

Jan. 7, 1996

"The Spirit Giveth Life"
II Cor. 3

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. At the end of Chap. 2 Paul gives all credit for a believer's triumph to faith in the power of Jesus Christ. At the beginning of Chap. 3 he gives attention to the part a witness plays in the salvation process. The apostle asks a couple of rhetorical questions in vs. 1. Does a witness to God's truth, in this case Paul himself as one especially chosen by God to communicate God's Word, need a letter of reference from someone other than God to vouch for his fidelity to the truth? Do I, Paul, need to lay again the foundation for spiritual salvation since I have already relayed the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth to you, Gal. 1:6-12. He said, "- - Need I, as some others do, need letters of commendation?" In vs. 2 he refers to having ones heart written upon, and states that their faith and manner of life shouts out that the message (Paul's) which changed their wills was positive evidence of the truth of Paul's witness. They had received God's Spirit who had himself written God's truth on their hearts (wills), Rom. 8:12-17. Believers, then, who follow Paul's letters (God's Word) written in their hearts (minds, wills) are following God's will, not because the communication is ink on paper. God's will (Spirit) is so much a part of the believers' personalities that they are new spiritual beings, II Cor. 5:17. Our new beings were created from above, and we now trust Christ and his relation to God the Father, John 10:22-30; II Cor. 3:4-5.

II. Beginning with vs. 6 Paul introduces and expands upon the contrast between God's Old Covenant and his New Covenant with mankind. Our message as believers in Jesus as Messiah (Savior) has to do with the difference between the first Covenant which was a set of rules set down in stone, and the second and last Covenant "of the Spirit [who] giveth life." To realize the profound difference one should keep in mind that "life" in this better Covenant is defined as "together with ones Creator" through faith in his only begotten Son, Christ Jesus, vs. 6. The Law was given to mankind through God's servant, Moses. But that Law ministered (dispensed) death to the hearers who attempted to please God by abiding by that Law. The concepts of the Law as codified, killed (spiritually) people even though that Law was glorious, because it expressed God's will for people. There is no doubt concerning the glory related to the Law, for Moses glowed with God's glory immediately after receiving it, Exod. 34:29-35. In the context of Scripture in which Moses received what Paul is referring to here, the Ten Commandments are intended. There is no fault with that Law even though it condemns mankind. The problem, then, is not with God who gave the Law, the Law, or with Moses through whom God channeled the Law, but with people's lack of will and therefore their inability to keep it. So what good was the Law to a people who could not live according to its demands? A sacrifice system was established to bridge the gap between God and mankind, but even that did not suffice. And what about today after Jesus has come and become God's agent for believers' spiritual rebirth? God's will for mankind as expressed in God's Law still shows individuals that they are sinners separated

from their loving heavenly Father, Psa. 19:7; Gal. 3:24-26. Vs. 7b states that the Old Covenant was known by God from the beginning to be an arrangement which would fade away, Heb. 8:7. What is the chief difference between the Old and New Covenants? Now if God's ministry of the Law was so glorious, how much more glorious is the Covenant during which God will live in his ekklesia, his people called out of all the earth to serve him in his Kingdom of God. God's Holy Spirit himself will dwell within each believer, a new phenomenon in God's relating with those who will believe his New Covenant in and through Jesus Christ, Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:14-16. The ministry of the New Covenant will testify to a perfect (complete) righteousness, for God has now provided the perfect Lamb for the needed sacrifice. Those who have faith in that Lamb, Jesus the Messiah, are covered by God's very own righteousness, Rom. 9:30-33. Throughout all time the factor that has pleased God has been faith in God's promise, not in ones own self-righteousness, Matt. 23:12; Rom. 10:3. The most succinct Bible contrast of the two Covenants is at Heb. 8:13, "In that he saith, A New Covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which is becoming obsolete and has become outdated is ready to vanish away."

