

- Systemic Teaching about Christian Life -



The Letter or Life

Series:
Suggestions for
Reading and
Studying the Bible

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General Considerations about Using This Material:

The subject presented in this material aims to provide support to knowledge and an in-depth study of the Bible and the Christian life.

Based on the understanding that in the Christian Bible is contained the consolidation of fundamental and formal records of the writings inspired by God for humanity and each person of it, the contents exposed in this material are not intended to add, ever, anything to the Bible, nor ever remove anything from it. The aim through this subject is to contribute to the exploration of what already was registered and passed on to us over thousands of years of history by the One Creator and Lord of Heaven and Earth.

The contents presented on the next pages, of course, intend to address just a portion of the essential themes of life displayed with such great amplitude in the Bible. On the other hand, however, this subject is presented in a grouped, colligated, organized and systematized manner with the objective to serve as an aid to knowledge and understanding of the Christian life without losing sight of the main aspects of it.

Ecclesiastes 12: 11 The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of scholars are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd.

Related words put together, as told in the biblical text above, serve as goads and nails for fixing supports and help for the life of people that hear and receive them. Therefore, one objective of this material is to study and seek a broader understanding of the truths handed down to us by the Unique Pastor and God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth.

We would still like to suggest that the reading and studying of this material also should always be accompanied by prudence and proper investigation, believing that this is a very healthy habit to be practiced toward any material presented to a person.

The act of acceptance, rejection, or “retaining what is good,” is a personal and individual attribute given to those who receive the wisdom from God and which should be exercised or used by them toward all that comes into their hands.

Proverbs 8: 12 "I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, And find out knowledge and discretion.

Acts 17: 11 These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

Proverbs 16: 1 The preparations of the heart belong to man, But the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.

2 All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, But the LORD weighs the spirits.

3 Commit your works to the LORD, And your thoughts will be established.

More details about these initial considerations are posted at www.zoominchristianlife.org.

Ronald Gortz and Irmelin Gortz, servants of the Lord Jesus Christ!

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*Revelation 21: 5 Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."
6 And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.*

The free availability of this material has been just the adoption of a similar practical example of how the King of Kings, Lord of Lords, distributes life of the source of living water to those who thirst for it.

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*1Timothy 2: 3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,
4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

More details about these initial considerations are posted at www.zoominchristianlife.org.

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C1. Distinctions between “Scriptures” and “Every Word of God”

The subject presented in this material is a part that integrates the Series of Suggestions for Reading and Studying the Bible, and is preceded by the following themes:

- ⇒ 1) History Told by the Unique Father of All Sons and Daughters;
- ⇒ 2) Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth;
- ⇒ 3) Colligated or Associated Words and Riddles of Antiquity.

And although we understand that each of the above-mentioned materials already propose matters of vital importance for the enrichment of people's relationship with the writings of the Bible, the reason for the presentation of this new aspect comes from the fact that, in our view, the central part of the theme of the present series still lacks a more specific approach on one of the most essential and enlightening aspects of the whole practice of reading and studying the contents of the Scriptures.

Thus, considering the importance of this essential aspect, as well as the need to address it in a more specific way, is that this new material was elaborated under a separated theme. Therefore, in the descriptions that follow ahead, we aim to cooperate so that the lack mentioned more briefly in the other subjects, and still not addressed more extensively in them, will now receive a broader and more particular explanation.

We understand that the topic to be addressed in the sequel is in fact very necessary, for just as many people may regard the records of the Bible as being inferior to what is due to them, so many people may also exaggerate the value they attach to the Scriptures.

By the fact that the words described in the Bible are also presented as “Word of God” and “Word of Truth,” it is well understandable that the people who wish to behave respectfully toward God, the Unique Creator, likewise also want to see the records of the Bible in honor and with a high degree of respect. This aspect, however, needs to be viewed with understanding so that an individual does not incur the undue thought that God expresses Himself to people only or exclusively through the Scriptures.

In relation to this last point, it seems to us that a very interesting area of mathematics that can help us is the theme of the “Sets Theory,” in which we are taught, among other things, that the various areas or subjects of life are subdivided into larger sets, smaller sets, sets contained in other sets, and sets that are entirely distinct from other sets.

The concepts about sets can contribute to a clearer and more precise definition of the various groupings that occur in life, as well as cooperate in the perception and understanding of the limits or boundaries of each set.

Therefore, looking from the standpoint of the “Sets Theory,” it is crucial for a person to realize that although the Scriptures are a faithful and broad set of the “Word of God,” this does not imply that the Scriptures are the set that covers “the whole Word of God” or “every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”

To acknowledge that the records of the so-called set of Scriptures indeed are the expression of the “Word of God” is quite different from saying that the Scriptures are the set of “all the Words of God.”

Although the text of 2 Timothy 3, verse 16, asserts that *all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable*, it is not stated in this same text, nor in other Scriptures, that the biblical writings cover all the ways God expresses Himself in words.

Paul, while writing to Timothy, in fact explicitly states that All Scripture is inspired by God, which also implies to say that “all the contents” recorded in the set called “Scriptures” are inspired by God, for if the Whole Set is inspired by God, also the details of the same set are inspired by the Lord.

Nevertheless, Paul's assertion that All Scripture, in all its parts, is given by the inspiration of God should never be confused with the misconception that “The Scripture” or “The Scriptures” inspired by God represent the entirety of what God has said, says or will say.

Even though “all Scripture” is the “Word of God” and the “Word of Truth” on the topics it addresses, to consider that the “Scriptures” are the expression of all that God said, says, or will say is an exaggerated or distorted attribution of value to the writings granted by God to humankind.

Although the Scriptures are a faithful expression of God's inspiration in all their contents, they are the set that contains a “part of all the words of God uttered in the Universe.”

The Scriptures are the “part of the words uttered by God and that the Lord has chosen to grant formally to humankind also by the written way,” a reason why they are also named, as already mentioned, “Divine Scriptures.” However, the fact that God allowed part of His words to be recorded in “Scriptures” does not make of them the totality of what is expressed by God through words.

The expression “The Whole Word of God,” unlike the expression “All Scripture,” refers to a broader set and a higher number of records than just those contained in the Bible, for if there is a reference to a set with the characteristic of covering the global aspect of God's words, this set should also be composed of:

- ⇒ 1) Everything that God said and that was recorded in the Scriptures;
- ⇒ 2) All that God has already uttered in the past, but which was not recorded in writings that were formalized in the compendium called the Christian Bible;
- ⇒ 3) Everything that God is saying in the present;
- ⇒ 4) Everything that God will yet pronounce in the future.

If the Scriptures were the representation of all that God said, says, or will say, that is, if they were the same as the set of the “Whole Words of God,” the Lord God would have become a mute God, because in this case, everything He said or could say would have been already converged to the Scriptures. In this situation, the Lord would have imposed upon Himself a condition of no longer being able to speak to humans or any other being in the universe other than through the Scriptures.

And why are we bringing up this aspect of the need for differentiation between the set of the “Scriptures” and the set that encompasses the “Entire Word of God”?

We are bringing up the point of the need for differentiation between the set of the “Scriptures” and the “Entire Word of God” to make it more evident, for if it is not adequately clarified, the very reading and interpretation of parts of crucial relevance in the Scriptures can be significantly impaired.

If a person does not distinguish the set named “Scriptures” from the set “All Words of God,” one may incur the perilous consideration that the entire references of the Scriptures to the “Word of God” would always be related or appointed to the Scriptures themselves. And by doing so, one may fail to realize that this is not always the case.

If the set named “Scriptures” were to be equal to the set of “All Words of God,” only the words contained in the Bible records could be considered as words that support the Universe, and God could not even use other words to address Himself to the angels, to the human being, to the creation in general, or to His Heavenly Kingdom.

Nevertheless, in Psalm 91, for instance, we see that God instructs His angels continually, particularly, or explicitly concerning the life of those who trust in Him and who place in the Lord the trust and hope of protection for their daily life.

*Psalms 91: 9 **Because you have made the LORD, who is my refuge, Even the Most High, your dwelling place,**
 10 **No evil shall befall you, Nor shall any plague come near your dwelling;**
 11 **For He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you in all your ways.***

Although the Scriptures expose fundamental aspects of the Word of God and expose contents that are eternal, the Scriptures do not contain and could not contain all or each of the instructions that the Lord God gives about every life that trust in Him.

Although the Lord, through the Scriptures, has declared words and guidelines that apply to all human beings and that will never be shaken, He also sustains the lives of people with new and personalized instructions that are uttered by His mouth throughout the unfolding of an individual's life.

If we also look at the history of humankind, it may be observed that it is not the Scriptures themselves that sustained the lives of the people. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Noah, Adam, and every human being that existed did not pass to exist and were not sustained from the Scriptures, but from a living declaration of God and the breath of life of God, as also is declared by the precious words of Job that follow below:

*Job 33: 4 **The Spirit of God has made me, And the breath of the Almighty gives me life.***

*Job 34: 14 If He should set His heart on it, If He should gather to
Himself His Spirit and His breath,
15 All flesh would perish together, And man would return to dust.*

Until the time that Moses lived on the face of the Earth, there was not even a set of Scriptures by which people could think about guiding their lives or using them as a reference for their existence.

Therefore, as already mentioned, the Scriptures are of great importance and inestimable value. The contributions they already provided and bring to the people of the most diverse generations are immeasurable. However, the Scriptures should not be valued to the point where people come to think that they express “the whole Word of God” as if God were limited to speak only through them.

