a broken and humble heart to receive Jesus and His sacrifice for them). While we have highlighted religious practices and how these feasts were celebrated, it is the spiritual lessons and relationship process that G-d teaches us through these feasts and the Beatitudes that we must put into practice. G-d still desires a close intimate relationship with you and me. The Glaser's point out that "joy is the fruit of obedience, the reward of having been purged and cleansed through repentance and redemption" (page 218). They add that we are to continue enjoying our relationship with G-d by keeping His commandments. Jesus states in John 15:10-11, that keeping His commandments allows us to abide in His love this creates joy in us that will be made complete or full. The passages in Revelation also paint a picture of the Messianic Age.

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from G-d out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of G-d is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and G-d himself shall be with them, and be their G-d. And G-d shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his G-d, and he shall be my son. (Revelation 21:1-7)

Here we see G-d dwelling or tabernacling with man on the earth. As He dwells with us, we have the promise in these passages that we shall be His

people. This is the same promise Jesus states in this Beatitude. Revelation 21:7 states He will be our G-d and we shall be His sons and daughters. We can experience this promise spiritually today as we await the greater fulfillment. But those who do not receive the promises of Jesus have a different fate and a promise of torment as we read further in Revelation 21:8. “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whore-mongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8). If there is someone who is reading this book and has not had their Passover by accepting Jesus Christ as redeemer and Messiah, I encourage you today to pour out your pride and become poor in spirit. Receive the fullness of His Spirit and the better promises His word has provided.

Finally, we see in 1 John a very clear analogy of what it takes to be called a son or daughter of G-d. It stems from the love we show to both G-d and others here on earth. Again, the reward and peace we have as a result of being a peacemaker is that we are called the children of G-d. Look at the overwhelming theme of obedience through our love for others as peacemakers and the promise of being called His children.

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of G-d: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of G-d, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is...In this the children of G-d are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of G-d, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. (1 John 3:1-2 and 10-11)

Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Hereby perceive we the love of G-d, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us. (1 John 3:13-14, 16, 18, 23-24)

These are powerful passages which highlight again the requirement for us as believers to practice obedience to His commandments by loving others (see 1 John 5:1-5). When we practice this as peacemakers, we receive a portion of the promise to come; His Holy Spirit abides within us. By practicing “peace” and “love,” we are identified as His disciples and called the sons and daughters of G-d. The fact that the idea of peace is associated with the seventh feast (Tabernacles) and that the term “peacemaker” is used in this seventh Beatitude shows the amazing consistency and design of His promises and plan of salvation.

The Result of the Beatitudes

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. (Matthew 5:10-12)

The passage we read earlier from 1 John 3 reminds us as believers that we should not be surprised when the world hates us. Here we are looking not at characteristics, but the result of putting on the first seven characteristics or Beatitudes. These remaining sections from Matthew 5 highlight the consequences of demonstrating these seven characteristics. We receive righteousness, just as Abraham did, as a result of our faith. As a result of our faith in Jesus Christ and the promises of G-d, which demonstrates itself through changed lives of love and obedience, we may face persecution. But that’s okay! People may talk about you and make fun of your changed life and beliefs. We are to rejoice and remember that G-d is our defense. Our ultimate reward is in heaven, and even our foretaste here on earth today is great. Our challenge is to remain in a right relationship with G-d. We can do this by effectively applying the Beatitudes as a clear demonstration of our faith.

At this point we will turn to the application portion, which is the primary reason David and I decided to write this book. We have only touched the surface on many of the themes and concepts we presented. We have attempted to demonstrate the strategic link between the feasts and the Beatitudes. The feasts provide a greater awareness and help us better

understand the spirit and intent of the Beatitudes. We hope that you too can see the link between G-d's plan of salvation and how to apply the Beatitudes for a more fulfilling relationship with Him.

Chapter 9

Proper Application of the Beatitudes: A Process Approach

So we are finally here! Now let's see how to apply the Beatitudes. You may recall in the first portion of this book, I mentioned my previous notion for how to do this. It consisted of just trying to put on one or two of these. Since the blessing appeared to be the same, what difference would it make? My standpoint was just take what you need from the Beatitudes and don't worry about the pieces that don't fit, such as meekness. I thought I could still be "blessed" from the Beatitudes that I actually applied. This is clearly not the spirit and intent of the verses. Jesus had something different and more complete in mind when He gave this sermon. Perhaps there are wiser people who figured this out long ago and already have the answer. You may not have needed the feasts to figure it out. I was not that person. I only discovered this when I observed the connection between the feasts. It became clear to me I was practicing the Beatitudes incorrectly. So let's see what I discovered. First, please do not discount this discovery. If G-d can reveal His truths to a group of fishermen and a tax collector, why would He not pour out a blessing and a revelation in these last days to common everyday folks like Dave and me? He did, and He still does!

The feasts are given in a designed sequence, a specific order, as planned by G-d. The children of Israel were led out of Egypt and bondage in the same specific order as the first four feasts, which have been fulfilled by Jesus Christ. Jesus fulfills these feasts in the order in which they are given in Leviticus 23. Nothing is taken out of sequence. The feasts were designed around the agricultural season. Even in nature and the growing season, we see a definite sequence. Spring comes before Summer, Fall follows Summer, and so forth in an order that has been repeated in continuous cycle through

the ages. This is not a coincidence, but designed by the hand of G-d Himself. The feasts follow the same pattern. Since I'm convinced that the feasts are applied in a given sequence and they are linked to the Beatitudes, then the Beatitudes must also be applied in sequence. This is an important concept and the basis for our spiritual growth and success as Christians.

