

WALKING
IN THE
ANCIENT PATHS

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CHAPTER ONE

Jeremiah 6:16 *“Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.”*

In the hectic, self-driven world in which we live, how often have we desired to find rest for our souls? Yet, why do so many fail? Why is our society filled with misery, sadness, deceit, divorce, murder and suicide at levels unheard of throughout the annals of history?

The answer is found, clearly, here in the Book of Jeremiah. People choose deliberately the way they will live their lives and nothing has changed from the days of the Prophet; people still refuse to walk in the ways of God; they will neither acknowledge the Ancient Paths, nor will they follow them.

What then are these paths and how can we, today, walk confidently in them and know the ‘rest for our souls’ that our Lord has promised in His Word? Let us begin by examining the context in which verse 16 appears.

The two key verses necessary for an understanding of this context, are 8 and 13.

“8 Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee; lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited.

13 For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely.”

The Prophet Jeremiah was addressing the people of Israel and Jerusalem was their capital. If today, we wish this passage to speak to us, then in place of Jerusalem, it is necessary to substitute ourselves, our church or even our nation. God tells us to '*be instructed*' and then he explains why and how. This is a command, not a request. The consequences of not being instructed, are clearly set out. There is no argument, no debate. We are either *instructed*, or God says He will depart from us, our church, our society and leave us desolate. Consider where you live right now. Is God there, or does desolation abound?

Verse 13 explains why we need instruction in following the Ancient Paths. My Bible says 'from the least to the greatest'. Stand up anyone not covered by that statement. It then uses the word 'everyone', twice. Is there anyone still standing? What then are we doing? We are covetous and we deal falsely.

Surely some must be excluded from this, my Pastor, the latest visiting preacher? No, 'from the prophet to the priest' EVERYONE deals falsely; lies, deceives, for covetous gain. Just look at your television if you don't believe me.

It is in this context, that we are given the commands found in verse 16 of Jeremiah chapter 6. "Thus saith the Lord". Before we examine this verse in detail, it will be helpful to consider exactly what the Bible teaches about following or walking in a path.

The Bible presents two contrasting paths: the path of the wicked which leads to death and the path of God and Light which leads to life, justice peace and righteousness, for those who follow it; those who obey and live by the commands or instruction of the Lord.

Deut 11:

26 Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse;

27 A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day:

28 And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known.

The blessing and curse found in verse 26 represent the two paths we face; the two choices we must deal with daily. For we are called to a daily walk; every day we must choose the path we will follow.

What then are the 'other gods' of verse 28? They are ANYTHING which would cause us to turn aside from obeying what God has told us to do in His Word. There are many things in this world, which of themselves are fine and good; our careers for example, or our families. However, if ANY of these things draw us away from God and the path He has directed us to walk, then they have supplanted Him and we no longer tread the Ancient Paths. We are no longer under God's blessing, but rather, we are now under His curse.

Deut 30:

15 See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil;

16 In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it.

17 But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them;

18 I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it.

19 I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:

20 That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.

Again, in this parallel text, verse 15 sets out our two clear choices; our two distinct paths. These are then developed in greater detail in the five verses which follow.

Bible numerics teaches us that the number 3 is the number of Divine completeness and perfection. Therefore, how significant must it be when a verse of scripture uses groups of 3, three times. When this occurs more than once in a passage, then we had better pay careful attention to the voice of the Lord.

Verse 16 gives us three commands: Love, Walk, Keep. We are instructed to Keep three things: His commandments, statutes and judgements. If we do this, then three promises follow: we will Live, Multiply, and be Blessed. WOW!!

However, verses 17 and 18 detail the other path. Note, if we turn away from God and do not heed His voice, then three other things will come to pass. We will be *drawn away* from the things of God, we will *worship* other Gods and finally, we will *serve* these Gods.

There is a progression as we walk this other path and God gives a further three consequences as a result. First we are simply drawn away from the things of God, usually by the things of the world which usurp the time we should spend with the Lord. Then as these things begin to supplant God in our lives, we come to worship them and eventually, we end up in servitude to them. Remember, these things, of themselves are not necessarily evil, sinful, or even wrong. It is only when we allow them to take precedence in our lives that we are in danger of walking another way.

What is the threefold result of this? Verse 18 of Deuteronomy 30 tells us. God will denounce us, we will perish (spiritually) and He will not prolong our days in the land (We will perish physically). Clear and concise warning has been given. There are two paths and we must choose. Verse 19 makes this abundantly clear.

19 "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:"

The purpose behind this 'living' of verse 19, is not only threefold as well, but is the beginning of another trinity of trinities. Examine verse 20.

20 That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.

We are directed to Love, Obey and Cleave. These in turn produce Life, Length of days and a place to Dwell; the promised results of the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Walk in this path and you shall indeed find rest for your soul.

Job 22:15 warns us that the old way is not always good and that we must be careful to avoid deception.

"Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden?"

Using scripture to interpret scripture, let us consider Proverbs 2 and verses 10 to 15 as a means of establishing a deeper understanding of this verse from Job.

Prov 2:

10 When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul;

11 Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee:

12 To deliver thee from the way of the evil man, from the man that speaketh froward things;

13 Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness;

14 Who rejoice to do evil, and delight in the frowardness of the wicked;

15 Whose ways are crooked, and they froward in their paths:

The word 'froward' in verses 12,14 and 15, is not in common use today. It means: perverse, perversity, or to act perversely. Since Jesus is the wisdom and knowledge of God made manifest, if we have Him within us, (vs10) then verses 11 and 12 are ours to claim. Once again, these verses contain a trinity of trinities.

Three verbs dominate verses 11 and 12, Preserve, Keep and Deliver. That is what Jesus does for us with regards the path of the wicked. Note, that the second and third groups of three, refer to this wicked path, and 2 times 3 is 6, the number associated with man and the devil.

In verses 12 and 13 of Proverbs Chapter 2, we are delivered from three things: those who are evil, those who speak perversely, and those who have left the paths of uprightness. It is not overly difficult to discern those who are evil and those who speak perversely, but those who have strayed from the right path pose much more of a challenge.

It is vital to realise, that these people were once on the path of the Lord. The others, never were, but how can you LEAVE a path (vs13) unless you are first ON that path? We need to be delivered from these false brothers who have left the paths of righteousness. Consider carefully the final group of three expressed in verses 13 and 14.

"13 Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness;

14 Who rejoice to do evil, and delight in the frowardness of the wicked;"

These people who once knew the Lord, now *Walk* in darkness, *Rejoice* to do evil and *Delight* in the perversity and wickedness of others. Heed this warning! If you are not on God's path, the Ancient Path, then you are on the path described above in verses 13 and 14. The Bible offers NO other Path, NO other Choice; just these two. Which path are you on right now?

CHAPTER TWO

Let's return to our key text.

Jeremiah 16:6 Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.

The first command is to 'Stand'. This verse gives advice concerning our duty as Christians; we are to stand in the ways. We are not to proceed rashly, but to take care to find the right way. We should pause and ponder the path at our feet.

This word 'stand', is the Hebrew word 'amad'. It means to: stand, abide, dwell, endure, or repair. In the Bible, standing is often the opposite of running. Therefore, since running is usually associated with fear, there can be no fear if we are to stand. It is interesting, that in the New Testament especially, the one word which is most commonly linked with a lack or absence of fear, is 'Faith'. We are repeatedly told to have faith and fear not. (Matt 8:26 is a good example.) It would seem obvious then, that the ability to stand is dependant on our level of Faith. In fact, 1Cor 16 :13 says, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith."