III. In vs. 10 Paul, in comparing the two Covenants, states that when God replaced the first glorious Covenant with the ultimate in glory, he established faith not in the good Law but in his only Son. Our hope now is in the righteousness of that only Son, Jesus Christ, and we can be bold. Our boldness is not dependent upon our ability to keep the Law but upon our faith in God's own righteousness, in God's Lamb whom he furnished for the sins of all people who will trust him, Gen. 22:1-8,11-13; John 1:29,36; Heb. 9:12,14-15,22-28. Recall that Paul was a Hebrew by birth and a strict Pharisee. He had personally experienced what Moses underwent when God's glory gradually faded from his face after leaving God's presence on Mt. Sinai. In Paul's case, however, this glow of trusting the Law failed quickly on his journey to Damascus to imprison believers who trusted not the Law, but God's sacrificial Lamb, Christ Jesus. Paul is now testifying to the Corinthian believers in AD 58 that the veil which covered Moses' face has been done away with entirely, Matt. 27:50-51, in Christ, vs. 16. The Law was read regularly by the Israelites, but their wills were made dull in Paul's day (and still are). The Jews have still not accepted God the Father's righteousness through Jesus, God's Messiah. The Law is a veil over their hearts, vss. 14-15. Their refusal to trust Jesus is the reason they have not received the Holy Spirit of God. God's Holy Spirit will come and live with (personally direct a believer's life) an individual only if he or she yields to God's plan of spiritual salvation for eternal life in and through Christ Jesus. Just as the heavenly Father and Jesus are one and the same (Jesus is God who came in human flesh), so is the Lord Jesus one with the Holy Spirit, John 10:30; 14:36; II Cor. 3:17. "- - Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," John 8:36; vs. 17. We believers can boldly approach God and can, with unveiled faces as reflections of the Lord Jesus Christ whom we trust for eternal life, rejoice. We have been transformed from fear of the Law (intended to reflect God's glory, righteousness) to the ultimate glory of God's righteousness, faith in Christ Jesus who is our righteousness. Faith in Jesus alone can give eternal, spiritual life!

Jan. 14, 1996

"Temporal Versus Eternal"
II Cor. 4

Couples Class
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Teacher

I. Chap. 4 continues (begins with "Therefore") Paul's testimony of those who bear witness to God's grace whereby he "spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he (God) not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32) Our testimony, even as Paul's, gives us such motivation because of God's mercy, we do not lose heart or faint, vs. 1,16, and see also Job 13:15-16, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him (God). - - He also shall be my salvation: for an hypocrite shall not come before him." The apostle in vs. 2 states that his testimony (God's Word) renounces crafty (hidden, shameful, ulterior, or adulterous) elements which do not reveal God's genuine position regarding his relating to his creation, mankind. The implication in vs. 2 is that some who claim to proclaim God's Word to be one thing really are combining its truth with error. The resulting amalgamation is not the Good News but is dishonest and is "handling the Word of God deceitfully." Such propagation of an improper, false "gospel" was in order to "commend themselves" rather than as Paul was doing, "renouncing such dishonesty." The true Gospel of God through his Son, Christ Jesus, is the ultimate expression of God's grace, and is so simple that a child can understand, Matt. 18:1-5. In fact, if it is hid, it is hid (veiled) from those who simply refuse to accept God's gracious, free offer of eternal life through his own righteousness in and through his only begotten Son Jesus Christ (are perishing), vs. 3. All of the propagators of this dishonest and false "gospel" are led by "the god of this world," (Matt. 12:31, "the prince (ruler) of this world"). These false teachers fulfill Isaiah's prophecy at Isa. 6:8-10; Matt. 13:14-15; John 3:36; Gal. 2:21; Jude 4. The substance of the argument against false teachers is that anything or any persons who put itself or themselves between an individual and Christ Jesus is blinded and cannot see the truth (God's Gospel), because Christ is the very image (true reflection) of God himself, vs. 4b. Nothing or no persons can rightfully claim to be God, for the only true way to see and know God the Father is through Jesus Christ himself, John 14:6-7.

II. A true witness to God's truth does not elevate himself or herself, but Christ Jesus as Lord, vs. 5. The true witness is, in fact, a servant of the Lord, not one who is served by others, Matt. 20:25-28. As Paul put it in vs. 5, "For we proclaim not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord: and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." The plural pronouns used here, "we" and "ourselves," are not the royal plurals used by monarchs, but are plural because, at the beginning of this letter, Paul includes Timothy as a coauthor of the message being sent to the Corinthians. Now we know also that God's Holy Spirit was the actual Author since it is God's Word to us believers, but not to unbelievers, vs. 3. The same Creator God who "commanded light to shine out of darkness [made something out of nothing, Gen. 1:1-5], hath shined in our (believers') hearts (wills), to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face (person) of Jesus Christ." The apostle (God's Word) is saying that it requires the same creative

power to recreate a human spirit into his (God's) likeness as it did for God to create something (physical) from nothing, II Cor. 5:17. (See also John 6:35,39,41-47; Rom. 8:16-17.)

