


# A PRELUDE TO *BIBLICAL* EVANGELISM

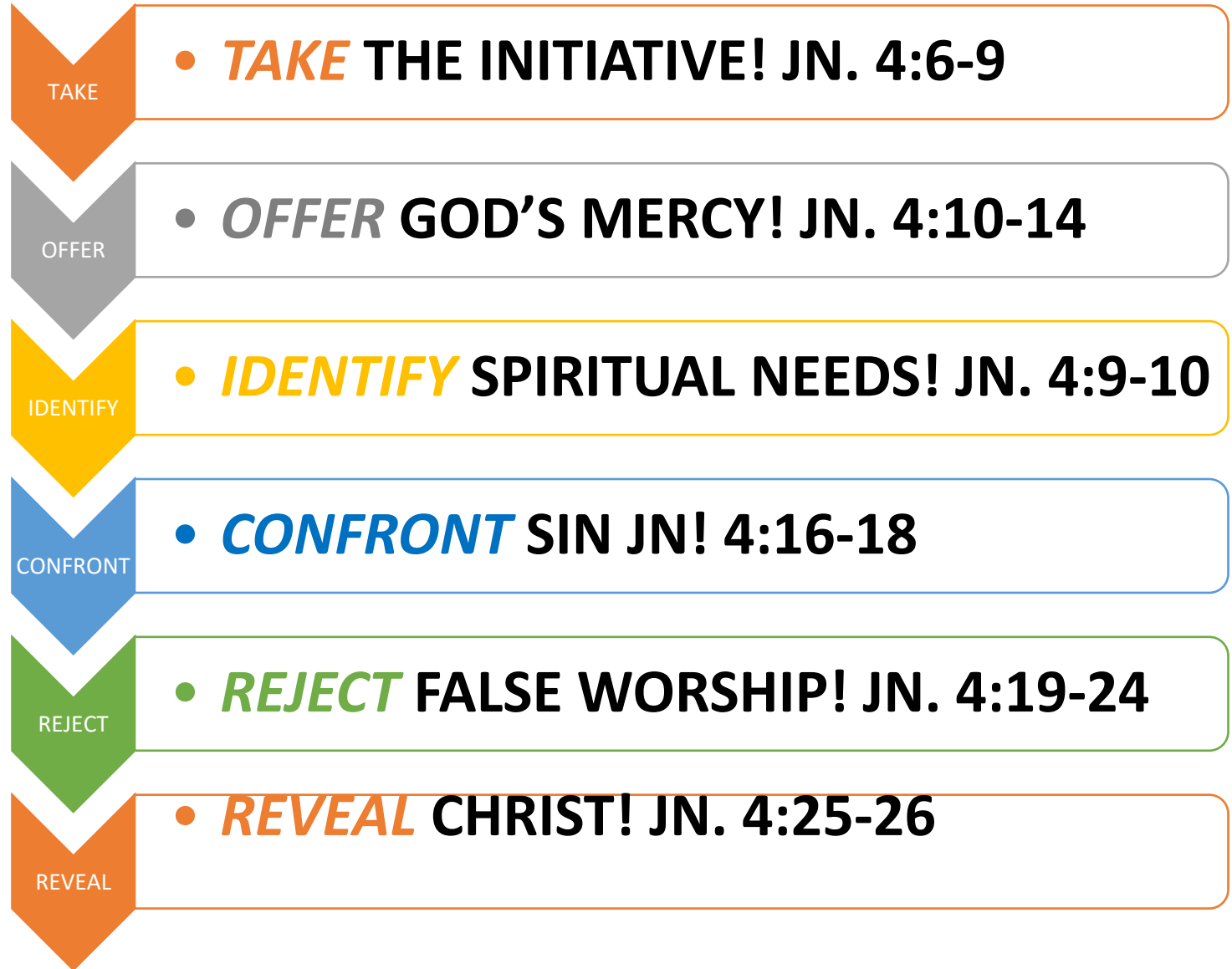


A large, ancient tree with thick, gnarled roots growing over stone ruins. The tree's trunk is massive and textured, with roots spreading out across the ground and over the stone structures. The background shows more stone ruins and lush green foliage. The scene is set in a natural, outdoor environment.

THE FRUIT OF  
THE RIGHTEOUS IS A  
TREE OF LIFE,  
AND HE WHO IS WISE  
WINS SOULS.