G-d is also a G-d of relationships. He desires a closer relationship with us. He stands at the door and knocks to get our attention. The problem is we need to know the pathway by which we can access fellowship with Him. The outline of the Old Testament tabernacle demonstrates how to have a relationship with G-d and the sequence of steps we need to take. While we have not covered the tabernacle message and symbolism in this book in great detail, it's an interesting study. Just as the tabernacle points the way to having a relationship with G-d, the feasts outline the step-by-step sequence for establishing the right relationship with G-d and others. If He dealt with His people Israel this way, our unchanging G-d will deal with us in the same way. G-d has not changed His plan for us, so we need to know the sequence of events outlined in this plan. In this book, I have proposed that our G-d of design and relationship has outlined a step-by-step guide for how to draw closer to Him and have ongoing fellowship behind the veil. From this process, we can have the joy of His indwelling Spirit leading our lives, and taking more control. As a result, we please G-d with our lives and service, and lay claim to the promises to which we are heir.

Let's get a better understanding of what I call a "process approach." A good business definition for a process that I have learned is: "A set of interrelated work activities that are characterized by a set of specific inputs tasks that produce a set of specific outputs." Simply stated, inputs are taken, and through a series of activities, they are transformed into desirable outputs. In my role as a business consultant, I analyze processes. It was of great interest to me to analyze the feasts as a process. I found that the feasts can be considered a process. Since the feasts are given to us by G-d, He has designed the process by which we can approach Him. We *are* the inputs to this divine process. Through a set of interrelated activities, these human inputs (we) are transformed, and a desirable output pleasing to G-d is produced. The feasts outline these activities or process steps. Since the feasts are linked strategically to the Beatitudes, then the latter also present a set of related activities to produce the desired end product G-d is seeking. I propose that the entire set of Beatitudes, and not just one or two of your favorites, make up the transformation process for believers to be perfected.

After researching and comparing the feasts to each of the Beatitudes, I am convinced that they are linked. If linked, then perhaps the Beatitudes are to be applied in a sequence using this same process approach. This totally changed my paradigm of the Beatitudes! So rather than putting on a desired characteristic out of sequence, I started to apply the Beatitudes one at a time in sequence using a step-by-step approach. Jesus is totally linked to the Father. His message is consistent with the Father's message. We can know the Father through having the mind of Christ (see 1 Corinthians 2:16). When we look at the Beatitudes, it is no surprise that they are to be applied in sequence. That's the reason Jesus proclaimed them in this specific order. This also reveals His consistency with the Father since G-d gives the feasts in this same divine order.

So how did I get started in my transformation? I went through each Beatitude step-by-step.

Step One: Become poor in spirit. First, I picked up my cross and poured out my spirit. Specifically, I sat down in prayer and renewed my need to rely on Him and the work of Jesus and not my own efforts or wisdom. I poured out my pride and renewed my acceptance of Jesus' sacrifice for me. I remembered from where G-d brought me. This meant accepting his sacrifice by sacrificing my own selfish desires.

Step Two: Mourn my failure. Next, I looked at my condition. I recognized my folly and regretted what I had done. While I am saved, I realized that I still had areas in my life where I am not always spirit-led. This was timely since I was just starting to prepare to teach the "*Mind of Christ*" series with the inmates. I couldn't even begin to feel self-righteous; the more I experienced G-d's glory and learned of Him, the more unworthy I found myself to be. I was falling short, and I mourned that condition. However, through His Spirit, I was comforted. I understood that I was forgiven and an heir to His promises. This was my comfort along with the fact that I had a place in the kingdom of heaven.

Step Three: Put on meekness. Never before this study had I imagined myself as having this characteristic within me. Now it was pouring out as I recalled my own shortcomings and the great mercy that G-d had extended to me. I now felt compelled to demonstrate this trait to others. My prayers for other people's needs became much more important to me. My service to others and compassion for those lost and in need started to overcome previous fears. He did not give us the spirit of fear, but of power and love.

Whatever issues I was dealing with at this time, I was now handling with a new mind. The old man was buried.

Step Four: Strive to release more of myself. By this phrase, I mean I was learning to release more of myself to the leading of the Holy Spirit. I realized that not all of my actions and emotions were spirit led. I started actively seeking by faith to follow the Spirit. I was hungry and thirsty for His leading. My flesh and worldly desires needed to be sacrificed and replaced with His Spirit. Indeed, He was filling me up! I started having the attitude of wanting to be obedient to His will.

Step Five: Practice mercy. As I was being healed and growing in knowledge of G-d, I realized that others around me may not be healed or might need encouragement. I started to provide compassion as the Spirit led me. My relationship with the inmates was sincere and I examined myself to ensure that my service and teaching were not about my need for recognition, but from a heart lifting up the name of Jesus and pointing to Him. My heart grieved more for those who were lost or in need.

Step Six: Seek holiness. While I knew that I couldn't be perfect, I was striving to live holy. I realized this was a new standard. For example, from time to time I would get (and still do) the "wife" conversation. I used to dread this. My wife would want to know how we're doing? Do you really love me? I could go on. My flesh response was "gimme a break." The bills are getting paid and I'm still here. I've got friends who are not doing that much so I didn't have much patience for these types of conversations. I would dismiss them with the thought, "she'll be over this in a bit, just suffer through it."

After my discovery, things were a bit different. I had been putting on these Beatitudes and becoming more sensitive to the needs of those around me including my family who are my priority. I had been comparing myself to my friends and the world when analyzing my performance as a husband and father. I didn't look too bad against the world's standards. The problem was that I was using the wrong standard. G-d's standards are quite different. When compared to His standards which call me to love, I realized I was woefully lacking. My attitude changed toward these "wife" conversations. I began looking at other areas of my life where I needed to apply G-d's standards and seek His holiness. In doing so, I became even more aware of His promises and how awesome G-d is.

Step Seven: Practice peacemaking. Peacemakers not only study peace, but diffuse conflict. I began to stop fueling the need to defend myself at every turn. Instead of focusing on differences, I started looking at the ground at the foot of the cross which is level. My focus was on Jesus and the cross rather than differences. This was particularly important at the prison where you have every religious denomination all lumped into one Christian community. So when dealing with the Church of Christ, Southern Baptists, or Methodists, I found myself focusing on Jesus who breaks down the walls rather than rebuilding walls based on doctrinal differences. There are always conflicts going on within the prison church community as with any church. But I've learned to demonstrate love and wear the peacemaker hat. I know I could not have effectively experienced this without going through each of the previous six steps first!

