

THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD

What happened in the Garden of Eden was not an unpleasant surprise for the Lord our God because He had anticipated that man would fall. He had already set a plan before He created the heaven and the earth, with carefully mapped out events and the time frame in which He will restore man to Himself. All true servants of the Lord have only preached one message, that of repentance and obedience to the laws and commandments of God. But it is not limited to these. Having faith, which empowers our belief, is also an essential component which opens the door to the kingdom of God. As it has been said: “without faith it is impossible to please God”.

From the moment the Lord our God called for light during the six-day restoration of the earth, before He even created man on earth, the countdown for this age began. The last day will be at the sounding of the last trumpet, when the Saints of the Lord will be resurrected to meet with the Lord in the clouds. Now, there has been a substantial amount of time between these two days, full of events that were prophesied in the Old Testament by the servants of the Lord, the prophets. These prophecies will be fulfilled before the last day of this age and beyond. A great number of us are ignorant of what God has prophesied He will do through the ages. One such event which is of paramount importance to us today is the period of time called the acceptable year of the Lord. The vast majority of professing believers have no understanding of what it entails even though they have all come across it in the Holy Scriptures.

God the Father has set before the Lord Jesus Christ, our Messiah and saviour, certain duties that He must fulfill in a given time frame. These duties will be carried out by the Lord with or without our participation at the appointed time. It must be stressed that the time frame God the Father has set does not depend on what is happening on earth, regardless of what some might be led to believe.

There is a prophecy in the book of the prophet Isaiah which outlines some of the duties God the Father has given the Lord Jesus Christ to fulfil in person when He is on earth:

Isaiah 61:1-3 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹*“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound; ²To proclaim the acceptable*

THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD

year of the LORD, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn, ³To console those who mourn in Zion, To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; That they may be called trees of righteousness, The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.”

These events have been given to us in chronological order, but how important is this to us? We now understand that the Lord Jesus Christ came to save sinners from their sins but does it mean that all those who were alive before the coming of the Lord, the great men and women of God in the Old Testament, will not be saved? Is there a difference between the people of God of the Old Testament and those of the New Testament? God is the judge and He will judge justly, our concern is for those alive today.

There were many other precepts addressing what God requires of His people before the first coming of Lord Jesus Christ which are irrevocable even after the works of the Lord Jesus Christ.. Consider this precept from the book of the prophet Ezekiel:

Ezekiel 18:4-9 New King James Version (NKJV)

⁴“Behold, all souls are Mine; The soul of the father As well as the soul of the son is Mine; The soul who sins shall die. ⁵But if a man is just And does what is lawful and right; ⁶If he has not eaten on the mountains, Nor lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, Nor defiled his neighbour’s wife, Nor approached a woman during her impurity; ⁷If he has not oppressed anyone, But has restored to the debtor his pledge; Has robbed no one by violence, But has given his bread to the hungry And covered the naked with clothing; ⁸If he has not exacted usury Nor taken any increase, But has withdrawn his hand from iniquity And executed true judgment between man and man; ⁹If he has walked in My statutes And kept My judgments faithfully— He is just; He shall surely live!” Says the Lord God.

It is imperative we understand that all souls belong to God - as He was the one who made them. We also have to be aware of the fact that God has already set the standards by which every one of us will be judged according to what we do during our lives. The above passage of Scripture and the whole of that chapter of the book of Ezekiel outline some of the criteria that form the basis of being justified before God. We have to depart from our iniquities, execute true judgement and walk in the statutes and judgement of God faithfully. That is

THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD

the only path that will render us just before God in accordance with the word of God. Moreover, the Lord has said:

Ezekiel 18:25-32 New King James Version (NKJV)

²⁵ "Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not fair.' Hear now, O house of Israel, is it not My way which is fair, and your ways which are not fair? ²⁶ When a righteous man turns away from his righteousness, commits iniquity, and dies in it, it is because of the iniquity which he has done that he dies. ²⁷ Again, when a wicked man turns away from the wickedness which he committed, and does what is lawful and right, he preserves himself alive. ²⁸ Because he considers and turns away from all the transgressions which he committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die. ²⁹ Yet the house of Israel says, 'The way of the Lord is not fair.' O house of Israel, is it not My ways which are fair, and your ways which are not fair?

³⁰ "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways," says the Lord God. "Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin. ³¹ Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? ³² For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies," says the Lord God. "Therefore turn and live!"

