

# Ground Zero

*The Governing Law of Divine Love.*

*The following article was inspired by “The Governing Law of Divine Love” by T. Austin Sparks as a basis for the content. The article uses quotes and excerpts from Sparks with no intent of changing the author’s meaning.*

**Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. For if we have been united with him in His death, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like His.** Romans 6:3-5

Consider what it means to be baptized into Christ, even to be baptized into His death. Simple put, we are finished. The life we were born with as a human being is over. **“We brought nothing into the world [at birth] and can carry nothing out [at death]”** (1 Timothy 6:7). When Jesus spoke to Nicodemus, a religious leader who sought to know who Jesus was, He told him, **“You must be born anew”** (John 3:7). Born “anew” means a completely new event that has nothing to do with the old. In fact, the old is gone, dead and buried, due to Christ’s work of redemption.

Did we have such an understanding when we received Christ as Lord and Savior? 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, **“If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation. Old things are passed away. Behold, all things have become new.”** The apostle Paul made it abundantly clear that to believe into Christ is a new creation. ‘New’ means that the old has failed, and will always fail and now there is something “brand new” that did not exist before. Nothing of the old is carried over, but, on the contrary, everything in Christ is new. Many of us have supposedly known or believed into Christ for some time, but do we have such an understanding? It is highly likely that we did not and still do not have a proper understanding of our salvation. The main point of this article is to show that we must start at ground zero to be a true follower of Jesus in a way that pleases God. Actually, ground zero is the essence of our life in Christ. We start completely over the day we received Christ, and everyday, every moment, we walk in newness of life as we walk in Him. Romans 6:4 says, **“We too may live a new life”** or as some translations put it, **“we too may walk in newness of life.”** Our walk is our steady, constant motion, which includes our daily living (Galatians 5:16, 25).

**For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.**

1 Corinthians 10:1-4

The apostle uses Israel’s exodus and wilderness journey to exhort us to live Christ. The children of Israel experienced “redemption” or “salvation” when God brought them out of Egypt (Exodus

5-6). They passed through the Red Sea on dry ground, signifying their baptism (1 Corinthians 10:1-2). That was a new event (parting the sea) based on the divine life and power. God gave them manna to eat, which was something new which they had not known before.

**He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years.** Deuteronomy 8:3-4

God's intention for Israel was a thorough and complete salvation that did not end at its initiation when He led them out of Egypt. Rather, God was going to reconstitute His people according to a new life, a new way, and a new goal, representing the new creation for believers in Christ. Everything God planned was new to Israel so that they would, in turn, manifest God to the nations. God is holy, meaning "other". He is set apart. In other words, God is new to mankind and He wants a people who will express Him. God led the Israelites by a cloud and fire, which was a new way. He fed them manna, which was new to constitute their new life. He was leading them to the good land, which was new as the goal.

### Loving the Old

However, much like today, the children of Israel preferred the old over the new. John 3:19 says it another way, "**Men loved darkness rather than the light.**" They did not want to be humbled so they rebelled against God and His new ways. Hebrews 3:7-13 exposes how Israel hardened their hearts towards God, rebelled, and did not know His ways despite being under His works for forty years. This was all because they did not want the newness of life, but choose to stay old. Hebrews was written for our admonition and exhortation.

1 Corinthians 10:5-10 portrays the Israelites who had been "saved" (from Egypt) but who lusted after evil things, loved idols and recreation, committed fornication, tested God, and murmured continually. The long and short of it is that only Joshua and Caleb entered God's "new" good land out of all the older generation in Israel. Every other person of that generation died in the wilderness (Numbers 14:29-30). They longed for the old, not the new. "**Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!**" (Exodus 14:12) Numbers 11:5 records them testing the Lord again by saying, "**We remember the fish we used to eat for free in Egypt. And we had all the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic we wanted.**" And yet even more, "**Would that we had died by the Lord's hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread to the full.**" (Exodus 16:3)

We need to see the parallel of the children of Israel to us today.