Although God has inspired the set which is called "The Scriptures," and that He will not announce anything specific to any person that contradicts the truths that were inspired by the Holy Spirit to be recorded in the so-called Holy Bible compendium, it should be reinforced that the Lord is greater than the "Scriptures" that He Himself granted to be written. The set of “All Words of God” is alive and dynamic, for the Lord is the living God Who expresses Himself all the time to His creation.

The Lord is a living God and also speaks through living ways to His creation.

God indeed proclaims truth to the world and instructs His children through the Scriptures. However, the Lord also spoke and speaks directly to His children of all centuries and epochs, teaching them to keep the words of the Scriptures in the most diverse areas and details of their life. God instructs individuals who are willing to hear the Lord's instructions through the Scriptures, but He also instructs them directly so that they know how to follow or apply accurately what the Lord is teaching them.

The Scriptures have a unique role in God's ways of communicating with people, but they are still an instrument of cooperation in the hand of God, the Creator, Who also speaks continually through “alive ways” with His creation, as expressed in a clear and objective manner also in the following text:

*Hebrews 1: 1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in
time past to the fathers by the prophets,
2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has
appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;
3 who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His
person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He
had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the
Majesty on high,
4 having become so much better than the angels, as He has by
inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.*

Thus, knowing that there is a substantial differentiation between the “Scriptures” and the “Whole Word of God” sets, a person may see the following text, declared by the Lord Jesus Christ, in a much broader and more comprehensive way:

*Matthew 4: 4 **But He (Jesus) answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"***

If someone chooses to submit oneself to the thought that “Every Word of God” is only referring to the words of the “Scriptures,” one would also have to consider that God could no longer speak to him or her except through the “Scriptures,” which contradicts many texts of the “Scriptures” themselves, such as those that follow:

*Romans 8: 14 **For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.***

*15 **For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."***

*16 **The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.***

*Hebrews 12: 25 **See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven,***

*26 **whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven."***

Neither the text of Matthew 4 nor the text of Hebrews 1, both mentioned above, declare that the Lord sustains all things with the power of the Scriptures. There is a reference in both to the word of God Himself. There is a reference to the word that is alive and present in all existence and from which many vital aspects have been recorded in the Scriptures so that people can know that the power and foundation of life are actually in the Lord.

Therefore, **every human being is invited by God to know the Scriptures, but this, for the primary purpose that also through the Scriptures, one may be instructed that the Lord's goal for human beings is that each person relates with his or her Eternal Creator through a continuous and living way.**

Through the set of words of the Scriptures, each human being is invited to know that God has always expressed Himself and continues to express Himself directly to the people who hear His unshakable living voice, as well as that the broader set of “All the Words of God” will always be increased by the freshness of what the Lord is still proclaiming and will proclaim in

the following ages and along eternity, even though the so-named Scriptures are already complete and that God will never contradict them.

C2. The Purpose of the Scriptures Extends Beyond the Writings Themselves

Having addressed the aspect that God is not limited to expressing Himself to people only through the Scriptures, although the Lord always instructs people in accordance with the truth that is described in the Scriptures, it is vital also to distinguish that there is a difference between the texts of the Scriptures themselves and the purposes to which these records point out.

We understand that it is indispensable to highlight this topic because there are many people who unduly believe that the mere fact of being holders of a Bible or even that the eventual practice of reading some content that they like of the Scriptures already puts them under a sort of automatic condition of blessed persons or that should deserve the blessings of God for it.

These people, however, do not know or fail to pay attention to the fact that their relationship with the Scriptures just at the literary level, or the possession of one or more copies of the Bible, will not necessarily reflect fruitful aspects for them.

The use of the expression Scripture or Scriptures is also directly related to the aspect that the words contained in them were registered using the technique of physical or human writing. And so, as a material set of writings, the Scriptures were recorded by the same material forms or techniques that were used throughout human history for the record of millions and millions of other writings.

As a book, materially or technically speaking, and using a classic expression for the record of writings, the Bible is of “paper and ink” just like any other book.

The Bible, as a book itself, as a compendium of letters, words, and sentences, can be read like any other book. In the “physical book called the Bible,” there are no unusual material characteristics of writing that distinguish it from other books. The physical records of the contents of the Bible were not made with techniques different from those used for most other writings. The manuscripts of the Bible were recorded on papyrus, materials for letters, or other stuff used to record written content as well as many other texts created along the various times of the present world.

If, on the one hand, the Scriptures are the expression of a set of words inspired by God to the men and women who recorded them materially in human language, on the other hand, the records of the Bible, from the point of view of the material technique of writing, do not present any distinction from the other writings made on Earth.

Moreover, the fact that the texts of the Bible have been written, recorded, and passed on for centuries through tangible and physical materials is also one of the factors that give them the credibility that they actually were written by people in their own epochs in the present world.

Considering that we currently have writings and more writings that are only published by digital media without ever being actually printed with ink on paper, it is clear that today the expression “written on paper and ink,” in parts, is just figurative. However, also in this new scenario, the Bible is materially exposed or written by precisely the same means or resources as the other writings made available on Earth.

Therefore, even though physical writing has contributed to the term Scriptures and that this way may even be more robust against tampering than the present digital means, it is not the raw material itself, also used as a means of presenting the Bible to

the world, that makes the biblical content more special than the texts of other books. It is not the mere material side through which biblical records have been offered to the generations that distinguish them from other ancient writings.

That being said, we would like to point out here that **no writing, as a written letter, as a physical record, has life in itself.**

The writings, materially speaking, do not have the ability to jump, by themselves, out of the pages or the screens in order to give life to a person or an object.

Moreover, to say that written letters have no life in themselves may seem obvious, but often or for many people, this consideration may not be so obvious.

There are people, for instance, who frame texts or expose words written in physical places that they consider special and, often, even without sometimes realizing it, begin to put and declare their trust more in the various objects in which they have printed or engraved the chosen texts than in the content of the texts themselves.

Many people may even devote great admiration to written texts that they have come to know, but **written words only come to life when someone associates practical and real acts with them, for written words always need an agent to give them some type of action, effect, movement or animation.**

Let us consider, for example, a water cooler with contaminated water and in front of which is a sign stating that the referred water is unfit for consumption.

The sign or the poster writings alone have no life or ability to act to prevent a person from drinking the contaminated water if such a person wants to do so. The poster in reference will only be effective if the person approaching the water cooler also observes the described content and thereby does not drink the contaminated water.

If, on the other hand, a person does not see the sign or read its content and despise it, the written records alone cannot give protection to him or her if one insists on drinking the water from that water cooler.

Let us now consider the example of the same water cooler with contaminated water, but with a difference in the content of the poster, where the written words would falsely describe that the disqualified water would be appropriate for consumption.

Also, in this case, similarly, if a person sees the sign, but is suspicious of the quality of the water and does not drink it, one will not receive the contamination in that water cooler just because the poster informs that the water is appropriate for consumption, for this kind of power is not possible to be conferred to written words.

If, however, an individual would pay attention to the false information of the poster and therefore drink from the water of the water cooler, then the written words would have been transformed into an expression of action or power.

Regardless of whether the poster content of the above example would be false or true, it would not have life in itself to take the initiative to protect an individual nor to contaminate a person.

Similarly to the examples of the signs in front of the water coolers, **the writings of a Bible do not begin to function for the instruction of a person merely because they are available before him or her, even though one considers the Scriptures admirable. From the perspective of the physical**

composition of letters and words in “paper and ink,” the Bible does not instruct the life of an individual merely because one possesses a copy of it.

An open Bible in a beautiful Psalm, placed in the middle of a room on a beautiful pedestal, but never read or which content is never taken into account by the people who frequently pass through it, has no life in itself. This physical Bible is restricted to be a decoration artifact, although it contains the records of the Word of God revealed to humankind and which is powerful to instruct for the present life and eternal salvation.

One can, however, argue that the Scriptures are called the “Holy Bible,” which in fact occurs frequently. Nevertheless, what is being emphasized here is that the Bible is not sacred merely as paper or as a printed book, but primarily because of its content. Moreover, if the printing of the Bible on paper could be the element that gave it the status of “sacred,” the Scriptures should never be presented by digital means, for this would take away from them the supposed status of a “sacred book” in a format that can be “touched” physically by people.

The Bible is considered sacred, differentiated, unique or special for describing words that have life in God and that from God manifest life to those who understand and receive them, and not just because they are materialized in some material resource.

As stated in the own writings of the Bible, the words contained in it are the words of the Unique God, Creator of Heavens and Earth, and of which the foundation and power remain in God.

Considering yet another example, it may be observed that a medical prescription containing a description of a medication that serves as a means or instrument by which a patient is to be cured, only can produce the expected effect if the patient indeed ingests the indicated drug and according to the prescribed dosage. A medical prescription may have its utility entirely neglected if the patient does not practice the items described therein to be performed.

A particular prescription may be useful, accurate, or correct, but the goals to be achieved by the description of a prescription depend on living agents who implement the instructions contained therein. Regardless how complete the instructions are described therein, the prescription is not the healing agent itself, but it is given for the purpose of assisting all those who need to know the information contained therein to act in accordance with what has been prescribed.

Still following the above examples, similar principles may also occur regarding the instructions of the Scriptures. Therefore, **having the understanding that the Scriptures were given for purposes beyond the very act of being presented and offered in written form is crucial for their content to cease to be seen as mere letters in the life of an individual.**

The records of the Scriptures have been granted for the purposes which are also outlined in them. And since these records were given in conjunction with the purposes described in them, it also becomes notorious that the Scriptures are there to serve the purposes that even extend beyond the precious writing of the Bible itself, as we can also see in the following text:

*John 20: 30 And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book;
31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.*

The Scriptures and the purposes for which they were given, or to which they point out, are very different aspects. The action of a person merely wanting to know the Scriptures, or the narrative of their contents, is very distinct from the action of seeking to discern more precisely what are the purposes for which the Scriptures point out.