The word 'amad' also means to 'abide'. Who can read this word without reflecting on that wonderful passage in John 15 verses 4 to 10. This is the key to understanding this command to 'stand in the ways'.

John 15: 4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

9 As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

Standing in the ways, means abiding in Christ and having Him abide in us. It has become something of a cliché, but John 15 is an excellent example of the New Testament being hidden in the Old, and the Old Testament being revealed in the New. Here we discover a marvellous parallel between Jeremiah 16 and John 15.

The word translated 'ways', is the Hebrew word, 'dherekh'. This means: a going, walk, journey, way, path, road, manner, course, way of life, and surprisingly, worship. Christianity, is a walk, a journey and a way of life that that should be totally immersed in worship. Worship is not singing slow songs in church on Sunday. Rather, it should be the outward expression of your walk with the Lord. Everything you do and everything you say, should comprise

worship unto the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. How is your worship today? Are you standing in the ways?

The second command of Jeremiah 16:6, is to 'See'. You have to be 'in the ways', before you can see and/or ask for the old paths. You must first be a Christian. That means being Born Again, repenting of your sin and asking God for forgiveness. It entails asking Jesus to be Lord of every aspect of your life. If you haven't already done this, then you are automatically on the other path; the one that leads to death and Hell. Stop what you're doing right now, get down on your knees and get yourself right with God. If you don't know what to do, then phone someone you know is a born again Christian and ask them for help. They'll be delighted to do so.

Being 'Born Again', sets your feet on the path, nothing more. It's only the beginning of your walk. John 3:3 is the key. *"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."* There is much more to salvation than the experience of being born again, important as that step is. That merely allows you to see the path you will spend the rest of your life walking; it allows you to see your destination, but you haven't arrived yet. It's a long and wonderful journey.

Some might ask why being born again is necessary in order to both see and walk this path. The answer is simple. Since the path, itself, is a spiritual path, then the seeing of it must also be spiritual. We call this having discernment and spiritual discernment, is a Gift of the Holy Spirit.(1Cor 12:10). Unless our spirit is quickened, made alive by the Holy Spirit through the New Birth, we are dead to things of the spirit; we cannot see or discern spiritual things.

Command number three of Jeremiah 16:6 is to 'Ask'. The word used here, is the Hebrew word 'sha'al', which means to request, to entreat or beg, and finally to demand. We need the ancient paths to such a degree, that if necessary, we must demand them.

We should consult antiquity; the observations and experiences of those people who have gone before: *"Ask for the old paths, enquire of the former age (Job 8:8), ask thy father, thy elders (Deut. 32:7).* Then we need to turn to the Laws and Precepts found in the Word of God and ask for the *old paths*, prescribed by the law, the written word, the true standard of antiquity. Ask for the paths that the patriarchs traveled in before you, Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob; tread in their steps.

The word translated 'Old', is most interesting. It is the word 'olam', which means: hidden, concealed, time immemorial, antiquity, from the most ancient times, eternity, time without end, everlasting, from before creation. These paths are hidden from those with no spiritual insight, yet they stretch from before the creation of the world, even unto the end of time. They are everlasting. Only Almighty God meets that criteria. He, through His son our Lord Jesus Christ, is this Ancient Path we must ask for.

I have read accounts, where the author tries to link these Ancient paths with certain human, often Jewish, customs or traditions. While I will admit that there is some degree of truth in these claims, the problem with this concept, is that it attempts to use as a precept, something God established as an example. Let me explain.

The entire Bible points to and reveals The Lord Jesus Christ; that is its purpose. Therefore, the focus of any Biblical interpretation, **MUST** be Christ. These Ancient paths, must point to Christ to be consistent

with God's plan and purpose for His Word. Therefore, we cannot claim that these paths point to any human or man-made tradition no matter how noble or worthwhile they may be. They may develop from the path, but they are not and never can be the Ancient Path.

"Ask for the old paths, Where is the good way?" When we ask for the old paths, it is only in order to find out the *good way*; the way of godliness. The word 'good', is the Hebrew word 'tov' which may be rendered as: good, pleasant, beautiful, excellent, delightful, joyful, fruitful, righteous. An important meaning of the term is moral goodness, as contrasted with moral evil. This is a path of Joy and Fruitfulness; *'by your fruits shall you be known'*.

It is not enough to stand on the path and ask, we must act according to the result of these enquiries. When we discover which is the good way, we are to *'walk therein'* Many people find it, few walk in it.

"Stand in the way," says God, and see which agrees with the written word and directs you to the good way.

Is 2:

- 3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

What exactly does this 'good path' entail? Scripture can be our only source of enlightenment. Let us return to the book of Proverbs chapter 2 and verses 3 to 9.

Prov 2:

3 Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding;

4 If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures;

5 Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.

6 For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.

7 He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly.

8 He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints.

9 Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path.

Verse 9 is obviously the key verse. Everything builds to the first word of the verse, 'Then'. After all the conditions from the previous verses are accomplished, THEN will you understand the 'good path'. Note the significance of the number 3 once again. There are three aspects to the 'good path', righteousness, judgement and equity. This third word, is the Hebrew word 'meyshar', which means: prosperity, concord, agreement, upright, and equality. If we walk the good path, we will have all these qualities in our lives and they will produce peace and rest for our souls.

A Path, is often a reflection on fundamental ethical themes relating to God, humanity, and salvation. Walking a path, first involves choosing that path. We then have to choose to continue on that path. Dealing with pitfalls, bends dangers and then not losing our way so that we arrive at our destination, are also part of the walk.

Is 58:

12 And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.

One of the possible meanings for the word 'amad', translated as 'stand' in Jeremiah 6:16, is REPAIR. Here in Isaiah 58, we are called upon to repair the breach and restore these Ancient Paths. The challenge is before us. Never have these paths been more in need of repair; never has the breach been so great. What are YOU doing in these times to fulfil this commission?

Jeremiah 6: 16 Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.

All was clearly laid before the people by the Prophet Jeremiah and yet, see their response; "*We will not walk therein.*" Why? The reason perhaps, is that God's path seems usually, to lead through a wilderness.

CHAPTER THREE

After God moves mightily, comes the possibility of a Wilderness experience. It happened to Moses; Pharaoh was destroyed, the Red Sea had been parted and the children of Israel had passed through safely onto dry land, but their path led straight into the wilderness. It happened to Jesus; baptised in the Jordan, God speaks from Heaven and the Spirit descends like a dove, but then His path led inexorably into the desert, into the wilderness. It can and will happen to you.

People tend to flee wilderness experiences, yet they are a necessary part of our walk on the Ancient Paths. God's path will always take you through the wilderness at some stage of your life. It's how you respond to the experience that is important. Moses was in the wilderness for 40 years, Jesus for 40 days, yet, these were both good and bad, positive and negative experiences. Problems arose, but needs were met. Therefore, there are two possible sides to any wilderness experience. If the path through the wilderness can be either a positive or a negative experience, then what determines which it will be? In this chapter, we will focus on the negative aspects of the wilderness. The positive aspects will be addressed in chapter six.

One key to understanding the wilderness experience can be found using Bible numerics. The number most often associated with the wilderness, is 40. This is significant, as it is the number of Probation, Trial and Chastisement.

Probation carries with it the idea of something which is temporary while important decisions are made. When you begin a new job,

there may be a probationary period before it becomes permanent to allow each side to determine if they are happy with the arrangement.

Trial, speaks of testing, refining, as metal is tested and refined by heat. A wilderness experience will often place a person under pressure to test the strength of their commitment.