PROVERBS 11:30 NASB

**PRINCIPLES  
FOR  
BIBLICAL  
*EVANGELISM*  
FOUND IN  
JOHN 4, “THE  
WOMAN AT  
THE WELL.”**



# OUR INHERITANCE

PRIVILEGES OF BEING  
HEIRS OF GOD

## TRASH OR TREASURE?

- **HOMER** and **LANGLEY COLLYER** were sons of a respected New York doctor. Both studied at Columbia University—Homer earned his degree in law, and Langley became an accomplished engineer and concert pianist. When their parents both died in the 1920s, the brothers inherited the family home and estate. The two men—both bachelors—were now financially secure.
- But the Collyer brothers adopted a peculiar lifestyle not at all consistent with the material status their inheritance gave them. They retired into almost total seclusion. They boarded up the windows of their house and barricaded the doors. All their utilities—including water—were eventually shut off. No one was ever seen coming or going from the house except Langley, on his occasional, furtive midnight trips for food. From the outside, the multi-story house appeared empty.

- On **MARCH 21, 1947**, police received an anonymous telephone tip that there was a dead man in the Collyer house. Unable to force their way in through the front door, authorities entered the house through a second-story window. Inside they found Homer Collyer's corpse, blind and paralyzed, starved to death. But this macabre scene was set against an equally grotesque backdrop.
- **THE BROTHERS WERE HOARDERS**. They had collected everything—but especially junk. Their house was crammed full of broken machinery, auto parts, boxes, appliances, folding chairs, musical instruments, rags, assorted odds and ends, and incredible heaps of old newspapers. Virtually all of it was worthless. Enormous mountains of debris blocked all entries; investigators were forced to continue using the upstairs window for weeks while excavators worked to clear a path to the door.

- Nearly ***three weeks later***, as workmen were still hauling heaps of refuse away, someone made a grisly discovery—***LANGLEY COLLYER'S*** body was buried beneath a pile of rubbish just feet away from where Homer had died. It seems Langley had been crushed to death in a crude booby trap he had built to guard his home from intruders.
- The garbage eventually removed from the Collyer house totaled more than ***140 tons***. No one ever learned why the brothers were stockpiling their pathetic treasure, except an old friend of the family recalled that Langley once said he was saving the newspapers so Homer could catch up on world events once he regained his sight.
- ***HOMER AND LANGLEY COLLYER MAKE A SAD BUT FITTING PARABLE OF THE WAY MANY PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH LIVE.*** Although the Collyer's' inheritance was sufficient for all their needs, they lived instead in unnecessary, self-imposed squalor. They cut themselves off from all else and treated their inheritance as a dump, carefully collecting and treasuring the world's garbage.

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- ***TOO MANY CHRISTIANS LIVE THEIR SPIRITUAL LIVES THAT WAY.***

Disregarding the bountiful riches of an inheritance that cannot be defiled (1 PET. 1:4), they scour the wreckage of worldly wisdom, collecting litter. As if the riches of God's grace (EPH. 1:7) were not enough, as if ***"EVERYTHING PERTAINING TO LIFE AND GODLINESS"*** (2 PET. 1:3) were not sufficient, ***THEY TRY TO SUPPLEMENT THE RESOURCES THAT ARE THEIRS IN CHRIST.***

- They spend their lives pointlessly accumulating *sensational experiences, novel teachings, clever gurus*, or whatever else they can find to add to their hoard of **spiritual experiences**. Practically all of it is utterly worthless. Yet some people pack themselves so full of these diversions that they can't find the door to the truth that would set them free. **THEY FORFEIT TREASURE FOR TRASH.**

**GOD'S PEOPLE MUST NOT REPEAT SUCH TRAGIC IGNORANCE. ALL THE RICHES AND RESOURCES WE NEED ARE FREELY AVAILABLE AND ACCESSIBLE TO US IN JESUS CHRIST. BELIEVERS CANNOT AFFORD TO IGNORE THEIR RICH INHERITANCE IN HIM.**

# A RICH *LEGACY* TO ENJOY

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- Where did Christians ever get the notion that they need anything ***OTHER THAN CHRIST?*** Is He somehow inadequate? Is His gift of salvation somehow deficient? Certainly not. We are children of God, joint heirs with Christ, and therefore beneficiaries of a richer legacy than the human mind could ever comprehend: ***“WE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD, AND IF CHILDREN, HEIRS ALSO, HEIRS OF GOD AND FELLOW HEIRS WITH CHRIST”*** (ROM. 8:16–17).