The Scriptures expose narratives, principles, knowledge, revelations, and so forth, but not without also pointing to the purpose of what is contained therein. The Scriptures repeatedly emphasize that the purposes written in them are conferred for aims to be achieved in the practical life of the people, and not to be seen just as a mere literary description or perspective.

The act of believing that the Lord Jesus is the Christ and the Only Begotten Son of God, for example, is an act that occurs in the heart of a person and not in the Scriptures. In the same way, the life that God grants to the one who believes in Christ comes from God, and not from the writings themselves.

The Scriptures describe their purposes and how these can be attained, but the living acts that accomplish the purposes take place outside the pages of “paper and ink” or “digital records” in which the Scriptures are respectively printed or stored.

To fulfill what is stated in the Scriptures, there is a need of agents to bring their statements to life and make them come true, being the Eternal Lord the first and foremost agent who grants this life.

C3. Distinction Between the Map of the Treasure and the Treasure Itself

Among the historical narratives or tales that attract the attention of many people, there are those that are related to the search for hidden treasures and that depend to be located on the so-called maps of these treasures.

Still regarding these reports, what often happens is that also the treasure maps become valuable in themselves, just as the aim to possess the maps becomes the subject of considerable dispute.

The mentioned types of maps, however, tend to maintain their high value only while their respective treasures are still being sought, for once the treasure is located, the map loses its purpose. The map is a tool to assist in locating the treasure it indicates, and as such, it may reach even a very high value only while it is still useful.

And although the example described in the above paragraphs does not apply fully to the purposes and uses of the Bible contents, we understand, however, to be relevant to draw some comparisons of it with the Scriptures.

Looking first at the aspects in which the Scriptures are distinct from the world's treasure maps, it can be noted that the biblical texts point to treasures far superior to any treasure that may exist on Earth, being the eternal life with God one of the chief treasures pointed out by the Scriptures.

Eternal life, unlike earthly treasures, is a resource that does not get exhausted, and therefore the same treasure is likely to be found multiple times and by the most distinct people. In this way, the treasure maps of the Scriptures remain with high value even after a person has reached the desired treasure. They keep serving as support for new people to find the riches of these same treasures also for them, as well as they keep serving people so that they may delve into new treasures within the main treasure.

On the other hand, by comparing the goals of the treasure maps with some of the purposes of the Scriptures, similarities may be observed among them, which show us that despite the incalculable relevance and preciousness of the Scriptures, these are not indeed the treasure for which the texts of the Bible point out. The Scriptures were granted to humankind for a purpose greater than themselves. The Scriptures were given to signal to the greatest treasure that every human being should aspire to find.

Therefore, in order for the Scriptures to be appropriately seen by a person, it is also necessary that the latter seeks to use them to go towards the chief treasure about which the biblical contents describe so many aspects and virtues. If a person only values the Scriptures by the Scriptures themselves, one is not attaching value to the purposes for which the Scriptures were granted by the Lord.

Just as a person who has a treasure map may begin to value the map itself rather than the treasure, and may even try to exploit the ownership of the map commercially, so it is also possible for people to begin to satisfy themselves more with the writings of the Scriptures than with the purposes that are described by them.

Treasure maps traders can even go so far as to no longer want people to actually reach the treasure pointed out by the map, for this would extinguish their activity around the map to which they began to devote their life to obtain from it their desired profits.

Thousands and millions of written, spoken, sung, exposed in films, and painted comments regarding the Scriptures have been produced and continue to be produced. However, here is a question: How many of these comments are indeed faithful to the purposes of the Scriptures and that point to the real treasures for which the Scriptures were given?

Nowadays, for instance, Bibles are being edited and marketed with the association of a large variety of considerations and points of view, and they are created even with titles and addendums differentiated according to the target audience of the “treasure map trade.” There are Bibles so-called of the “Children,” “Teenagers,” “Men,” “Women,” “Fathers,” “Mothers,” “Entrepreneurs,” “Workers,” “Warriors” and many other variations that are dumped daily in the world.

So, at this point, perhaps, also some other questions should still be asked, as follows:

- ⇒ 1) Could the Bible of each of these particular groups be different from those addressed to the other groups?
- ⇒ 2) Could there be different Bibles that point to different treasures depending on the different groups of people?
- ⇒ 3) Could the Bible that the father reads be different from the Bible that the mother reads? And the child should learn about the Bible from whom, from the father or the mother? Or should children learn only from children's Bibles and never from their parents' Bibles? And when they grow up, would they have to change their Bible for every period of life? What, then, would the older people's Bible say? Would it have different contents from the other Bibles for the final times of life of an individual on Earth, as if this subject should only be addressed at this time of life?
- ⇒ 4) Would it not be this vast variety of emphases attributed to the same Bible, a demonstration or evidence that there is in the world a profound ignorance of the real purposes and treasures for which the Scriptures were granted by God to humanity?
- ⇒ 5) With all this quantity of variations of presenting the Scriptures, do not people run the risk of being induced to unlearn how to read and study “a simple Bible” with its basic texts handed down from generation to generation for thousands of years?

We, therefore, emphasize here that also the creation of multiple “versions of the treasure map” is not yet reaching the treasure itself, remembering once again that the rampant trade of the “treasure map” tends to be stronger only as long as the real treasure is not found.

The ultimate purpose of Scripture does not vary by groups of people, nor by gender, race, age, professional activity or by the place where a person was born. The treasure to which the Scriptures signal is always the same and is for all people in all epochs and at all times, as exemplified bellow:

Proverbs 22: 6 Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.

*Hebrews 13: 8 **Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.***

There is only one proper way presented by God for all people to walk from their childhood to their old age, the only path that leads to the heavenly supreme purpose or the true treasure of life.

The true treasure of life pointed out in the Scriptures is the very God who inspired the Scriptures, and who is the Upholder of all the purposes described therein. And the actual living and walking in communion with the treasure signaled by the Scriptures is God's appointed way to live and walk in accordance with His will and to enjoy this treasure.

*John 14: 6 **Jesus said to him: I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.***

*John 17: 3 **And this is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.***

*John 11: 25 **Jesus said to her: I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.***
*26 **And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?***

So, regarding the Scriptures themselves, it is also necessary to know that they, despite their immeasurable value, cannot replace the treasure to which they point and for which they were so carefully granted to humankind.

The singular map which points to the treasure of eternal life granted from the heavenly kingdom, and which has been described to humanity over many centuries by words gathered under the term Scriptures, was not given to receive the place of primacy in the life of a person. This higher or unique place belongs and will always belong exclusively to the greatest treasure which the Scriptures themselves describe with such preciousness.

C4. The Life Described in the Scriptures is not in the Scriptures Themselves, but in the Lord Presented by the Scriptures

In the three previous chapters, under special care not to underestimate the value of the contents of the biblical texts, we aimed to expose that the Scriptures, in their narratives, describe aspects that are greater than their own condition of Scriptures.

Moreover, since the Scriptures contain mentions or explanations of aspects that have a higher status than the precious texts that describe them, a particular challenge of finding what is most valuable among aspects that are also very valuable is put before the people.

Also in life in general, it is often challenging to qualify those aspects of great relevance that are more important than other remarkable elements that present or make them known. However, in several situations, it is necessary to do so to give particular emphasis to some more vital or essential topics and to promote the evidence of what is indeed superior to other also precious aspects.

When the expression that some particular aspect is greater than others is used or that one point is more important than others, this does not mean automatically that those aspects of lesser importance are not precious, but that the most significant contain singular virtues and characteristics that in fact stand out from others.

Thus, in this context of a variety of degrees or levels of importance, and according to the previous chapters of the present subject, we have already seen that:

- ⇒ 1) The set of “All the Word of God” is greater than the set of the words of God recorded in the “Scriptures.”
- ⇒ 2) The purposes of the Scriptures extend beyond the writing and presentation of their contents. It is the purposes outlined in the Scriptures that magnify the contents of the Bible, not just the fact that they have been written and recorded throughout human history.
- ⇒ 3) The purposes for which the Scriptures point out, when the biblical texts are viewed under an analogy of being similar to a map, express the treasures to be found or received, which, therefore, should be more aspired than the treasure map itself and named Scriptures.

Despite the inestimable significance of the Scriptures, there is regarding of life, a set of living, vital, and practical aspects that cannot be replaced by the writings made about these points.

No matter how good the descriptions of some fundamental aspect of life are, and even if they are also of inestimable value and benefit, the descriptions of a fundamental aspect of life are no higher than the aspect they describe, nor can the descriptions take the place of the vital aspect they describe.

Considering, still, the undeniable fact that many practical questions about the various aspects of human life and creation are dealt with in the Bible, it is possible for people to become involved with the Scriptures on a variety of subjects without,

however, give due attention to aspects that have a more significant, crucial, and even fundamental condition.

Even people who say they do not believe in the Bible, in the sense that all their texts are inspired by God, use parts of its writings to try to apply their instructions in their daily lives, for it is undeniable that the Scriptures deal with many matters of importance in life and with a mastery and nobility worthy of great admiration.

The writings of the Bible, even when viewed only on the literary side, have great recognition even by many of those who say they do not see in them the instruction of God.