God has no pleasure in the death of anyone because He is the God of the living. God wants everyone to live, but as we all know the wages of sin is death. In other words: it is our transgression of the laws and commandments of God that will lead us to death. Yes, we all have an appointment to keep with death but at the appointed time, if we are rendered just in the sight of God, death will have no hold on us and we will be resurrected back into everlasting life. This is a promise God has made to all those who believe and keep His statutes. There are some alive today who will not taste death but pass into everlasting life as we are the last generation of this age. There is also an invitation for all to buy life, which requires no money and there is no price attached to it:

Isaiah 55:1-7 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹ "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk Without money and without price. ² Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And let your soul delight itself in abundance. ³ Incline

THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD

your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you— The sure mercies of David. ⁴ Indeed I have given him as a witness to the people, A leader and commander for the people. ⁵ Surely you shall call a nation you do not know, And nations who do not know you shall run to you, Because of the LORD your God, And the Holy One of Israel; For He has glorified you.” ⁶ Seek the LORD while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near. ⁷ Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the LORD, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.

Is this not what the majority of us who go to these churches and give everything we have in the hope – that we will enter into life? The offer of life is for a limited time only while the Lord can be found. All we have to do is turn from our evil ways and heed the Lord’s instructions and He will abundantly pardon our iniquities. As mentioned earlier, it is only for a limited time. This period of time when the Lord can be found is what has been prophesised as the acceptable year of the Lord. This is what the Lord has said He will do:

Proverbs 1:20-33 New King James Version (NKJV)

²⁰ Wisdom calls aloud outside; She raises her voice in the open squares. ²¹ She cries out in the chief concourses, At the openings of the gates in the city She speaks her words: ²² “How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity? For scorers delight in their scorning, And fools hate knowledge. ²³ Turn at my rebuke; Surely I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you. ²⁴ Because I have called and you refused, I have stretched out my hand and no one regarded, ²⁵ Because you despised all my counsel, And would have none of my rebuke, ²⁶ I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your terror comes, ²⁷ When your terror comes like a storm, And your destruction comes like a whirlwind, When distress and anguish come upon you. ²⁸ “Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; They will seek me diligently, but they will not find me. ²⁹ Because they hated knowledge And did not choose the fear of the LORD, ³⁰ They would have none of my counsel And despised my every rebuke. ³¹ Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way, And be filled to the full with their own fancies. ³² For the turning away of the simple will slay them, And the complacency of fools will destroy them; ³³ But whoever listens to me will dwell safely, And will be secure, without fear of evil.”

THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD

We have been advised not to be in a sinister position at the end of the age when the Lord will close His door to all those who did not turn at His rebuke and disdained all his counsel; despite the fact that his counsel has now been completely open to us as knowledge has increased a thousand-fold:

Daniel 12:4 New King James Version (NKJV)

⁴“But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.”

We do not realise just how privileged we are because we have been given understanding of the truth. The prophets of the Old Testament, including the apostles of the Lord, wanted understanding of what they were given to write for us, but it was not opened to them. Now every scripture has been opened to our understanding but the truth is eluding us because we have put our trust in teachers who are not from God and who don't have the Spirit of Truth.

THE CUT-OFF POINT

There is a particular point in time when there was a transition between the Old Testament and the New Testament and that point came at the arrival of John the Baptist. John the Baptist marked the end of the Old Testament since he was the one who announced the arrival of the Messiah the King. The Lord Jesus Christ validated the ministry of John and this transition point when He said:

Matthew 11:8-10 New King James Version (NKJV)

⁸But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. ⁹But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰For this is he of whom it is written:

'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.'

This was in fulfilment of a prophecy that was given to the prophet Malachi:

THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD

Malachi 3:1 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹“Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,” Says the LORD of hosts.

As we now know, the Lord did suddenly appear in His temple but the majority of those around at the time did not believe, especially those who professed to understand the word of God and were teachers. Moreover, the Lord said something interesting which we need to notice and seriously consider what it means:

Matthew 11:10-15 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹¹ “Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. ¹² And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. ¹³ For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. ¹⁴ And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come. ¹⁵ He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

John the Baptist is the greatest person ever to be born into this world, but whoever is called least in the kingdom of Heaven is greater than he. So, what does this mean to us today? What is the meaning of all the prophets and the law prophesied up until John?

In His first coming, the Lord Jesus Christ gave us the truth about the requirements for eternal life and fulfilled what was written of Him by the prophets. He also declared what is known as the acceptable year of the Lord as prescribed by God: a time in which we have all been given the chance to change from our wicked ways and start walking in righteousness as prescribed by God. Consider this passage of Scripture:

Luke 4:18-19 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹⁸ “The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; ¹⁹ To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.”