**"These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come."**

1 Corinthians 10:11

We, like the Israelites, prefer the old over the new (Luke 5:39). In fact, we may not have even realized that we need to start at ground zero when we receive Christ and that we need to continue having an attitude of “ground zero” throughout the remainder of our lives on earth. Without such a view and reality, we become the church in Laodicea (Revelation 3:17):

**You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.**

### **Walking in the Light to Expose the Old**

Therefore, the New Testament has many verses that exhort us to examine ourselves (1 Corinthians 11:28; 2 Corinthians 13:5; 1 Peter 1:17; Galatians 6:4; 1 John 3:20-21; Matthew 7:5; James 1:23-25). Examination must be in the light of Christ.

**For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), proving what is well pleasing to the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible — and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. This is why it is said: “Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”** Ephesians 5:8-14

Pray for the Lord’s light to expose your darkness and oldness. When the light comes do not push it away because it is new and different, but consider how the Lord is making you new in everything. The Lord often tells us to look at the fruit of our lives because fruit issues out of life (Matthew 7:20; 3:8; 13:18-23; Luke 6:45; John 15:1-16; Philippians 1:27-30; 1 John 2:6; 2 Timothy 3:10; 1 Peter 2:12, 3:15-16; James 3:13-18). Too many ignore their fruit, the manner of their life, and practice the adage: “Do as I say, not as I do” which originates from a strong self-life unwilling to become new. The fruit of such a life is listed in Galatians 5:19-21, which describes the flesh of our first birth:

**... sexual immorality, impurity and lasciviousness; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.**

The flesh is capable of all these ugly things. If we have not become new in Christ, then, the fruit of the flesh is still present by default. We often “write off” these fruit of the flesh because they seem extreme, but when the Lord’s light shines, we are exposed. The Lord said that looking lustfully at a woman is adultery (Matthew 5:28). He said that being angry with our brother is equivalent to murder (Matthew 5:22). How can we “write off” discord, jealousy, dissensions, factions, and envy when there are countless denominations and independent churches claiming oneness in Christ but not willing to drop their theology, their culture, their preferences, and their practices in order to be one in Christ with other seekers of God. James said that if we are guilty in one of these things, we are guilty of all of them (James 2:10). This just shows that we are still old and have not come to ground zero to be made new and to walk in newness of life.

## Fellowship in the Light

One of the main purposes of fellowship among believers is to expose everything that is not new so we can terminate the old and the past. But our kind of fellowship is often old, based on our old man with its abilities, preferences, understandings, culture, and background. Consider:

**God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make Him out to be a liar and His word is not in us. 1 John 1:5-10**

We are complete darkness before Christ enters us in regeneration. God as light exposes our darkness. Once we are regenerated, however, does everything of the past, everything of who we are, just disappear after years of practice? Is our old life completely dead and buried, so we walk in newness of life? This is not possible experientially. We need to grow spiritually and the growth process terminates the old and regenerates the new day by day. John understood the process of growth in life and he wrote of how we walk in darkness and lie to ourselves and each other because we say we are in the light. If we still have the fruit of flesh then we walk in darkness. However, if we have the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, goodness, gentleness, meekness, self-control, etc (Galatians 5:22-23), then we are walking in the light.

When we walk in the light so that we can have true fellowship, we need the blood of Christ to cleanse us. Some Christians claim they are forgiven and cleansed once for all and have no need to re-apply the blood of Christ in their daily life. They are deceived. John 13:1-11 shows the need of washing the feet as one example of our need of further cleansing. Hebrews 10:23 mentioned having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water (see also Ephesians 5:26). These are ongoing processes that come from walking in the light. John goes on to tell us that **“If we say the we do not have sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us”** (1 John 1:8). Sin here refers to our nature, the oldness that exists in our flesh. If we walk in the light we will “see” our old nature. When we have true fellowship with other believers, we will “see” our sinful nature. Therefore, we need to confess our sins (1 John 1:9). This is not just to God, but to each other. Our confession of sin and sins allows God to cleanse us in a deeper way than when we first believed. It is the “digging deeper” in Luke 6:48 in order to build the proper foundation for the house. Yet, some still refuse to admit their sin and sins. They still reject the thought of confessing their oldness, their flesh, and in essence, proclaim they no longer sin or need to deal with sin. Now, they **“make God a liar and His word is not in them.”** (1 John 1:10). This does not mean that they are not children of God, but that they cannot hear nor obey God’s speaking to them (Matthew 13:13-15).