Excited with my new discovery, I felt well prepared to go and teach the Beatitudes to my prison bible study class. What a new revelation! I knew after coming out of a feast study, the inmates, my brothers, would be thrilled and extremely interested in this concept. I had to watch myself to make sure my own pride didn't rise up in me. But before teaching it effectively, I was to face a trial that would put the concept to the test.

The Moving Trip

Shortly after my analysis and new insights concerning the Beatitudes, the concept was challenged in my own life. My oldest daughter had moved to another city while she was attending college part-time. She now was moving from an apartment she shared to her first apartment on her own. My wife and I planned to drive to the city where she lived to assist her in moving her things into her new apartment.

The trip didn't start off well. My wife and I had a disagreement concerning the logistics of the trip that irritated me. I also was not very thrilled about my daughter's move and skeptical about some of the things going on in her life. Nevertheless, I put all that behind me and started the drive by playing my array of Christian music that I had planned for the trip. It seemed the praise and worship music I selected was just what I needed to get my mind off any conflicts and back on G-d. I was having a blessed time! I felt blessed!

As soon as I met my daughter however, there was tension on both sides. I greeted her with a question, and I didn't receive her reply or greeting for me

very well either. During the whole move, the tension continued to grow between us. I couldn't help focusing on my displeasure with her, and unknown to me, she was upset with me over a separate issue. Toward the end of the move as we returned to her new apartment, I heard her mumbling something to effect of, "if he's going to have that kind of attitude, he could have stayed home."

Of course I hit the roof! Here I was taking time out of my day to drive to another city to help her move. Sweaty and dirty from the dust and lugging heavy furniture, and I couldn't even get a "thank you Dad" for all of my effort. As if I owed her something! When I confronted her about her mumbling, she let me have it. There was a lot of frustration built up, and she felt betrayed by me. Personally, at the time, I thought she was crazy and I proceeded to argue my case vehemently. Flesh was touching flesh then, and all of our arguing did nothing but strain our relationship even further. I moved the last piece of heavy furniture and left in a huff. If she wanted me out of her business, fine. They won't have Chuck to kick around much longer!

I got into my car and started on my trip back to Montgomery. I slammed in my Christian music hoping it would restore the peace and happiness I had prior to my encounter with my daughter. But peace didn't come. In my spirit, I felt a question being asked. Now I'm very alert when questions hit my spirit. In the Bible, G-d addresses His people with questions. Jesus used the same technique while he was on earth. When Adam sinned in the garden how did G-d respond? He came and asked him questions. When Cain's offering wasn't accepted, how did G-d respond? He asked Cain a question. When the fearful disciples were in the boat with Jesus who was sleeping as a storm arose, how did he respond? Jesus asked them a question before rebuking the storm (see Matthew 8:23-27). Why does G-d ask questions? It is clear He knows the answers to these questions before He asks them. Perhaps He asks them in the same manner that we ask our children questions when they disobey. We are looking for them to accept responsibility, understand the wrong, and repent! I believe G-d asks these questions so we will think about our own performance. When we attempt to honestly answer these questions, we soon find out that we have repair work that needs to be accomplished in us. Interestingly enough, some of the questions G-d asked others in the Bible, are the same questions He asks us today.

So I was driving down the road, playing my music, and finding no peace. All of a sudden, in my spirit, I sense this question being asked, "Why are you

angry and why is your mouth poked out?” G-d asked of Cain these same questions (see Genesis 4:4-7). When I started to answer the questions in my spirit, I realized that I wasn’t happy. I was happy a few hours ago on the trip up playing my music, but I was not happy now. As I answered the questions in my mind, it hit me--the Beatitudes! One of the promises from the Beatitudes is that we are to be blessed. With my understanding of “blessed” meaning happy, I realized I wasn’t happy, and I wasn’t being blessed. How could I get my happiness back? I wanted my blessings back! The answer for me lay in the Beatitudes. I was angry, but that was no excuse for letting circumstances take away my blessing.

I’m not a rocket scientist so it takes a while for some things to sink into my skull. As I was driving, I recalled my study preparation on the Beatitudes for the prison class. If I was lacking happiness, then I should simply apply what I learned, and I would be happy and blessed all over again. It sounded simple enough. Here is where the real challenge begins for the truth seeking believer. You gain all this knowledge, but what will you do with it? How will you apply it to your life? I started to apply my discovery and that is the step of faith. However, I was so mad, that it was more like a leap of faith.

Step One: I shifted my focus. Rather than focus on my hurt feelings, I focused on my need for Jesus. I celebrated His sacrifice for me, even though I was not worthy of so great a sacrifice. I became poor in spirit. During the argument, my pride rose up. No parent wants their child at any age to rise up against them. As a man, respect is important to me and that is biblical (see Ephesians 5). I found myself in both a defensive and attacking position with my daughter as I tried to prove I was right. As I turned my focus from my self and pride, I turned instead to my need for Jesus. My pride started to fade away. I began to empty out self and hurt feelings so He could replace them. I was making room for Jesus by clearing out pride and self.

Step Two: I started to mourn and appreciate Jesus’ sacrifice and understand that I still have issues. I was comforted that even though I may not have handled the circumstance correctly, a forgiving G-d extends His mercy to me even in my short-comings. I accepted His sacrifice and mourned my condition and poor response to my daughter, but rejoiced in my deliverance. At this point, I had buried my pride and was ready to walk in newness of life.

Step Three: My tone began to change. Earlier, I had nothing but a hot temper and some choice words to get my message across. I had even been replaying in my mind other things I could have said to her to win my

argument and show her the error of her ways. All that had changed now. My focus was not on my daughter, but on me and my need for Jesus. My tone had changed from one of anger and wanting to strike back to a much softer tone. This was an attitude I thought I would never be able to display, but here it was--I was experiencing meekness!