III. A big problem for us believers is that part of us which is temporary, the physical dwelling place (our bodies) of our spirits, spirits which have been remade (reborn from above) spiritually. We have eternal spirits in "earthly vessels," and we know from our experiences that "the excellency of the power (which recreated us) is of God, and not of us," vs. 7. In the flesh we are under pressure "on every side" but not destroyed (crushed) spiritually. We are at times perplexed (with the physical eventualities), but we do not permit life's uncertainties to create despair or hopelessness for us who have eternal life. Even when in this life we are persecuted and struck down, we know God's promise, to sustain us even through our separation from this world order (physical death) and beyond, is steadfast and sure, vs. 8-9. We know that our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom we trust, went through the severest of persecutions. God's promise is that if we trust and publicly display that trust before others, we will be protected from anything that would separate from God's love for us, Matt. 10:32-33; Rom. 8:35-39. As believers we are to subject our actions while in these temporary dwellings to the lordship of Jesus Christ so that our attitude and actions will be manifest (demonstrate) our trust in the Lord Jesus, vs. 10-11. Our lives are to be lived for others rather than selfishly, I Cor. 10:24; Phil. 2:3-8. Paul could have lived a selfish life but deliberately chose to spend his life dedicated to proclaiming God's Good News in Jesus Christ so that others could hear, believe, and thereby have life eternal. We, too, should live lives that testify to God's grace through his Son. Paul refers to such a life as one which has the "spirit of faith," vs. 13. In that verse he quotes Psa. 116:10, "I believed, and therefore have I spoken." We believers are likewise to speak (communicate) our belief to others. We understand that as God raised Jesus from physical death, "shall raise up us also by the same power," and we will, after that resurrection, be presented together with Paul and Timothy, vs. 14. In vs. 15 Paul states simply that sharing God's offer of his grace with all who will accept it is worth all the sacrifice in personal time and effort, because all such activity will signify agreement with the praise and glory due God for his mercy through his Son, Christ Jesus.

IV. The chapter concludes with a repeat of vs. 1, that believers should not "become weary in well doing," Gal. 6:9-10; II Thes. 3:13. Paul's reasoning is that we are inevitably going to diminish physically and eventually die physically, I Cor. 15:22. This arrangement was brought about by mankind's choice of evil (Isa. 53:6), but God now has created a new covenant by sending his Son from heaven for all who will trust him for eternal life. Those who have that trust are renewed in their spirits every moment of their lives, "day by day", vs. 16. We believers should not be overly concerned about the problems and anxieties of this temporal period "while we look not at things which are seen. Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." The things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen (our faith in Jesus Christ) are eternal," vs. 18.

Jan. 21, 1996

"We Walk By Faith"
II Cor. 5

Couples Class
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I. Chap. 5 of II Corinthians is probably the best known passage in this second letter by most believers, for it is there where Paul (God's Word) makes an explicit connection of one's faith in God's love (John 3:16) with the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Vs. 1 states that, "For we know that if (when) this tabernacle (tent or temporary home) were (is) dissolved (destroyed), we have a building (permanent place where our spirits will continue to live) created by God (himself) not by hands (of earthly materials), John 2:13-21; Mark 14:58, "eternal in the heavens." While in the mortal flesh, we believers yearn and earnestly desire to swap our flesh-and-blood dwelling places for that eternal house waiting for us in heaven which God is preparing for us, John 14:1-3. Such was Paul's testimony at Phil. 1:21-24 and Peter's at II Pet. 1:13-14, but both noted that their service for the Lord was the restraining force which at that time caused them to want to remain in the flesh. Neither was suicidal even though both looked forward to being in Jesus' presence. Vss. 3 and 4 have raised questions in the minds of many Bible scholars as to whether "nakedness" as noted here has to do with the believer's state of being between mortal death and the resurrection when Jesus returns to earth in person. If this transitional period is what Paul is describing here, it is to my knowledge of Scripture, the only instance where the believer is said to be without living quarters (naked) between physical death and the resurrection, I Cor. 15:42,50-52; I Thes. 4:13-18. I believe that that is an improper interpretation of the passage and that upon leaving our tabernacles (mortal bodies) we believers go at once to be with our Lord in heaven, Luke 23:42-45. This chapter, I believe, simply confirms what Jesus proclaimed on the cross concerning the criminal who confessed Jesus to be Lord just before he (the criminal) died. Jesus said, "Truthfully I say to you, today shalt thou be with me in paradise." Now returning to II Cor. 5:3-8: it also concludes with the same fact that Jesus asserted on the cross. The "If" (conditional) proposition in vs. 3 raises the probable question which could occur to a believer regarding his state of being between mortal death and the resurrection. Vs. 4 further emphasizes the same concern (burden) of becoming "unclothed" rather than having their beings "swallowed up of life." But God himself has promised the continued well-being of his chosen ones, John 10:28-29; Rom. 8:38-39. He has done this by living in the person of his Holy Spirit within each believer's personality, vs. 5. The Holy Spirit's dwelling within is the guarantee (earnest, down payment, assurance) that God will do what is best for the trusters in his Son, Jesus Christ. "Therefore, we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the [physical] body, we are absent from the Lord: [this is true even though] we walk [while in the flesh] by faith, not by sight," vss. 6-7. Our assurance is based, then, completely upon our faith in God's promise through Christ Jesus, Eph. 2:4-10. Now in vs. 8 Paul (God's Word) reiterates the reason for a believer to be confident, "[even while in the flesh a believer] can be cheerful and happy knowing that God's sure promise is that after leaving this earthly home, he or she will be taken