Ground zero only comes when: **“Those who are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh.”** (Galatians 5:24) The Lord wants us to evaluate our lives fully (as long as we are in His light;

Ephesians 5:8-14; 1 John 1:5-10) to determine the reality of putting off the old man and putting on the new man (Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:9-10) in our daily walk. To begin this process, we must lay hold of Christ's death and burial for ourselves. This means our old life is dead and buried as the foundation for walking in newness of life. We render ourselves dead in Christ and living to God (Romans 6:11). We unload all of our past life with its baggage, socioeconomic status, background, wisdom, achievements, successes, culture, dreams, and acknowledgements.

If we walk in the light of the Lord and experience true fellowship, we will "see" many old habits, customs, cultural preferences, desires, understandings, and dreams still 'alive and well' in us. These are things that need to be denounced (Ephesians 5:11). Through this process we will gratefully watch the old things pass away, never to return, and experience the gradual growth into 'all things have become new.' We will live as strangers and sojourners on this earth (1 Peter 2:11) versus storing up treasures for ourselves, our retirement, our vacations, and our dreams and ambitions. We will long for fellowship in the light not only with God, but with other believers in Christ for such a purpose. We will reject our taste and murmuring for the old, and fervently pursue the new (Philippians 3:7-15).

## The Gospel of John Depicts Newness of Life

John 1:4, "**In Him was life; and the life was the light of men.**" In Christ was life, yet we were already alive humanly. Therefore, there is a new life completely different from the old. Only in the life of Christ is there divine light, yet we thought we could "see" in the past before knowing Him. Christ as life and light is a new life and a new light that we never knew or experienced before. So, there must be a major change in our thinking and our living once we accept Christ into our hearts. "**The light shines in the darkness**" (John 1:5), meaning that until we receive Christ we are absolutely in darkness. We can't "see" anything. So, it should make sense that in coming to Christ, everything of the past should be questioned and set aside and replaced with the newness in Christ. Christ was revealed to the entire universe in the man, Jesus Christ. The light had come to the world. Something new to replace the old. However, "**People loved darkness rather than the light**" (John 3:19). This is another way of saying that people loved the old over the new (Luke 5:39).

### The Need of Being Born Anew

Nicodemus came to Jesus and sought to commence a relationship based on what he considered a good starting point for negotiations with the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus could not accept Nicodemus' terms and brought him to ground zero: "**You must be born anew**" (John 3:7). Of course, Nicodemus could not comprehend such a thing and asked, "**A man cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?**" (John 3:4) Is this a foolish question or does it indicate how we all understand God according to our old natural life? We try to relate the old to the new and worse than that, we try to fit the old into the new. Christians seem adept at compromising. (*Consider so-called Christian holidays and their origins as an example.*) The Lord Jesus made it utterly clear that the old has nothing to do with the new. "**You must be born anew.**" We cannot start at any point beyond that. If you and I are going to come into any kind of living relationship with Christ that is acceptable to God, we must come to ground zero (i.e. old things have passed away) and proceed from ground zero (i.e. all things become new). It

is no use starting at a point that we have conceived because we were in darkness, incapable of seeing Christ or His salvation.

### Being Brought to Ground Zero

In John 4, a woman came to a well where Jesus was waiting for her. Jesus asked her for a drink and she responded, **“You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?”** (John 4:9) Her old concepts caused her to hesitate to honor the Lord’s request. It made sense according to the old creation. She was a woman and woman shouldn’t contact men (John 4:27). Even more, she was a Samaritan, an enemy of the Jews. Jesus then offered her something brand new: **“The water that I give will become in [each one] a spring of water gushing up into eternal life.”** (John 4:14) The woman wanted such water, but the Lord knew she was not yet at ground zero, so, He continued to bring her to the proper starting point of her salvation in his conversation with her. Next, the religion she clung to was exposed: **“Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.”** (John 4:20) Eventually, however, the woman realized her bankruptcy and ran to tell others. **“Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?”** (John 4:29)