Chastisement is not punishment. God is not punishing us when we have a wilderness experience. Rather, chastisement is what we do with our children when they do something wrong and we want to make sure they know not to do it again. It is done to correct us, strengthen us and make us better people. This then, is God's purpose in a wilderness experience.

A wilderness, is another name for a desert, a dry place, though the word can also be translated 'alone', or 'solitude'. Jesus frequently went away from His followers, to be 'alone' to pray. We can very easily draw much closer to God during a time in the wilderness.

Biblical imagery, links the Holy Spirit with water. We are offered 'rivers of living water' which is the Holy Spirit. It would seem logical then, that a time spent in the desert with its connotation of being dry, lacking in water, would tend to indicate that such an experience involves some degree of spiritual dryness as well; a time when the Holy Spirit appears to be far away from us.

This is often the case, from our perspective. We feel as if God has deserted us, that we're alone. No wonder few embrace being in a wilderness. However, is this really true. Has God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit really left us? Scripture does not support this concept. God says, He will never leave or forsake us, (Heb 13:5). In fact, in the

original the text contains a triple negative, which could be translated *'I will not, I will not, I will not, ever leave you nor forsake you.'*

Consider how the natural and the spiritual often parallel each other. Though the desert is basically dry, it does contain plenty of water if you know where to look. The one symbol which dominates all our images of a desert, is the cactus. This plant, which frequently is stylised in the shape of a cross, complete with its own crown of thorns for protection, is full of life giving water, though some blood may have to be shed to obtain it. What a wonderful Biblical image of our Lord and what He has done for us.

The wilderness, is the site of three negative aspects.

1. Danger and Death.
2. Rebellion and Punishment.
3. Temptation and Evil.

These are not mutually exclusive, and frequently overlap. For example, in Jeremiah 3:2 we find the first and third of these.

Lift up thine eyes unto the high places, and see where thou hast not been lien with. In the ways hast thou sat for them, as the Arabian in the wilderness; and thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms and with thy wickedness.

Let me present a number of scriptures for each of these three aspects, that clearly illustrate the point being made. First, 'Danger and Death'

(Jer 2:31 KJV) O generation, see ye the word of the LORD. Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? wherefore say my people, We are lords; we will come no more unto thee?

(Acts 21:38 KJV) Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers?

(Exo 15:22 KJV) So Moses brought Israel from the Red sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water.

(Exo 14:12 KJV) Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.

The key to understanding this verse of scripture, is realising what Egypt represents. Egypt, is a symbol for the old life; one without God. It's where you were before God apprehended you; where you were, in the Kingdom of Darkness, before the salvation purchased for you through the shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ on Calvary, translated you into the Kingdom of Light. It represents the other ancient path, that of the wicked. When you're going through a hard time, a dry time, do you ever regret becoming a Christian? Do you ever desire to return to your old life, your old sinful ways? That's what Egypt is, Sin.

(Exo 16:2 KJV) And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness:

(Exo 16:3 KJV) And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the

full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.

(Num 3:4 KJV) And Nadab and Abihu died before the LORD, when they offered strange fire before the LORD, in the wilderness of Sinai, and they had no children: and Eleazar and Ithamar ministered in the priest's office in the sight of Aaron their father.

(Num 16:13 KJV) Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us?

(Num 20:4 KJV) And why have ye brought up the congregation of the LORD into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there?

(Job 12:24 KJV) He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth, and causeth them to wander in a wilderness where there is no way.

(Psa 107:40 KJV) He poureth contempt upon princes, and causeth them to wander in the wilderness, where there is no way.

Jesus is the Way. Without Him, all are lost and will die in the wilderness through their disobedience. The Ancient Path is there, *"But they said, We will not walk therein."* (Jer 6:16)

(Luke 8:29 KJV) (For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.)

The second negative aspect, 'Rebellion and Punishment' has even more scriptures for support.

(Psa 78:40 KJV) How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, and grieve him in the desert!

(Psa 95:8 KJV) Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness:

(Num 14:33 KJV) And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness.

(Num 14:35 KJV) I the LORD have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die.

(Num 32:13 KJV) And the LORD'S anger was kindled against Israel, and he made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation, that had done evil in the sight of the LORD, was consumed.

Note here, that it was never God's original intent that they spend 40 years in the wilderness. That resulted from their rebellion and wilful disobedience. (See Deut 9:7 and Ezek 20:13 below)

(Num 32:15 KJV) For if ye turn away from after him, he will yet again leave them in the wilderness; and ye shall destroy all this people.

(Deut 9:7 KJV) Remember, and forget not, how thou provokedst the LORD thy God to wrath in the wilderness: from the day that

thou didst depart out of the land of Egypt, until ye came unto this place, ye have been rebellious against the LORD.

(Josh 5:6 KJV) For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people that were men of war, which came out of Egypt, were consumed, because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD: unto whom the LORD sware that he would not show them the land, which the LORD sware unto their fathers that he would give us, a land that floweth with milk and honey.

The children of Israel 'walked' a path in the wilderness for 40 years, but it was not God's Ancient Path. The number 40 remember symbolises testing. What was God testing? The answer is found in this and other verses. God was interested in their OBEDIENCE. You can't really test obedience in the good times. When everything is going well, it is extremely easy to be obedient. However, in the hard, dry times of a wilderness experience, obedience can really be put to the test. The children of Israel failed this test and for 40 years, were not allowed to enter the Promised Land. God will always test your obedience and the only way He does this, is through a wilderness experience. What grade have you received?

(Ezek 20:13 KJV) But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness: they walked not in my statutes, and they despised my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; and my sabbaths they greatly polluted: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them in the wilderness, to consume them.

(Num 14:22 KJV) Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice;

10 is the number of completeness and represents here, the 10 times the children of Israel rebelled against the Lord in the wilderness.

(Exo 16:2 KJV) And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness:

(Exo 16:3 KJV) And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.

A friend of mine, a well respected minister who has worked in most countries in the world, was directed by the Lord to move his ministry and his family to Australia. He sold most of his possessions, his sons gave up there jobs and the family obeyed the Lord. Once in Australia, they came under immense attack from supposedly fellow Christians. Lies were spread, their ministry was undermined, they were frustrated at every turn. How easy would it have been for them to echo the cry of the Israelites; 'Would we were back in the States where life was more comfortable, where we weren't continually persecuted.'

They were undergoing a severe wilderness experience, but they did not cry out against their Lord. Instead, they obeyed His voice when not to do so would have been so much easier. Despite the attacks against them and their ministry, this time became one of the most profound learning experiences of their many years in the ministry. God worked mightily in them, and through them; touching and changing many lives. The impact of their work in Australia will be

felt for many years to come. When caught out in the wilderness, don't moan and complain; discover what it is that God wants you to accomplish or learn and then do it.

(Num 14:2 KJV) And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness!

Be careful what you pray for. God has a way of answering these prayers. You are not put into a wilderness experience so that God can destroy you. You are there so you are not distracted while He teaches you; if only you let Him.

(Num 21:5 KJV) And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread.

The Book of John tells us three times in chapter 6 that Jesus is this living bread from Heaven that the people are rejecting. (vs 35, 41, 51) They reject not only our Lord, but the Holy Spirit as well (no water). Is it any wonder God punished their rebellion with 40 years in the wilderness.

(Acts 13:18 KJV) And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness.

For 40 years, God endured their behaviour and cared for them. What a loving, patient and longsuffering Father He is.

