

THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS : INTROSPECTION, OR HEAVEN-SPECTION? PT 1

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Some time ago, one of my online friends asked me a question regarding certain quotes which are found in the Gospel Of Thomas, also known as the Coptic Gospel of Thomas, being as it is written in the Coptic alphabet. Coptic is an Egyptian language which itself was adopted from the Greek alphabet, with about a half dozen other signs added to it. While the Coptic language is still spoken in the Coptic Orthodox and Coptic Catholic churches of Egypt, it has been replaced by Egyptian Arabic in modern Egypt.

Some of you will no doubt have never heard of the Gospel of Thomas, due to the simple fact that it was not included in the Biblical canon with which most people are familiar. It is in fact a part of a group of ancient texts referred to as the Nag Hammadi Library, or the Gnostic Gospels. These texts were discovered in a buried sealed jar in Egypt in 1945. It has been proposed that they may have been hidden after noted bishop Athanasius of Alexandria -- who was a progenitor of the early Roman Catholic Church -- condemned the use of non-canonical books in his Easter Letter of 367 A.D. This gospel -- which some scholars believe may have originated in Syria

sometime during the Second Century -- is a collection of one hundred and fourteen sayings which have been attributed to Jesus. But it should be noted, however, that less than half of these sayings resemble things which were spoken by Jesus in the canonical Gospels. That is, in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

In the Thomas O. Lambdin translation, the Gospel of Thomas begins with the words "These are the secret sayings which the living Jesus spoke and which Didymos Judas Thomas wrote down." Despite this introductory text, and the fact that the gospel bears his name, doubt has been cast on whether or not the Gospel of Thomas was truly written by the Apostle Thomas who is named in the four Gospels. As you will discover in a moment, I have my personal doubts regarding the authenticity of this book as well.

After reading my friend's comment, my mind was immediately filled with a variety of Bible verses which I proceeded to use to answer his inquiry. Realizing that others may have also read the Gospel of Thomas, and that they may likewise have similar questions, I decided to present my response in this current series. Following then is a direct quote from this person's message:

----- Begin Quote -----

I'd really like your comments on "The Gospel of Thomas" especially v3 where Jesus says: "If those who lead you say to you, 'See, the kingdom is in the sky', then the birds of the sky will precede you. If they say to you, 'It is in the sea', then the fish will precede you. Rather, the kingdom is inside of you, and it is outside of you. When you come to know yourselves, then you will become known, and you will realize that it is you who are the sons of the Living Father. But if you will not know yourselves, you will dwell in poverty and it is you who are that poverty."

----- End Of Quote -----

While I have had the Gospel of Thomas sitting in my pile of apocryphal writings for a number of years now, due to the tremendous amount of unfinished writing projects I have yet to complete, it was not until recently that I made time to read it in its entirety. As a result, I felt that until I did so, it would be unwise of me to pass full judgment on whether or not I feel it is a Divinely-Inspired work. As I mentioned

earlier, there are opposing views regarding the authenticity of this gospel. However, I try to not allow such opinions to influence me, as I wish to read such works with as unbiased an opinion as possible. I am the type of person who likes to form his own opinions on a matter, and not rely too heavily on the evaluations of others; particularly when it involves matters of a religious nature. However, having now read the Gospel of Thomas in its entirety, I feel more confident in expressing my own views regarding it.

As I point out in the article "A Biblical Cafeteria, or the Whole Course?", while I do sense Divine Inspiration in some of the actual Apocrypha -- which, incidentally, was included in the original version of the KJV Bible -- I don't sense the same Divine Spark in the majority of the other apocryphal and pseudepigraphal works that I have read thus far. The only one I have accepted as having any degree of Divine Inspiration is the Book of Enoch. Even though I have quoted from it in some of my other articles, I feel that I should clarify that it is not a one hundred per cent endorsement of the Book. I simply found enough information in the Authorized King James Bible which seems to substantiate the authorship of the Book of Enoch. This gives it a little more credence than some of the other works. Please refer to my article "The Book of Enoch: Truth or Heresy?" for a more in-depth commentary.

But concerning the Gospel of Thomas, after reading the above message from my friend, I must admit that I was disconcerted by the contents of the material he quoted from it. Not only that, but after having now read the Gospel of Thomas in its entirety, I have been left with even more doubt regarding the notion of it being a Divinely-Inspired text. In my opinion, the above quote describes a rather self-centered faith rather than a Christ-centered faith, which is what Jesus and all of the Apostles taught in the Gospels, in the Book of Acts, and in the Epistles. As I continued to ponder that quote, a few verses came to mind which I will now share with you. As you will see, rather than support the purported quote from Jesus in the Gospel of Thomas, they do the exact opposite. To begin with, consider what Jesus said in the following verse:

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

John 12:32, KJV

In this verse from the Gospel of John, Jesus is referring to His approaching Crucifixion. However, we can also look at it

as meaning that we are to look up to Jesus for our Salvation, and not down or inward into ourselves. The answers to life -- particularly to gaining Eternal Life -- will not be found in introspection. That is, in examining ourselves. Rather, the answers will be found in what I prefer to refer to as Heaven-spection. That is, in looking upwards to Jesus. This is made evident by verses such as the following one:

"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."

Hebrews 12:2, KJV

King David, who was a man who was plagued with many problems during his lifetime, likewise knew that the answers to life, and his own Salvation, could only come from above. Consider the following two verses:

[A Song of degrees.] I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth."

Psalms 121:1-2, KJV

As you can see, we are again told to lift up our eyes, and not to look downward, or inward at ourselves. We are not told to find ourselves or to know ourselves, as the Gospel of Thomas seems to be saying. Consider also what Jesus said when His disciples inquired of Him regarding the signs that would mark the end of the age:

"And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh."

Luke 21:28, KJV

As you can see, Jesus told them to look up to the heavens for their redemption. Why would the Lord say this? The answer is obviously found in the following set of verses:

"And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

Matthew 24:30, KJV

"Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on

the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

Matthew 26:64, KJV

"And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory."

Mark 13:26, KJV

"And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

Mark 14:62, KJV

"And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

Acts 1:9-11, KJV

"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

1 Thessalonians 4:17, KJV

"Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen."