The Lord Jesus is so skillful in bringing us to ground zero. This is the sanctification of the Spirit in us today (1 Peter 1:2-3). She came to understand that she did not know anything of Christ’s salvation and eternal life. She had been coming to that same well day after day, but knew nothing of living water that gushed up into eternal life. The water the Lord gives has nothing to do with our own resources (our own well). She had thought that **“salvation was of the Jews”** (John 4:22), but now was told something new: **“God is spirit and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth”** (John 4:24). Previously, to her the physical place was important. Once at ground zero, Jesus unveiled her eyes to realize that the physical place is irrelevant. This was totally new to her and she could never have come to understand on her own. Christ as life is not something we can produce from our own resources. We cannot improve our lives or expect Christ to make our old life better in order to accomplish God’s will. No, divine life comes solely from Christ Himself; it is new altogether. And notice the “place” of worship is drastically new. We worship God in spirit. Religion focuses on places, liturgies, traditions, culture, activities, and teachings. These are all things of the old creation, the past, which are passed away. Worshipping in spirit is new and must be our means of worshipping God.

### Not Improving the Old

John 5 shows a cripple who was in a helpless state, in which every effort failed and every hope ended in disappointment. For 38 years, a lifetime, the man had tried to improve his situation based on his own effort and the effort of others. Yet, he remained in that old condition, and despair had set in. The good part is that he finally gave up on trying to be healed. He came to realize that his effort and his longing to improve upon his condition did not work. This again is the sanctifying work of the Spirit, bringing us toward ground zero. When the Lord intervened into this man’s condition, He did not bring the man’s old life into the new. The Lord Jesus does not say to him, “Look here, you are a poor cripple; I am going to take your hand, and bring you to the healing waters so you can walk, I will make those old limbs brand new, I will improve on

your condition.” Not at all. In an instant, the Lord terminated the old completely and gave the man a whole new start. The effect of what the Lord did was the same as if he were born anew. He did not cure the old man, but made him a new man, in principle.

The Lord spoke two things to the man. First, **“Pick up your mat and walk”** (John 4:8), and second, **“See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.”** (John 4:14). The man was to walk, not as before (i.e. old things have passed away), but in newness of life (i.e. all things have become new). Formerly, he walked in sin. Now, in Christ, he would walk apart from sin. The Lord is not about curing the old man but making a new man. He desires something to come into us that was not there before, and could not be produced before because it is uniquely and solely Christ’s doing. We tend to try and produce things out of our own resources and improve upon what we already have. This makes sense because these are things we know and can “see” in our world. However, Christ comes to us in our darkness, meaning we cannot “see” anything apart from Him. His light creates a totally new view and walk. The man listened and obeyed the Lord because he had come to ground zero. Now, he was to continue walking in newness of life.

### **The Source of All Things New**

John 6 unveils the possibilities contained within the new creation. Jesus fed a great multitude of 5,000 men plus women and children with only five loaves of bread and two fish! Our old mentality may focus on the miracle and miss how the Lord was terminating the old things and bringing in the ‘all things new.’ Needless to say, feeding close to 10,000 people from a boy’s lunch is something new, but look closer to ‘see’ the Lord showing to all the necessity of coming to ground zero in order to know God’s full salvation.

The Jewish Passover festival was near (John 6:4), which was to remind Israel of God’s marvelous redemption for them. Jesus was God’s full, eternal redemption (Hebrews 9:14), standing among them, yet the people were clueless. Jesus tested Philip, **“Where can we get some food to feed these people?”** (John 6:5-6) Why was this a test? Because Philip, like us, would think according to his old nature and realize how impossible it is to feed such a crowd on the spur of the moment without any previous plan or ample supplies. Philip did not recognize Jesus Christ as God, the supplier of all creation. Something new was living and breathing directly in front of the people: God manifested in the flesh. Andrew must have been prompted by the Spirit’s sanctification to at least offer something to the Lord to use, but he still questioned how a boy’s lunch could be useful to Jesus (John 6:8-9). No one understood that Jesus Christ is the Source of all things new and He is not only capable of supplying all things according to God the Father’s will, but He is the One who will carry out God’s will.