(1 Cor 10:5 KJV) But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

(Heb 3:8 KJV) Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:

Remember, it is at our Hearts that God looks, not our words and deeds, though *'out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks'*. There is temptation in the wilderness, as we shall see in the next section, but do not allow it to affect your heart.

(Heb 3:17 KJV) But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?

We noted at the beginning of this chapter, that the wilderness has three negative aspects. It is the site of: First, 'Danger and Death'; Secondly, 'Rebellion and Punishment'; and Thirdly, 'Temptation and Evil'. Let us turn our attention to some scriptures which illustrate this final attribute.

(Mat 4:1 KJV) Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

(Mark 1:12 KJV) And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness.

(Mark 1:13 KJV) And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.

(Luke 4:1 KJV) And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,

The three parallel passages detailing Christ's entry into the wilderness, there to be tempted by Satan, need to be examined in the Greek to be fully understood. The word 'led' in Matt 4:1 is the Greek word 'anago' which carries with it the implication of being led or taken as a SACRIFICE. In Luke 4:1, the word 'led' is the Greek word 'ago'. This particular word conveys a sense of unwillingness, as in a person bound in chains, or cattle being led to the slaughter. These then tie in nicely with the use of the word 'driven' in Mark 1:12. Cattle are driven unwillingly as was Jesus into the wilderness. Here He was to be Tempted, Tried and Tested for 40 days. We will examine this whole area of temptation in more detail in the next chapter.

(Mat 11:7 KJV) And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

(Luke 7:24 KJV) And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

(Luke 8:29 KJV) (For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.)

Yes, the wilderness can be a devastating place, but it serves a purpose in our lives and in our walk on the Ancient Paths. If God spared not His Son the trials and testings of a wilderness

experience, can we expect anything less? What is important, is how we respond to these temptations, these tests. Will it be like the children of Israel, who languished and died there over a period of 40 years, or will we return victorious as Christ did?

There are many dangers and pitfalls as we walk the Ancient Paths and what appears pleasant and good, can sometimes be nothing but the gate to a wilderness experience. Be constantly on your guard, learning how to deal with temptation as it comes your way.

(Jer 12:10 KJV) Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness.

CHAPTER FOUR

As we walk the Ancient Paths, and especially as we face times in the wilderness, we will be forced to confront and deal with various temptations that are thrown our way. Therefore, it is imperative that we understand the nature of temptation from a Biblical perspective if we are to be successful in overcoming the wiles of the enemy. That is the purpose of this chapter.

1John 2:

15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

17. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

The key to understanding the true nature of temptation, is found in verse 16 of 1John chapter 2. It takes three forms; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. For the sake of clarity, let me first examine each of the significant words used here before we turn to scriptural evidence.

The Greek word 'Epithumia' means a strong desire or lust, usually in a bad or negative sense. Lust, as we know, can be an overpowering emotion that can both control and destroy lives. A great many temptations spring from lust. We need to recognize this emotion when it rears its ugly head.

The word 'Sarx' means living flesh, as opposed to dead flesh or meat. It is used primarily in the New Testament to distinguish the material nature from the spiritual and is often used as a contrast to 'Pneuma' (spirit). It implies sinfulness, or the sin nature in man.

'Ophthalmos' is the Greek word which means: to gaze, an eye or eyes, to open the eyes of the mind, to understand. It can be the source or power of understanding.

'Alazoneia' (pride) is ostentation, boasting about what one is not, or does not possess. "In 1 John 2:16, it means showing off to fellow mortals; the pride, pomp, or manner of life; the ambitious or vainglorious pursuit of the honours, glories, and splendours of this life; the luxury of life for the purpose of showing off, whether in dress, house furniture, servants, or food." (Complete Word Study Dict. NT.)

It's the opposite of Humility.

'Bios' means Life. The means and manner of life. It is the Greek word we get such English words as biology from.

With this introduction, let us examine a selection of scriptures which will illustrate each of these three aspects of temptation in operation. We'll begin with the Lust of the Flesh.

Num11:

33 And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the LORD was kindled against the people, and the LORD smote the people with a very great plague.

34. And he called the name of that place Kibrothhattaavah: (the graves of sensuous desire) because there they buried the people that lusted. (Their physical appetite caused them to sin.)

Ps78: Is a parallel text

18 And they tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lust.

30 They were not estranged from their lust. But while their meat was yet in their mouths,

31 The wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel.

Mk.4:

18 And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word,

19 And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

Notice, the Bible talks here of '*the deceitfulness of riches*'. How many have been tempted and led astray by riches, money and material possessions. These are clearly one aspect of 'the lust of the flesh'.

Rom8:

5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

Good as the King James version is, read this passage in the Amplified Bible and observe the depths of meaning it expresses.

5 For those who are according to the flesh *and* are controlled by its unholy desires set their minds on *and* Pursue those things which gratify the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit and are controlled by the desires of the Spirit set their minds on and seek those things which gratify the [Holy] Spirit,

6 Now the mind of the flesh [which is sense and reason without the Holy Spirit] is death [death that comprises all the miseries arising from sin, both here and hereafter]. But the mind of the [Holy] -Spirit is life and [soul] peace [both now and forever].

7 [That is] because the mind of the flesh [with its carnal thoughts and purposes] is hostile to God, for it does not submit itself to God's Law; indeed it cannot.

8 So then those who are living the life of the flesh [catering to the appetites and impulses of their carnal nature] cannot please or satisfy God, *or* be acceptable to Him.

Wow, that says it all. What a mighty God we serve.

Gal.5:

16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

That's how we deal with this form of temptation, we '*Walk in the Spirit*'; we walk in the Ancient Paths of God. To be able to do this, you need the Holy Spirit operating in your life. Is He? If not, what are you going to do about it Today, in fact, what are you going to do about it Right NOW? Pray and ask the Spirit to take control of your life, your walk in Jesus name. Hallelujah!

Eph.2:

2:1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins:

2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

2Pet.2:

18 For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.

The warning is fairly clear; take care what and who you listen to or risk being caught up once more in the snare you have escaped. The lust of the flesh is powerful, guard yourself.

Jude:

16 These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.

17 But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ;

18 How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts.

We are in the last days, so beware those who mock your faith, your beliefs. These people are prisoners of their own sinful lusts, heed them not. This then is the first aspect of the nature of temptation,

the lust of the flesh. Let us now consider a selection of scriptures which illustrate the second aspect, the Lust of the Eyes.

Ps. 119:

36 Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.

37 Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way.

Ezk. 23:

14 And that she increased her whoredoms: for when she saw men portrayed upon the wall, the images of the Chaldeans portrayed with vermilion,

15 Girded with girdles upon their loins, exceeding in dyed attire upon their heads, all of them princes to look to, after the manner of the Babylonians of Chaldea, the land of their nativity:

16 And as soon as she saw them with her eyes, she doted upon them, and sent messengers unto them into Chaldea.

17 And the Babylonians came to her into the bed of love, and they defiled her with their whoredom, and she was polluted with them, and her mind was alienated from them.

18 So she discovered her whoredoms, and discovered her nakedness: then my mind was alienated from her, like as my mind was alienated from her sister.

This passage becomes easier to understand when you realize that figurative language and imagery is being used. The two sisters mentioned here are Israel and Judah. God is commenting on their harlotry. They were supposed to depend on and trust God. Instead, they turned their backs on Him and looked to other nations for help and protection. How often do we do the same thing? When we are in need, where do we turn? Do we call upon the name of the Lord, or do we turn to others; friends, family, books, counselors,

whatever? They may look and sound good; they may appear to have the answer you want to hear, but they will only lead you off the Ancient Path unless you get God's direction, His answer first.

