


A PRELUDE TO *BIBLICAL* EVANGELISM

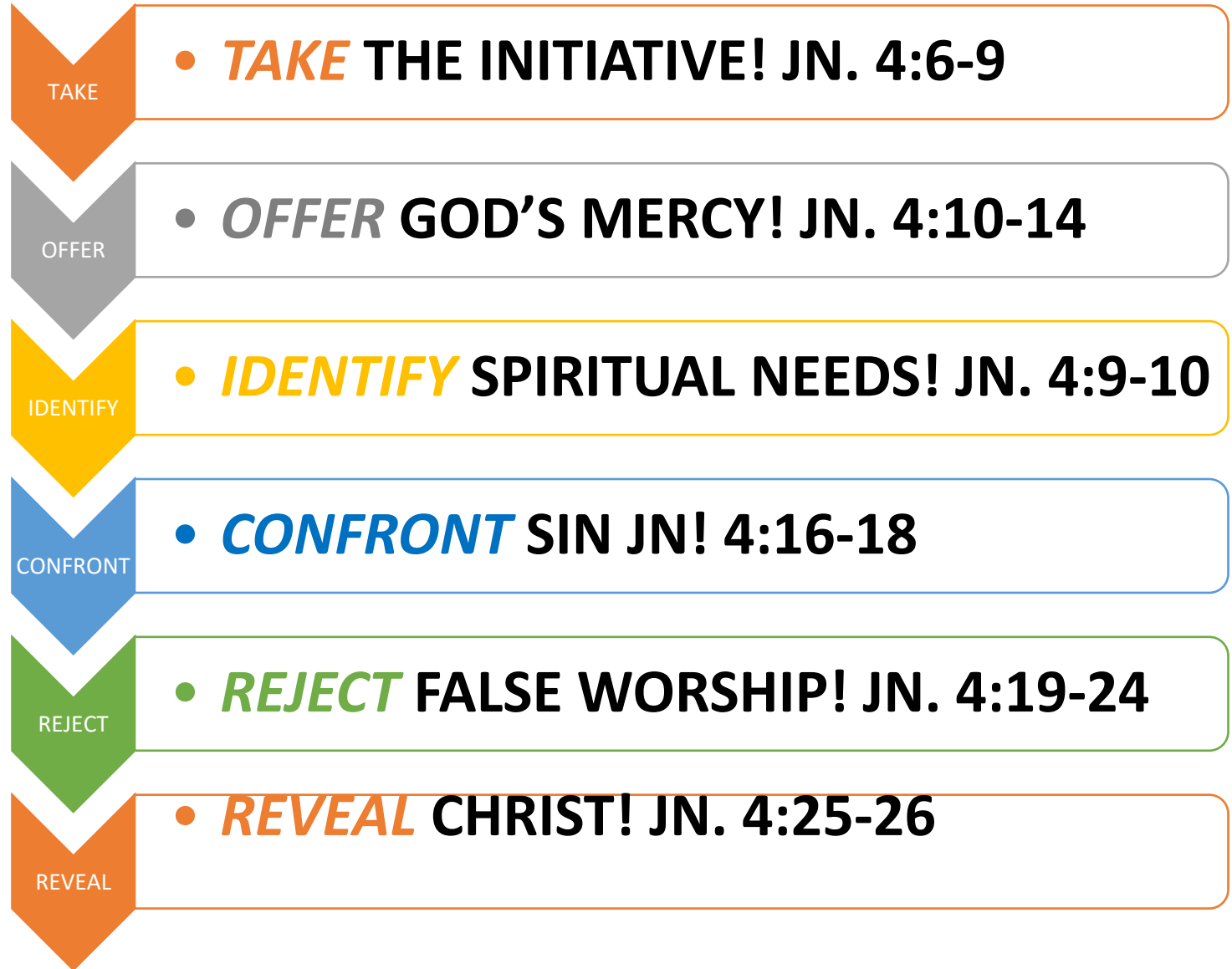


A large, ancient tree with thick, gnarled roots growing over stone ruins. The tree's trunk is massive and textured, with roots spreading out across the ground and over the stone structures. The background shows more stone ruins and lush green foliage. The scene is set in a natural, outdoor environment.

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?**
- A RICH *LEGACY* TO ENJOY
- WE INHERIT **GOD**
- WE INHERIT **CHRIST**
- WE INHERIT **THE HOLY SPIRIT**
- WE INHERIT **SALVATION**
- WE INHERIT **THE KINGDOM**

HOW TO WAIT FOR *HEAVEN*

- Focusing on our *ETERNAL INHERITANCE* is key to maintaining a proper perspective on *CHRIST'S SUFFICIENCY*, especially when you're in the midst of difficult circumstances. That's not always easy because we're prone toward *selfishness* and desiring *instant gratification*. Advertising fuels that mentality by telling us we can have all we want—and we can have it *RIGHT NOW!* Of course, "*HAVING IT ALL*" usually means buying on credit whatever product they're selling.
- A steady diet of that philosophy has fattened our society with *self-indulgence* and *impatience*. People find it difficult to cope with life if they can't instantly fulfill every desire. They want to eliminate any *discomfort, difficulty, injustice*, or *deprivation* immediately.