The significance of five loaves and two fish is amazing and multifaceted, but we will focus on a few points of emphasis. First, the loaves of bread represent vegetable (plant) life. Christ as life to us regenerates us and continues to generate God’s life in us so we can grow in the divine life in the new creation. Jesus explained the miracle of the bread feeding the crowd by saying, **“I am the bread which came down out of heaven.”** (John 6:41) Christ feeding the crowd is a physical analogy of Him being our life supply spiritually. No one could supply the large crowd with food, but Jesus Himself. Likewise, there is nothing here on this earth that can meet our need in the new

creation except Jesus. Everything has to come out of heaven. Jesus used the miracle of feeding the 5,000 to show that spiritually, in the new creation, He was the source of all life from inception to eternity.

Second, barley is a coarse grain that ripens early in the growing season, and is the first of the harvest. This may represent the resurrected Christ who was the Firstfruits to God (1 Corinthians 15:23). The Lord Jesus was demonstrating the principle of new creation: **“When you come into the land which I give unto you, and reap the harvest, you will bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest”** (Leviticus 23:10). Whatever we offer to God must be acceptable to Him and therefore, must come from Him. God only accepts Christ as our offering. We must experience Him as our Firstfruits and offer this to God. We cannot offer something of the old creation, something of ourselves, to God because He won’t accept it. Just as Adam was the first man in the old creation, Christ is the Firstfruits of the new creation.

### **The Overcoming Life of Christ**

The Lord Jesus took fish, which represent the animal life. Fish swim in the saltwater and freshwater, yet do not become salty or bloated with water. This signifies how Christ came into the sinful world of the old creation, yet He was not sinful or affected by the world. And more than that, animal life signifies the redeeming aspect of Christ’s life. God took an animal to clothe Adam and Eve, thus, shedding blood (Genesis 3:21). It was for this reason that God accepted Abel’s sacrifice, but rejected Cain’s (Genesis 4:4-5). Cain offered something of the old creation (Genesis 4:3), something out of the works of his own hands. Abel sacrificed an animal to clothe his family, which shed innocent blood. Hebrews 9:22, **“without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.”** It is only by the redeeming life of Christ that we can walk and exist in the Satan dominated world and overcome (1 John 4:4).

We must not think for a moment that our old creation life can withstand or resist the devil (1 Peter 5:8-9). It cannot. Cain offered his offering and God made it clear that nothing of the old creation, no matter how good or how well intentioned, will be accepted. We should not think that we can offer anything to God that will be of use to Him. You may ask, didn’t Andrew offer the boy’s lunch to Christ? The loaves and fish may represent our small measure of Christ which can be increased. The boy had no intention of feeding 10,000 people with his lunch. God did, however, so God gave that portion to the boy, and He prompted Andrew to discover it.

### **The New Brings Eternal Satisfaction**

John 7 also helps us distinguish the old from the new:

**On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to Me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as Scripture has said, out of his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.” By this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit was not yet, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.** John 7:37-39



Jesus went to the Feast of Tabernacles, which was the last Jewish feast of the calendar year, following the harvest of crops. The feast signifies completion and satisfaction based on achievement and success. God intended the people to reflect on their fathers' wandering in the wilderness and living in tents, temporary dwellings, and thereby, remember their dependence on God alone as they sojourn on earth with the future goal of rest in the good land, the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:2-3). At the end of the feast, Jesus stood and shocked everyone with the truth. The Jews celebrated their successes, their achievement, and their completion, but they were still thirsty and unsatisfied. So, Jesus offered them eternal satisfaction in the new creation.

Everything that God does is new, not of the old creation. He waited for the people to become thirsty before He offered them the only thing that would satisfy their thirst: Christ Himself as living water. The old had to pass away before the things could become new. The Lord Himself spoke of the Spirit being the living water, but that the Spirit was not yet because He had not yet been glorified. This has profound spiritual meaning, but suffice it to say, it was something totally new. To enjoy God in the old creation included man's accomplishments, man's successes, and man's achievements for man's satisfaction. The Lord Jesus waited until the lack of satisfaction surfaced before presenting the new, eternal satisfaction, Himself as living water. This living water is entirely based on Christ's accomplishments, Christ's success in His human living, death and resurrection, and Christ's achievements in being glorified for man's eternal satisfaction. The only role man has to play is to drink, which means to believe, to receive, all of Christ as the Spirit with His accomplishments.