Mat.5:

28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

2Pet.2:

14 Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children:

The third aspect of the nature of temptation, is the Pride of Life. There has been so much written about the sin of Pride and the place of Humility in our Christian walk, that only a couple of scriptures are needed here.

Ps.119:

21 Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from thy commandments.

Dan.4:

30 The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?

31 While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee.

32 And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that

the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.

The things of the world therefore are divided into three classes, according to the three predominant inclinations of depraved nature; as, (1.) There is *the lust of the flesh*. The lust of the flesh is, subjectively, the humour and appetite of indulging fleshly pleasures; and, objectively, all those things that excite and inflame the pleasures of the flesh. It could perhaps best be symbolized by a mouth.

(2.) There is *the lust of the eyes*. The eyes are delighted with treasures, riches and rich possessions. This is the lust of covetousness.

(3.) There is *the pride of life*. A vain mind craves all the grandeur, and pomp of life; this is ambition, and thirst after honour and applause. This is, in part, the disease of the ear; it must be flattered with admiration and praise. The objects of these appetites must be abandoned and renounced; *they are not of the Father, but of the world*.

I think it would be worthwhile at this point to employ a little hermeneutics, namely the Law or Principle of First Mention and examine the origin of temptation and its counter or parallel passage in the New Testament.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Law of First Mention, in its simplest form, states that the first time an idea, concept, truth or principle is mentioned in the Bible, it sets its parameters and is the key passage by which all other texts on the same topic must be measured. A corollary to that, is that the earlier the first mention occurs in the Bible, the more significant it is concerning its scope in the entirety of scripture. Obviously then, the Book of Genesis can be considered the controlling book of the Bible as it is the first book, and the earlier a passage occurs in Genesis, will once again affect its importance. Let's begin with Genesis chapter 2.

Gen2:

16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

17. But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Two important points need to be noted here. Firstly, see how verse 16 is presented in a positive manner; '*Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:*'. There is no negative command given here. That comes in verse 17, but a very strong reason is given; '*thou shalt surely die.*' God gives clear warning of the consequences of eating the forbidden fruit. All other fruit was good to eat, including the fruit of the Tree of Life.

One further point needs to be made. This event took place before Eve was created. She did not hear God's command to Adam. In light of later events, we can only assume that Adam passed on this warning after her creation. Now consider Genesis chapter 3.

Gen3:

3:1 Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

2 And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:

3 But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

4 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:

5 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

7. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

Isn't it strange, how we always desire what is Prohibited. Have you ever noticed how Satan can take something good and subtly twist it; how he takes truth and then corrupts it? Compare Genesis 3:1 with Genesis 2:16. Do you see the subtle difference? God was positive, Satan is always negative. The Law of First Mention works for this as well. Satan will always twist God's words. Whenever you hear anyone twisting the Word of God, you are hearing the voice of Satan.

Now compare verse 3 of Genesis chapter 3, with verse 17 of Genesis:2. Note the addition. God made no mention of touching

the fruit. I can only speculate that Adam in passing on God's warning added that extra condition; perhaps to impress on her the importance of the command he had received directly.

Verse 4 is extremely important. '*And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:*'. Satan just called God a Liar. Imagine the audacity of the father of Lies calling He who is Truth incarnate a liar! Yet, there was a *grain* of truth in the statement. There must always be some truth in any lie if it is to be effective. Remember, 99% truth and 1% lie still makes the sum total a Lie. Adam and Eve did not die PHYSICALLY, but they certainly died SPIRITUALLY, and that was far more serious.

In verse 5, we see 'the pride of life' for the first time; '*ye shall be as gods*'. Then, in verse 6 come all three temptations; '*the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise.*' Here we have, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life for the first time in scripture. The consequences of their actions are still being felt today.

The steps of the temptation go downward towards the pit:

1. She **listened** to words of the great tempter, the father of lies. We need to be discerning when we listen.
2. She **saw**. She looked with pleasure on the forbidden fruit. A great deal of sin comes in at the eyes. Jesus spoke often about our eyes and ears.
3. She **desired** both food and wisdom, she wanted to be as a god.
- 4 She **took**. It was her choice; Satan can not force us to take an action. He can only tempt, seduce and coerce through trickery. Her taking it was stealing, like Achan's taking the accursed thing. (Joshua 7:1) The result was the same, death, as God said.
5. She **did eat**. Thus giving in to all three temptations.

6. She ***gave*** also to her husband with her. The result of her 6 downward steps,

7. He ***did eat***. And the Fall was complete.

The first Adam, the first man, failed when faced by temptation. Eve was deceived, but Adam sinned. He wilfully disobeyed God.

In contrast to this, let us examine the same three temptations faced by Jesus, the second man and the last Adam. There are several scriptures we could choose, but only one selection will be necessary.

Mat4:

4:1 Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

2 And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered.

3 And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

5 Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple,

6 And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

7 Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

8 Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;

9 *And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.*

10 *Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.*

11. *Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.*

The purpose of this temptation, was to divert Jesus from God's way of accomplishing His mission . Note how Satan taunts Jesus: *'If you are the Son of God.'* The Greek also permits the translation, *'Since you are the Son of God.'*

The first temptation was to turn stones into bread. Jesus replied in the words of Deuteronomy 8:3 that *'man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the God.'* The lust of the flesh.

The second of Jesus' temptations was a challenge to jump off the Temple in Jerusalem. Jesus responded by quoting Deuteronomy 6:16 that one should not tempt *'the Lord your God.'* This temptation was an appeal to pride.

Jesus' third temptation was on a high mountain from which worldly kingdoms could be seen. This appealed to both the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. Jesus concluded this temptation by quoting Deuteronomy 6:13 that thou should worship the Lord thy God alone, and by commanding Satan to leave. *'resist the devil and he will flee.'*

The major temptation of Jesus was to do God's will the devil's way. The great purpose of Jesus was to follow the will of God. He walked the Ancient Path.

The three temptations of the Garden, failed by Adam and Eve, were overcome by Jesus in the Wilderness. The contrasting symbolism of a garden and a wilderness should provide a fruitful ground for your further study.

CHAPTER SIX

In chapter three, we examined the negative aspects of a wilderness experience. One of the reasons so many people refuse to walk the Ancient Paths, is because they frequently lead you through one of these wilderness experiences. This is God's proving grounds where he tests the mettle of each and every believer who walks His paths. In this chapter we will focus on the positives that can be associated with a visit to the wilderness.

How does one end up in a Wilderness Experience? There are basically two ways; either God puts you there, or you put yourself there. While Satan can meet you during a Wilderness Experience, he can't put you there. Nothing can separate you from God and His Holy Spirit (Rom 8); however, you can withdraw from Him through sin and disobedience and thus enter your own wilderness, where God seems far away.

When you're in the Wilderness, you have 3 choices:

1. You can try to get out of it, but if God's put you there, I don't think He'll be too quick to take you out. Even if He does, you'll soon be back there.
2. You can pretend you're Not in the Wilderness and hope that by ignoring it, it will eventually disappear. In that case, you'll likely die there, either physically, or spiritually.
3. You can learn and achieve what God wants you to learn/achieve and then leave the Wilderness behind you. You'll continue your walk on the Ancient Paths.

Remember, that 40 is the number most closely associated with the wilderness, and it refers to: Probation, Trial and Chastisement.

Therefore, let's examine the Positive aspects of a Wilderness Experience, to see why God takes us through one

From a positive perspective, the wilderness can be the site of:

1. Sanctuary and Salvation. (This includes His Provision.)
2. Worship and Covenant.

We see His provision in the wilderness through the prophet Elijah and the sanctuary and salvation he was given, while the whole nation of Israel was the recipient of His covenant through the tenets of worship established during the 40 year sojourn in the desert.