Step Four: I became sensitive to being Spirit-led. With my new mindset, I started seeking what to do next. What did the Spirit want me to do? I was now able to hear the Spirit clearly since my fleshly desires had been crucified and buried through putting on the first two Beatitudes. The Spirit was taking control, where as before my flesh had held my thoughts and emotions in bondage. Now the Spirit was in control and I was free.

Step Five: The Spirit began leading me now to apply mercy. It is interesting to me that I'm not sure if I had memorized the Beatitudes in their given order at this point. But as I recall, things happened in that exact same order. The Spirit was leading me through the sequence of events even though I may not have memorized the order yet. Without even remembering the rest of the Beatitudes, I reached Step Five--applying mercy! This was not easy to apply. The Spirit was prompting me to extend mercy since I had received G-d's mercy. This was tough as I noticed my flesh starting to rebel again. The Spirit showed me that I needed to call my daughter and apologize. "Fat chance!" That was my initial reply as soon as the thought hit my mind. "Ain't gonna happen!" That was my second thought. You see folks, I was right in my argument. At least in my mind, I was right and she was wrong! Why should I apologize? At this point, I noticed that the progress I made up to Step 5 had halted. Not only had I stopped progressing through the Beatitudes, but I found myself beamed back to the starting point as the Captain Kirk in my mind was ordering Scotty to pull up the deflector shields. So now I had to start over again with Steps One through Four and repeat the process.

Let me point out an application caution here. Too often we stop without completing the entire process. I got some of my "happy" back, and I was content to stop right there. Would we want a major manufacturer to do the same thing with the goods and services we buy that they produce for us? Of course not! Who would want to purchase a car that has not gone through the entire assembly process? Not me. So why would a holy G-d be satisfied with anything less than completion in us? He desires us to be completed works.

I have caught myself at times settling for less than His best for me. I'll go through the first few steps, get my joy back, and then stop without going through the remainder of the process. At times, I have even taken them out of order trying to capture happiness and G-d's favor on my own terms. This is a Cain-like offering whether we want to admit it or not. This same principle applies to the tabernacle example. Does G-d want you in the outer court, or in the Holy of Holies? If the veil has been torn in two, why wouldn't He want you to come closer? Indeed, the New Testament encourages us to come boldly (Hebrews 10:19-20). With such an invitation to draw closer in relationship to Him, why would we not take advantage of this? But often we don't. We sit in the outer court without drawing closer and wonder why our joy is not complete.

So here I was. I could be satisfied with myself that I wasn't mad at my daughter anymore and stop there. I mean, my happiness was back; she would call home eventually and things would blow over. But now with the new knowledge based on the feasts pressing upon me, why would I want G-d to only complete a part of His plan by stopping at the first four feasts and not fulfill the final three? As believers, would we be satisfied at Jesus' first coming? Or do we need and desire Him to fulfill the complete process and plan by coming again? No, we would not be satisfied. Instead my hope is in the complete accomplishment of all seven feasts. The entire process needs to be completed. But we give G-d less than our best at times and only our partial obedience. And we wonder why our joy is not full? Now that the feasts are linked to the Beatitudes, I no longer have an excuse. I must complete the entire process so my joy would be complete. I could give my best to G-d by fully surrendering.

After going back through the first four steps, I arrived at Step Five. If G-d had shown me mercy, shouldn't I display mercy to my daughter? A series of Bible verses floated through my mind, and it was no longer a matter of who was right or wrong. The Spirit was in control again, and my desire was to draw closer in relationship with Him. When I focus on my relationship with G-d, it helps me improve and repair the relationship I have with others. The Bible speaks of this in Matthew stating, "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matthew 5:23-24).

I took out my cell phone and called my daughter before I could even make it home and apologized. Yes, I still thought I was right, and she was wrong.

But it wasn't a matter of defending myself anymore. Instead it was a matter of relationship with G-d and standing on His promises. Our conversation took on a different tone. I was meek and softer in my tone. Her tone in turn, changed as a result. If we think we are healed or have the answer, then we believe that the other person doesn't have it. We show patience when we remember long ago, we were sick or not aware ourselves (Galatians 6:1).

It is also important to note that I had to repeat the process again in order and that I couldn't jump around out of sequence to get back to the fifth step. This is also consistent with scripture. In Leviticus 10, we read the story of Aaron's two sons, Nadab and Abihu. In this story, Nadab and Abihu observe Moses and Aaron conducting a worship service. During the service, G-d revealed His glory to the people, and fire came from Him upon the Brazen Altar (see Leviticus 9:24). Can you imagine the praise and worship at that service! Apparently, Nadab and Abihu wanted to duplicate this feat, and they took fire from a source other than the Brazen Altar and used it to enter into the Holy Place to burn incense to the L-rd. Leviticus 10:1 states they, "*offered strange fire.*" I don't know where they got the fire from, but it wasn't from the Brazen Altar as the L-rd had designed and instructed. The offering was not brought with the right heart and pure motives. As a result, G-d killed Aaron's sons with fire (Leviticus 10:2). Now I thought this punishment was a bit severe, but G-d is making a statement for our benefit.

G-d designed the tabernacle and the first piece of furniture, as we have mentioned was the Brazen Altar. Why? Because by design, you must start there. Remember, the design of the tabernacle points to a divine process. Nadab and Abihu tried to bypass the process. Applying the steps out of sequence (just like Cain) is not acceptable. If G-d allowed the steps to be broken, He would have given us the green light to approach Him any way we wanted. He has never accepted a Cain offering or strange fire. He never will because He doesn't change! So why would He accept us applying the Beatitudes out of sequence? As I pondered this, I wondered how many prayers had I sent up before first becoming "poor in spirit" or having Passover at the altar? How many times had I bypassed the first step and rushed to my Christian music for instant joy rather than humbling myself first? Was this a false joy because I offered Him strange fire? We should be careful folks!