### **The New Creation is Out of God, Not Out of Us**

In John 9, a man blind from birth was on the path where Jesus was walking. His disciples asked, **"Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?"** The Lord responded, **"Neither, but he was born so that the works of God might be manifested in him."** (John 9:3) In our old mentality, we may think this is a story of a blind man receiving his sight so he can have a better life. To all of us who have physical sight, we assume that everyone who is physically blind is missing out. But that is not the point at all. The story shows how God brings glory to Himself by bringing the blind man into something new, something never done before (John 9:32). The glory of God is not found in improving the old condition. The man could have received his sight and possibly had a better human life in the old creation. But what God desired was to offer the man new life altogether: a life of "sight" in the new creation where he could "see" God and believe in Him and worship Him (John 9:36-38). This new sight would allow the man to repent of his sin and live for God based on the Lord's death and resurrection (John 9:39-41).

How often we may long for a better quality of life. Christians commonly strive to improve their standard of living in this old creation. We use our so called faith in God to better our lives, but we remain in the old creation. We want God to bless our endeavors, to heal us when we are sick, to take away our trials and temptations, and to fight our battles for us against those who oppose us. Yet, we never come to ground zero and live at ground zero in which the old creation is terminated and only the new creation exists. In the old creation, we pity those who are blind, thinking that they have a lower quality of life than we do. This story in John 9 shows that the real value is not our condition from birth, but our existence in the new creation. Jesus gave the man

his sight and now he could see clearly to walk and to move for the glory of God. The glory of God is not found in our being able to produce something or to put something into God's hands, something of ours, that He can take up and make use of. The glory of God is something solely out from God Himself. We contribute nothing. The man born blind was given something absolutely new. He was given sight which he did not have, nor could have, before. Sight in the new creation is the most precious thing and we all can and should experience it.

### **Resurrection Comes When the Old Creation is at Ground Zero**

John 11 takes us to the home of Mary and Martha, whose brother Lazarus had become sick (11:1-2). The sisters sent for Jesus because they had an intimate relationship with Him and assumed He would respond to their plea for healing (John 11:3). According to their natural thought, the Lord healed so many others, surely He would heal one He loved so dearly. He did not (11:4). Instead, He purposely remained away from the situation until Lazarus had died (11:11). By the time Jesus arrived in Bethany, Lazarus had been in the tomb four days (11:17). Martha corralled the Lord first, asking for an explanation for allowing her brother to die (11:20-22). Jesus told her plainly that Lazarus would rise again (11:23). Then, Martha's religious mindset spoke doctrine to the Lord, and He told her "**I am the resurrection and the life**" (11:24-25).

The logic, assumptions, and disappointments we experience are too often because we are perceiving our situation from the vantage point of the old creation. We complain to the Lord and even teach Him! Yet, all along, Jesus plans to bring us into resurrection. The glory of God is found in resurrection, and only there can we "see" clearly according to God's will. Mary also went to plead with Jesus and find out why He hadn't responded to their request. Previously Mary had learned that listening to Jesus was the best portion (Luke 10:42). She had touched the new creation and desired to abide there. However, in this situation, she returned to the old creation with its logic and parameters. Her fallen mind could not comprehend how Her loving Lord and Savior could allow her brother, whom He loved so much, to die.

### **New Creation Brings Glory to God**

The Lord proclaimed, "**Did I not tell you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?**" Believing is part of the new creation. If we find ourselves murmuring or disappointed in God's arrangement or will or come to the point of despair and shrinking back due to the harsh circumstances, we are still abiding in the old creation. In the new creation is resurrection. In the new creation is sight. In the new creation is belief and hope and joy. Why didn't the Lord just heal Lazarus? Why would He then leave Lazarus in the tomb for four days before raising him from the dead? Our fallen mind cannot comprehend this. But in the new creation, the Lord Jesus will not touch anything until it is far removed from any human remedy; until all human standpoints are at zero.