The book of Proverbs, for instance, is seen as a book rich in advice on practical aspects that occur routinely in people's lives and that occur similarly in all places where people inhabit, regardless of their cultures or ethnicity.

Nevertheless, there are even more central or fundamental points described in the Scriptures that may stay utterly unnoticed by many people, even by the most ardent and dedicated students or scholars of the Bible.

A person may become so involved by the relationship with the writings of the Bible themselves that one may go so far as to fail to realize that the principal aspects described by the Scriptures “are not” in the Scriptures themselves.

The treasure to which the treasure map named the Scriptures points is not on the map itself but outside it. The treasure is where the map says it is.

So, the point we want to address in this new chapter is to emphasize or highlight once more, or more directly, one of the aspects that are among the highest and most relevant that may exist on the subject of the relationship with the Scriptures or about the theme of suggestions for an appropriate reading and studying of the texts of the Bible.

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself, knowing all human beings, knowing how quickly people deviate from the way of the Heavenly Father for them when they also distance themselves from the instruction of God, and aiming to draw people's attention to the reality that life is beyond written letters, **has allowed His very objective words to be recorded in one of the most beautiful and most illuminating texts that can exist about an individual's proper relationship with the contents of the Bible.**

The understanding of the specific words of the Lord Jesus, regarding the subject referred to in the previous paragraph, reveals a particular new perspective on the purpose of God granting the Scriptures to humankind.

Therefore, to receive the grace of the Lord to understand a text such as the one exposed below is like receiving the enlightening of the obscured eyes or a clearing of the blocked hearing. Thus, in order to see well what the Lord is exposing or to hear well the sound of the invaluable content of the highlighted text, it may be necessary to look at it or to hear it repeatedly until this truth is seen with eyes that see the purpose of the Lord for each person and with ears that hear and understand the treasure for which the Lord indeed calls people.

Let us, then, attentively, see the words of the Lord Jesus Christ in the following text:

*John 5: 39 "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.
40 "But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.*

What verse is this?! How profound are these “colligated sentences” that the Lord has given us in such summarized words?!

When one speaks of reading, studying, or interpreting Bible texts, the words of the Lord Jesus Christ described above should never be put aside, but should be continually kept in the heart.

The text of the book of John chapter 5, verses 39 and 40, should be a continuous part of the set of texts that serve as guidance for meditation on all the other writings of the Scriptures.

On the other hand, it is a big challenge to discuss these few verses without again deviating from the central teaching that is contained in them, for although they are so short or summarized, they deal with several very significant points at the same time.

Thus, to order the various considerations on the text here in reference, it may be noted that by it the Lord Jesus Christ deals with at least the following topics:

- ⇒ 1) The unveiling of a misconceived purpose in the hearts of many people who examine the Scriptures;
- ⇒ 2) The unveiling of a central content that is in the Scriptures, but which may be unnoticed by those who examine them;
- ⇒ 3) The unraveling of an evasive or an improper attitude toward the will of God and which some people adopt exactly by staying intense in the systematic examination of the Scriptures;
- ⇒ 4) The unveiling of which is one of the most relevant or central purposes by which the Scriptures were granted to humanity;
- ⇒ 5) The unveiling that there is something greater than the Scriptures and even greater than the purposes described therein, for the Lord Jesus reveals the aspect that is powerful and capable of supporting the Scriptures and each of the purposes they describe;
- ⇒ 6) The explicit signaling or instructing what the people who read the Scriptures should do and what will be the outcome of following their instructions.

After presenting below again the words spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ in the context of the exercise of examining the Scriptures, we will then attempt to discuss briefly each of the six topics listed above:

*John 5: 39 "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me."
40 "But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life."*

As the first aspect mentioned in the last list of topics above, it can be seen, in the text in reference, that the people to whom the Lord addresses these words examined the Scriptures, even with high intensity, by the fact that they “judged that what they were looking for would be in the Scriptures.” This point was evident when the Lord said to them: ***“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life.”***

In this last reference, it may be noted that the Lord Jesus Christ was unraveling the intention in the heart of several people who read the Scriptures that were available to them until those days. The Lord revealed the “motivation” with which or by which they read the texts of the Scriptures.

Some people with whom the Lord spoke in the narrative of John chapter 5 were persons who had a “prejudgment,” “preconception,” or an inappropriate “own judgment” regarding the Scriptures, which, in turn, and in a very damaging way, affected all the reading and exercise of scrutiny that they did of the texts of God's written Word, although they did it with persistence or intensity.

Nevertheless, could there be a higher motivation than examining the Scriptures to find in them the “eternal life”? “Seeking eternal life” should not be the noblest of the pursuits of the human being?

Moreover, the people to whom the Lord addressed Himself or His words were not mere readers of the Scriptures, for to examine is more than to read, and even more than to study. To examine is to scan, to probe, to go deep in a detailed and meticulous manner.

However, by carefully observing the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, it may be seen that He revealed that those examiners of the Scriptures were engaged in an entirely fruitless task by harboring an inappropriate “pre” judgment that led them in the wrong or misleading direction.

The Lord Jesus Christ, through the words of the text of John 5, verses 39 and 40, was declaring or teaching that the Scriptures, in themselves, did not contain and would never contain the “eternal life” so sought by many examiners of the biblical writings.

Among the people of those days, as well as today, there were many individuals that day after day dedicated themselves exclusively to “examining” the Scriptures. Many of those who heard the mentioned words of Christ were not readers or scholars who did so just eventually or out of curiosity, but they even had the examination of the Scriptures as their professional activity.

And the Lord Jesus Christ, in exposing the error of perception of some people about the purpose of the Scriptures, was telling many examiners of them that their work of years, and for some the work of almost a lifetime, had been unsuccessful for having adopted as a hypothesis or premise a misjudgment about what can and cannot be contained in the set of the Scriptures.

The Lord Jesus Christ warned the examiners of the Scriptures that many of them were looking for something in a place where what they sought could never be found. They were looking for the treasure on the treasure map itself, not at the location that the map described.

Many of the examiners of the Scriptures invested hours and hours of their lives without discovering real or productive results. Many of them devoted significant portions of their lives to an unfruitful endeavor, which would continue to be unproductive if they would not heed the warning pronounced to them by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Similarly, also in the new epochs of humanity on Earth, people run the risk of being involved with many writings to the point of spending their lives on them without, however, realizing and indeed experiencing what the Scriptures point to as the true source of life.

People may even have the most renowned diplomas among human beings, know how to recite many parts of the Bible, but still incur the same problem of many people who lived in the days when the Lord Jesus Christ was in the flesh on Earth. And more than that, many persons may even attract crowds and multitudes along with them in their endless research and interpretations of the Bible and its contents, but as in ancient times, they may still be on a base widely misguided as to the judgment of the purposes of the Scriptures.

The first point to which the Lord Jesus warned the people in the text of John 5, verses 39 and 40, explains, then, that the judgment with which one reads the Scriptures must be right with what the Scriptures offer, and not with what the Scriptures do not offer and could not provide in the condition of a Scripture or written letter.

Let us, thus, once again, review this point that the Lord Jesus Christ was teaching through His own words directly, namely: **The Eternal Life described by the Scriptures was not and is not in the Scriptures themselves!**

Turning now to the second point in the last list of topics above, it may be noted that after the Lord Jesus showed what the Scriptures do not contain, He goes on to evidence what the Scriptures contain, and which was not being seen by the examiners of the Scriptures.

The Scriptures, although they do not contain eternal life in themselves, do offer instruction about the way or the place where eternal life is indeed. The Lord said: “*and these are they which testify of Me.*”

Huge and decisive was the distinction that the Lord Jesus Christ made between Himself and the Scriptures that pointed to Him.

The Scriptures, therefore, do not provide life itself, but they contain an ample and bright testimony that teaches and instructs on Him who is the giver of the natural life, as well as the spiritual and eternal life.

The Scriptures were not granted by God so that they would become an autonomous source of life for those who examine or study them as if in the writings or written knowledge themselves could be life. The Scriptures were given to testify and assist in the understanding that the heavenly and eternal life that God grants can only be found in the Lord Jesus Christ for all who come to believe in Him.

It is interesting to note that the same wrong judgment that some people made about the value of the Scriptures, attributing to them aspects that could never be found in these writings, was also the same judgment that blinded the eyes of these individuals in

such a way that they could not see what in fact was being communicated to them through the Scriptures.

The Lord Jesus announced to the examiners of the Scriptures that the erroneous thought that eternal life was in the Scriptures, or in the mere intellectual knowledge of these writings, was also the inappropriate thought that led them not to perceive what the Scriptures indeed were testifying about the life offered to humanity by God from His heavenly kingdom.

In the context we are observing, the Lord Jesus Christ was not dealing with people who did not know how to read, write, or who did not know the main facts of human history. Christ was dealing with people who read and examined the Scriptures frequently and systematically. Individuals who were not illiterate or who ignored the practices of reading and interpreting texts. However, despite being literate, they were people who wanted to see what was not really in the Scriptures and that, therefore, was also a cause for not seeing what in fact was described in the Scriptures.

The examiners of the Scriptures with whom the Lord Jesus spoke in the text narrated in the book of John, chapter 5, were so close to the true life, but also so far because of the “own judgment” to which they surrendered, and which resulted in a sequence of “distorted actions and discernment” as to the place for the search for the newness of life offered to them by God. The examiners of the Scriptures were overshadowed by the very work with which they were so intensely and repeatedly involved.

Should they, then, give up checking the Scriptures?

Should we, then, give up reading and studying the Bible, since there is also the risk of being involved in the same misconceptions that people have incurred in past centuries?