Step Six: As I concluded the follow-up call with my daughter, I became excited with my progress. It works! My joy was restored, but my degree of happiness and blessings were even more than I had imagined and I still had

two steps to go. It was satisfying to know I was making the Father happy by being obedient. I really felt like G-d was pleased. It was similar to the joy I felt as a youth when I made my earthly father proud of my achievements. I began to seek holiness in other areas of my life and in my relationships. Even though I already had reconciled in my mind with my wife, I couldn't wait to share the joy in my heart over my progress. I became more sensitive about other areas that might impact my purity. In other words, I was letting the Spirit purge my conscience and my heart on the inside and not just become satisfied with my outward accomplishments. Here is the application within my example. After hanging up with my daughter, it would have been easy to stop there with the outward evidence that I made the first step toward reconciliation (even though the move was driven from the inside). In fact, I was tempted to stop right there, but within my heart I needed to ensure that I was sincere and consistent. There was still a piece of me that wanted to cut her off, but I was applying a new standard different from the world's expectations. The standard was holiness and a conscience sprinkled clean.

Step Seven: This step took several days to complete. Thrilled with my progress and the actual application of the Beatitudes in my life, within the next week I started telling my close friends about my discovery. One of these friends was of course David and his wife Deena. They were both pleased and impressed with my findings. However, Deena remarked, "How does your daughter feel? Does she know that you're a safe place?" I was not amused to say the least. "Hey look Deena, I made real progress here. Isn't it good enough?" I told myself. She should know that it's a safe place at my house. I apologized and didn't even have to. I made the first step, which I rarely had done before (especially when I felt I was right). I quickly discounted this train of thought. But I was not beamed back to Step One this time. Instead, I found myself still at the sixth Beatitude. I continued to be led by the Spirit, but I still needed my heart sprinkled from an evil conscience pertaining to my daughter. I knew Deena was right. So here we go again, though it took a couple more days, I made the other phone call and explained to my daughter that our home is always a safe place for her. It is not a place where I can frequently vent and voice my disappointment in her, but a place where she can find healing when needed. Why would I want her to reach out to the world and its logic for this kind of relief? The process was now completed--I was working as a peacemaker! Wow, I was operating as a real child of G-d!

I've had to renew my mind and go through the entire process from time to time. When my daughter came home for the holidays, there was a part of me that wanted to withdraw and not take a chance on getting hurt. Perhaps I could get a little revenge factor to prove I was right. These thoughts were quickly aborted before they could be conceived. During one conversation, she was very happy and sharing with me about her job. She noticed I was a bit standoffish. I was going through a bit of a battle at the time. However, it was only a light flare up, which once again I squashed. I simply applied the Beatitudes and was able to fully join in the conversation without pride or a desire for pay back. I had the assurance that I was standing on His promises and pleasing the Father--my joy was being completed.

Since this time, I have been trying to apply these principles in my life. My son went through a period where he wasn't performing well in school. In fact a teacher called the house on two or three occasions. I had just about enough! He was placed on punishment and I basically cut him off from blessings and communication (except for the mean looks I would shoot at him). My wife sat me down and suggested that I change my approach. This would be one of those "wife" conversations I mentioned earlier. No way! My son needed to be taught a lesson. I walked back through the Beatitude process again, and now I'm having a blast with my son. Oh, he stayed on punishment for awhile, but that was no reason to cut off communication to get my point across. Remember, even G-d asks questions when we are disobedient.

With great joy and real-life application, I shared my Beatitude lesson with the inmates one Sunday. It has been almost impossible to not refer to these principles from time to time as we continue through our current "*Mind of Christ*" study. Since the entire Bible is about Jesus and G-d's plan, almost every study I embark on links back to the feasts or Beatitudes in some way. However, there are some other points and observations we should be aware of.

There is no set time limit for processing these steps. When making goods and services, there is usually a standard or expected "cycle time" for completion or movement through each processing stage. Some of my success in the business world has been in analyzing and making recommendations leading to process improvement that have reduced processing times and improved quality and speed to market. Since the Holy Spirit is involved in performing much of the processing activities, the cycle time varies among believers based upon how long it takes you to surrender.

In the example with daughter, I went through the first four process steps (Beatitudes) twice before progressing to the sixth Beatitude. It took me several days to jump from the sixth Beatitude to the seventh one. Sometimes I can speed through the entire process in a matter of minutes. Sometimes it might take hours or days, or sometimes I still find myself derailing and halting the process in the middle. I'm a work in progress, but I'm getting better since now I know the purpose and vision behind Jesus' sermon. If it takes a long time for you to get through the process, then check yourself; unlike man-made processes, this process is not broke. If it takes too long or is not complete, then it is operator error that needs attention and not G-d's design

Let me illustrate this concept another way. Raw materials or inputs into a manufacturing or business process start out incomplete or as unfinished goods. They must go through the entire processing activities in order to be properly assembled and considered finished goods. Through these processes, the goods must meet quality control standards in order to satisfy customer demands and expectations. Inputs are transformed into desirable and completed outputs. Materials or inputs that have flaws or are incorrectly assembled at any stage in the process may have to be re-worked or scrapped altogether as rejects. This may occur as a result of errors in the process or the use of defective materials or inputs. G-d's process however, has no design flaws. It is perfect! It's so perfect that He can take any raw material input like you and me. It doesn't matter how defective or imperfect we are. He can transform this same imperfect input into something quite desirable and complete. What an awesome potter He is!

This is why I've developed such a heart and a great love for many of the inmates in the prison. Many of the inmates who are sold out to G-d are indeed raw materials and imperfect inputs who He has transformed into mighty men of G-d! Many of them are much closer to G-d than many people I know who are walking around free in their body, but their souls are still in bondage. We must emphasize the fact that G-d can take any defective raw material and make it brand new (in fact He can create something out of nothing). I've come across several people who did not receive Christ, simply because they felt G-d would never forgive them for all of their past sins. Yet I know He can fix any one who comes to Him with a humble heart.