The Lord is so wise. He knows that if there is any element of the old creation, we will become proud and take credit in some way. Paul wrote, "**We have this treasure [Christ] in earthen vessels so the power [to overcome any difficulty] is out of God, and not out of us.**" (2 Corinthians 4:7) In Deuteronomy (8:17), the Lord spoke the same message through Moses: "**You**

**may say to yourself, “My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.”** Remember, the old creation has Satan’s prideful nature injected into it, so it will always try to usurp credit. Therefore, God waits until the old has died and is buried before He brings resurrection in the new creation.

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### **God’s Love is the Basis of the New Creation**

The Lord will not intervene in our lives to improve the old nor to take something we have offered to Him and use it. He operates through faith, and without faith He will not work (Matthew 13:58; Mark 6:5; Hebrews 11:6). Therefore, from all human standpoints we must be bankrupt, at ground zero, before Him. This is not a question of lack of interest, lack of compassion, or lack of love. Actually, the divine love is the foundation of all the God does (John 3:16; Ephesians 1:4; 1 John 4:8). But love is bound by law. God’s Love is under the law of the glory of God. The glory of God is in resurrection and therefore God’s love is always demonstrated by death into resurrection, meaning that everything must come to a place where only resurrection will meet the need, not curing or remedying the old man.

Have you heard the argument, “Why would a God of love allow such suffering or tragedy?” The answer is simple: God’ love and God’s salvation require man to be at ground zero. He allows suffering and even tragedy to work so that we can be saved fully (Matthew 7:24-25; Romans 8:28). Death, pain, and suffering all originated because of man’s fall. God did not create waste and void (Isaiah 45:18) and the temptation, lust, and conceding to sin is due to man’s fallen nature and self-life (James 1:13-15). So, God lovingly and mercifully comes to man with the offer of salvation to bring us out of the old and into His new creation. However, we must realize that we have produced the separation between us and God; we have hated and murdered; we have lusted, envied, stolen, coveted, and broken every principle God set forth. We broke the intimate relationship with God and it is He who offers us reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18). But reconciliation must be on God’s terms, not ours. We must realize that there is absolutely no hope in fallen man to restore a proper relationship to God, and that we have no rights before God except the penalty of death due to our sin. The reconciliation that God offers us is totally out of Himself. Once we come to this point, God can fully save us.

### **Ground Zero Annuls Man’s Effort**

There are still a lot of people in this world who think that there is something in man that can contribute to the glory of God. Every religion in the world, including Christianity, lays much emphasis on man’s effort, man’s accomplishment, and man’s ability to please God, meaning they feel that man can contribute to his salvation in some way. This is a fallacy, a lie. The Word of God denounces any positive aspect of the fallen humanity in relation to the glory of God. God requires fallen man to be dead and buried, and the new man in Christ will start at ground zero. To start at ground zero means we can contribute nothing. Everything has to come from God. **“The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”** (Romans 6:23). Death is the only reward for anything of the old creation. On the other hand, in the new creation, eternal life is absolutely and solely contained in Christ Jesus our Lord. It is given to us from start to finish. We did nothing and can do nothing to obtain it except to allow

the Spirit to bring us to ground zero where we are ready to enter into the new creation: Christ in us the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27).

### **Our Role in the New Creation**

When it comes to God and God's glory, everything is given to us (1 Corinthians 4:7; Romans 12:3; Ephesians 4:16). We are living in the old creation until the Lord gives us a new birth. We simply receive it. We are thirsty and unsatisfied until the Lord comes as 'drink' to us. We simply need to drink. We are hopeless cripples unable to do anything acceptable for God until God comes to give new life. We simply need to obey by getting up, taking our mat, and walking in His light. We hunger and have no way to supply the need until the Lord comes to abundantly provide. We simply 'eat' Him as the bread of life. We are blind and in complete darkness towards God until God gives us sight. We simply need to walk based on our new vision: in newness of life. We are dead to anything spiritual until God gives us life. We simply come out of the tomb and walk in Christ's new life.

### **Hear and Obey Versus Come as You Are**

You may have heard the message, "Come as You are and Christ will accept you." This is only true when the Spirit's sanctifying work precedes your coming as when Lazarus walked out of the tomb wrapped in burial cloth. Most of the time, however, Christ will not accept us "as we are" because we are coming out of ourselves, hoping for a life improvement or hoping to offer something to Christ for His use. Christ will not and cannot take us or anything we offer to Him unless we are at ground zero. Ground zero is where we have nothing, we realize that we are nothing, we confess it, and then we listen and obey the Lord.