The words of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the text in reference, in any way express that He wanted the examiners to abandon the examination of the Scriptures, but that they also should be practicing what the Scriptures were telling or instructing them to do.

The Lord Jesus Christ, in responding to the examiners of the Scriptures, and thus advancing to the third point mentioned in the last list of topics above, was showing those people, and all of us, that **the examination of the Scriptures may also be performed with improper postures, besides the inappropriate judgment, namely: To use the argument that the intense exercise of reading and studying the texts of the Scriptures would suffice in itself to reach the eternal life or that this practice could justify people in their abstention from practicing what the biblical writings instruct to be practiced.**

The Lord Jesus Christ told the examiners, "***You search the Scriptures, ... but you are not willing to come to Me ...***" as the Scriptures instruct you to do.

In the few words of the Lord Jesus Christ mentioned above, there is no direct explanation of all the reasons why those listeners did not want to relate to Him, the source of truth and eternal life. However, these words explicitly state that a central motivation by which they did not understand the Scriptures, and by which they also had a wrong judgment about them, was the fact that they did not want to come to the true life that was being offered them by the Heavenly Father. The examiners of the

contents of the Scriptures did not want to practice what the very writings they examined instructed them to do.

The text in reference does not directly relate to the following consideration, but the impression one may have about this passage, and other contents of the Gospels, is that those scholars and examiners of the Scriptures did not even want the true life to be revealed as being available outside the Scriptures, for if this happened, many people would not be more dependent of the examiners to hear their vain considerations on eternal life.

Moreover, if regular people came to have an encounter with the true source of eternal life granted from the heavenly kingdom, also the real motivations of the hearts of those examiners of the Scriptures could be stripped down before others. If the path to eternal life described by the Scriptures would be explicitly shown or taught to everyone, people could go straight to the source of life, and they would no longer need the so-called “noble examiners of the Scriptures” to be their supposed mediators in this task.

So, if the Scriptures did not contain and cannot contain eternal life, why then were they given so broadly to humankind?

In response to the previous question, and still continuing in the considerations of the last paragraphs, the text of John 5, verses 39 and 40, also moves us to the fourth point of what the Lord Jesus revealed in His brief words to the examiners of the Scriptures, as follows.

Although the Scriptures do not contain and cannot contain eternal life, they have been granted, among other things, to meet the need of humankind for an accurate, steady, formal, and unshakable testimony about where each person can reach the newness of the eternal life that is offered from heaven by the Heavenly Father, as well as on what are the conditions for this life to be reached or received.

The description of God's purpose through a reliable means is meant to serve as an instruction for all people, but it also has the purpose of making formal to humanity what God has established for eternal life to be attained or received.

To demonstrate, in more than one way, that His Word is not volatile and unstable as the word of human beings, God granted that the truth and instructions about eternal life got recorded by natural means that affirm and evidence them to humanity also in this manner.

When the Bible, for instance, exposes the statement that “*for whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved,*” it is presenting a formal record of assurance that God has announced that whenever this statement is performed as the Scriptures instruct, salvation will be manifested.

The Scriptures have enormous value as a testament, as a written record of God's commitment by a written and official record, granting the Scriptures the highest degree of something written on the face of the Earth, for they have the seal or signature of having been written in the name of God. Moreover, also in this way, God proclaimed the commitment of His word itself as a guarantee of the provision of salvation.

The Scriptures testify again and again that Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and that no one comes to the Heavenly Father except through Him. And the fact that this statement is testified in the Scriptures that have as its seal the inspiration of the

Lord through the Holy Spirit, to the point that the Scriptures are called the Word of God and Word of Truth, demonstrates in one more way that this position of God is immutable and irrevocable.

The Scriptures recorded through the writing used by humans, also testify how the salvation of God or eternal life is offered to all human beings and how it can be accessed by those who receive it according to the conditions established by the Heavenly Father.

The Lord Jesus Christ, in His few sentences described in the text of John 5, verses 39 and 40, announced the primary purpose of the existence of the Scriptures, which is to bear a clear, firm, faithful, recorded, and official testimony about the Lord Himself so that people could and still may know that there is for them, in the Lord, a true life that goes beyond written words.

The true eternal life is in God, and God has granted all life to be manifested to human beings through His Unique, Living, and Eternal Begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, as may also be recalled in the following texts:

*Hebrews 1: 1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,
 2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;
 3 who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,
 4 having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.*

John 10: 10(b) ... I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

The fact that the Lord Jesus Christ announces that life is beyond the Scriptures, but that their writings testify about Him and the newness of life in Him, leads us, therefore, to the fifth topic listed above on the declarations of John 5, text repeated once again below:

*John 5: 39 "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.
 40 "But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.*

After announcing one of the most relevant purposes of the Scriptures, the Lord Jesus Christ, in His words of John 5, verses 39 and 40, uncovers the reality that there is definitely in the Universe a fundamental aspect that is greater than the formally recorded Scriptures and even greater than the very purposes that the Scriptures present.

In the following paragraphs, the point exposed above is further described yet in other words so that it can be perceived in a more specific way.

So, if the Scriptures point to the various purposes of God, one of the principals being the granting of eternal life to every individual, the Scriptures are precious, but the purposes of God are higher than the Scriptures. However, the purposes need to be performed, supported, or sustained by someone, which demonstrates, then, that before this, the One Who accomplishes the purposes described in the Bible, and gives them firm support or foundation, is even greater than the purposes and the Scriptures that describe them.

He, the Lord Jesus Christ, is greater than the Scriptures and is higher than any purpose that the Scriptures describe, for it is through Him that all God's purposes for human beings can be fulfilled, hold up, and established.

The One Who inspired the Scriptures is greater than the Scriptures, and He Who is mighty or able to fulfill the purposes recorded in the Scriptures is higher than the very purposes announced in them.

What is exposed in these last paragraphs is also what the Lord Jesus Christ spoke to the people when He said": "***The Scriptures testify of me***"!

The Scriptures testify that the Lord Jesus Christ is the eternal life that the people sought and seek so much in the historical writings given by God.

The Scriptures can serve as a map that points to eternal life, but Christ is indeed the newness of life and the giver of eternal life to those who believe in Him and receive Him in the heart as the Eternal Lord.

The Scriptures do contain the truth about how to find eternal life, but they do not have in fact this life in themselves. The Scriptures present the answer to everyone who seeks to know where to find eternal life, but they alone cannot give people the salvation and novelty of life that they so desperately need.

As seen in the previous chapters, the writings need agents to give life to them and to support the granted life. And the Lord Jesus Christ is the agent of God who confers life according to the heavenly kingdom, as well as the support to the statements about eternal life described in the Scriptures.

By proclaiming that the Scriptures testify that He is the eternal life granted by God and described in these same Scriptures, and that this life is not actually in "paper and ink," in "letters," or "digits" of texts written down in the world, the Lord Jesus was also shedding great light on the specific function of the writings and on the way in which someone should examine them to avoid incurring unfruitful and similar results to the examiners whom the Lord exhorted.

And so, after observing this marvelous elucidation that the eternal life is in the Lord of the Scriptures Himself, it seems to us that we can finally discuss the sixth and last topic that was mentioned earlier about the text of the book of John in reference in this chapter.

This sixth topic is especially relevant because, in addition to the proclamation that He is the very provision of the newness of life or the eternal life, the Lord Jesus did not

just proclaim where eternal life indeed lies, but He also taught about the way people can get access to it.

Despite the greatness of His words that announced the true source of eternal life, the Lord Jesus Christ did not just proclaim this vital information. If we look again at the words of the Lord Jesus in the text that is being studied more closely in this chapter, it may be noted that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself did not stop at the clarification of who He was regarding the life that the examiners of the Scriptures were seeking wrongly in the writings.

Through His instruction, the Lord Jesus Christ did not want people just to know who He was, but He wanted them also to know how they could, in fact, come to eternal life that is in Him.

In addition to presenting the eternal life that God was offering in Him to the world, the Lord Jesus Christ also showed people what they are called to do in order to know and achieve this life that the Heavenly Father wants to grant to every person.

The Lord Jesus Christ taught that mere knowledge of the information that He is the source of eternal life does not automatically establish a real and practical connection that leads people to a personal experience with this life. There is one more step to be taken for an adequate encounter with the newness of life, which is the establishment of a personal connection of faith and relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ, by His words, showed the need for a person to believe in God and to want to receive the eternal life offered by the Heavenly Father so that one may also experience this newness of life.

If a person, for instance, reads thousands of times a sentence or instruction that announces that one needs water to live, but despite this does not ingest any liquid, one will inevitably die for not having followed the instruction given to him or her.

Similarly, information about eternal life is of utmost importance, but without the connection to the eternal life proclaimed by the Scriptures, a person does not put oneself in a condition that allows him or her to experience or to enjoy the life offered from the kingdom of God.

It is not primarily knowledge about something that gives life. It is the active relationship with life that produces life! Knowledge can grant instruction about the steps necessary to attain the newness of life, but it is the relationship with heavenly life that produces novelty of life.

Therefore, **reading and studying the Bible begin to reflect real benefits to a person when a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ is established, since only then a person starts to have fellowship with the newness of life announced by the Scriptures.**

Those examiners of the Scriptures to whom the Lord Jesus Christ addressed Himself at a specific time on His earthly journey were so close to eternal life, but could not experience it because they insisted on not turn their hearts toward Him with whom the relationship is the primary reason or the purpose of the existence of the Scriptures.