Revelation 1:7, KJV

As you may already know, this whole idea of looking inward is a central theme of many Eastern religions, and of New Age thought as well. They all promote the belief that the answers can be found within ourselves. They teach that we humans are the masters of our own fates. They claim that humans beings have a lot more potential than what most people realize. All we have to do is to learn to harness our mental, emotional and spiritual energies they say. In short, they are claiming that we are our own gods. Such false belief systems reek of humanistic thought, which is totally contrary to God's Word.

If you really stop to think about it, this is basically how Satan must have felt as well; and as we all know, it led to his downfall. Because of his own pride and vanity, he took

his eyes off of the Lord, and looked inward to himself. He deceived himself into thinking that he deserved more, and that he was better than God. He was not happy with his high position in the Heavenly Hierarchy. He wanted to be God; and that is why the Lord cast him out, as is made evident by the following set of verses:

"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit."

Isaiah 14:12-15, KJV

"And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven."

Luke 10:18, KJV

"Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out."

John 12:31, KJV

"And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time."

Revelation 12:7-12, KJV

"And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he

laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season . . . And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."

Revelation 20:1-3, 10, KJV

"Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished . . . Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."

Proverbs 16:5, 18, KJV

To continue, I do not believe, and I am not convinced, that looking inward to ourselves is what the Lord meant when He said that the Kingdom of God is within us. Here is exactly what Jesus said when He was confronted by the unbelieving Pharisees:

". . . The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you."

Luke 17:20-21, KJV

You see, the Scribes, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and even many of the common people were very lacking when it came to their understanding of the true nature of the Kingdom of God. Many of them in fact looked upon the things of the flesh, and the temporal things of this present world. The Gospels make it clear that the religious hierarchy were more interested in observing the Mosaic Law, in performing Temple services, in making loud public prayers, and in wearing their long flowing garments. They were only interested in impressing people with their own outward righteousness and religiosity so that they could receive the praises of men. Does this sound like some sectors of modern organized religion? This is why Jesus said the following to them, and concerning them, and exposed their hypocrisy:

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto

men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."

Matthew 23:27-28, KJV

"And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces, And the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts: Which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation."

Mark 12:38-40, KJV

"Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets."

Luke 11:43, KJV

"Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts; Which devour widows' houses, and for a shew make long prayers: the same shall receive greater damnation."

Luke 20:46-47, KJV

"Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."

John 12:42-43, KJV

Furthermore, as I point out in a few other articles such as "Who is Moshiach ben David?", similar to many Jews today, the Jewish elders and many of the common people were so blinded to the truth, that they were looking for and expected to see the arrival of an outward, physical kingdom. Their hope and expectations were in a messiah king who would be a descendant of King David. In other words, the Jews were anticipating the arrival of a physical savior and political leader who would deliver them out of the hands of their oppressors. That is, their Roman occupiers.

In fact, as you may know, even the Twelve Apostles themselves misunderstood the true nature of God's coming Kingdom. They too thought that it meant that the nation of Israel would be restored as a kingdom under Jesus' leadership. This becomes very evident by the following verses and event which occurred just prior to the Lord's Ascension to Heaven:

"When they therefore were come together, they asked of him,

saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power."

Acts 1:6-7, KJV

I find it interesting that the Lord gave them a roundabout answer. I suspect that Jesus may have done this, because He knew that they were not ready yet to accept an answer which would be contrary to their expectations. During His time on Earth, the Lord realized that there were certain truths which His followers were not yet able to bear, as is demonstrated by the following verse:

"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."

John 16:12, KJV

This expectation of a physically restored kingdom of Israel led by a political messiah king is precisely what motivated such radical groups as the Zealots and the Sicarii. As I mentioned a moment ago, today, the Orthodox Jews continue to await the arrival of Moshiach ben David, who they are still convinced will fulfill all of the requirements to be their one true "messiah". They do not expect a Divine Being from Heaven.

However, just like their unbelieving counterparts of old, the sad truth is that until the Jews fully understand what Jesus meant, they will never be able to enter God's Kingdom. That Kingdom is presently invisible, and has been invisible for the past two thousand years; for it resides within those of us who accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. As I explain in a number of other articles, we enter into that Kingdom through inner spiritual rebirth. Furthermore, as I point out in the two-part article entitled "A Treasure in Earthen Vessels: God's Promise of the Spirit", God provides us with a spiritual down payment of the life to come in the form of His precious Holy Spirit which dwells in Believers. So truly, although unseen at this present time, His Kingdom resides in all Bible-believing Christians.

In contrast, and tragically, because of the Jews' unbelief, the Kingdom has in effect been ripped out of their hands, and it has been given to the Gentiles, and to anyone else who embraces Jesus Christ. Jesus made this sad truth very clear when He said the following in the Gospels of Matthew

and John:

"And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom [the Jews] shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Matthew 8:11-12, KJV

"Therefore say I unto you, [to the unbelieving Jews] The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, [from the unbelieving Jews] and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them."

Matthew 21:43-45, KJV

". . . Jesus saith unto them [the Jews], If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it . . . He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because YE ARE NOT OF GOD."

John 8:39-44, 47, KJV

So as you can plainly see, those misguided people who believe that they are the heirs of promise, and who think that they are the children of the Kingdom and the children of Abraham -- that is, the unbelieving flesh Jews -- will be cast out. In the very next chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, the Lord emphasizes this same point again in the form of the Parable of the Wedding Garment, as we see by the following group of verses:

". . . The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to

call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen."

Matthew 22:1-14, KJV

Notice that in the final verses, Jesus uses the same exact descriptive words that He used in the verse from Matthew chapter eight above. And what is the wedding garment which this man failed to wear? It is the righteousness which can only be obtained through faith in the Atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It is the cloak which covers our sins as I discuss in other articles. Consider the following verses:

"I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment was as a robe and a diadem."

Job 29:14, KJV

"I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels."

Isaiah 61:10, KJV

"He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and

before his angels . . . I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see."

Revelation 3:5, 18, KJV

"After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands . . . And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Revelation 7:9, 13-14, KJV

"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God."

Revelation 19:7-9, KJV

Please go to part two for the continuation of this series.