to be [present] with the Lord in heaven [paradise]." This undeniable assurance gives us reason (motivation) to be constantly pleasing to the Lord, vs. 9.

II. We are to appear before Christ's judgment seat (throne) to be assessed for rewards according to ones behavior while in the flesh, vs. 10. The Bible is not definitive in describing this "reward judgment," but here Paul includes himself among those to undergo such a judgment. It is obvious that the "we" includes us also as believers, for only believers can be rewarded for service in God's kingdom under the lordship of Christ. Unbelievers have chosen otherwise. We believers are not to be judged for our sins for which Jesus was crucified, nor are we to be judged for sins for which we confess to God and ask him for forgiveness, John 3:17-18; I John 1:9. For what then are we to be judged? For exercising options as believers that do not promote God's kingdom on earth, sins which destroy a believer's witness to the lordship of Christ. I base this belief upon I Cor. 5:5 and II Cor. 2:6-10, as well as Matt. 6:14-15; 18:21-22,34-35. What are to be our rewards for serving God while in the flesh? Apart from the satisfaction of realizing that one is pleasing (praising) the merciful heavenly Father who has awarded an undeserving person eternal life in his presence through simple faith in his only begotten Son, Christ Jesus, need there be more? Vs. 11 calls our attention to the fact that our holy God can not be manipulated or misled. All of our motives "are made manifest (known) unto God," and Paul states that (because we are led of God's Holy Spirit), our consciences should likewise keep us informed about whether our actions and attitudes are pleasing to God, Gal. 5:16-18; Eph. 4:30. This leadership precludes the notion that we can please God by pleasing others with outward appearances. Paul implies that some are acting in such a way "and not in heart" (in reality before God), vs. 12. Paul admits that his determination to spread the Gospel could be interpreted as though he were not quite sensible. That determination also applied to his efforts to encourage other believers to grow in God's grace and reach maturity, vs. 13. Christ died for all, and therefore all need the Gospel and to believe it. After they believe, they should also "not live unto themselves" but share the Good News with others and live lives exemplifying the will of the Lord they confess. Before Paul's conversion (seeing God's light), he saw Jesus as just another human being, but as a believer he realized that he was wrong. When anyone accepts Jesus as the Christ (Savior), he or she becomes a new creation, and as a new creation in union with Christ, that believer has a completely new (another) orientation to what is worthwhile in life. This new being is the result of God's doing alone. He has made possible, through Christ, for anyone to be reconciled to himself. In fact, "God was in Christ to bring the world (eventually the whole world order will be transformed) back to himself, and through that new relationship (a believer through belief in Jesus Christ with God the Father) God will not impute (assign blame for) their trespasses (sins) against them," vs. 19. What a glorious thing our heavenly Father has done for us as trusters in Jesus Christ! We are therefore ambassadors (authorized messengers) for Christ, and as God's representatives, we are to tell the world that "God hath made him to be sin (that which separates people from God and makes them dead spiritually) for us, who (Jesus) knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him," vs. 21.