God had predetermined, before He created the earth, that the Lord Jesus Christ should fulfil these duties in His first coming. These duties include the opening of blind eyes, both spiritually and physically, to set at liberty those who are oppressed by the gods of this

THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD

present age, to heal the broken hearted, to preach the gospel to the poor and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. The apostle Paul was inspired to expound on this truth when he said:

Acts 17:22-31 New King James Version (NKJV)

²² Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; ²³ for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription:

TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.

Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: ²⁴ God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. ²⁵ Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. ²⁶ And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, ²⁷ so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; ²⁸ for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.' ²⁹ Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising.

³⁰ Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,

³¹ because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."

We currently live in a period of time in which every single soul has been given the opportunity to repent and walk according to the laws and commandments of God. God commands all men everywhere to repent because at the end there is going to be judgement. The Lord Jesus Christ, who was slain for the sins of all men, will be the judge. The Lord Jesus Christ paid in full the penalty for all our sins. It is up to us - we have the choice to accept the free gift of His life, which we can only receive through repentance. We

THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD

are at the end of the period of time predestined as the acceptable year of the Lord. What follows is the period of time preordained to be the Day of the Lord.

The acceptable year of the Lord marks an end of the period of time in which God spoke of His plan for us through His servants the prophets. This is what the Lord Jesus Christ meant when He said that the law and the prophets were until John. There is a distinction between the end of the ministry of John and the beginning of the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Before John the Baptist, God spoke through His servants of His plan and what He requires of His people. From the beginning of the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, God the Father started revealing the truth through His Son and the apostles. It was from that period of time when God the Father started fulfilling what He has said through His servants, the prophets, in the Old Testament.

THE BEGINNING OF THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD

The Lord Jesus Christ began His ministry by fulfilling a passage of Scripture from the book of the prophet Isaiah, which included some of the duties God the Father had set before Him. Ironically, He stopped at a peculiar point:

Luke 4:18-19 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹⁸ "The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; ¹⁹ To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD."

Stopping at this point of the prophecy means that there is a cut-off point between the period of time called the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God - if we consider the entirety of the prophecy in the book of Isaiah chapters sixty one, verses one and two. But what is the acceptable year of the Lord?

THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD

THE FOUNDATION

The acceptable year of the Lord is an extensive period of time which has an expected end, by which time all men everywhere are expected and advised to repent and to come to the knowledge of the truth. This is the foundation which began on that day when the Lord fulfilled this prophecy from the book of the prophet Isaiah:

Isaiah 61:1-3 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹*"The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound; ²To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn, ³To console those who mourn in Zion, To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; That they may be called trees of righteousness, The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified."*

We are all held captive by the god of this age: Satan the devil. The Lord Jesus Christ came and opened the door of the prison to set free all those who will heed His words and then take the necessary actions He has prescribed. This was made possible when Satan could not entice the Lord to break any of the laws and commandments of God:

Luke 4:3-13 New King James Version (NKJV)

³*And the devil said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread."*

⁴*But Jesus answered him, saying, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.'"*

⁵*Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. ⁶And the devil said to Him, "All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. ⁷Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours."*

⁸*And Jesus answered and said to him, "Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'"*

THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD

⁹ Then he brought Him to Jerusalem, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here. ¹⁰ For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you,' ¹¹ and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.' "

¹² And Jesus answered and said to him, "It has been said, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God.' " ¹³ Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time.

This passage of Scripture is the understanding of this parable:

Luke 11:20-23 New King James Version (NKJV)

²⁰ But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²¹ When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace. ²² But when a stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him all his armour in which he trusted, and divides his spoils. ²³ He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters.

The Lord is the stronger man who has come upon the god of this world and spoiled his house - setting free those who choose to heed His words. This leads to another passage of Scripture which expounds on the prophecy from the book of the prophet Isaiah mentioned earlier in this study:

John 8:30-38 New King James Version (NKJV)

³⁰ As He spoke these words, many believed in Him. ³¹ Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. ³² And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

³³ They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can You say, 'You will be made free'?"

³⁴ Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. ³⁵ And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. ³⁶ Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD

³⁷ "I know that you are Abraham's descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. ³⁸ I speak what I have seen with My Father, and you do what you have seen with your father."

Disobedience to the laws and commandments of God is the component that keeps us bound in the prison of the god of this world, Satan. Liberty from this captivity only comes after justification and sanctification. Sin leads to death and if we do not change from our sinful ways and start living a life of obedience to God the Father, we will surely die. For this reason the Lord Jesus Christ said to us:

Luke 13:1-5 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ²And Jesus answered and said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? ³I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. ⁴Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? ⁵I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."