***CHRISTIANS ARE RICH BEYOND MEASURE. ALL TRUE CHRISTIANS ARE HEIRS TOGETHER WITH CHRIST HIMSELF.***

- **SCRIPTURE** has much to say about the **CHRISTIAN'S INHERITANCE**. It is, in fact, the *central point* of our **NEW COVENANT RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST**.
- The writer of **HEBREWS** referred to **CHRIST** as ***"THE MEDIATOR OF A NEW COVENANT, SO THAT . . . THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN CALLED MAY RECEIVE THE PROMISE OF THE ETERNAL INHERITANCE"*** (HEB. 9:15).
- **REMEMBER, WE WERE CHOSEN FOR **ADOPTION** INTO **GOD'S OWN FAMILY** BEFORE THE WORLD BEGAN** (EPH. 1:4–5).

**AND WITH OUR **ADOPTION** CAME ALL THE **RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES OF FAMILY MEMBERSHIP**, INCLUDING AN **INHERITANCE IN TIME AND ETERNITY** THAT IS BEYOND OUR ABILITY TO EXHAUST.**

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- **THIS WAS A *KEY ELEMENT IN THE THEOLOGY OF THE EARLY CHURCH***. In (ACTS 26:18) **PAUL** says he was commissioned by Christ to preach to the Gentiles ***“SO THAT THEY MAY TURN FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT AND FROM THE DOMINION OF SATAN TO GOD, THAT THEY MAY RECEIVE FORGIVENESS OF SINS AND AN INHERITANCE AMONG THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN SANCTIFIED BY FAITH IN [CHRIST].”***
  - In (COL. 1:12) he says that **GOD THE FATHER** has ***“QUALIFIED US TO SHARE IN THE INHERITANCE OF THE SAINTS IN LIGHT.”*** **PAUL** viewed the believer’s inheritance as so enormous in scope that he prayed the **EPHESIANS** would have the spiritual enlightenment to ***COMPREHEND THE RICHNESS OF ITS GLORY*** (EPH. 1:18).

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- ***THE CONCEPT OF AN INHERITANCE FROM GOD*** had great significance to early ***JEWISH BELIEVERS IN CHRIST*** because their Old Testament forefathers inherited the land of Canaan as part of ***God's covenant with Abraham (GEN. 12:1)***.
  - Theirs was for the most part an ***EARTHLY, MATERIAL INHERITANCE (DEUT. 15:4; 19:10)***, though it included many ***spiritual blessings***.
  - ***OUR INHERITANCE IN CHRIST***, however, is primarily ***SPIRITUAL***. That is, it is not a promise of ***wealth*** and ***material prosperity***.



***IT GOES FAR BEYOND TEMPORAL OR TRANSIENT PHYSICAL BLESSINGS.***

# WE INHERIT GOD

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- ***BELIEVERS INHERIT GOD.*** This concept was key to the Old Testament understanding of a spiritual inheritance. **(JOSH. 13:33)** says, ***“TO THE TRIBE OF LEVI, MOSES DID NOT GIVE AN [EARTHLY] INHERITANCE; THE LORD, THE GOD OF ISRAEL, IS THEIR INHERITANCE, AS HE HAD PROMISED TO THEM.”***
- ***OF THE TWELVE TRIBES OF ISRAEL, LEVI*** had a uniquely spiritual function: It was the ***PRIESTLY TRIBE***. As such, its members ***DID NOT INHERIT*** a portion of the Promised Land; ***THE LORD HIMSELF WAS THEIR INHERITANCE. THEY LITERALLY INHERITED GOD AS THEIR OWN POSSESSION.***