In order for G-d to work out all of our imperfections, we must stay on the Potter's wheel (Jeremiah 18:1-8). In business, raw materials don't just jump off the assembly line. But in G-d's process, the raw materials (you and I) can

elect to be incomplete by choosing not to go through the remainder of the process. If your joy is incomplete, it isn't because G-d's process is broken. Make sure that the raw materials and inputs are still on the assembly line. We need to examine if we haven't jumped off the Potter's wheel. Instead we need to continue through G-d's process, which I have shown you in this book to be the Beatitudes.

Just because you've gone through the process once, doesn't mean that you stay in the happy zone. I've found in my case that there is sometimes a revolving door outside the Holy of Holies where the veil used to be. I find myself entering the presence of G-d in my relationship with Him, and it only takes an irritating phone call, cranky family members, someone offending me at church, work, or play, or even someone cutting me off on the road to zap me right out of there again. G-d is a spirit and we must worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). He won't take your fleshy fellowship. When you find yourself outside the Holy of Holies or lacking in blessings and happiness, start over again at the first Beatitude and get back on the assembly line. You can get yourself beamed back into the Holy of Holies in no time. Just as I've found there is no time limit for completing the seven-step process, there is also no set time of how long it takes for you to find yourself in the outer court again. When pride and flesh rise up, you will not be in His presence very long.

The whole process is designed for continuous improvement. During my studies and application of quality assurance measures both as a college instructor and business consultant, a key selling and teaching point remains the aspect of continuous process improvement. This is a concept widely sought after and used today in just about every successful business operation. Even though your processes may be performing well, in the face of growing competition, "well enough" won't allow you to maintain your market share. As a result, continuous improvement has been a key buzz word for decades.

The methodology I often use to implement a client's business solution is centered around the Deming Wheel or the Shewhart cycle. Dr. Deming, a guru in Total Quality Management (TQM) developed a cycle which contained four steps or quadrants. These quadrants are Plan, Do, Check, and Act (PDCA). I've used the concept to implement quality assurance procedures in several large organizations. The continuous improvement steps derive from the concept that after you have chosen a process to review and analyze (Plan); then you actually analyze the processing activities, collect data on root causes, and design improvement recommendations (Do). Next,

you test these recommendations, design, implementation, and measure the effects of these proposed changes (Check). Finally, implement the proposed process changes into live production so the organization can enjoy the benefits of these changes (Act). PDCA doesn't stop there. You are to then go back and start over by looking for the next process opportunity, either in a new area or by further refining the key process you just improved.

That is the essence of continuous improvement. An organization does not rest on past accomplishments but strives to continuously improve as a way of life. That's what successful businesses are doing. As a consultant, I'm aware and sensitive to this concept. I find that many of these quality principles mirror what G-d has already laid out in His word. In fact, G-d has implemented a continuous improvement process and plan for us. The Beatitudes are an example. It is one thing to accept Jesus as Savior at one point in your life, it is quite another to let Him be the L-rd of your life. The latter requires a continuous improvement approach.

I'm not gathering support for this concept from the business world alone. Jesus said we should pick up our cross daily and follow Him (Luke 9:23). If we have already picked up our cross once, then why is there a need for a daily renewal? Because each day we should pour out our spirit and crucify our flesh to be led by the Spirit. That's the same concept as continuous improvement. Don't get stagnant or comfortable; always seek to move closer to Him. Just as we may get up each day to go to work to make something new, each day that we are alive is a new processing day for G-d to complete our make over. Each day we should implement the Beatitudes starting at the first one. When you pick up your cross (pour out your spirit), then G-d's processing can begin in you each day.

Remember, we must always follow the sequence and not try to serve Him out of order. Take and apply the Beatitudes in their proper sequence, especially starting at the first Beatitude or feast. There is always the danger of bringing strange fire or a Cain-like offering before the L-rd. He didn't accept such offerings back then, and He has not changed His standards today. One sure way to prevent bringing a Cain offering is by applying the first Beatitude before you bring your offering or gift. It is exactly what Jesus asks us to do in picking up our cross daily. Jude 11 tells us that it was through Cain's pride that he sinned. We avoid this trap when we pour out ourselves and accept Him prior to presenting our offering.

So what does this mean for us since we don't bring bloody goats, lambs, and bullocks for offerings today? It simply means start in the proper sequence before you pray, or sing in your choir, or lead the church in a hymn or song, or even put your offering in the plate. There have been times where I've prayed incorrectly or have been more concerned about how I sounded and the praise I might receive, rather than focusing on giving Him glory. These are Cain offerings. Perhaps they are acceptable to you, but not to G-d! I'm more aware now and crucify my flesh and desires prior to service. Even in my prison ministry, I'm careful to make sure I have sacrificed at the altar first by becoming poor in my own spirit. Celebrate the first Beatitude before you perform your service and/or good deed for others.

A Case Study

I was teaching one of my Hispanic Bible study classes at the prison after writing much of this book. I shared with them a particular situation I had experienced recently with a friend and used it as a case study for the lesson. This particular case links directly with the Beatitudes and what we have shared with you in this book. As you read through the case study and see the list of answers, see if you can figure out a proper response for this scenario.

I have a friend who has paid some heavy dues for some mistakes he has made. Certainly, the inmates in my class could relate to this. The consequences presented quite a strain on his family and during one of his first visits home, his teenage daughter pretty much let him have it. She told her father how disappointed she was in him, how she didn't like him, and on and on. This happened right before the Christmas holidays. My friend was both hurt and very upset. He relayed the story to me and was considering not buying his daughter any presents. I knew he was venting, but perhaps also looking to see if I would validate his decision and support his feelings. As believers, we can expect people to come to us to vent or ask for advice, and often we may be called to direct them in the right direction. I posed the question to my class, what would they do and how would they respond if this were their friend coming to them? So what would you do? Think about the situation and place yourself in the story. Remember what we have already shared from the feasts and Beatitudes and leverage these concepts into your answer before reading further.

The response from the class was interesting and quite logical. Some of the responses included the following:

- He should buy his daughter presents anyway.
- He should seek to sit down and re-establish a relationship with her.
- He should pray.