To emphasise the importance of repentance, the Lord said:

Matthew 7:21-29 New King James Version (NKJV)

²¹ "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. ²² Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' ²³ And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

²⁴ "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: ²⁵ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

²⁶ "But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: ²⁷ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."

THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD

²⁸ And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, ²⁹ for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

We have to become doers of the word of God - that which has been given to us throughout the entirety of the Holy Scriptures. We cannot be selective of any part because this will lead to error. We must become doers of the word of God in truth and that truth comes from the Spirit of God which God the Father gives to those who have chosen to obey Him.

THE FUNDAMENTAL REQUIREMENT

The Lord Jesus Christ came full of the truth and the Spirit of God. The most important truth He gave us is:

John 4:22-26 New King James Version (NKJV)

²² You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. ²³ But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. ²⁴ God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

²⁵ The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When He comes, He will tell us all things." ²⁶ Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He."

God the Father is a Spirit and He seeks those who must worship Him in spirit and in truth. This is the fundamental requirement of all those who seek to worship God the Father. Nothing short of worshipping in spirit and truth is acceptable in the sight of God the Father. The laws and commandments of God have been magnified by the Lord Jesus Christ to become a spiritual entity and they are now more binding and must be obeyed. Without the Spirit of God, no one can keep the laws and commandments of God. Furthermore, without the Spirit of God no one can be Christ. The apostle Paul was inspired to inform us that:

Romans 8:5-11 New King James Version (NKJV)

⁵ For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. ⁷ Because the carnal

THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD

mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.⁸ So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹ But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.¹⁰ And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.¹¹ But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

The carnal mind is enmity against God and cannot be subject to His laws and commandments. God is a Spirit and He has made available His Spirit to all those who seek to worship Him. We must follow the prescribed procedures to acquire the Spirit of God which will empower us to be able to keep His laws and commandments. Without the Spirit of God dwelling in us we are not one of His.

Moreover, without the Spirit of God, no one can come to the understanding of the truth. This is because it is the Spirit of God that opens our understanding to what God has said - the truth. The Lord prayed to God the Father asking Him to sanctify His servants:

John 17:17 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹⁷ Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

Earlier, the Lord had explained to us the purpose of the Spirit of God:

John 16:12-15 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹² "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now."¹³ However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.¹⁴ He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.¹⁵ All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.

All things that God the Father has also belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. This includes His laws and commandments. It is the Spirit of Christ that will lead all those who believe into all truth, hence the importance of the Spirit - which gives us wisdom, understanding and knowledge. Hence there is a difference between a believer of the Old Testament before

THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD

John the Baptist and a believer after the Lord Jesus Christ. God the Father seeks those who must worship Him in spirit and truth and He has made His Spirit available to empower and guide all those who seek to worship Him in spirit and truth.

However, there is no alternative because of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. If we do not seek to acquire the Spirit of God - we can never be part of the kingdom of God. The Lord Jesus Christ was sacrificed for the sins of the whole world. If we do not repent from transgressing the laws and commandments of God, it implies that we do not believe in what Christ the Lord has done. Where there is a belief, it should also be followed by action, which underpins the belief. We have all fallen short of the glory of God as, at one point, we have transgressed the laws and commandments of God. But if we repent and set our hearts to obey the laws and commandments of God, God the Father will give us His Spirit which will empower us to keep His laws and commandments. This is the fundamental requirement of the acceptable year of the Lord.

THE UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY

The unique opportunity opened to those who came into the world during the acceptable year is the opportunity to become the Son of God. This window of opportunity was not opened to the generation before the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord made a statement of profound importance, which the majority of scholars have missed, when He said:

Matthew 11:7-15 New King James Version (NKJV)

⁷As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?"⁸ But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses.⁹ But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet.¹⁰ For this is he of whom it is written:

'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.'

¹¹"Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."¹² And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the

THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD

violent take it by force. ¹³ For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. ¹⁴ And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come. ¹⁵ He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

The Lord Jesus Christ said that John the Baptist was the greatest man ever to be born of a woman. This list includes the likes of Moses (who spoke face to face with the Lord), Isaiah, Jeremiah, Abraham the friend of God, Daniel the beloved of God, Elijah, Solomon, David and many more of the great men and women of the Old Testament. If someone from any of the generations after the Lord Jesus Christ - who is called least in the kingdom of God - is greater than the man who the Lord Jesus Christ said was the greatest man ever to be born of a woman, implies that there is an exceptional importance given to those who will qualify for the kingdom of God during the period of time called the acceptable year of the Lord.

All these great men and all those who qualify from the period of time before Christ up to John will be resurrected at the appointed time:

Daniel 12:9-13 New King James Version (NKJV)

⁹ And he said, "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. ¹⁰ Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand. ¹¹ "And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days. ¹² Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days.