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THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS : INTROSPECTION, OR HEAVEN-SPECTION? PT 2

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We Are Washed In The Blood Of The Lamb, Jesus' Conversation With Nicodemus, Jews Reject Christ And Prevent Others From Entering The Kingdom, We Have No Righteousness Of Our Own, The Invisible Kingdom Of God Within, New Heavens New Earth New Jerusalem, Thy Kingdom Come, Know Ourselves Or Know God And Be Known Of Him, We Are To Be Reflectors Of God's Love

Continuing our discussion from part one, as we have seen, in order for anyone to enter the Kingdom of God, they must be clothed in a marriage garment, which is also referred to as garments of salvation, robes of righteousness, and fine white linen. As John informs us in the previous set of verses, this "fine linen is the righteousness of saints." As we have also discussed, this righteousness can only be obtained through complete spiritual renewal and rebirth, which results from faith in the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Stated another way, we must be symbolically washed and spiritually cleansed in the Blood of Jesus Christ, who is the Sacrificial Lamb of God. For this is the cloak, or garment, which covers our sins. This truth becomes evident by verses such as the following:

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;"
Titus 3:5, KJV

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."
Isaiah 1:18, KJV

"And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."
Matthew 26:26-28, KJV

"And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it. And he said unto

them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many."

Mark 14:22-24, KJV

"And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you."

Luke 22:14-20, KJV

"Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;"

Romans 3:25, KJV

"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."

Ephesians 2:13, KJV

"And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission."

Hebrews 9:22, KJV

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;"

Hebrews 10:19-20, KJV

"Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate . . . Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

Hebrews 13:12, 20-21, KJV

"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied."

1 Peter 1:2, KJV

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

1 John 1:7, KJV

"And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,"

Revelation 1:5, KJV

"And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Revelation 7:14, KJV

As some of you will know, this process of spiritual rebirth and renewal is exactly what Jesus tried to explain to the Pharisee, Nicodemus. While it is true that Nicodemus was a Pharisee himself, unlike some of his Jewish brethren, he did in fact recognize Jesus as the Messiah. Consider this group of verses:

". . . Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

John 3:3-8, KJV

As we learned in part one, because the Jews rejected this basic truth and refused to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah,

they have been denied entrance into the Kingdom, until such time when they do embrace Christ. In the meantime, billions of Gentiles have found Salvation in Jesus. As the Apostle Paul noted in the Book of Acts:

"Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, WE TURN TO THE GENTILES."
Acts 13:46, KJV

Worse yet, not only did they reject the righteousness which comes through faith in Jesus alone, but those unbelieving Jews did everything within their power to try to disrupt the dissemination of the Gospel of Christ. Thus, the Apostle Paul likewise writes the following in his first Epistle to the Thessalonian brethren:

"For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews: Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins always: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost."
1 Thessalonians 2:14-16, KJV

Rather than accept the Garment of Righteousness which is offered to all men so that they can enter freely into the Kingdom, those stubborn Jews chose to be cloaked in their own righteousness. But you see, as I explain in the article entitled "Are You Saved and Sealed, and Healed and Filled?", Jesus ripped that useless cloak away two thousand years ago, as we see by this verse:

"If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin."
John 15:22, KJV

The Apostle Paul likewise exposed the unbelieving Jews' vain efforts to establish their own righteousness without Christ in the following verses which are found in his Epistle to the Romans:

"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that

they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

Romans 10:1-4, KJV

But no matter what arguments are presented by the Jews, or by anyone else for that matter, the indisputable truth is that none of us have any righteousness of our own. This truth is made abundantly clear throughout the pages of the Bible, as we can determine by the following group of verses:

"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."
Isaiah 64:6, KJV

"They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one."
Psalm 14:3, KJV

"If thou, LORD, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?"
Psalm 130:3, KJV

"For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."
Matthew 5:20, KJV

"And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."
Luke 18:9-14, KJV

"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one . . . But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"

Romans 3:10, 21-23, KJV

Having now explained to you what is meant by the Kingdom of God being within, as well as how we can enter that Kingdom, let me continue to explain why we are told that we must look out and up, and not down and in. To refresh your memory, let me again quote part of the material from the Gospel of Thomas which motivated me to write this series:

----- Begin Quote -----

". . . Rather, the kingdom is inside of you, and it is outside of you. When you come to know yourselves, then you will become known, and you will realize that it is you who are the sons of the Living Father. But if you will not know yourselves, you will dwell in poverty and it is you who are that poverty."

----- End Of Quote -----

In examining the previous quote, there appears to be a contradiction with what Jesus said to the Pharisees in Luke chapter seventeen. You may recall from part one that the Lord clearly told them that the Kingdom of Heaven does not come with observation, and that it is within. Yet according to the Gospel of Thomas, Jesus said it is both without and within. In a sense, I can agree that it is without as well, because the Kingdom of God does consist of the born-again Believers who we can visibly see. Likewise, as the Apostles began to establish Churches in Israel, Asia Minor and the surrounding areas, the Kingdom became even more visible; at least to those who had the Spiritual Discernment to see it.

Of course, this invisible Kingdom of God is not recognized by the secular world, because it has no political boundaries, or ruling government, or even a capital city. Well, at least not on the present Earth. At the same time, we likewise know that the Bible tells us that the Lord creates the New Heavens and the New Earth, and that the Heavenly City -- New Jerusalem --

descends from Heaven to set upon this New Earth. This becomes clear by verses such as the following ones:

"For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind."

Isaiah 65:17, KJV

"For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain."

Isaiah 66:22, KJV

"Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

2 Peter 3:13, KJV

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea . . . And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful."

Revelation 21:1, 5, KJV

"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

John 14:2-3, KJV

"But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all."

Galatians 4:26, KJV

"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God . . . These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they

might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city."

Hebrews 11:8-10, 13-16, KJV

"But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."

Hebrews 12:22-24, KJV

"Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come."

Hebrews 13:13-14, KJV

"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name."

Revelation 3:12, KJV

"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God . . . And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of

the Lamb. And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life. And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever. And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done . . . I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and

the last. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

Revelation 21:2-3, 9-27, 22:1-6, 13-14, KJV

So looking at it from the perspective of the Kingdom of God being within us the Believers, and us being representatives of that currently invisible Kingdom, we can say that in one regard, the words which Jesus prayed in the "Lord's Prayer" almost two thousand years ago have been fulfilled since the day that Jesus spoke them. Consider the following verses as evidence of this:

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

Matthew 6:10, KJV

But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you."

Matthew 12:28, KJV

"Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom."

Matthew 16:28, KJV

"And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power."

Mark 9:1, KJV

"But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God."