While these were good responses, I asked what happens when the man with his hurt feelings, tries to execute any of the above actions? With his whole heart could he really give her presents in the right spirit or practice meekness? I don't think so. So the class went in another direction. While these options looked okay, something internally probably needed to be done first before he tries to fix the relationship or even punish her for her poor

response to her father. Even though there may be truth in her words, and her feelings are genuine, the manner in which she presented them was not appropriate.

After careful consideration, I shared a story my pastor used in a sermon one Sunday. He mentioned plucking a leaf off an artificial plant one day and asked if the plant felt any pain? Of course the answer is no since the plant was not alive, but dead. He used this example to show that we too must be dead in the flesh in order to walk in the spirit. My friend was hurting, and he needed to deal with his own pain first. Where could he go for healing? Who could bind up his wounds and allow him to rebuild his relationship with his daughter? Jesus can. He's an awesome healer!

The class quickly realized that my friend first needed to pour out his spirit. He needed to stop trying to defend himself to his daughter and instead allow Jesus to heal his hurt feelings. Once he poured out his spirit and stopped trying to find the solutions using his own wits and strength, G-d would pour out His spirit and heal his hurt. In short, he must first pick up his cross before trying to exercise the options recommended by the class. As we have seen in this book, the first step of crucifying self is also the first Beatitude where we mortify worldly desires.

Several months before my friend shared with me his pain about his daughter, I had discovered this secret of the Beatitudes. Because of this, I recognized that not buying her a present, while perhaps a viable option, was a carnal response based on his pain. I was able to share G-d's word with him in a way that related to his hurt, but also how we are called to be spiritual in our response. I could certainly share his feelings since I had just a few months earlier gone through an episode with my own kids. My friend received this counsel and went back to the Brazen Altar of sacrifice; although he didn't know it, he practiced the first Beatitude. Now I also told him he didn't have to go hog wild with presents. His daughter was perhaps disrespectful so one of the presents would be a Bible if it were my kid. He got a good laugh out of that one, especially since one of the presents I gave my son was a leather Bible book cover. It was interesting how several of the inmates could relate to this story. In fact, one of my dear brothers in the class shared how he faced a similar situation but didn't handle it quite right due to his emotions. At the end of the class, he said that the lesson and case study were like looking in a mirror. He now was equipped with the tools to better handle the situation.

Case Study Two

One day I received a letter from another Christian I had been praying for. I was surprised at the tone of the letter. The letter attacked me on several points and accused me of not being led by the Spirit. I've been attacked before and even recently by others. However, when it's an attack from a Christian brother or sister it seems to catch me off guard. I expect persecution from the world, but it's still surprising when I am attacked from the same side of the street and from believers when our response should be in love. King David writes about the same disappointment.

For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of G-d in company. (Psalm 55:12-14)

I have a tendency to defend myself whenever I'm hurt or disappointed by others, especially Christians. I fought hard to respond to the letter in a Christian manner. I prayed first and then began to write a response. As I drafted my reply, I noticed that I had spent the greater part of my response defending myself against the attacks. In the past, I have sometimes fought back in such a manner. The way I was raised called for me to never roll over. I have a very competitive nature so those feelings were also being engaged. I shared the attack and other instances where I had been misjudged or abused with some of my Bible study groups at the prison. I decided to use it as a case study. I asked the inmates if they had ever received any communications where they felt attacked or disrespected? Of course they have. Some people, even family members, attack the sincerity of their faith. Other inmates may persecute them based upon their belief. We began to analyze ways in which we should properly respond in such instances.

Take a moment to recall a time in your life when you were hurt or attacked by others, even a loved one or acquaintance. How did you handle that situation? Take a moment to write down your response. Now how would you respond based upon the Beatitudes? Take a moment to walk through your example by step-by-step walking through each of the Beatitudes.

As I struggled to respond in the right manner, I noticed I had lost my peace. Losing your peace doesn't require that the attack or disappointment be justified. I've been disappointed in churches, by others, by pastors, you name it. These disappointments were not always my fault, many times I was an innocent party. However, I noticed that often the offending party continues on with their life, clueless that they may have inflicted damage. Meanwhile, the damaged party is shipwrecked and without peace. I'm sure I've been on both sides at some time, receiving insults and disappointing others myself. I try to be sensitive to not offend others even unknowingly.

I was able to walk through the Beatitudes and receive my answer on how to respond. Of course, I had to sacrifice flesh and my need to defend myself. I don't think this means we are supposed to let people walk over us, but it does require us to remember who we are in Christ and that, "because of His strength will I wait upon thee: for G-d is my defense" (Psalm 59:9). When I stopped defending myself, by sacrificing my desires, I became poor in spirit. This led me to the next step where my mourning turned to joy. By the time I had gotten to the fifth Beatitude, I was praising G-d for the experience and disappointment. I thought to myself, "this is a great example that I could share with my brothers." I praised G-d for the persecution and the step-by-step approach He provides for our healing.

The inmates had a variety of responses but we all came to the same conclusion, we must respond in love! As I continue on this Christian journey, I'm amazed at the mercy and grace we receive when we stand in the place of blessing before G-d. Take a moment to review any situations you may be facing in life and see how the proper application of the Beatitudes can be used to restore your happiness. Each challenge shows me I still have a ways to go, but I'm closer than ever before, as I keep putting on the mind of Christ, step-by-step. This is continuous improvement.