¹³ "But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days."

At the end of days: Daniel, like all the other from the Old Testament, will arise to their inheritance. Job was inspired to say:

Job 14:13-17 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹³ "Oh, that You would hide me in the grave, That You would conceal me until Your wrath is past, That You would appoint me a set time, and remember me! ¹⁴ If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait, Till my change comes. ¹⁵ You shall call, and I will answer You; You shall desire the work of Your hands. ¹⁶ For now You number my steps, But do not watch over my sin. ¹⁷ My transgression is sealed up in a bag, And You cover my iniquity.

THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD

The Lord has appointed a time when all those who have qualified will be resurrected from the dead into eternal life. Furthermore, there is a unique opportunity opened to those who will qualify after the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. This opportunity is depicted by this parable:

Matthew 20:1-16 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. ²Now when he had agreed with the labourers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. ³And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, ⁴and said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went. ⁵Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. ⁶And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day?' ⁷They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.'

⁸"So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the labourers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.'⁹ And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. ¹⁰But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius. ¹¹And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner ¹²saying, 'These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.'¹³ But he answered one of them and said, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? ¹⁴Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. ¹⁵Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?' ¹⁶So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen."

Many have been called but few have been chosen for this unique opportunity to become the Sons of God. This opportunity is only opened during the acceptable year of the Lord. Consider this passage of Scripture:

THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD

John 1:12-13 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³ who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

As mentioned earlier, the right to become the Sons of God is only opened to those who have received Christ and believed in His name. These are the Jews, whose circumcision is that of the heart and who have the Spirit of God dwelling in them:

Romans 2:28-29 New King James Version (NKJV)

²⁸ For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; ²⁹ but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.

Furthermore, there are those who are led by the spirit of God. It is one thing to have the Spirit of God. But to be led by the Spirit of God is another level:

Romans 8:12-14 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹² Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

The Sons of God are those who are led by the Spirit of God. If we do not have the Spirit of God we can never be the Sons of God. What does it mean to be a Son of God? As mentioned before, the Lord Jesus Christ has given power to those who believe in His name to become the Sons of God. A Son of God is one who will be transformed from a human to a spirit being at the appointed time. This is what the Lord said:

Matthew 22:29-33 New King James Version (NKJV)

²⁹ Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. ³⁰ For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven. ³¹ But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, ³² 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." ³³ And when the multitudes heard this, they were astonished at His teaching.

THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD

The Lord explained to the Pharisee Nicodemus what processes were involved for us to become the Sons of God (in other words born again):

John 3:1-8 New King James Version (NKJV)

³*There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. ²This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."*

³*Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."*

⁴*Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"*

⁵*Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' ⁸The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."*

To become born again actually involves being transformed to be like the resurrected and glorified Lord Jesus Christ. Like the Lord, you have to be born of water. This is water baptism and then being born of the Spirit of God, which is at an appointed time in the future after the great tribulation on the last day.

Many have been led to believe that they are born again now because they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. What ignorance. If anyone is born again now, it means that they are a spirit being that can go through walls and appear and disappear in the twinkle of an eye. Moreover, they should be able to see and enter the kingdom of God. As we all know this is not so at the moment.

This unique opportunity is not for the Saints of the Lord to go and sit around in heaven enjoying themselves doing nothing. It is for them to go and visit God the Father to receive their crowns, and then return to earth with the Lord to reign as kings and priest.

THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD

Revelation 5:9-10 New King James Version (NKJV)

⁹And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, ¹⁰And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."

This group of Saints will be from every nation under the sun and their duty will be to reign over the earth with the Lord Jesus Christ as their Master:

Revelation 20:4-6 New King James Version (NKJV)

⁴And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. ⁶Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

There is an awesome blessing: to be part of the first resurrection which is commonly known as the rapture. These are those who have passed from death to life and the second death will have no power over them. These Saints have been given the opportunity to join God's family forever and they shall be priests of God and of Christ forever.

To be a part of this unique opportunity we have to first acquire the Spirit of God. We must understand that God the Father is a Spirit and He seeks those who must worship Him in spirit and truth. The Lord Jesus Christ, through the sacrifice of His life, has made it possible for us to be able to receive the Spirit of God. Without the Spirit of God dwelling in us we are surely worshiping in vain. Repentance and a mind-set of obedience to the laws and commandments of God are the prerequisite requirements for us to acquire the Spirit of God. No other way is permissible.

We are the generation to see the end of the acceptable year of the Lord come to pass. Next on God's master plan is the Day of the Lord.