SCRIPTURE RESPONDS WITH **TWO** REVOLUTIONARY CONCEPTS:

1. HEAVENLY-MINDEDNESS and **DELAYED GRATIFICATION**.

- **HEAVENLY-MINDEDNESS**: is taking our eyes off the world's offerings for fulfillment and focusing instead on God's sufficient provision for our satisfaction. It's what **JESUS** meant when He instructed us to make the Father's kingdom our **first** priority (**MATT. 6:33**). ***"BUT SEEK FIRST HIS KINGDOM AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND ALL THESE THINGS WILL BE ADDED TO YOU."***
- It's what **PAUL** meant when he told us to set our minds on the things above, not on earthly things (**COL. 3:2**).
- And it's what **JOHN** meant when he said, ***"DO NOT LOVE THE WORLD NOR THE THINGS IN THE WORLD"*** (**1 JN. 2:15**).


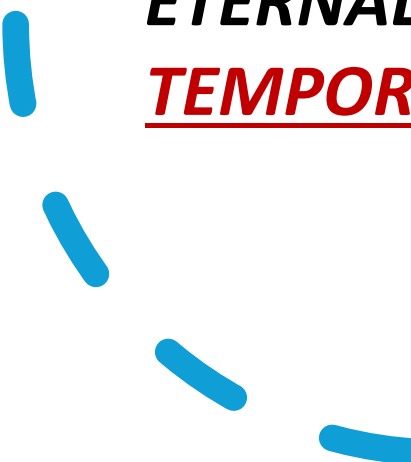
2. **DELAYED GRATIFICATION**: is simply **DEFERRING TO GOD'S WILL AND GOD'S TIMING**—the essence of **PATIENCE**. All of His promises will be fulfilled, His righteousness and authority will be fully realized, His Son and His saints will be fully vindicated—**BUT IN HIS TIME, NOT OURS**.

- Many of the difficulties we experience will not be resolved in this life because **HIS PURPOSES TRANSCEND OUR TEMPORAL SITUATIONS**. So, there's no point in running impatiently for relief to people offering “*solutions*” that **ignore** God's **objectives** and **timetable**.

- For example, **THE HOLY SPIRIT** encourages persecuted believers:

“BE PATIENT, BRETHREN, UNTIL THE COMING OF THE LORD. THE FARMER WAITS FOR THE PRECIOUS PRODUCE OF THE SOIL, BEING PATIENT ABOUT IT, UNTIL IT GETS THE EARLY AND LATE RAINS. YOU TOO BE PATIENT; STRENGTHEN YOUR HEARTS, FOR THE COMING OF THE LORD IS NEAR.”

(JAM. 5:7–8)

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- I'm sure the dear saints to whom **JAMES** was writing longed for God's comfort and justice against their persecutors. But God wanted them to **CULTIVATE PATIENCE, STRENGTH OF HEART**, and a **JOYFUL ANTICIPATION** of **CHRIST'S RETURN**. Those are far greater benefits than immediate relief from the difficulties and injustices they faced. **GOD WOULD VINDICATE THEM, BUT IN HIS OWN TIME.**
 - **HEAVENLY-MINDED PATIENCE** includes **LOOKING FORWARD** to our **ETERNAL INHERITANCE WITH GRATITUDE TO GOD DESPITE OUR TEMPORAL CIRCUMSTANCES.**
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- **PETER** illustrated that principle in his *first epistle*, which was written to teach us *how to live out our faith amid seemingly unbearable trials and persecutions*.
 - The **EMPEROR NERO** had accused the Christians of burning Rome, and the resulting persecution was spreading even as far as Asia Minor, where the recipients of **1 Peter** lived.
 - To help them **FOCUS** on their **ETERNAL INHERITANCE** rather than their *present difficulties*, **PETER** gave them—and us—a **threefold** word of encouragement.