Luke 9:27, KJV

"Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you."

Luke 10:11, KJV

"But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you."

Luke 11:2, 17-20, KJV

"And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of

your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled."

Luke 21:29-32, KJV

Although I can make this part of the Gospel of Thomas quote fit my understanding, I must still express some doubt as to whether or not these words were really spoken by Jesus. For my part, I just do not feel comfortable with them at this current time. Concerning the phrase "When you come to know yourselves, then you will become known", here again, this whole idea of knowing ourselves bothers me. As all of the previous verses demonstrate, we are to know Jesus, and know His Word as well. Furthermore, we are to know that we are saved and have Eternal Life, and we are to be thankful that we are known of the Lord. After all, that is where hope and Salvation lie, and not within ourselves. I am reminded of the following verses:

"He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God . . . And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."

1 John 5:12-13, 20, KJV

"Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, THE LORD KNOWETH THEM THAT ARE HIS. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

2 Timothy 2:19, KJV

As far as "then you will become known" is concerned, I am not exactly sure what Thomas -- assuming that he even wrote this -- actually meant. The only verse that I can think of which might make some sense out of this is the following one:

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

John 13:35, KJV

Please notice, however, that the emphasis in Jesus' words is not on exalting ourselves. Rather, it's on exalting His Love. He is saying that people will know we are different because

they will see God's love shining through us. This is a topic I more amply discuss in articles such as "The Royal Law: Thou Shalt Love", as well as in "Selfishness: A Prophesied Sign of Our Times?". For now, consider the following group of verses:

"Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Matthew 22:36-40, KJV

"As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. 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. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

John 15:9-13, KJV

"Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

Romans 13:8-10, KJV

"Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth."

1 Corinthians 8:1, KJV

"But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way."

1 Corinthians 12:31, KJV

"And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing . . . And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."

1 Corinthians 13:2, 13, KJV

"For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this;
Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

Galatians 5:14, KJV

"If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou
shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:"

James 2:8, KJV

"And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves:
for charity shall cover the multitude of sins."

1 Peter 4:8, KJV

"He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."

1 John 4:8, KJV

"And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall
wax cold."

Matthew 24:12, KJV

In short, as Christians, we are supposed to exalt the Lord through our loving example; and that is where we all have room for lots of improvement. Our job is to act as God's reflectors of Love, Light and Truth, in order to draw people to Jesus Christ. We are only to serve as prisms which reflect the different aspects of God, just as a prism reflects the different colors of white light. Again, I delve into these subjects in articles such as "The Children of Light: Are You One of Us?" and "This Little Light, Glory of the Lord and Our Bright Future".

Please go to part three for the continuation of this series.

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THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS : INTROSPECTION, OR HEAVEN-SPECTION? PT 3

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Bring People To Jesus And Not To Us Or to Our Church, Jesus Is The One True Rock, Our Secular Humanist World, The Pride Of Life, A Sacrificial Life Of Humble Servitude To The Lord, We Must Die Daily To Bear Fruit For God's Kingdom, Old Man Versus New Man, Be Honest With Yourself And God Regarding Your Sinful Condition, King David's Example Of Humility And Obedience, To Whom Much Has Been Forgiven The Same Loves Much, Full Of Ourselves Or Full Of Christ, First Recognize The Problem, Our Wicked Human Heart, A New Heart In Christ, Apostle Paul's Struggles, Our Battle With Sin And Our Flesh, Submit Ourselves Daily To God's Will, The Battle Of The Mind

As I concluded in part two, through seeing the Love, Light and Truth which we reflect, people will hopefully be brought to Jesus, and thus be saved, and not merely be brought to us, or to our particular church or organization. We are not the source of that Love, Light and Truth. We are only the tools through which the Lord shines. If we are only bringing people to us, or to our particular faith or doctrine, then we have failed them. Unless they are firmly established in the Lord and in His Word, then they will also fall and fail in times of hardship and temptation. So it's very important that they stand on the one true Rock -- Christ -- and not just on any man-made foundation of organized religion. Consider the following group of verses:

"The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvellous in our eyes."

Psalms 118:22-23, KJV

"Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?"

Matthew 21:42, KJV

"And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner: This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?"

Mark 12:10-11, KJV

"This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner."

Acts 4:11, KJV

"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

1 Corinthians 3:11, KJV

"To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed [that is disapproved, rejected, repudiated] indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed."

1 Peter 2:4-8, KJV

In the school of the world, we are taught to be proud of our accomplishments. From the time we are young we are taught to have personal pride, national pride, pride at work, pride in sports, pride in education, etc. It is really the epitome of exaltation of self and the worship of human achievements. It is secular humanism. It is looking inward instead of upward. It is all glory to self and very little or no glory given to God. The Apostle John very pointedly exposed this misguided worldly manner of thinking in the following verses:

"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. 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."

1 John 2:15-16, KJV

Do you see that? The pride of life. And what does John say about this? He writes "is not of the father." That is the Devil's game in a nutshell. As we learned in part one, it was pride which brought about his downfall and it will most assuredly bring about our downfall as well, if we foolishly choose to yield to it.

However, contrary to the false ideas and values which the world tries to brainwash us with, the Bible clearly reveals that we are not to seek our own glory, our own credit, or to exalt ourselves in the eyes of men. We are not to lift up our church, our particular denomination, our doctrines, or anything else. We are only to preach Jesus. As the followers of Christ, God's Word instructs us to humble ourselves, to take the lower seat, to live sacrificial lives in service to the Lord and to others, and to seek no reputation of our own. Furthermore, we must all realize that without Christ in our lives, we can really do nothing of eternal value. All of these points become evident in the following set of verses:

"(Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.)"

Numbers 12:3, KJV

"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."

Proverbs 16:18, KJV

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

Matthew 11:29, KJV

"Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Matthew 18:4, KJV

"Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Matthew 20:28, KJV

"But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted."

Matthew 23:11-12, KJV

"And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all."

Mark 9:35, KJV

"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but

whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it."

Luke 9:23-24, KJV

"He [Jesus] must increase, but I [John the Baptist] must decrease."

John 3:30, KJV

"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 . . . Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."

John 15:5, 13-14, KJV

"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. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

Romans 12:1-2, KJV

"I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily."

1 Corinthians 15:31, KJV

"For WE PREACH NOT OURSELVES, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."