What a sad sentence, therefore, is the next phrase expressed by the Lord Jesus:

John 5: 40 "But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life."

The treasure of the map came to the map's examiners, but many of them did not really want the treasure that came to them, for they preferred to keep bending over the map to the point of despising their relationship with the true treasure of eternal life. And those who despise Christ, also despise the treasures of life that are in Him.

*Acts 4: 11 "This (Jesus) is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.'
12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."*

*Colossians 2: 1 For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh,
2 that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ,
3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.
4 Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words.*

The Scriptures have been granted by the Eternal Lord so that people know and comprehend that eternal life is not in the knowledge itself or in the Scriptures in which so much knowledge is described, but rather that eternal life is in God Himself, and that it can be accessed with abundance through a living relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Although truth-based knowledge clarifies and points to where the eternal life is, it is not life itself.

Thus, the focus of reading and studying the Bible should not be aimed primarily at knowing and comprehend more about the Bible itself, but it should aim at knowledge about eternal life and how the connection with it can be done through an effective and real way.

The Scriptures were given to human beings as a map of eternal life, so that, knowing the way, every person may return to the God who created and loved them to the point of giving His Only Begotten Son, that thereby everyone who believes in Him may receive eternal life.

The greatness of reading and studying the Bible is also manifested when a person, in due time, knows to put the Scriptures aside and addresses oneself by a living and direct prayer to God and His son Jesus Christ.

The Scriptures are not granted by God to be examined by human beings only from an intellectual standpoint, but they are given so that humans examine their own lives in the light of the word of God and realize how much they need the eternal life described in the Scriptures and about which the Bible writings testify.

In the records of the Scriptures, human beings find a description of the life offered to them by the Heavenly Father, as well as the instruction that they need to address themselves personally and directly to the God of the Scriptures to receive the eternal life that every person needs so much, as exemplified once again below:

Romans 10: 13 For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."

When a person believes in his or her heart that the Lord Jesus Christ is alive, because He is eternal and was resurrected by His Heavenly Father after His death on the cross of Calvary, and addresses to Him words of prayer and worship recognizing, by faith, that Christ is the Lord of his or her life and the whole universe, one receives the same life that inspired the Scriptures that describe the way of eternal life.

Romans 10: 9 ... If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

- 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*
- 11 For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."*

C5. The Letter Kills

Considering the depth and richness of the words declared by the Lord Jesus Christ as recorded in the book of John chapter 5, verses 39 and 40, it seems to us that the theme of the present subject could, in some ways, have already ended with the previous chapter.

Nevertheless, because of the immense importance that the present theme represents to people's life, we would like to insist a little more on the approach and explanation of some points related to it, since in the Scriptures there are also several other texts that approach it by a very particular, sharp, or emphatic way.

There are many writings that point to God's intent to relate intensely to every individual and how much the Lord yearns for people to realize that one of the highest points described in the Scriptures is precisely the aspect that He calls each person to live and walk in fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, as also exemplified in the following text:

*1 Corinthians 1: 9 **God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.***

The theme that the Scriptures point to eternal life, but that the life that they describe is not in themselves, and that every person needs, then, to relate personally to the very source of life provided by the heavenly kingdom, and not just to the writings on it, is addressed several times in the Scriptures by its vital or crucial condition for every human being and because of the very significant consequences that are associated with this subject.

If in the text referred to in the previous chapter it can be observed, on the one hand, that the consequence of a person not “going to Christ” also implies the fact that this individual deprives oneself of the newness of life offered by the Heavenly Father, even though one examines the Scriptures frequently, on the other hand, several people may not realize, in the same text in reference, that the attitude of depriving themselves of life also implies a way of death by the absence of the relationship with the eternal life itself.

Therefore, and so that the various angles of the theme in reference may be well evidenced, the Scriptures in multiple texts also address, with more specific and accentuated emphases, the various crucial points that may be associated with it.

Thus, if the text of John 5, verses 39 and 40, puts a greater emphasis on the fact that people deprive themselves of eternal life when they do not seek the Lord Jesus Christ, in Whom is the eternal life, there also are other texts that emphasize the fact that depriving oneself of eternal life implies simultaneously a path of ruin and death.

If for us it is so challenging to find the precise words to speak about the subject that makes reference to people seeking a living and constant relationship with the Lord, as well as what comes from the practice or rejection of this action, even though they examine the Scriptures systematically, in the Scriptures there is no shortage of words to

instruct on this vital subject and on what are the consequences of practicing it or ceasing to practice it, as also described below:

*2 Corinthians 3: 4 And we have such trust through Christ toward God.
5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being
from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God,
6 who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not
of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives
life.*

Despite the Scriptures primarily describe the greatness of God's call for people to receive heavenly salvation, so that they may practice a living and continual fellowship with the Heavenly Father through His Only Begotten Son Jesus Christ, the biblical texts do not omit to describe also what can happen to people if they insist on pursuing life just in the Scriptures, or in other writings, rather than seeking it where these same Scriptures declare that the eternal life actually can be found.

Although the Scriptures were given to humankind primarily to serve as a supporting tool for people to find the way to newness of life or the eternal life in the Lord, depending on how people look at the writings of the Bible or how they approach them, it may occur that they, in their relationship with the Scriptures, find the opposite way to the life offered to them by God.

For that reason, we consider that it is necessary and of great value to formulate this chapter with the intention to highlight that, as to the relationship of people with the Scriptures, a specific problem can occur recurrently in the various generations on Earth.

In the world, many people of every new generation inherit the thought or begin to think that the handling of the tools to achieve a purpose may turn out to be or replace the purpose itself. They start to believe that their relationship with the supporting tools may replace the relationship to which the supporting means have been designed to provide help or assistance.

For a large contingent of people, support tools often become the primary target instead of the purpose with which the means should cooperate. And once a person loses the focus of the purpose one is called to achieve, also the interpretation of the use of the supporting tools may become significantly impaired.

The reading and examination of the Scriptures, therefore, can be much harmed if people do not realize the purpose for which the writings were conferred to them. For by this, even if there is a significant amount of knowledge about the texts of the Scriptures, they will not know how to interpret them according to the truth and the will of the Heavenly Father to reach the life in Christ.

So, because of the high significance that a person's proper relationship to the Scriptures can represent, it also becomes very significant for every individual to understand more broadly or accurately about what the Scriptures declare, for instance, through sentences like "*the letter kills.*"

When it is stated in the text of 2Corinthians 3 that “*the letter kills*,” it is not being announced that the mere letters of the alphabet kill, but that the manner in which a person relates to certain parts of the Scriptures may indeed be a way of death instead of being a path to the eternal life that the Lord offers for every person and which is also described in the same Scriptures.

Highly significant is this statement that “*the letter kills*,” which was written by Paul to Christians so that they may be attentive to their relationship with the Scriptures or also to other writings so that they do not make it dissociated from the newness of life to which the biblical texts point.

We further understand that it is appropriate to mention here that the text quoted last above is also related to a comparison with the writings of the law, called the Law of Moses or the “ministry of the letter.”

The law Paul referred to contained a multitude of regulations and rules of outward acts that should be practiced by those who were somehow bound by this law. Those people who were bound to this law had to keep days of feasts, sabbaths, special foods on special days, and many other practices, which should be followed “literally,” that is, that should be followed “to the letter.”

Nevertheless, at this point, we understand that it is also very significant to comprehend that preceding the various regulations described in the Law of Moses, there was a covenant that was the propelling reason for the Law of Moses to be introduced before the people who made a choice for this covenant. What Paul was focusing on, then, in 2Corinthians 3, besides the Law of Moses itself, was this covenant, agreement, or concert that grounded this law.

When Paul declares the expression that “*the letter kills*,” there is also behind this statement a whole principle attached to the so-called “*covenant of the letter*” or the “old covenant.”

And one of the central principles associated with the attempt to live and walk under the old covenant lifestyle, or the letter covenant, is connected with the fact that the one who longs to do so would also have to keep a series of commandments by one's own strength in order to attain one's justification before God to, then, receive the blessings and favors of God.

The covenant of the letter or the old covenant, therefore, is a proposition of life that intends to have as its foundation the human capacity to carry out a series of commandments beforehand established or written, and which are previously assigned to the people so that, through the fulfillment of these commandments, they may try to reach justification, righteousness, and eternal life.

In other words, in the types of covenants of “the letter” is offered and taught a proposition of life in which it is by following or keeping the commandments of a law of ordinances previously defined and established that a person should come to attain righteousness and the right to be blessed by God and to achieve eternal life.

However, once more, **it is precisely about the proposition of the covenant of the letter or the old covenant, or all others like it, that the Lord, through Paul, declares that “*the letter kills*.”**

We understand that here it should be stressed several times that the central point “that kills,” described by Paul in the text of 2 Corinthians 3, is not just related to the commandments of the law associated with the covenant of the letter, but also or mainly, to the proposition of the way or the means by which a person, subjected to a “letter covenant,” should fulfill the commandments proposed by this kind of covenant.

A covenant of the “letter” type proposes that a person can be established on the basis that a human being, from oneself, can perform a series of tasks of righteousness and that aim to please God, and that God, thereby, is forced to bless a person for the good acts that one practiced. However, it is also exactly the attempt to live and walk under this condition of the covenant of the letter that puts a person subjected to experience the reality that “*the letter kills.*”

The attempt to attain newness of life or eternal life through the concept that the human being is capable of performing a list of good works previously established, so that, because of these works, one can reach the favor of God, is one of the central aspects that is so lethal; it is “*letter that kills*”!