#1 REMEMBER YOUR CALLING

“WE ARE “A CHOSEN RACE, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR GOD’S OWN POSSESSION” (1 PET. 2:9). As such we are at odds with Satan’s evil world system and will incur its wrath. Therefore, we shouldn’t be *surprised* or *intimidated* by **THREATS OF PERSECUTION. THAT’S OUR CALLING:**

“YOU HAVE BEEN CALLED FOR THIS PURPOSE, SINCE CHRIST ALSO SUFFERED FOR YOU, LEAVING YOU AN EXAMPLE FOR YOU TO FOLLOW IN HIS STEPS, WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; AND WHILE BEING REVILED, HE DID NOT REVILE IN RETURN; WHILE SUFFERING, HE UTTERED NO THREATS, BUT KEPT ENTRUSTING HIMSELF TO HIM WHO JUDGES RIGHTEOUSLY.” (1 PET. 2:21–23)

#2 REMEMBER TO *PRAISE GOD*

- **BOWING IN *PRAISE* IS FAR BETTER THAN BOWING *TO PRESSURE*.** In (1 PET. 1:3–5) Peter says:

“BLESSED BE THE GOD AND FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, WHO ACCORDING TO HIS GREAT MERCY HAS CAUSED US TO BE BORN AGAIN TO A LIVING HOPE THROUGH THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST FROM THE DEAD, TO OBTAIN AN INHERITANCE WHICH IS IMPERISHABLE AND UNDEFILED AND WILL NOT FADE AWAY, RESERVED IN HEAVEN FOR YOU, WHO ARE PROTECTED BY THE POWER OF GOD THROUGH FAITH FOR A SALVATION READY TO BE REVEALED IN THE LAST TIME.”

- The main verb **“BE”** (1 PET. 1:3) is implied rather than stated (**“BLESSED BE THE GOD”**). The text could be literally translated, **“BLESS THE GOD AND FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.”** In short, the sense of it is **“BLESS GOD,”** which is both a **DOXOLOGY** and a **COMMAND**.
- For **PETER** to have to command believers to bless God clearly illustrates the **DEPTH** of our **SINFULNESS**. One of the joys of heaven will be our **undiminished capacity TO PRAISE GOD PERFECTLY AND INCESSANTLY FOR HIS SAVING GRACE**.
- The **SONG OF THE REDEEMED** will be on our lips throughout eternity. Yet now we struggle with **apathy** and **familiarity**. What an indictment!

PRAISING GOD FOR OUR ETERNAL INHERITANCE SHOULD BE THE CONSTANT EXPRESSION OF OUR HEARTS, NO MATTER WHAT THE TEMPORAL SITUATION MIGHT BE.

#3 REMEMBER YOUR *INHERITANCE*

FOCUSING ON OUR *INHERITANCE* IS AN IMPORTANT *KEY* TO EXPERIENCING *JOY* AMID *TRIALS*.

- *THE RICHNESS OF OUR INHERITANCE SHOULD MOTIVATE US TO BLESS GOD CONTINUALLY.*
- We're *ALIENS* IN THIS WORLD (1 PET. 1:1), but *WE'RE CITIZENS OF HEAVEN AND RECIPIENTS OF IMMEASURABLE BLESSINGS IN CHRIST.*
- *THIS TEMPORAL WORLD OFFERS NOTHING IN COMPARISON TO OUR IMPERISHABLE ETERNAL INHERITANCE.*

HOW TO *RECEIVE TRUE RICHES*

- **YOU DON'T *BUY* OR *EARN* YOUR WAY INTO AN *INHERITANCE*.** The Greek word translated "*INHERITANCE*" (*KLĒRONOMIA*), (1 PET. 1:4) speaks of *POSSESSIONS* passed down from generation to generation. ***YOU RECEIVE THEM SIMPLY BECAUSE YOU'RE A FAMILY MEMBER.***
- The apostle *PETER* describes the means by which believers gain membership in the family of God: "***[HE] CAUSED US TO BE BORN AGAIN TO A LIVING HOPE THROUGH THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST FROM THE DEAD***" (1 PET. 1:3).

***WE RECEIVE OUR ETERNAL INHERITANCE BY MEANS OF SPIRITUAL REBIRTH—
THE ONLY SOLUTION TO OUR *SINFUL* CONDITION AND *ALIENATION* FROM
GOD.***

- **JESUS** made that very clear when He said to the Jewish leader **NICODEMUS**, ***“UNLESS ONE IS BORN AGAIN HE CANNOT SEE THE KINGDOM OF GOD”*** (**JN. 3:3**). **JN. 1:12–13**) underscores the same truth: ***“AS MANY AS RECEIVED [CHRIST], TO THEM HE GAVE THE RIGHT TO BECOME CHILDREN OF GOD, EVEN TO THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN HIS NAME, WHO WERE BORN, NOT OF BLOOD NOR OF THE WILL OF THE FLESH NOR OF THE WILL OF MAN, BUT OF GOD.”***
- We were first born as sinful creatures, dead in trespasses and sins and indulging the desires of our flesh and mind. We were by nature children of wrath, separate from Christ, having no hope, and without God in the world (**EPH. 2:1–3, 12**). We were no more able to change our condition than we could alter the color of our skin, or than a leopard could change its spots (**JER. 13:23**).