2 Corinthians 4:5, KJV

"But made himself OF NO REPUTATION, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:"

Philippians 2:7, KJV

"But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble . . . Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up."

James 4:6, 10, KJV

"Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:"

1 Peter 5:5-6, KJV

"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

1 John 3:16, KJV

So as you can plainly see, unless we are willing to die to ourselves, to die to our own wants and worldly interests in life, unless we are willing to present our bodies as living sacrifices to God, we may never know what God's will is for our lives, and we may never accomplish the purposes He has designed for us. Jesus compared this dying daily to a seed planted in the ground, which then later bears much fruit, as we see by the following two verses:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."

John 12:24-25, KJV

Each of us must make this important decision for ourselves. Either we selfishly live for ourselves and exalt ourselves, or else we become nothing and live for the Lord in daily sacrifice. There is no room for both. To reiterate, we are to lift up Jesus and not look to ourselves. We are to look up to Heaven and not in to ourselves. As I explain in the article entitled "What Really Happens to Us When We Die?", our old man of the flesh, and our old way of thinking and doing things is our enemy. It fights against God and His Will for our lives. As I amply explain in articles such as "Are You Crucified With Christ?" and "So You Really Think You Are So Humble?", it is for this reason that we must deny our old sinful man of the flesh and crucify it, as we see by the following set of verses:

"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."

Romans 6:6, KJV

"That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;"

Ephesians 4:22, KJV

"Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old

man with his deeds;"
Colossians 3:9, KJV

In contrast to the previous three verses, in this next set of verses, the Apostle Paul informs us that we must become new creatures, and we must put on the new man who we become through faith in Jesus Christ:

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

2 Corinthians 5:17, KJV

"And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

Ephesians 4:24, KJV

"And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:"

Colossians 3:10, KJV

As I point out in the aforementioned articles, there is a constant war going on between our new man of the Spirit, and our old man of the flesh. So in regards to what the Gospel of Thomas says about knowing ourselves, while we must know ourselves -- that is, be aware of our own human weaknesses and shortcomings -- we are not to dwell upon them. In short, as we discussed in part two of this series, the only thing we really need to know is that we are all hopeless sinners without Christ in our lives, and that we really have no righteousness of our own to boast about. Furthermore, it is only in knowing Jesus' Spirit which dwells within us that we acquire Eternal Life, as we see by the following two verses:

"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

John 17:3, KJV

"And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."

1 John 5:20, KJV

There is one final reason why we are told not to look inward to ourselves. As should already be clear to you, the simple fact of the matter is that there is nothing good there. If

you think that there is, then you are being deceived by your own pride and vanity, and you will be utterly useless to God in any real way. Let's be honest here. It is easy for us all to say, "Oh sure, I know that I am a sinner. I know that I need Jesus in my life. I realize that I am doomed without Him." However, how much of it is just lip service? How much do we really believe it in our hearts? Do we secretly say within ourselves "I'm not really that bad"? In his Epistle, the Apostle James writes the following:

"If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain."

James 1:26, KJV

The truth is that we can very easily quote Scriptures such as Romans 3:23 and Romans 6:23. But are we just applying them to others, or to ourselves as well? As we learned in part one, the Jewish religious elders were quite notorious for doing this. Their self-righteous, condescending attitude stunk to high Heaven, and Jesus thoroughly exposed them as a result of it. Remember again the story Jesus told regarding the Pharisee and the publican, which I shared with you in part two. Which one of those two are we?

From one end of the Bible to the other, we find Prophets and men of God, not boasting of how great they are, not boasting of what wonderful things they have done for the Lord, but beseeching the Lord for His love, mercy and forgiveness as a result of recognizing their own sinful state. King David is particularly known for his many supplications to the Lord in his Psalms. One Psalm which has been widely used as a good example of prayer by many Christians is Psalm 51. This is a Psalm which King David prayed after committing adultery and impregnating Bathsheba -- the wife of Uriah, who was a loyal general in his army -- and then intentionally murdering Uriah in order to cover up his sin. It states in part the following:

". . . Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in

iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."

Psalms 51:1b-10, KJV

I don't know about you, but I can really sense the anguish in King David's words. This was a genuine prayer from his heart. It was because of David's honesty with the Lord, and the fact that he acknowledged his sinful condition, that he was so special in the Lord's sight. It was likewise due to David's obedience, even before he became the next king. You may recall that when the Prophet Samuel was sent to King Saul to inform him that his kingdom would be given to David, Samuel said the following to stubborn Saul:

"But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee."

1 Samuel 13:14, KJV

In the thirteenth chapter of the Book of Acts, we discover that the Apostle Paul confirms this same thought regarding David when he preached in the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia. Consider this verse:

"And when he had removed him [Saul], he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will."

Acts 13:22, KJV

One reason why King David obviously loved the Lord so much, particularly after he had committed such grievous sins, is precisely because he found forgiveness in the Lord's sight, after the Prophet Nathan had revealed all to the king. In other words, as Jesus explains in the following Parable, to whom much has been forgiven, the same loves much:

"There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me

therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven."

Luke 7:41-48, KJV

As I mentioned earlier, it is when we are full of ourselves, full of our own pride, and full of our own self-righteousness that the Lord's Spirit does not have an opportunity to work in us or through us, as He would like to. As the Apostle Paul wrote to the brethren at Philippi:

"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

Philippians 2:13, KJV

But how can God really work when we are so full of ourselves? As long as we think we are good; as long as we think we can save ourselves or merit our own Salvation -- as the Scribes and the Pharisees obviously thought -- we will never be truly saved, and we will never be the humble vessels that God wants us to be. That was also Saul's mistake before he became the Apostle Paul. As you may recall, Saul self-righteously went around persecuting the early Christians until God smacked him down into the ground and woke him up. If you are not familiar with the story, please read Acts chapter nine.

As any doctor will tell you, the first part of finding a cure is to recognize and admit that there is something wrong with us. For some people, this can be the hardest step to take; either with an earthly doctor, or with our Heavenly Spiritual Doctor. You see, the Lord is an Expert Cardiologist. He knows exactly where the problem lies, as well as how serious it is. He also knows how to remove the diseased tissue. So exactly how bad is it? Well, I think the Bible can speak for itself regarding this matter. Consider the following set of verses:

"And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the

earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

Genesis 6:5, KJV

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

Jeremiah 17:9, KJV

"But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man."