The idea or principle that human beings can cause God to be obliged to bless them and forced to give them eternal life because they perform the execution of a list of previously prescribed works is one of the chief aspects of the fragile and inept foundation of the covenant of the “*letter that kills,*” and regarding which the Lord so insistently and emphatically warns people to abstain from it.

Hebrews 10: 1 For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect.

Galatians 2: 16 ... knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

Under the covenant of the letter, even though many try to keep this hidden in a subtle or camouflaged way, is the misleading idea or proposition that human beings, by their carnal effort, can produce actions by themselves and for the benefit of themselves so that, by performing it, God must bless them with the blessings they want from the Lord.

Under the concept of the old covenant, the one that among the human beings themselves proved to be fragile and useless, people need to make great efforts to keep a very large list of works or commandments so that, by doing this, one can be worthy or have the right to be blessed by God, as if by this way this could be possible.

Under the covenant of the letter, people are required to set aside the sober understanding of the fact that humans are not capable of practicing

good things that last for eternity when they distance or disassociate themselves from the relationship with the source of every good and perfect gift, which is the Eternal Lord.

Moreover, **in choosing to accept and follow the propositions that are similar to the covenant of the letter, already declared by the Lord as obsolete, that so many people still insist on walking the path of the “*letter that kills*,” thus despising the goodness and the heavenly grace that God offers them through the New Covenant or the “Covenant of the Spirit that gives life.”**

The covenant of the letter is a kind of concert that resists and opposes the favor offered by God through the Gospel of the Righteousness of God and the Gospel of the Grace from the heavenly kingdom, thus proposing a way of death by abstention from the way of the newness of life offered to all humanity by the Heavenly Father.

It has already been previously exposed in the present subject that no writing has life in itself, but that each of them needs agents to give them life, and that regarding the promises of God, it is the Lord Himself who gives life to them. Thus, to think that merely perform a set of rules can bring the promises of God to life is a thought that, ultimately, can be lethal, for it does not take into account that the provision of eternal life can only be provided directly by God through His grace and mercy.

Although some aspects of the provision of life are provided by God to people also regarding some behaviors they adopt, it is not the very conduct of the people who produce the newness of life they need. It is always the granting of life, performed by the Lord, that produces novelty of life for the people.

The way to achieve the newness of life provided by the heavenly kingdom is not in the very act of keeping rules or commandments itself. Eternal life does not depend exclusively on the action of the human being. And considering that the life of an individual does not come from oneself, the mere practice of pre-established rules or deeds does not increase one’s eternal life. On the contrary, the mere practice of works, as an act of self-effort, may generate great wear on human beings and even lead to death if they do not repent of their opposite ways to the will of the Lord towards them.

And again, when the Scriptures announce that “*the letter kills*,” this does not mean that death will always be seen instantaneously, for from the moment a person begins to adopt the conduct of following the concept behind the covenant of the letter, one places oneself in a process of mortification whose perception may be accelerated in some cases or more prolonged in others. The person puts oneself on a death route if he or she persists on this path.

The fact that a person does not remain attached to an appropriate source of life also implies the absence of this life, and it is well-known that the prolonged absence of proper life can trigger and accelerate death even more than many efforts or wear processes of life.

In other words, if a person understands that one must strive or make considerable efforts to follow all the instructions of the Scriptures or even just those directed at Christians, and comes to think that one is responsible for following them or performing them in the own strength, this person is exposed to a process that may suffocate him or

her because one is not associated with the source that provides the instructions and vigor for the life that is according to the will of the Heavenly Father.

By attempting to follow the law or the commandments in the own effort, aiming thereby to be blessed afterwards by the Lord, and therefore choosing a path that is dissociated from the grace of God, a person exposes oneself to a process of suffocation caused, mainly, by the lack of fellowship with the heavenly spiritual life and which is only found in a relationship of dependence on the Lord Jesus Christ.

The attempts of performing works on the strength of the own flesh, in the natural force of the human being, express efforts to establish paths where people prefer to believe that the fulfillment of written rules can give them life instead of recognizing the necessity of the practice of a constant fellowship with the Lord who is the giver of eternal life.

The adherence to the mentality of life according to the covenant of the letter, or similar to it, can, therefore, result in the possibility that the writings of the Scriptures themselves, or of other writings that people follow, serve as a support for them to enter more and more in the way in which there is death and not life.

If the contents of the Scriptures are received only under the concepts or the intelligence of the natural being or are rejected because people do not find an explanation that humanly satisfies them, these contents can result in spiritually lethal aspects. The letter can be dangerous in both situations because, in either of them, people stay away from the supernatural life that comes from Christ, and not from the Scriptures.

Since the Scriptures were inspired by God as spiritual truths, they are not the mere expression of natural knowledge. They are “things of the Spirit of God,” because God is Spirit and the Scriptures were inspired by the Spirit of God.

1 Corinthians 2: 14 ***But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.***

Although the Scriptures were physically recorded in a manner similar to other writings of the world, their contents were not granted to be known, understood, discerned, or assimilated only according to the natural or human knowledge and understanding.

To seek to understand or even to practice the spiritual Scriptures on the basis of natural understanding and effort, and not under the living instruction and the strength granted by the Lord who is above the Scriptures, may manifest itself as a way of death, for merely in the natural level or material presentation, the Scriptures are letters exposed similar to the rest of the writings of the world, and whose practice, by itself, does not produce spiritual life and eternally beneficial results.

We highlight once again here, that in no way the intent in this present subject is to detract the Scriptures, but present them in conformity with what is described about them in their writings themselves. And since the Scriptures do not have life in themselves when separated from the Lord of the eternal life, it is of inestimable value

that God Himself provided for the record of this condition in the very content of the Scriptures.

Thus, God does not want people to be stuck in the Scriptures, but that, following their instructions, they may open their heart to the relationship with Him, the Unique and Eternal God who can provide eternal life.

In the example of the examiners of the Scriptures, as seen in the previous chapter and to whom the Lord Jesus declared that the Scriptures give testimony that in Him is the eternal life, we can see that these examiners were stuck to the letter in such a way that they forgot to drink from the “water of the spiritual life” who was so close to them, thus also remaining subjected to the path of death instead of the way of life in the Lord.

We understand, therefore, that it is so important to emphasize here repeatedly that the main factor of the process associated with the “*letter that kills*” is not only the attempt to fulfill the contents of the Scriptures in the natural or fleshly strength, but it is the fact that by attempting to carry out the works in their own strength, people do not remain connected to relationship with the source of true eternal life.

The lack of fellowship with the life offered to all by the Heavenly Father is the leading “cause of spiritual death” that the mentality of living by the “letter” subtly tries to introduce, for it proposes a path of trust of the human being in the own human being who never was and never will be the source of eternal life.

The way of the covenant of the letter is seen before the Lord as a path of cursing and not of blessing and eternal life by the fact that in it people seek to obtain life in the creation and so that they do not need to come individually to a relationship of trust with the true source of eternal life, as also explained in the following text:

Jeremiah 17: 5 Thus says the LORD: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, Whose heart departs from the LORD.

6 For he shall be like a shrub in the desert, And shall not see when good comes, But shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, In a salt land which is not inhabited."

Wanting to carry out works in one's own strength, even those that are called by some as “good works,” is a very dangerous positioning, for as exemplified by Paul, the human beings, no matter how much one tries to do good, do not have in themselves or in their dissociated position from the Lord, the condition of practicing the good works that they eventually seek to perform.

Romans 7: 18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.

No matter how precious an instruction of the Scriptures is, if a person tries to get the newness of life by the fulfillment of some instructions and not by the relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, one is putting oneself in a similar position to the path proposed by the covenant of the “*letter that kills.*”

So, that is why it is so crucial to understand that above all the instructions that the Scriptures present for the benefit of a person, there are also in them the instructions that guide people to seek, first of all, a living and personal fellowship with the Eternal Lord.

Isaiah 55: 3 Incline 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.

*Matthew 11: 28 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*

John 6:35 And Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.

Finally, in this chapter, we would like to say "thank God" for the fact that the words of 2Corinthians 3 do not end at the point where "*the letter kills,*" but they advance to the point where they announce the possibility of a life that is not limited to the letter, an aspect which is also more explained in the next chapter.

C6. The Spirit Gives Life

Considering that this new chapter is also a continuity of the texts in more prominence in the two previous chapters, we would like to expose below once again the mentioned biblical verses:

John 5: 39 **You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.**
40 **But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.**

2 Corinthians 3: 4 **And we have such trust through Christ toward God.**
5 **Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God,**
6 **who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.**

In recalling again the text of John 5, verses 39 and 40, it can be seen in it that when the Lord Jesus Christ warned the examiners of the Scriptures about the wrong way in which they examined their writings, the Lord did not omit the information that showed them the alternative of where they could find the eternal life they were seeking.

Similarly, also the text of 2Corinthians mentioned above, and presented by the apostle Paul, was not inserted in the Scriptures to declare a final condemnation for those who live under the “covenant of the letter” or who want to live through it. This text was granted by God to humanity so that people can repent of this way of life and make a choice for the covenant in which there is the eternal life that is offered by the Heavenly Father in Christ Jesus.

The biblical verse in which Paul addresses the aspect of “***the letter kills***” does not end with a condemnatory sentence, or that is devoid of hope and promise, but it declares that “***the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.***”

Who, however, is this Spirit that gives life?

If we also recall other texts already mentioned in this subject, we may observe that the Lord Jesus Christ, in His own words, said that He is life, just as we may also note that Paul wrote that through Jesus Christ, we have access to the sufficiency of life that comes from God the Father.