Again, as with the negative aspects, these are NOT mutually exclusive. An example would be John 3:14 *'And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up'*.

It will be helpful to study a selection of relevant scriptures as we examine the first of these, 'Sanctuary and Salvation'. As a part of this, we must also take into consideration His total provision for us while we're being tested in the wilderness.

(Isa 40:3 KJV) The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

(Mat 3:1 KJV) In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,

(Mat 3:3 KJV) For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

Christ, Himself, identified John the Baptist with Elijah. Here we clearly see a reflection once more of the Ancient Paths of Jeremiah 6:16; the announcement of the coming of our Lord.

(Mark 1:3 KJV) The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

(Mark 1:4 KJV) John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

Repentance, is the starting point, the beginning of our walk on these Ancient Paths. It is here, at the moment of repentance, that we turn from the paths of evil and take our first steps on the path of righteousness. The Baptism for repentance was the nature of John's baptism.

Again, using the Law of First Mention with regard to baptism, we discover that it too began in the wilderness. The people of Israel went through the Red Sea, and then travelled under a cloud or pillar of fire. This represents the two New Testament baptisms of water and fire associated with John and then Jesus. We go through the waters of baptism, but the baptism of fire by the Holy Spirit comes from above and we are under it.

(Luke 3:2 KJV) Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.

(Luke 3:4 KJV) As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

(John 1:23 KJV) He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.

It is amazing how many people come to the Lord either through, or after a wilderness experience. It places their feet firmly on the Ancient Path.

(Gen 37:22 KJV) And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again.

It is interesting, that this passage, refers to Joseph, who is a type of Christ. Both had a wilderness experience.

(Exo 13:18 KJV) But God 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.

God leads us on His Ancient Paths, '*through the way of the wilderness*'. We may be '*harnessed*', but His '*yoke is easy and His burden is light*'.

(Acts 7:36 KJV) He brought them out, after that he had showed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years.

(Deu 1:31 KJV) And in the wilderness, where thou hast seen how that the LORD thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that ye went, until ye came into this place.

(Deu 2:7 KJV) For the LORD thy God hath blessed thee in all the works of thy hand: he knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness: these forty years the LORD thy God hath been with thee; thou hast lacked nothing.

When we are in a wilderness experience, we have to learn to depend TOTALLY on God, as did the children of Israel. He is our sufficiency. He will meet our every need as we go through this time of testing, if we trust fully and only in Him.

(Deu 8:15 KJV) Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint;

Aside from the obvious reference to meeting our physical need for water in a desert, we must not miss the deeper application of this verse. There are three clear Biblical images presented here. First, the serpent, an unmistakable reference to Satan who, as we said earlier, will often meet with us during a wilderness experience. We are told in (Luke10:19) that we have nothing to fear from serpents and scorpions. *'Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.'*

Jesus tells the Samaritan woman at the well, that he can give her living water so that she will thirst no more. The Holy Spirit is that

living water, and Jesus is the Rock. These are the other two images in this verse.

(Deu 8:16 KJV) Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end;

This is perhaps the most significant verse of scripture in this section. Once more we note the number three recurring throughout our study of the wilderness. God in His fullness is there with us on this Ancient Path. His promise holds true as ever; He will never leave us or forsake us.

The manna, of course is symbolic of Christ, the true living Bread from Heaven. The question here answered, is why this manna was sent. The answer is in three parts. Humility is the first. We are told to 'humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God'. Christ humbled Himself coming among us as a man. In all things, He is our example. Our walk on the Ancient Paths is one of Humility. There is no place for pride in the Kingdom of God; that was Satan's sin.

God then wants to 'prove' us in the wilderness. This is the Hebrew word 'nasah' which means to test the quality of something, or someone through stress with the intent or purpose of refining it or them. It is the same word that is used for the purification and refining of precious metal, such as silver or gold. When a smith plunged a sword blade fresh from the hot forge into a barrel of water, he was 'proving' it. God will do that with us during a wilderness experience.

Thirdly, He does this refining work *'to do thee good at thy latter end'*. God only wants the best for us His children. When we chastise our own children, it is because we love them and want to make them better people. Can we expect less from God who is Love? God *'proves'* us, not to punish us, but because He loves us, because He wants what is good for us after we come through this time of testing. Oh the Goodness of our wonderful God.

(Deu 29:5 KJV) And I have led you forty years in the wilderness: your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot.

(Deu 32:10 KJV) He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.

(Psa 78:19 KJV) Yea, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?

(Psa 78:52 KJV) But made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock.

(John 6:49 KJV) Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.

(Mat 15:33 KJV) And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude?

(Mark 8:4 KJV) And his disciples answered him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?

Not only do these verses highlight the provision of God in the wilderness, but they also show Christ as the manna. He is the one who can provide bread for the multitudes. Strangely, His disciples had not yet realised this. It was for this reason, to make this aspect of His character known, both to His disciples and the world, that He performed the miracle of the feeding of the multitude in the wilderness.

(Mark 1:13 KJV) And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.

(Lev 16:10 KJV) But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness.

(Lev 16:21 KJV) And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness:

(Lev 16:22 KJV) And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.

Again we see yet another connection between Christ, who takes away the sins of the world, and the importance of the wilderness. It is through this atonement, that our salvation is purchased.

(Rev 12:6 KJV) And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

(Rev 12:14 KJV) And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

(Psa 107:33 KJV) He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the watersprings into dry ground;

(Psa 107:35 KJV) He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into watersprings.

(Isa 41:18 KJV) I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.

(Isa 41:19 KJV) I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together:

God can make any experience, especially a wilderness experience, a life changing one. The Bible is replete with examples of God turning events which would be considered negative in the natural, into incredible positive events. Perhaps the greatest example of this is the Cross. To the natural mind, this would be a devastating, horrific failure, yet God made it His greatest success. Things are not always what they seem and life can suddenly blossom in the middle of a desert. Trees, it's interesting to note, represent symbols of

spiritual growth and life. God says He will plant them in the wilderness; life and growth in the spirit can be found there.

(Isa 51:3 KJV) For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.

(Isa 32:15 KJV) Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.

(Isa 32:16 KJV) Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field.

These two verses represent both the aspects of sanctuary and salvation, as well as those of worship and covenant. Therefore, let us now turn briefly to a few representative scriptures, which illustrate this second positive aspect of a wilderness experience.

(Acts 7:30 KJV) And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sina an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush.

(Acts 7:38 KJV) This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:

Please note, that the church is found in the wilderness. We need to be there for one another. When the Ancient Paths take us through the wilderness, the church should be found there. We shouldn't walk there alone, our brothers and sisters in the Lord should be

there to help us in our dry times. By our love for one another, do we show ourselves to be Christ's disciples.

(Acts 7:42 KJV) Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness?

(Exo 3:18 KJV) 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 LORD God 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 LORD our God.

(Exo 5:1 KJV) And afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.

(Exo 7:16 KJV) And thou shalt say unto him, The LORD God of the Hebrews hath sent me unto thee, saying, Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness: and, behold, hitherto thou wouldest not hear.

(Ezek 20:35 KJV) And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face.

(Ezek 20:36 KJV) Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord GOD.

(Isa 43:19 KJV) Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.

(Isa 43:20 KJV) The beast of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen.

The most significant verse of the first section, is echoed slightly differently in the next verse, but the theme remains the same.