I. The time in history when Daniel had this experience was during the first year of Darius' reign over the Chaldeans, about 538 BC. The prophet was so concerned about what would happen to his people, the Jews, that he gave attention to the information available to him in the writings of the prophets. Daniel is now about ninety years of age, and he wonders how long his people will be without a homeland. He had learned from an earlier vision (in Chap. 8) that the Jews would experience a time of much trouble under "the little horn," Antiochus Epiphanes. How long would the God of heaven permit his people to be humiliated and abused? Daniel did the two things which reveal God's will, he studied God's Word and was thereby led to pray. Of this chapter, the first nineteen verses are given to the prayerful concern of Daniel for him and his people, and the last eight contain the answer for which the prophet prayed. The Word of God which Daniel studied included the prophet Jeremiah. There he learned that the Jews would be exiled for seventy years, vs. 2; Jer. 29, especially 29:10. This information would indicate to Daniel that the exile period would soon be over. Would God then reestablish Israel as a glorious nation as it was under David and his son Solomon? (Acts 1:6) The "little horn" vision of Chap. 8:9-12 had made Daniel wary of Israel's immediate future. At the end of that vision he "fainted and was sick for days" before he could return to the king's business (Belshazzar's). Even so, none understood the importance of the vision, 8:27. Now he has come under the rule of another king (Darius), and the prophet seeks another message from his God (and ours).

II. After studying God's Word, Daniel, "set my face unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, 'O Lord, the great and awesome God, keeping the covenant and loving kindness to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments,'" vs. 4, and see John 14:15. He confessed that he and the other Jews had sinned, committed iniquity, done wickedly, rebelled, departed from God's precepts, and not heeded God's servants, his prophets. Daniel further confessed that righteousness belonged to God, but that they, the Jews, were confused at that time, including all the Jews of the diaspora as well as those still in Jerusalem. They had been scattered because of their trespasses against Jehovah God. Daniel appealed to God's mercies and forgiveness even though they had rebelled against him and refused to obey the voice of the Lord their God. The prophet admitted that their current deplorable condition was of their own choosing, because they had not kept their oath written in the Law of Moses, vs. 11; Lev. 26:14-18. Jerusalem, the Jews holy city and home, had undergone continuous disaster. They, the Jews, knew the right according to God's will, for he had openly declared his desires for the Israelites in the Law of Moses. It had been written down for all to know, but the people had not conversed with their God (prayed) for strength to turn away from their iniquities and embrace the truth of God, vss. 11-13. The nature of God which Daniel confesses in vss. 14 and 16 is that God is the source of righteousness (See also Rom. 9:30-33.) that pleases

the Lord, vs. 14, "the Lord our God is righteous," and vs. 16 "according to all thy righteousness." In vs. 11 Daniel states, "Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law," and in vs. 20, "confessing my sin." [italics mine-WA] He said that every Jew had sinned including himself, and agrees with what Paul (God's Word) states at Rom. 3:23, "For all [including Gentiles as well] have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Also, at Gal. 3:22, "But the Scripture hath confirmed all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." Daniel's prayer was heard by God who sent Gabriel again to his prophet about three o'clock one afternoon as he was praying the above prayer, vs. 21.

III. God sent Gabriel to inform Daniel about the deep, profound concern the prophet had for his people, the Jews. One is reminded of the same earnest desire which Paul had for the same people in his letter to the believers at Rome. In this letter Paul expressed a love for them greater than love of his own life, Rom. 9:1-5. A part of Daniel's inquiry concerned "the holy mountain of my God," the Temple mount in Jerusalem as well as "my people Israel," vs. 20. While praying Daniel was informed by Gabriel, apparently in the form of a man, that he had come to answer the questions he (Daniel) had asked of Almighty God. "O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill [the ability to] and understanding," vs. 22. "When you began to plead for understanding, God sent me to satisfy that understanding, because you are greatly beloved. Therefore, give heed to the information in the following vision," vs. 23. Verses 24-27 communicate a volume of information without which much of the end time prophecy (Theologians call it "eschatology.") would have no scriptural key. Jesus referred to this passage specifically at Matt. 24:15 and at Mk 13:14 which give Dan. 9:27; 11:31; and 12:11 extremely important significance, I believe. Gabriel begins his answer to Daniel's plea by saying that seventy sevens (490 years or 70 weeks) are involved in the future of the Jews and Jerusalem. That is the period through which the Jews must finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins (forgiveness, see Matt. 18:22) and reconciliation. Further, the end of that time of seventy sevens will bring in "everlasting righteousness." Also, that long period of time will be concluded by the ending of the prophecy involved in this vision and the anointing of "the holy place, [holy of holies]." The chief confusion of Daniel appears to have been the problem of reconciling the seventy years of captivity in Babylon (prophesied by Jer. 29:10) and the period to be covered by the kingdoms indicated by Nebuchadnezzar's image of gold, silver, brass, iron, and iron mixed with clay. Daniel was, of course, hoping for a return of the Jews to Jerusalem and the reestablishing of a glorious nation, Israel, as God had promised concerning David, Ezek. 37:1,21-28: 41-46; John 10:16. As we consider the sheer mathematics of the revelation in these four verses (24-27) of Daniel, we must keep in mind that by no means can we manipulate these figures to determine the day or hour of the coming of our Lord Jesus to earth again for us. Many have attempted such a calculation, but they (Militz, Alsted, Jurieu, Bengel, Ann Lee, William Miller [founder of the modern Adventist sects], Claas Epp, Ellen G. White, etc.) have been misled. Jesus himself said that God the Father would