Scriptural References for the Beatitudes

The Bible offers several supporting scriptures which provide greater insight on the practical application for each of the seven Beatitudes. I have a clearer picture of the characteristics for each of the Beatitudes after reading these scriptures. I developed the table below (Table 2) with several reference scriptures assigned to the Beatitudes to help you develop a greater understanding of each and see the consistency of G-d's word. We encourage you to review these scriptures as you put on each Beatitude step-by-step. Additionally, while we have used the King James Version of the Bible for our scripture references, other versions, such as the New International Version or the Hebraic-Roots Version translated out of the original Hebrew and Aramaic by James Scott Trimm, may also provide a solid perspective and enhance your understanding.

| Beatitude | Scriptural References |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Poor in spirit (Matthew 5:3) | Psalm 51:17 Isaiah 57:15 Isaiah 66:2 Matthew 11:28-30 James 4:7-10 |
| Mourn (Matthew 5:4); having mind of repentance | Psalm 51 Isaiah 61:2-3 2 Corinthians 1:4 2 Corinthians 7:9-11 James 4:9 |
| Meek (Matthew 5:5) | Psalm 37:5-11 Matthew 11:27-30 1 Peter 3:4 |
| Hunger and thirst for righteousness (Matthew 5:6) | Psalm 34:10 Psalm 42:1-5 Psalm 63:1-8 Psalm 84:1-5 John 7:37-39 |
| Merciful (Matthew 5:7) | Psalm 41:1 Matthew 18:23-35 Luke 6:35-36 1 Peter 3:8 |
| Pure in heart (Matthew 5:8) | Psalm 24:3-4 Philippians 4:8 1 Timothy 1:5 1 Timothy 5:22 Titus 1:15-16 1 Peter 1:22 1 John 3:2-3 |
| Peacemaker (Matthew 5:9) | Romans 12:17-21 Romans 14:19 1 Corinthians 13 |
| Persecuted (Matthew 5:10-12); a temporary result of demonstrating Beatitudes | Matthew 10:16-28 1 Corinthians 13 2 Timothy 3:12 1 Peter 3:14-17 1 Peter 4:3-19 |

Table 2, Beatitude References

The Final Words

There are still many stones we've left unturned and meat still on the bones for us on this subject. In this book, we have only shared a piece. In fact even while writing there were several new revelations we had either overlooked or of which we were unaware. I'm certain there is more to discover, and the Spirit will lead you to these truths as you practice the Beatitudes daily.

The feasts and the Beatitudes point to a timeless message for us. Looking back I realize that I was often practicing the Beatitudes in my Christian walk, but just didn't really understand or make the connection. But now through the study of these feasts, I have a better understanding of the Beatitudes. Now when I'm thirsty for living water or in need of blessing, and peace, I have the step-action plan that immediately springs out a fountain from inside of me. I can always be in the happy zone if I so desire and choose to walk through the steps.

So what is that timeless message? Simply obey G-d! We obey Him by following His commandments and these commandments are summed up in loving Him and loving others (1 John 5:2-3). We can see evidence of this in David's final words to his son Solomon in 1 Kings 2:1-3. By our love, the world will know we are His disciples. By following the Beatitudes in sequence, we begin to perfect our love for G-d and others.

This is also an important lesson for mature Christians who are practicing putting on righteousness. We may cause damage when we pump ourselves up or judge others without properly applying the Beatitudes in sequence. If you find yourself being righteous without going through the prior steps, then instead of putting on Christ-righteousness, you have put on "self-righteousness." We must be careful that we are not fooling ourselves in this area. Our own righteousness is "as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). When we try to live holy without going through each of the prior steps of the Beatitudes, then we have again gone the way of a Cain-like sacrifice. We are no closer to G-d, and not any holier when we try to live and look righteous before others without sacrificing self first. Properly putting on each Beatitude ensures that you have put on Christ's righteousness and not your own. I can't stress this enough as I've have seen and experienced hurt and damage to G-d's kingdom from saints who have brutally demonstrated their own self righteousness. Our self righteous actions turn people away from G-d, rather than turning them toward Him. That's damaging the Christian witness to

push our own self righteous agenda. It is not spiritual to put on self-righteousness. Please ensure you put the Beatitudes on in order, step-by-step, and bear fruit for G-d's kingdom. Brutalizing people because you have not practiced mercy and meekness, but instead skipped over to righteousness, does damage to your witness and doesn't glorify Him. This attitude and misapplication of G-d's word among believers must stop!

It is our hope that through writing this book, you will have a more abundant, loving relationship with G-d and go through the entire Beatitude process in order to fulfill your joy and relationship with Him. That is the spirit and intent of the Beatitudes and now we hope that you can use these tools effectively to bring Him glory and secure the promises He has in store for you.

As we encourage people to walk through all seven steps continuously, we also wish to encourage those who have never poured out their spirits and accepted Jesus' sacrifice for their sins, to take that first step to blessing. This book will not be of much value unless you take the first step to securing your place in heaven through Jesus. You have no relationship with G-d unless you have humbled yourself (become poor in spirit) and accepted His free gift of His life. Please don't miss this opportunity! This is something about which, you should have no doubts. Our pastor Lawrence Phipps, has written a book called *More Abundant LIFE*, and we would like to relay a portion of his work to help lead you into a saving relationship with G-d through Jesus Christ. Here is a prayer from his book you can say right now to receive the gift of His love:

Heavenly Father, I believe that you love me and gave your Son to die for me. I also know I have sinned and need to be forgiven. L-rd Jesus, I want to turn from sin and my past, and I ask you to forgive me. Please come into my life, be the L-rd of my life, and give me eternal life. Thank-you for forgiving me, coming into my life, and giving me eternal life. Amen. (page 97)

If you have sincerely prayed this prayer and poured out your spirit, then welcome to the family of G-d! I invite you now to apply the remaining six Beatitudes and stand on the promises G-d has for you! Each day He will make you over as you surrender more of yourself. What an awesome promise for each of us, whether we are in a physical prison or not! Some people may doubt your newfound belief, but don't let that hinder your progress or hope in Christ. G-d takes us as imperfect people and produces something brand new and wonderful! Stand firm in the fact that we are new

creatures and loved by G-d; we become His people when we accept Jesus. You may face persecution for your faith, and people may doubt and revile you, but rejoice! Your reward in heaven will be great, and you can even taste a portion and enjoy the benefits here on earth. What a wonderful Father to reveal His perfect plan and faithfulness to us! Be blessed!

Chuck and Dave

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Jesus and more abundant spiritual life. If this book helped you draw closer in relationship to G-d, then you have earned us much interest and a great return on our investment. We thank you and encourage you to stand on His promises. We love you, but Jesus loves you much, much more!

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