(Deu 8:2 KJV) And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.

The covenant with Moses was not established in Egypt, nor was it established in the Promised Land. Rather, it was made in the wilderness, which is also where the Law, the commandments were given. Why? What was God's purpose in that? What did He wish to test, what did He hope to achieve?

God is always looking for obedience. He looks at our hearts, and what He is seeking is simply our obedience. Will we obey Him, not just in the good times when it is easy to do so, but also in the testing times, the dry times when everything seems so difficult. Examine your own heart today.

Finally, as we bring this chapter to a close and before we examine two key aspects of God's Ancient Paths; Joy and Fruitfulness, I leave you with one interesting thought. Make of it what you will.

(Prov 21:19 KJV) It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Jeremiah 6:16 *“Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.”*

Earlier, in Chapter Two, we examined the word ‘good’ in our key verse. This word ‘good’, is the Hebrew word ‘tov’ which may be rendered as: good, pleasant, beautiful, excellent, delightful, joyful, fruitful, righteous. In this and the next chapter, I want to explore two of these possible meanings; joyful and fruitful, as this is exactly what our Christian lives should be. This is how we can determine whether or not we are walking the Ancient Paths.

Joy, the Greek word ‘chara’ should be an integral part of our daily walk with the Lord. The Bible has much to say on this topic. A few examples from the New Testament might be helpful.

(Gal 5:22 KJV) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

(Rom 14:17 KJV) For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

(John 15:11 KJV) These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

(John 16:24 KJV) Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

(John 17:13 KJV) And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

The question then becomes, what exactly is meant by 'joy' in these scriptures? Is it the same as 'happiness' or 'pleasure'? Surely not. I think James expressed what real joy is better than anyone else.

(James 1:2 KJV) My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

(James 1:3 KJV) Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

(James 1:4 KJV) But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

There is a progression here that we need to examine. It seems almost an oxymoron, a deliberate contradiction, to link joy and falling into temptation, yet James does so. The word translated temptations here, is the Greek word 'Peirasmos' which means a test, or temptation; either from God for our good, or from Satan for our destruction. James is obviously using it in the first sense here, which confirms what we have discussed about temptations, trials and testings in earlier chapters.

Can we be sure the temptations are not from Satan? Yes, 2 Pet 2:9 says, *'The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.'* Our God will deliver us from the evil one.

In verse three, we find the Greek word Hupomone which is rendered as 'patience'. It concerns having endurance relating to

things or circumstances as contrasted to longsuffering, which is endurance towards people. The testings of God help to produce this quality in us. Then, in verse four, we find two important Greek words; 'teleios', which means either something done as it ought to be, or maturity, and 'holokleros' which refers to mental and moral wholeness, the state of perfection man had before the fall.

The progression then, leads us on the Ancient Paths to where we should have been had Adam never fallen. The trials we face will eventually allow us to attain the maturity/perfection (same word in the Greek, teleios) as Christ, which is what God planned for us in the beginning. That is what produces real joy.

A parallel passage can be found in Romans 5, verses 3 and 4. In the Amplified Bible, it reads as follows: *'Moreover [let us also be full of joy now!] let us exult and triumph in our troubles and rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that pressure and affliction and hardship produce patient and unswerving endurance. And endurance develops maturity of character. And character produces joyful and confident hope of eternal salvation.'*

The two key words here are; 'thlipsis', which is tribulation, trouble, or affliction and 'pathema' translated as sufferings. The interesting thing about 'pathema', is that it refers specifically to the sufferings Christ endured. Again the identification with our Lord comes through as we joy in our salvation.

(Heb 12:2 KJV) Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

(Luke 6:22 KJV) Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake.

(Luke 6:23 KJV) Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.

(1 Pet 1:6 KJV) Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:

(1 Pet 1:7 KJV) That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

The word 'tried' in this verse, is 'dakimazo' which is to test for what good is in something. It is also used of testing metals for purity.

(1 Pet 4:12 KJV) Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:

(1 Pet 4:13 KJV) But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. 3804

Phil:2

17 Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.

18 For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.

There is Joy to be found in sacrifice also. Yes, we are told that obedience is better than sacrifice, (1Sam15:22) but we are commanded to lead lives of sacrifice for the Lord as Romans 12:1 shows. *'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.'*

(Mat 25:21,23 KJV) His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

(Jude 1:24 KJV) Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,

The Ancient Paths, are joyful; they lead us not only to God and salvation, but through the trials and testings along the way, we mature and develop to become what God has always intended for us to become. We grow into the measure of the full stature of our Lord Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER EIGHT

How are we to know, to discern when we, or others we meet are truly walking the Ancient Paths? While many find them, few actually walk them faithfully. What standard can we use? Only scripture, the inspired Word of God, can measure our walk. It is scripture which gives the answer. Matthew 7 verse 16 says '*Ye shall know them by their fruits.*' This is the only valid way of knowing.

Again, the word 'tov' used in our central verse, Jeremiah 6:16 has the connotation of being fruitful. The good way, the Ancient Paths are fruitful. Therefore, if we are walking these paths, then our fruit will be on display for all to see and we shall be known by our fruit. Look carefully at the warnings which follow Matthew 7:16.

16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

The message should be clear. We are not going to be judged on what we say, or on what we claim to have done, but on the fruit we have produced over the time we have walked the Ancient Paths. If a fruit inspector came to inspect your fruit today, what would he find? There is no mixed fruit in the Kingdom of God, only good, or bad. The question, therefore, is what do we do if our fruit is not all that it should be? To answer this question, I want to examine in some depth a parable of our Lord's which addresses this issue.

Luke 13:1 There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

2 And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things?

3 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

4 Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?

5 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

6 He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.

7 Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?

8 And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it:

9 And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.

Luke 13, begins with a repeated call to repentance. (verses 3 and 5) Everything in the Kingdom of God begins with this step. If you are not happy with the state of your fruit, then repentance is the first thing you should do. Unless this is done, there is no hope of salvation. Verses 6 to 9, tell the parable of the unfruitful fig tree. Interestingly, this is not the only incident in the Bible of an unfruitful fig tree. Christ, Himself, curses one in Matthew 21:19 and we shall see the link between the two later.

I have already discussed in some detail, the importance in Bible numerics of the number three. We see it in operation with fruit. There is good fruit, bad fruit, and as verse 6 tells us, no fruit. Also, in John chapter 15 we are introduced to the concept of some fruit, more fruit, and much fruit. All of these are obviously important, as we shall see.

Two sources of fruit are presented in the New Testament; the fig tree, and the more significant vine. It is from the vine that grapes come, and these in turn produce wine which is symbolic of blood in the Bible. The vine, itself, is also representative of the nation of Israel and all that that encompasses.

Ps 80:8 Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it.

9 Thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land.

10 The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars.

11 She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river.

12 Why hast thou then broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her?

13 The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it.

Remembering that this passage refers to the nation of Israel, and God's displeasure with it, an important question is posed in verses 12 and 13. To answer this question, we must let scripture interpret scripture. The book of Isaiah chapter 5 is where we'll look.

Isaiah 5:1 Now will I sing to my well beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill:

2 And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.

3 And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.

4 What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?

See how his expectations are frustrated: *'It brought forth wild grapes;'* not only no fruit at all, but bad fruit, worse than none, grapes of Sodom. Deut 32:32. explains this.

Deut 32:

32 For their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah: their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter:

33 Their wine is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps.

Verse 33 is an obvious reference to Satan who counterfeits everything that is good in the Word and corrupts every truth. Wild grapes are the fruits of the corrupt nature, fruit that is in a sense illegitimate, and not a part of the engrafted branch. They stem from a root of bitterness. Hebrews 12:15 sheds further light on this.