not reveal that date, Mk 13:32; I Thes. 5:2. I believe that the mystery element (unknown) in the total time frame determining Jesus' return has to do with "the times of the Gentiles" referred to by Jesus at Lk 21:24. When John the Baptist gave his message that the kingdom of God was "at hand," the Messiah, Jesus, was on earth to receive the Jews and to establish that kingdom. However, the evidence is that God would not follow through on his promise at that time unless Israel as a nation would willingly accept the Messiah, Jesus, Matt. 11:10-19. Nor will he ever, I believe. But during the great tribulation, the Jews can only trust, because complete annihilation will be the only other option, Matt. 24:15-22. The seventy sevens period, then, has been interrupted by the taking out from among the Gentiles a people of God through Jesus Christ and any Jews who will accept Jesus as God's Messiah, Savior, during that time. Peter and Paul are examples of the latter, and the Couples Class are some examples of the former. The interruption of the seventy sevens period in Dan. 9:24 will include the Messiah's coming and a hesitation of the Messiah's reign on earth, vs. 26. Also, Jerusalem will be destroyed, vs. 26. (That happened in 70 AD.) There is one week left of the seventy sevens which were interrupted by the Messiah's being "cut off." That week (seven years) is to take place at the time of Jesus' return to earth. At that time an impostor of Christ will appear who will be the one to whom Paul referred at II Thes. 2:3 as "the man of sin," "the son of perdition." He is the "little horn" of Dan. 7:24-28, the beast of Rev. 13:11-18, and a Roman of Nebuchadnezzar's image of iron and clay, part religious and part political. His title at Dan. 9:26-27 is "the prince" of the people (all unbelievers). This man of sin will make an alliance (covenant) with the Jews at the beginning of the seventieth week (seven years) of Daniel's seventy sevens, vs. 27; John 5:43-47, and immediately after God has removed his ekklesia (all believers) from the earth. In the middle of the seven year covenant ("in the midst of the week", three and one-half years), the "prince," the antichrist, will break his seven year covenant with the Jews by placing an idol image in the Holy Place in Jerusalem, vs. 27. At that time God's Holy Spirit will not be residing in any of the earth's inhabitants. The lack of God's Spirit and the abominable desecration of the Holy Place will then create the awful period of the "abomination of desolation" referred to at Dan. 9:27, Matt. 24:15-26; [Jer. 30:7]; Mk 13:14-23; II Thes. 2:7. At the end of the tribulation, there will be a dark sun, and an invisible moon, and the stars will be in different motions than usual for them. Then will all be made right by Jesus' return to earth with all his ekklesia including the Jews who have come to rely upon the righteousness and lordship of Jesus Christ, Mk 13:24-27; Acts 2:19-21,36; Rom. 9:30-33. The kingdom of God under the lordship of Jesus, his Son, will then be "at hand" again, and, this time, it will be accepted by all of God's people, Rom. 10:13; 11:25-36. We believers cannot know the day or hour when Jesus will come for us, but we can recognize the season or nearness of his appearance, Mk 13:28-31; Lk 21:28; I Thes. 5:4.