## **The Spirit Brings us to Ground Zero (Sanctification)**

God takes great pains through the Holy Spirit to make us know that we must come to ground zero in order to be fully saved. "**But when the Spirit of reality (truth) comes, He will guide you into all the reality (truth)** (John 16:13). Nothing can come from us. It all originates and proceeds from God in the Spirit. Therefore, to experience full salvation, we must give up our past and must relinquish our background, culture, abilities, strategies, activities, successes, achievements, etc.. It seems to take us so long to learn such a basic lesson because we cling to the idea that we can or need to produce something for God. We live miserably before God because we still hope that in some way we can provide the Lord with something. But we can't contribute one iota from ourselves that is acceptable to God. All that He can use is His Son and the ultimate measure of God's glory is the measure of Christ in us. Our measure of Christ depends on how much we, by faith, make Christ the basis of our life, the very basis of our living and of our being.

**He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years.** Deuteronomy 8:3-4

Let's consider how God does everything out of Himself (2 Corinthians 5:18) and what is our role in salvation? God is the Author and Perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). This certainly means that there is nothing we can do, give, or say that merits salvation. When God led His people in the wilderness, He humbled them by causing them to hunger. This was the Spirit's work to bring us to ground zero. God creates a dependence within us so that we will turn away from our self or self-chosen provision to Him. Once we realize our need for God, we simply eat what He has provided. Manna literally means "what is it?" It was completely new and completely out of God. Fallen man had nothing to do with it. You can see the problem, however, fallen man complained about the manna and eventually everything else God provided because they did not want to be dependent on God.

**As for you, the anointing you received from Him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as His anointing teaches you all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in Him.** 1 John 2:27

The Spirit is the anointing within each genuine believer in Christ. God speaks to us through this anointing day by day and moment by moment. We must sense the Lord's presence and then, listen and obey the Lord's word. John also wrote, "**But when the Spirit of reality (truth) comes, He will guide you into all the reality (truth)** (John 16:13) close to the same time in history. This confirms that it is the Spirit who leads us and guides us in the truth or reality in our daily living. It is not by our own understanding, ability, or preferences. The anointing is the means by which God speaks to us, teaches us, and leads us into Himself as truth.

Some Christians reject the matter of the anointing and many are ignorant about it. The author of Hebrews rendered some insight:

**Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the word of righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use (practice) have trained themselves to distinguish good [superior] from evil [inferior].** (Hebrews 5:13-14)

If we are in the old creation, we are still infants unacquainted with the word of righteousness (1 Corinthians 3:1-9). This is because we have never grown spiritually even though we think we have. We are blind despite claiming to have sight (John 9:39-41). We are dead spiritually in spite of claiming to be living (Revelation 3:1). On the other hand, to live in the new creation takes practice and in time results in growth. A child claims many things that are not "real" to them because they mimic what they see and hear without the maturity to live it out for themselves. Just because childish Christians claim to hear God, yet live according to self, does not diminish God's word one bit. God has given us the Spirit to teach us and guide us in all things. This is the anointing within us and it is based on hearing and obeying the Lord (Matthew 7:24-25).

Obedience is our role in salvation. Romans 10:16-17 speak of obeying the gospel in faith. Where does faith originate? Not out of ourselves but through the word of God: "**So faith comes out of hearing, and hearing through the word of God.**" Hearing and obeying is our role before God.

We do not obey out of ourselves, however. Our obedience is through Christ: “**take captive every thought unto the obedience of Christ.**” (2 Corinthians 10:5) It is Christ in us that obeys God’s word, not our old self-life, and this thought is conveyed in John 15:4-5:

**“Abide in Me and I in you. For the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you abide in Me. I am the Vine. You are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.”**

There is a mutual abiding in Christ that directs our every step. Christ is the source of this abiding, not us. And remember that a tree is known by its fruit (Matthew 7:20). The fruit of the Vine, which is Christ, will be Christ, not us. We are nothing apart from Christ.