Matthew 15:18-20, KJV

"And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man."

Mark 7:20-23, KJV

As you can see, our heart is so evil that we can't even begin to realize how wicked it is. Working in conjunction with our brain, it protects itself by feeding us all kinds of rot to keep us living in a state of delusion. It tells us how good we are, how great we are, that there is nothing wrong with us, etc. This is in direct contrast to what is made so clear in the previous set of verses, as well as in the verses I shared with you in part two regarding our sinful condition.

This is why our Heart Specialist -- Jesus -- needs to perform an operation of the Spirit. Modern medicine prides itself in being able to perform heart transplants. However, do you know what? While modern medicine may be able to temporarily repair what is wrong with our physical hearts, it can never get to the root of the real problem which plagues all of humanity, because it is spiritual in nature. The real cure -- that is, the Eternal Cure -- isn't in replacing our heart with another healthy human heart, or even with an artificial heart, but rather in replacing our wicked, unregenerate heart with one of the Lord's own making through spiritual rebirth, as we see by the following verses:

"And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit

within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God."
Ezekiel 11:19-20, KJV

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."
Ezekiel 36:26-27, KJV

While the previous four verses were specifically written in regards to the backslidden Jews who had been taken captive to Babylon for a period of seventy years, in a more general sense, we can apply them to our own lives as Christians as well. This is in perfect agreement with what we discussed earlier regarding being reborn in the Spirit, the old man versus the new man, and becoming new creatures in Christ.

The Apostle Paul was no stranger to these matters of sin and the battles of the flesh. If you read my article entitled "A Biblical Cafeteria, or the Whole Course?", you will discover that Paul knew exactly what the score was between himself and the Lord. Even after the Lord had smacked him down hard and turned him into a new creature, Paul still wrestled for the rest of his days against his old flesh and his besetting sins, as we can determine by the following verses:

"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Romans 7:18-19, 24, KJV

Just like the Apostle Paul, we too must make a conscious effort on a daily basis to keep ourselves in submission to the Lord and His Divine Will for our lives. We must bring all of our thoughts into subjection, and run the race that is set before us. Paul expressed these thoughts quite well with the following set of verses:

"I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and

bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

1 Corinthians 9:26-27, KJV

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

Romans 8:7, KJV

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;"

2 Corinthians 10:3-5, KJV

Why does the Apostle Paul place so much emphasis on the mind?

Because as I explain in a number of other articles, that is where the real battle is fought. That is where Satan tempts us to sin. He attempts to weaken us in our minds first, and tries to cause us to faint in our minds, so that what start out as just thoughts, soon turn into actual sins which we carry out. He also attacks us in our minds with doubts, with thoughts of futility, and with discouragement, so that we'll take our eyes off of the Lord, and perhaps even stop serving the Lord altogether. That is why Paul admonishes Believers to "gird up the loins of your mind." This profound truth is made evident by verses such as the following:

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

Romans 8:6, KJV

"For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ."

1 Corinthians 2:16, KJV

"In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

2 Corinthians 4:4, KJV

"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

2 Corinthians 11:3, KJV

"And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;"
Ephesians 4:23, KJV

"And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled"
Colossians 1:21, KJV

"For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."
Hebrews 12:3, KJV

"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;"
1 Peter 1:13, KJV

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:"
1 Peter 5:8, KJV

So you see, that is why Paul wrote that we must be renewed in our minds in Romans chapter twelve. We can say then that we need both new hearts and new minds if we expect to win the battle and run with patience the race that is set before us.

Please go to part four for the conclusion of this series.

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THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS : INTROSPECTION, OR HEAVEN-SPECTION? PT 4

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Beware Of New Age Doctrines And Meditation, Look Upward To Jesus And Not Inward To Ourselves, To Be Carnally Minded Is

Death, Wages Of Sin And Unbelief Is Death, Jesus Is The Light Of The World, Beware Of Materialism, Heavenly Rewards, Seek First The Kingdom Of God, God Will Provide, Be Content With What You Have, Don't Dwell On Your Sins Or Look At Yourself, Publish The Glad Tidings, Beware Of Falling Under Depression, Seek Forgiveness For Your Sins, God Desires Our Healing And Repentance, Devil Is A Liar And Accuser Of The Saints, Give Your Burdens To The Lord, Run The Race With Patience, We Are New Creatures In Jesus Christ, Lifelong Battle Against Our Personal Sins, Strangeness Of Gospel Of Thomas, Simplicity Of The True Gospel, Confusing New Age Psychobabble, Be Careful Reading Apocryphal And Pseudepigraphal Writings, Eschew Evil And Choose The Good, Closing Remarks, Suggested Reading List

Considering the preponderance of Scriptures I have shared with you in this series, it should be clearly recognized that no good thing dwells within us, no matter what anyone says; which is why we must be regenerated in both our minds and hearts. That being the case, why do so many false religions and New Age doctrines teach that we should look inward for the answers? The answer is quite simple. As long as we are carnally minded; as long as we dwell on the things of the flesh; as long as we think the answers can be found within ourselves or in the temporal things which this world has to offer; we will never lift up our eyes to Jesus and see that He is the only real answer.

If we really stop to think about it, that is what oriental meditation is all about. It is not about lifting our hearts up to Jesus. It is about getting lost in ourselves, and in the darkness of our own minds. It is a false spirituality which may even lead to demonic oppression or possession if we are not careful. Meditation may offer some people a kind of temporary state of bliss and peace of mind, but it isn't true Salvation by any means. Thus, all of that chanting and meditating is really quite meaningless in the end. It is all death disguised as New Age enlightenment. In fact, it is not even the real Light. It is the exact opposite. Consider this verse:

"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"

Isaiah 5:20, KJV

In case you have forgotten, the Apostle Paul clearly warns us that "to be carnally minded is death." Paul likewise tells us that "the wages of sin is death." Furthermore, as Jesus told the unbelieving Jews in the Gospels, if we don't embrace Him -- the one true Light of the world -- then we will walk in darkness, and we will die in our sins. Please consider these verses:

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

Romans 8:6, KJV

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Romans 6:23, KJV

"Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come. Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come. And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."

John 8:21-24, KJV

"In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

John 1:4-9, KJV

"Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

John 8:12, KJV

"As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

John 9:5, KJV

"Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not

whither he goeth . . . I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness."