So, the Spirit who gives life is the Spirit of God the Heavenly Father and is the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is granted to all who believe that the newness of life is in Christ and that receive it by heavenly grace, through faith, in their hearts, as it is also stated in other texts such as those exemplified below:

John 10: 10 **The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.**

Romans 8: 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.*

John 5: 21 *"For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will."*

John 7: 38 *"He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."*

39 *But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*

What beautiful and immeasurably precious texts are described in the Scriptures on the life of the heavenly kingdom given by the Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus through the Holy Spirit, but let us note in particular the last one where it is announced that ***"he who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."***

We understand it to be very significant here to emphasize this last point, noting that the text does not describe that the one who believes in some Scriptures will have streams of living water flowing from within him or her. Instead, it declares that ***"the one who believes in Christ, as the Scripture has said, out of one's heart will flow rivers of living water,"*** also referring to the fact that the rivers of living water are related to the condition in which an individual receives the Spirit of the Lord by believing in the heart in Christ Jesus as his or her Eternal Lord and Savior.

The Scriptures are given to humanity for a purpose that goes beyond the writings themselves. The Scriptures are given to us by God so that we may direct our faith and confidence to Christ, the Son of the living God, to receive from Him the life-giving Spirit, since life is in the Lord and not in the writings.

Moreover, once a person receives the Spirit of the Lord in the heart, reading and studying the Scriptures through the Spirit of God may turn out to be a very distinct experience than the approaching the Scriptures through the covenant of the letter.

The covenant of the letter proposes the expectation that the fulfillment of the commandments of the so-called "law" will bring life, whereas in the covenant of the Spirit of the Lord, faith is directed to the source of life who provides everything for the appropriate discernment of the Scriptures and so that a Christian may live and walk according to the heavenly will by the strength given to him or her by the Lord.

In the covenant of the Spirit of God, unlike the covenant of the letter, a person is empowered and blessed by God because one first comes to the source of life, and not because of the works of the law that an individual tries to accomplish by natural strength or efforts.

The search or the attempt to fulfill the commandments by the way of the covenant of the letter drains life and generates burden and weight on those who seek or try to live by it. The covenant of the Spirit of God, however, provides life beforehand or in advance for those who trust in Jesus Christ.

In the covenant of the Spirit of God, the provision of life is granted by fellowship with the Lord, and this occurs so that the instructions of God for a Christian may be performed in accordance with the provision granted from the newness of life that is in the Lord, as reiterated once more in the texts below:

2 Corinthians 3: 5 ... our sufficiency is from God,

Galatians 6: 8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

John 6: 63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.

The Scriptures instruct on the way to eternal life. However, the Lord Jesus Christ is the way to this life and the very source of the newness of life, in Whom a Christian has available the provision of the Spirit of the Lord to vivify, strengthen, and sustain him or her to live and walk appropriately in accordance with the will of the Heavenly Father.

To practice of what is described in the Scriptures is, therefore, first and foremost, to seek Jesus Christ as instructed in the Scriptures in order to obtain in Him, through a living relationship with the Lord, the novelty of life also promised by the Heavenly Father through the Scriptures to all who believe in Him and receive His heavenly offering of everlasting love and grace.

John 6: 29 Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."

John 21:25 And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.

...

*20:30 And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book;
31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.*

C7. Practicing the Relationship with the Author of Life about Whom the Scriptures Give Testimony

Although a more extensive knowledge about life may also cooperate significantly with life, it is not the informative knowledge about life that gives life. It is the active relationship with a source of life that produces life.

The serpent in Eden, which presented itself to Adam and Eve, attempted to blind humankind with the idea that life was in the knowledge of good and evil, which, however, also was not in this kind of knowledge.

Moreover, since then, thousands of years have passed, and the human being never had access to as much natural knowledge as one has in contemporary times, but also in no other time was it so evident that knowledge itself cannot produce the eternal life that comes from God.

The conditions and quantities of information available may have changed since the earliest centuries of humankind, but people continue to depend on the life that is provided by God as any human being who has lived in any previous epoch.

Thus, also due to the reality of the fact described above, we would like to recall in this last chapter of the present subject, that **the Lord Jesus Christ, when affirming that eternal life is beyond the Scriptures and that it is indeed only in Him, did not merely announce where eternal life lies, but He also showed how one can come to Him and receive from the life that is in Him.**

In addition to the announcement that the newness of life of the heavenly kingdom or the eternal life is found in Him, the Lord Jesus Christ also taught that it is by the relationship with Him and through abiding in Him, by faith, that a person can experience this life and be continuously supported and nurtured by Him, thus not needing to stay just on the condition of hearing about the place in which this life is found.

*John 13: 20 **Most assuredly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.***

*John 15: 4(a) **Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.***

So, once a person approaches Jesus Christ, believing that He is the Son of the living God, and abides in Him believing that He is also the provision of life from the heavenly kingdom, the Lord Himself will instruct this person, in due time and through the Holy Spirit, to grow more in Him and the knowledge of the Scriptures that He gives to those who believe in Him and receive Him as Lord of their lives, according to the text repeated once again below:

*Matthew 11: 28 **Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.***

*29 **Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.***

The rest of the soul before the large set of information and knowledge that is in the world is not primarily in the continuity of the search for natural knowledge, but it is in the Lord Jesus Christ and the relationship with Him, this being the leading knowledge that a person needs to understand to reach and choose for the eternal life.

It is from a living relationship with the Lord, supported by His Holy Spirit, that a person, according to the Lord's instruction, will be able to deepen productively in the other areas of life that the Lord wants one to be active and established.

God's proposition to humankind has always been and continues to be that each person may experience life that is beyond the letter so that each one may continually enjoy this life in the Lord and that comes as a result of a living relationship with Him.

Therefore, the practice of reading and studying the Bible has its main purposes achieved when a person reaches and abides in the relationship with the Author of the Scriptures and when one goes deeper into them under the living instruction of the Holy Spirit that is granted to him or her by the Lord.

*John 16: 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.***

The understanding that one of the most essential parts of the Christian Life is the relationship with God and with His Son Jesus Christ can affect the whole view and purpose of reading and studying the Scriptures, which, under the direction of the Spirit of the Lord, have the function of cooperating with an individual in the living relationship with God Himself, and not as in the covenant of the letter in which people thought that life could be in the letter itself.

Only God can personalize the instructions of the Scriptures in ways that they add life to a person instead of being like letters that kill. For this reason, the Lord also grants His Spirit to be in the heart of those who believe in Him and long to live and walk according to His will.

Many people use the expression that the Bible is the "Manufacture's Handbook" about human beings and that it teaches people how to live the life God gives them. This assertion, however, and depending on the interpretation applied to it, absolutely does

not conform to what the Lord Jesus Christ declared to the scholars who sought life in the Scriptures themselves.

In the world, for example, there are several equipment manuals that are written so that those who buy such equipment can use them and fix them independently of the manufacturer. And this, so that the buyers have autonomy in use or even for the maintenance of the acquired equipment.

Nevertheless, in the case of life in conformity with God's will and described in the Bible, the "Manufacturer's Manual" principle described in the previous paragraph is not applicable.

The Bible is not a "Manufacturer's Manual" to give human beings autonomy about themselves. On the contrary, it is a compendium that declares to the creation that without the life of the Creator and without dependence on a living relationship with the Lord, it is not possible to properly operate the equipment so-called "the human life."

The Bible is a compendium that shows how a person can be connected to the life of the Lord and also expresses the constant invitation that the Lord makes to people to return to Him in order to remain in Him, firmly announcing that a person dissociated from the Lord is not capable of bringing forth beneficial fruits before the eyes of God.

John 15: 5 I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

The Lord offers His newness of life through the Spirit that vivifies so that people no longer need to stay in the frustrated attempt to live by the letter that kills.

Finally, we still would like to point out that **the invitation to the eternal life that is extended by the Lord to all human beings, and which aims that every person may live and walk in a continuous relationship with Him, is associated with an offer presented by the Lord, and not to a condition of imposition.**

The action of addressing oneself to God in prayer and trusting that He will listen to them, for a large group of people may be the first practical experience they consciously embrace to open their hearts to a living relationship to the God of the Bible, the God Creator, the Living and Eternal God, and with His Son Jesus Christ. However, surely it is not the first time that God approaches them to offer a living relationship with them, as explained in one more text below:

Revelation 3: 20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

Since the Lord is alive and present everywhere by His Spirit, the call on the name of the Lord can be done anywhere and anytime, if only a person believes in the heart that Christ was and is forever the way, the truth, the

life, and the constant and perfect mediator between every individual and the Heavenly Father.

However, the choice of a life of relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore a life in fellowship with the Spirit that gives life, is a personal decision and action that can only be taken personally and voluntarily.

In this way, we would like to conclude, then, the present subject, showing below some more texts that present the Lord's invitation to all human beings on Earth to receive the heavenly life in which, in Christ Jesus, the Heavenly Father calls them to abide forever.

2 Corinthians 6: 2 **For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.**

1 Corinthians 1: 9 **God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.**

- John 3: 16* **For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.**
- 17* **For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.**
- 18* **He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.**
- 19* **And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.**
- 20* **For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.**
- 21* **But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.**

Romans 10: 9 **... that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.**

- 10* **For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.**
- 11* **For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."**

Bibliography

Note on Biblical Texts referenced:

- 1) The biblical texts without explicit indications of reference were drawn from NKJV Bible, as indicated below.
- 2) Highlights in the biblical texts, such as underline, bold, or similar were added by the author of this study.

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