IV. The term "generation" cited above in Mk 13:30 can be confusing if not given a proper Scriptural context. Jesus said there, "Truth-

fully I say to you, that this generation [my italics-WA] shall not pass, till all these things be done." (Lk 21:32 provides the same statement.) I bring this to our attention with Dan. 9, because this "generation" is related to "the times of the Gentiles," Lk 21:24. In Psa. 22 which Jesus quoted while paying the sin debts of us believers by hanging and dying on the cross (Mk 15:34), the thirtieth verse states, "A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord (God) for a generation," [my italics-WA]. At Gal. 3:16 God's Word states that Jesus Christ is that seed which fulfills God's promise to Abraham, Gen. 22, especially Gen. 22:18. Further, at Acts 2:40, Peter referred to this generation (current) as a period during which those who are to be made right (reconciled) with God will do so by repenting of their sins and confessing that Jesus is Lord with immersion in Jesus' name as a symbol of that confession. This includes "as many as the Lord our God shall call," (the ekklesia), Acts 2:39b. This period of God's New Covenant (Heb. 8:7-13) is accounted (recounted) by God as a "generation" (a block of time) which is to be terminated by a time of sorrow and desolation spoken of by Daniel in his Chap. 9. Isaiah at 53:10 prophesied that, "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him [Jesus]; he hath put him to grief; when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his [God's] seed [offspring, Son], he shall prolong his [God's] days, and the pleasure of the Lord [God] shall prosper in his hand." Our Lord Jesus Christ declared Daniel to be a [true] prophet, and that prophet's proclamation at Dan. 9:24-27 to be valid concerning events which are to happen at the end time when Jesus has promised to return for us believers, Matt. 24:15; Mk 13:14; John 14:1-3.

June 30, 1996

"Stirrings, Summary, And A Seal"
Dan. 11-12

Couples Class
Wendell Alford,
Teacher

I. The general vision which began in Chap. 10 continues through the remainder of Daniel's prophecy. It is very important that the predictions in this prophecy be associated with the Jews, for at the beginning of the vision the one imparting the vision to Daniel said to the prophet, "Now I am come to make thee understand what shall happen to thy people, [the Jews] in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days [yet to come]," Dan. 10:14. [My italics-WA] Note also that the angel Gabriel was God's messenger who revealed the vision regarding the fulfillment of the long period of "the times of the Gentiles," Dan. 9:21-27; Lk 21:24. In contrast, the angel Michael is the messenger directly involved in Chap. 10:13, 21 and 12:1. At 10:21 and 12:1 Michael is mentioned as "Michael your prince," and, "- - at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for [watches over] the children of thy people [the Jews]." Michael is also named in Jude 9 as the messenger of God who withstood the Devil regarding the body of Moses. While we understand that this vision of Chaps. 10-12 relates specifically to the Jews, there is an ideological bridge between this portion of Daniel's prophecy and the New Covenant. One of the main promises of the New Covenant is related to the resurrection of God's only begotten Son, Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:1-14; I Cor. 6:14; II Cor. 4:14), and resurrection, as such, is not stressed in the Old Covenant. At 12:2 Daniel is told that there will be a resurrection of all "thy people" [the Jews], both those who are righteous to everlasting life and those who are not righteous to "shame and everlasting contempt." And, as we shall see, there are other parallels such as the appearance of Antiochus Epiphanes (Dan. 8:9-12) who persecuted the Jews between and Old and New Covenants and the final persecutor of the Jews [and the entire earth], the Antichrist of II Thes. 2:3-4.

II. Note that Chap. 11 begins with "also" which indicates that the vision begun in Chap. 10 is being continued. An angel (not named specifically) came to Darius the Mede to encourage and strengthen the king. The angel then told Daniel that four Persian kings would follow Cyrus. The four began with Cambyses in about 529 BC and ended with Xerxes who invaded Greece in about 480 BC. When the latter was defeated, Media-Persia ceased being a world empire. The mighty king of vs. 11:3 is the military genius who established his western world dominion beginning in 323 BC, the "he-goat" of Dan. 8:5, Alexander the Great. The "king of the south" is the successor of another of Alexander's generals, Seleucid, vs. 11:6. Vs. 11:7 speaks of another Ptolemy ruler who carried large supplies of gold and silver to Egypt from Syria. His sons were infighters who practiced incest, greed, and unimaginable intrigue. [I read in our edition (1964) of Britannica Encyclopaedia an article about the fourteen Ptolemys. Truthfully, the information there is far more pathetic (sick) than the worst of our "soap operas." Ptolemy II (Philadelphus) married his own full sister, Arsinoe. We examined Antiochus Epiphanes of the Ptolemy Dynasty in Dan. 8, III, and his attempt to decimate or abolish all the Jews.] To form an alliance