Heb12:15 'Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;'

Where grace does not work, corruption and bitterness will. Wild grapes are hypocrisy in religion. Looking like grapes, they are sour, bitter, and far from being pleasing to God. Today, we see much hypocrisy in the church. There is so much hype concerning issues that are not in the Word of God, making totally unsubstantiated and unscriptural claims. The true grace of God is forgotten, replaced by these counterfeit graces which come from the pit of Hell. Counterfeit graces are wild grapes. They are not found on the Ancient Paths. Let's continue with our study of Isaiah chapter 5.

*Isaiah 5:5 'And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down:
6 And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.*

7 For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.' (of oppression and distress).

Here then is the culmination of the first four verses. Because wild grapes, bad fruit, was produced, where the expectation had been good fruit, the vineyard was laid waste, turned into a wilderness. Verse 6 becomes clearer if we consider Hebrews chapter 6, verses 7 and 8.

Hebrews 6:

7 For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God:

8 But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.

We have almost come full circle. There is an echo here of Matthew 7 verse 19. *'Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.'*

However, the real significance of all these scriptures concerning the vine and the vineyard is found in the book of John chapter 15.

John 15:

15:1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

Could anything be clearer. Turn or burn. Repent, find and walk the Ancient Paths, or suffer eternity in Hell. You either produce good fruit, or your end is the fire. The wrath of God is real against those who do not produce good fruit.

Matthew 3:7 'But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:

9 And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

10 And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.'

Note also, the parallel text in the book of Luke.

Luke 3:7 Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

8 Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

9 And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

Beware the Axe. It will be laid at the root; that root of bitterness which produces wild grapes, poisonous fruit whose only use is to bring death, both physical and spiritual. Walk the Ancient Paths, God's good ways and have Life through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

Let's return now to our Parable of the Fig Tree in Luke chapter 13.

6 He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.

7 Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?

8 And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it:

9 And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.

The Fig Tree is planted IN the vineyard, rather than the wayside. It is not outside 'the way', but rather inside God's vineyard, unlike the other unfruitful fig tree.

(Mt.21:19) *'And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away.'*

Therefore, because of its location, it must represent Christians. Note, in verse 6, that the owner of the vineyard deliberately had this tree planted there. The Tree belongs to someone, it is not just growing wild and its being there was part of a plan the owner had.

However, the Tree, while not producing any fruit, is doing damage to the vineyard; '*why cumbereth it the ground?*' and the owner has already been patient and longsuffering. There are many scriptures which tell of this aspect of God's character and nature.

Exodus 34:6 And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,

9 And he said, If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us; for it is a stiff-necked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance.

Romans 2:4 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

2Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

15 And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;

Christ intercedes for a REPRIEVE (for 1 year), not forever, in verse 8. This is a symbolic period of time, rather than a literal year, but we don't know when that reprieve will be up; we're not guaranteed a

tomorrow, no one is. The following poem, makes this abundantly and powerfully clear. I wish I knew who wrote it.

If Tomorrow Never Comes

If I knew it would be the last time that I'd see you fall asleep, I would
 tuck you in more tightly and pray the Lord, your soul to keep.
 If I knew it would be the last time that I see you walk out the door, I
 would give you a hug and kiss and call you back for one more.
 If I knew it would be the last time I'd hear your voice lifted up in praise,
 I would video tape each action and word, so I could play them back day
 after day.
 If I knew it would be the last time, I could spare an extra minute or two
 to stop and say "I love you," instead of assuming, you would know I do.
 If I knew it would be the last time I would be there to share your day,
 well I'm sure you'll have so many more, so I can let just this one slip
 away.
 For surely there's always tomorrow to make up for an oversight, and we
 always get a second chance to make everything right.
 There will always be another day to say our "I love you's", And certainly
 there's another chance to say our "Anything I can do's?"
 But just in case I might be wrong, and today is all I get, I'd like to say
 how much I love you and I hope we never forget, Tomorrow is not
 promised to
 anyone, young or old alike, And today may be the last chance you get to
 hold your loved one tight.
 So if you're waiting for tomorrow, why not do it today?
 For if tomorrow never comes, you'll surely regret the day, That you
 didn't take that extra time for a smile, a hug, or a kiss and you were too
 busy to
 grant someone, what turned out to be their one last wish.
 So hold your loved ones close today, whisper in their ear, Tell them how
 much you love them and that you'll always hold them dear, Take time
 to say "I'm sorry," "please forgive me," "thank you" or "it's okay".
 And if tomorrow never comes, you'll have no regrets about today.
 Author Unknown

This reprieve, which Christ provides, involves work and effort. There is the digging, the breaking up of the fallow ground around our heart, and the spreading of manure. This manure/fertilizer is the Word of God, which is spiritual food that nurtures us and helps us to grow and produce not only good fruit, but much good fruit.

Again, let scripture speak for itself; this time from the Amplified Bible.

Jer 4: 3 For thus says the Lord to the men of Judah and to Jerusalem: Break up your ground left uncultivated for a season, so that you may not sow among thorns.

4 Circumcise yourselves to the Lord and take away the foreskins of your hearts, you men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, lest My wrath go forth like fire [consuming all that gets in its way] and burn so that no one can quench it because of the evil of your doings.

Hos 10: 12 Sow for yourselves according to righteousness (uprightness and right standing with God); reap according to mercy and loving-kindness. Break up your uncultivated ground, for it is time to seek the Lord, to inquire for and of Him, and to require His favor, till He comes and teaches you righteousness and rains His righteous gift of salvation upon you.

13 You have plowed and plotted wickedness, You have reaped the [willful] injustice [of oppressors], you have eaten the fruit of lies. Because you have trusted in your [own] way and your chariots, in the multitude of your mighty men.

The Bible tells us to be trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord. What type of tree are you? By your fruits will you be known. Are you producing much good fruit, or does your fallow ground need digging up? Do you need more of the Word in your heart, in your life. Are you on the way, the fruitful way, or are you standing in the wayside where fruit cannot grow? Are you walking the Ancient Paths?

Jeremiah 6:16 "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein."

Have you found rest for your soul? The promise is there to all who walk the Ancient Paths. If you don't have that rest, then you're not on the path. Instead, you're grouped with those who said; '*We will not walk therein*'.

Sadly, I don't see any great difference between the people of Jeremiah's day, and our society today. Never have so many known so much. Never has there been such a proliferation of books, tapes, CD's whatever, dealing with Christian issues and yet fewer and fewer people in Western society attend church, pray, study their Bibles or for that matter have any real interest in Christian things unless there is something material in it for them.

Many find the Ancient Paths; many pay 'lip service'; many even think they are OK with God, because they said some little prayer one evening at the front of a church or meeting hall. However, the tragic truth is that very few actually walk these Ancient Paths. Christianity is a walk, not a decision. Salvation is not a once in a lifetime event, it is an ongoing phenomena. We were saved, we are saved, we are being continually saved. We are commanded to take up our cross daily and follow Him. How can we follow Him, unless we walk in the path He treads; the path that He represents.

Are you walking the Ancient Paths? Will you walk in the Ancient Paths, or will you like so many others, refuse. Broad is the path that leads to destruction and many find it, but narrow is the path that leads to salvation and few are the number who find it.

Jesus Christ is this Ancient Path. He is the only way to God, the only way to salvation. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. No man comes to the Father except through Him. Won't you take up the challenge today, and Walk in the Ancient Paths.