- A person in that condition ***MUST BE TRANSFORMED*** by the power of ***THE HOLY SPIRIT***. Through the new birth, the Spirit makes a new creation in Christ (**2 COR. 5:17**), taking up residence in the believer and ***TRANSFORMING*** that person's ***THINKING*** and ***BEHAVIOR—PERSPECTIVES*** and ***VALUES*** change, and the ***FOCUS*** shifts from ***SELF*** to ***CHRIST***.

- ***GOD'S WORD IS ESSENTIAL TO THE NEW BIRTH. PETER*** said, ***“YOU HAVE BEEN BORN AGAIN NOT OF SEED WHICH IS PERISHABLE BUT IMPERISHABLE, THAT IS, THROUGH THE LIVING AND ENDURING WORD OF GOD. . . . THIS IS THE WORD WHICH WAS PREACHED TO YOU”*** (1 PET. 1:23, 25).

THE HOLY SPIRIT WORKS THROUGH THE WORD TO ACTIVATE FAITH, WHICH RESULTS IN THE NEW BIRTH (ROM. 10:17).

- ***FAITH MEANS TRUSTING IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST ALONE FOR SALVATION***.
- Many people want to add other requirements to the gospel, such as ***religious ceremony, some code of conduct, church membership***, or whatever. All of those things are ***HUMAN WORKS***. Salvation cannot be earned by works but is a gift of God's grace (**ROM. 3:21–26**). That is, God ***does not*** ask us to ***reform*** as a prerequisite to being saved;

HE JUSTIFIES US FREELY, THEN WORKS HIS TRANSFORMING POWER TO CHANGE US INTO THE IMAGE OF CHRIST (2 COR. 3:18).

- Before ***NICODEMUS*** came to Jesus by night (**JN. 3:2**), he was undoubtedly like the other Jewish religious leaders of his day—***LIVING BY AN EXTERNAL CODE OF RELIGIOUS CONDUCT APART FROM TRUE LOVE FOR GOD (JN. 8:42)***.

- They thought they could be saved by their own good works. But **JESUS** shattered that illusion when He told Nicodemus, in effect, that he would have to assume the role of a spiritual infant by setting aside all his religious error and approaching salvation all over again on God’s terms—he needed to be **“BORN AGAIN”** (JN. 3:3).
- **JESUS** illustrated His point by referring to a familiar event in Israel’s history. At one point during Israel’s wilderness wanderings, God had sent **FIERY SERPENTS** among the people because they had spoken against God and Moses. Many had been bitten and were dying. When **MOSES** interceded for the people, God instructed him to place a bronze serpent on a pole. Those who looked upon the bronze serpent were healed of their snakebites (**NUM. 21:5–9**).

THAT WAS THE IMAGE JESUS CALLED UP IN NICODEMUS’S MIND:

“AS MOSES LIFTED UP THE SERPENT IN THE WILDERNESS, EVEN SO MUST THE SON OF MAN BE LIFTED UP; SO THAT WHOEVER BELIEVES WILL IN HIM HAVE ETERNAL LIFE. FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD, THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, THAT WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM SHALL NOT PERISH, BUT HAVE ETERNAL LIFE.” (JN. 3:14–16)

THAT BRONZE SERPENT WAS SYMBOLIC OF THE SPIRITUAL HEALING THAT COMES **TO ALL WHO TURN FROM SIN AND LOOK TO JESUS, WHO WAS LIFTED UP ON A CROSS.**

- **NICODEMUS** had been bitten by the serpent of **self-righteous religious legalism**. He needed to **ACKNOWLEDGE HIS HELPLESSNESS** and **LOOK TO CHRIST ALONE FOR SALVATION**.

- The **NEW BIRTH** gives **“A LIVING HOPE”** (1 PET. 1:3). It is perpetually alive because it is grounded in the living God, who will fulfill all of His promises (TITUS 1:2), and because it transcends this temporal life. Also, our hope is living because it’s based on the **RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST** from the dead (1 PET. 1:3). **JESUS** said, **“BECAUSE I LIVE, YOU WILL LIVE ALSO”** (JN. 14:19) and **“I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE; HE WHO BELIEVES IN ME WILL LIVE EVEN IF HE DIES”** (JN. 11:25). Then He raised Lazarus from the dead to prove His claim (JN. 11:43–44).
- **PAUL** said, **“FOR TO ME, TO LIVE IS CHRIST AND TO DIE IS GAIN”** (PHIL. 1:21). Physical death is never the end for the believer—it simply ushers us into Christ’s presence, where our hope is eternally realized.

WE NEVER NEED TO FEAR THE GRAVE BECAUSE CHRIST HAS CONQUERED DEATH AND HAS GIVEN A LIVING HOPE TO ALL WHO LOVE HIM.