- **KING DAVID** said, ***“THE LORD IS THE PORTION OF MY INHERITANCE”*** (PSA. 16:5).
- In (PSA. 73:25–26) **ASAPH** says, ***“WHOM HAVE I IN HEAVEN BUT YOU? AND BESIDES YOU, I DESIRE NOTHING ON EARTH. . . . GOD IS THE STRENGTH OF MY HEART AND MY [INHERITANCE] FOREVER.”***
- **THE PROPHET JEREMIAH** said, ***“THE LORD IS MY PORTION . . . THEREFORE I HAVE HOPE IN HIM”*** (LAM. 3:24). That Old Testament principle applies to every Christian. ***WE ARE “HEIRS OF GOD”*** (ROM. 8:17).
- **(1 PETER 2:9)** describes believers as ***“A CHOSEN RACE, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR GOD’S OWN POSSESSION.”***

***WE ARE HIS, AND HE IS OURS. WHAT A JOY TO KNOW THAT WE INHERIT GOD HIMSELF AND WILL SPEND ETERNITY IN HIS PRESENCE!***

# WE INHERIT CHRIST

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- ***BELIEVERS ENTER INTO AN ETERNAL ONENESS WITH CHRIST.***
- ***CHRIST HIMSELF INDWELLS THEM (COL. 1:27).*** He prayed to the Father ***“THAT THEY MAY BE ONE, JUST AS WE ARE ONE; I IN THEM AND YOU IN ME” (JN. 17:22–23).***
- Someday ***“WE WILL BE LIKE HIM, BECAUSE WE WILL SEE HIM JUST AS HE IS” (1 JN 3:2)*** and ***WE WILL REIGN WITH HIM AS JOINT HEIRS (ROM. 8:17).***

# WE INHERIT THE HOLY SPIRIT

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(EPH. 1:14) says that the **HOLY SPIRIT** “**IS GIVEN AS A PLEDGE OF OUR INHERITANCE.**” That is, **HE IS THE GUARANTOR OF OUR INHERITANCE.** The Greek word translated “**PLEDGE**” (**AR-RA-BŌN**) originally referred to a **down payment**—money given to **secure a purchase**. It came to represent any token of a pledge. A form of the word even came to be used for an **engagement ring**.

**THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE RESIDENT GUARANTEE OF OUR ETERNAL INHERITANCE.**

# WE INHERIT SALVATION

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- **PETER** said our inheritance includes **“A SALVATION READY TO BE REVEALED IN THE LAST TIME”** (1 PET. 1:5). The Greek word translated **“SALVATION”** (**SŌ-TĒR-IAN**) speaks of a **RESCUE** or **DELIVERANCE**. In its broadest sense it refers to our **FULL AND FINAL DELIVERANCE** from the **curse** of the **law**; the **power** and **presence** of **sin**; and **grief, pain, death,** and **judgment**.
- No matter how difficult our present circumstances might be, **WE CAN LOOK BEYOND THEM AND BLESS GOD FOR THE ULTIMATE FULLNESS OF OUR ETERNAL SALVATION.**

# WE INHERIT THE KINGDOM

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- **JESUS** said in (MATT. 25:34): *“THE KING WILL SAY TO THOSE ON HIS RIGHT, ‘COME, YOU WHO ARE BLESSED OF MY FATHER, INHERIT THE KINGDOM PREPARED FOR YOU FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD.”*
- And so, **WE INHERIT GOD, CHRIST, THE HOLY SPIRIT, ETERNAL SALVATION, AND THE KINGDOM.** Still, the fullness of our inheritance has not yet been revealed to us.
- **JOHN** wrote, *“BELOVED, NOW WE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD, AND IT HAS NOT APPEARED AS YET WHAT WE WILL BE”* (1 JN. 3:2).

- **PAUL** said, **“THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND WHICH HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM”** (1 COR. 2:9).
- We’re like a ***child prince*** who is too young and immature to understand the privileges of his position or the royal inheritance that awaits him. Consequently, he may struggle with petty wants and throw tantrums over trinkets that pale in comparison to the riches he has access to and will receive when he assumes his father’s throne. As he grows up, his parents must discipline and train him, ***so he learns to behave like someone of royal lineage***. Throughout that training and maturing process, ***he begins to understand the immense value and implications of his inheritance***.



- **WE, TOO, WILL SOMEDAY *EXPERIENCE THE FULLNESS OF OUR INHERITANCE.* IN THE MEANTIME,**

**“WE MUST LEARN TO ACT LIKE CHILDREN OF THE KING AND LET THE HOPE OF FUTURE BLESSINGS PURIFY OUR LIVES.”**

**(1 JOHN 3:3)**