John 12:35, 46, KJV

So my friends, don't think on the things of the world and the things of the flesh. Beware of becoming trapped in the imagination of the wicked thoughts of your own heart. Watch out for the sins and darkness which invade your own mind. Be very careful that you don't become deceived by so-called New Age enlightenment. Instead, look up to Jesus, who is the one true Light of the world, and the Author and the Finisher of your faith, and live! As the Apostle Paul admonishes us, "be spiritually minded" and put on "the mind of Christ". Do not become deceived by the Father of Lies who poses as an angel of light.

Returning to the quote from the Gospel of Thomas regarding dwelling in poverty because of not knowing ourselves, I must confess that it is a rather strange saying. I am not exactly sure what the phrase means. My sense is that it may possibly be a reference to spiritual poverty. In either case, whether the phrase is referring to spiritual or physical poverty, it still seems like a contradiction to things which were taught by the Lord and the Apostles in the New Testament.

As you may know, both Jesus and the Apostles warned against becoming ensnared by worldly, material wealth. Remember; the Apostle John wrote "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." In both the Gospels, as well as in the Epistles, they emphasized the importance of acquiring the true riches of the Kingdom through knowing the Word and faithfully serving the Lord. In other words, it is through investing our lives in preaching the Gospel to others that we acquire the true Heavenly Rewards; and those are the only ones which will last. Consider the following set of verses which describe the temporary nature of worldly wealth:

"And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."

Job 1:21, KJV

"As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand."

Ecclesiastes 5:15, KJV

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also . . . No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

Matthew 6:19-21, 24, KJV

"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Mark 8:36-37, KJV

"Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed."

John 6:27, KJV

"Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."

Colossians 3:2, KJV

"But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content."

1 Timothy 6:6-8, KJV

As far as our physical needs are concerned, both Jesus and the Apostles taught that if we seek first God's Kingdom, He will faithfully provide all of our needs. I for one can testify to this fact. For the record, in all the years that I have been serving the Lord, God has never once failed to provide for me in some way. He keeps His promises. Consider the following verses:

"Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Matthew 6:31-33, KJV

"Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear:"

Isaiah 59:1, KJV

"Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart . . . I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

Psalms 37:4, 25, KJV

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

Malachi 3:10, KJV

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened . . . If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"

Matthew 7:7-8, 11, KJV

"And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."

Matthew 21:22, KJV

"Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows."

Luke 12:6-7, KJV

"And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment. Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls? And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought

for the rest? Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Luke 12:22-31, KJV

"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

Romans 8:32, KJV

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

Ephesians 3:20-21, KJV

"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

Philippians 4:19, KJV

"And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."

1 John 5:14-15, KJV

As I have mentioned before, God may not necessarily give you everything that you want, but He will provide you with everything that you truly need in order to get the job done. But whatever the Lord chooses to provide for you, make sure that you remain content, and that you have a thankful heart. Consider these two verses:

"Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."

Philippians 4:11, KJV

"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I

will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

Hebrews 13:5, KJV

Before bringing this series to its conclusion, allow me to remind you again that introspection is not the way to go. To be successful for the Lord, we need to engage in what I like to refer to as "Heaven-spection". That is, keeping our eyes on Jesus, and on our Heavenly Goal, and not on ourselves. As I pointed out earlier, all we need to know about ourselves is that we are sinners, and that we need a Savior. We must be honest with ourselves and recognize our shortcomings and our sins, but we should not continually dwell on them. Yes, we could sit around all day complaining about how bad we are and what a mess we are, but that is not going to do anyone one bit of good. All that does is keep us from doing what God really wants us to do, which is to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom.

Believe me; I have a lot of experience in this area. As no doubt occurs with you as well, Satan just loves to try to discourage me by pointing out all of my mistakes in life. He will tell me what a failure I am, or what a hypocrite I am. He will say all kinds of nasty things in order to make me feel unworthy of this calling, so that I will faint in my mind, give up, and surrender. Maybe some of them are true. Believe me, I have my share of problems and besetting sins just like everyone else. However, I don't think anyone wants to hear about them, and that is not what we are supposed to do anyway. We are commanded to publish the good tidings of Salvation, and not the bad tidings, as we see by this set of verses:

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!"

Isaiah 52:7, KJV

"How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things."

Romans 10:14-15, KJV

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever

things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

Philippians 4:8, KJV

As we have already seen, the Devil's primary objective is to get us to take our eyes off of Jesus; because the minute he convinces us to do that, we are sunk. We will sink down into the discouraging mire of self, and sin and the old man. Each time I have foolishly invited the Devil to pull up a chair and tell me how bad I am, and how I failed at this point in my life, or at that point in my life, or how I failed this person or that person, I have sunk so low into myself, and into the morass of my own sins, that I have barely gotten anything accomplished for the Lord.

You see, that is exactly what that vile fiend wants! He will make me feel like such a hypocrite that I will stop writing. Sometimes, if it hits me hard enough, I won't write for a few days, or longer, until I manage to pull out of the spiritual slump I am in. Remember that when you feel that way, it is not of God. While it is true that the Lord wants us to be aware of our sins, and to feel remorse for our sins, at the same time, He also wants us to ask for forgiveness, to know that we have been forgiven, thanks to the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and then to move on. We simply cannot remain stuck in that spiritual rut. We need to keep on pressing in to the Kingdom.

As we learned in part two, God promises in His Word to blot out our sins. He will not hold them against us forever; as otherwise, we would never have any hope. In fact, in the case of Israel, He said that He would remember their sins no more. Consider the following group of verses:

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Isaiah 1:18, KJV

"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man

his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

Hebrews 8:10-12, KJV

"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

Hebrews 10:16-17, KJV

"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."

1 Peter 2:24, KJV

"And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world."

John 12:47, KJV

"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

1 Timothy 2:3-4, KJV

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

2 Peter 3:9, KJV

So as you can see, contrary to what some people may believe, God actually desires healing and repentance. He in fact wants to forgive us, and to save us, if we will just approach His Throne with humility and ask Him for it. It is only the Devil who tells us that we are too bad for Jesus, and that we can't be forgiven. After all, he is a liar and the father of lies. Furthermore, as the Book of Revelation informs us, Satan is the accuser of the Saints and the Prosecuting Attorney who charges that we are guilty until proven innocent. Consider these two verses:

". . . He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the

father of it."