between two of the warring families, Ptolemy Philadelphus of Egypt gave his daughter Berenice in marriage to Antiochus Theos of Syria. Antiochus was already married to Laodice whom he divorced. After two years Ptolemy Philadelphus died, and Antiochus Theos put away Berenice with her son and took back his first wife, Laodice. She, then, poisoned Antiochus Theos and ordered the death of Berenice and her son, and afterwards Laodice put her own son, Seleucus Callinicus, on the throne. This complicated interplay between Alexander's successors continues until vs. 11:18 where Daniel is told about "a prince for his own behalf shall cause the reproach offered by him to cease." This "prince" is the rise of the Roman Empire.

III. In about 195 BC Antiochus the Great made a treaty with Egypt and gave his daughter Cleopatra to Ptolemy Epiphanes in marriage. In 170 BC Epiphanes entered Jerusalem, slew 100,000 Jews, took away the daily sacrifice at the Temple, and placed an image of Jupiter on the Holy Mount, vs.. 11:31. In vs. 11:35 Daniel relates this Epiphanes to a like figure who will appear, "even to the time of the end: because it is for a time appointed," vs. 11:35. Daniel's prophecy now gives full attention to the "man of sin," "the son of perdition," who is also described by God's Word at II Thes. 2:1-4, 8-12. Daniel's and Paul's accounts can be seen as the same, because of the similitude of their descriptions. This person will feel no obligation to anyone else, "the king will do according to his [own] will," Dan. 11:36, and, "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he is as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God," II Thes. 2:4. He will enter into "the glorious land" [Israel], and overcome many countries in the area. At last he will establish his headquarters between "the seas" [Mediterranean] and the "glorious holy mountain" [Jerusalem], but, "he shall come to his end, and none shall help him," vs. 11:45.

IV. Chap. 12 begins with the assertion of "a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time," vs. 12:1. This reference can only be that same time to which Jesus referred at Matt. 24:21, and see also at Jer. 30:7. Now, note the last part of Dan. 12:1, "at that time thy [Daniel's] people [the Jews] shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book [elected or chosen]." The last clause of Jer. 30:7 (cited above) is, "but he (Jacob's people, the Jews) shall be saved out of it." This salvation of the Jews agrees with Rom. 11:25-32 where Paul (God's Word) quotes Isa. 59:20-21. Note especially Rom. 11:28 and relate it to Dan. 12:1b, "every one that shall be found written in the book," i.e., elected. Among those "elected" will be, I believe, all those who have exercised faith in Almighty God including such notables as Abraham, Moses, David, Samuel, etc., listed in Heb. 11. They will join us trusters in Jesus Christ with Jesus, God's Messiah, after Jesus comes for us, Heb. 11:39-40. Daniel wanted to know more details (vs. 12:8), but the Lord said to him, "Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end," Dan. 12:9,13. We know, through our faith, that Jesus is coming for us and that we will be in the Kingdom of God which he will establish at that time!

August 1, 1993
Spec. Supp. for
Pastor Doug.

"Image and Likeness"

Couples Class
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IMAGE, , tsehlem - P. 511 in Strong's Main Concordance; No. 6754 on p. 99 of his The Hebrew Bible: resemblance or a representative figure.

LIKENESS, , demooth - p. 606 in Strong's Main Concordance; No. 1823 on p. 31 of his The Hebrew Bible: fashioned like (from No. 1819 , damah which means "comparable")

The fact that two terms (communicative concepts) are used here, Gen. 1:26, is highly significant, I believe. Connotational differences are differentiated by our English "representative" (image) versus "in-fashion-of" or "comparable" (eternal Spirit [spirits]), i.e., the "image" is not comparable but the "likeness" can withstand the definition of comparison (both eternal following a given human being's creation by God). God is Spirit (John 4:24), and the Bible, I believe, gives no hint of any physical identity in which God the Father inhabits. In the person of the Holy Spirit he resided in our Lord as a human being and in believers, I Cor. 3:15; II Cor. 6:16. Believers are said to be at one (atonement) with God the Father through faith in his only begotten (by means of the Holy Spirit the same Spirit that was in Jesus Christ) Son Jesus, the Savior.