John 8:44, KJV

"And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night."

Revelation 12:10, KJV

So as I mentioned a moment ago, the simple equation to follow is this: Accept and recognize our sins; ask the Father for forgiveness; believe we have been forgiven; and then press on to better things leaving the dead weight of sin behind. Just forget about all of that torturous introspection, and engage instead in Heaven-spection. Look up to Jesus. In fact, don't just look up to Jesus; cast off your burdens and the weight of sin and let Him bear them for you, exactly as we are told to do in the following verses:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Matthew 11:28-30, KJV

". . . let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, 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."

Hebrews 12:1-2, KJV

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Philippians 3:13-14, KJV

It should be evident to you by now that we should not try to work out our own Salvation in the flesh through introspection or self-analysis, because it will come to no avail. Doing so will only drag us down and discourage us, to the point where we become ineffective for the Lord. As we have learned from previous paragraphs, the only real way to overcome our weak,

sinful nature is by a miraculous rebirth through faith in Jesus Christ. Once His Holy Spirit dwells in us, similar to the Apostle Paul, we become new creatures who strive to live according to the Spirit.

However, let me caution you that this does not mean that we suddenly acquire some kind of permanent victory over our sins for life. Of course not. As we saw in Romans chapter seven with the Apostle Paul, the same weaknesses and temptations are still there; but we now have the power of God's Spirit to help us to resist them. And trust me; just like the Apostle Paul, we will have to continue to fight against those same sins for the remainder of our mortal lives, because we are still in our sinful bodies of flesh. Furthermore, even when we do fall, we know that God is always willing to forgive us if we ask Him to.

Let me conclude this series by saying that the spirit that is conveyed in the aforementioned quote taken from the Gospel of Thomas just does not seem right to me. It comes across to me as being rather strange. The overall tone of the Gospel of Thomas is just very different. Aside from being too cryptic, mystic and cabalistic in nature, it seems somewhat contrary to the Spirit of Truth I find in the canonical Gospels. Now, while it's true that Jesus did speak in Parables quite often, He normally explained Himself later to His closest followers. In other words, He preached a simple Gospel to simple men. I am reminded of a verse I shared with you in part three which says the following:

"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from THE SIMPLICITY THAT IS IN CHRIST."

2 Corinthians 11:3, KJV

The previous quote from the Gospel of Thomas does not seem to follow that same pattern of simplicity. It seems more similar to some of the New Age psychobabble that we find all over the Internet these days. I honestly don't know who those people are trying to reach with all of that deceptive garbage. It is just so despiritualized, so secular, so humanistic, and so full of the philosophies of men that it sickens me. It is all a bunch of hot air and an empty wind void of real spiritual truth. I am also reminded of the following verse that was likewise written by the Apostle Paul:

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain

deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."

Colossians 2:8, KJV

It seems that the people who write that New Age nonsense are only interested in promoting themselves and their own carnal wisdom. When I read Jesus' words in the King James Version of the Bible, I don't have to struggle with it. It is easily understood. The quotes from the Gospel Of Thomas -- as well as this New Age nonsense -- is not. Even after reading it a few times, I still had a hard time trying to make some sense out of it. This is not the Gospel of Jesus Christ that I am familiar with. It is something foreign to the true Spirit of Christ.

Now, I have considered the possibility that maybe I struggle with the Gospel of Thomas because I am more used to reading Elizabethan English in the King James Version of the Bible. However, I am not convinced of this. It goes beyond that. I should also add that while this series centers on the quote that was shared with me via an email message years ago, the truth of the matter is that the entire Gospel of Thomas is marked by this same level of strangeness and difficulty in understanding. While there are some sayings which do sound very close -- and in some cases, even identical -- to what we find in the four Gospels, there are also other sayings which just don't seem to make much sense at all. It is as if someone took some of Jesus' teachings, and then added a lot of their own as well.

Having said all of the above, my overall counsel regarding the Gospel of Thomas is this: I strongly advise caution in accepting it as the bona fide words of Jesus Christ. As I have made sufficiently clear, the spirit of this apocryphal writing is significantly different from what we find in the canonical Gospels. Furthermore, some of its themes likewise appear to contradict what we find in the accepted Gospels. There are many other problems and questions regarding the Gospel of Thomas. If you have the time, and are interested in reading a more scholarly analysis of the book, I suggest that you research it on Wikipedia at the following URL:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas

On a final note, I advise anyone who has an interest in reading the apocryphal and pseudepigraphal writings, to be extremely prayerful, and to be sensitive to God's Spirit.

Above all, I also suggest that you become totally familiar with God's Spirit, as it is revealed to us in the accepted Scriptures -- that is, in the Canon -- before you choose to delve into these questionable works. If you don't do this, you may open yourself up to satanic deception. Please don't forget that some of those books were purposely written for the purpose of confusing and deceiving sincere Christian Believers, and to contradict the real Word of God. In short, as the Apostle Peter writes, choose the good and eschew the evil, as we see by the following verse:

"Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it."

1 Peter 3:11, KJV

With this word of advice, I will bring this series to a close. I trust that you have found it informative, and I hope that it has been a blessing in your life. If you have enjoyed reading it, I ask you to please consider sharing its URL with your online friends. If you have an account with Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr or with any other social network, I would also appreciate if you would take the time to click or tap on the corresponding link which is found on this page. Thank you so much, and may God bless you abundantly!

For additional information, you may want to refer to the list of resources below which were either mentioned in this series, or which contain topics which are related to this series. All of these articles are likewise located on the Bill's Bible Basics web server:

2012: New Age Deception And Psychobabble

A Biblical Cafeteria, or the Whole Course?

A Treasure in Earthen Vessels: God's Promise of the Spirit

Are You Crucified With Christ?

Are You Saved and Sealed, and Healed and Filled?

Going Down the Highway of Life

One From Beyond: Hebrew of Hebrews

Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God

Selfishness: A Prophesied Sign of Our Times?

So You Really Think You Are So Humble?

Striving for Perfection: Are You a Sinless Saint?

The Book of Enoch: Truth or Heresy?

The Children of Light: Are You One of Us?

The Heavenly Vision: Have You Got It?

The Only Credentials You Need!

The Royal Law: Thou Shalt Love

The Wisdom of God vs the Philosophy of Men
This Little Light, Glory of the Lord and Our Bright Future
What Really Happens to Us When We Die?

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