

Four Views Of Christ (Part 7)

Conclusion of Series

John W. Ritenbaugh

Given 08-Jan-94; Sermon #109

You'll recall that toward the end of my last sermon I speculated that the lie of II Thessalonians 2:11 is the same one that Satan told Eve in the garden all the way back at the beginning. Satan said to them, "*You shall not surely die.*"

I think that this illustrates a dangerous quirk of human nature that is in all of us until we are sufficiently instilled with the true knowledge and the right fear of God so that we are able to do something positive about this quirk. This quirk also exposes a very critical lack of faith and that is that mankind, as a rule, does not take what God says seriously.

Adam and Eve didn't. If they really had taken what God said seriously, I doubt very much that they would have sinned so quickly. Maybe in a certain circumstance they might have sinned, but it seems from the way God has told the story in Genesis 3, that the very first time Satan came by he was able to trick them (deceive them) into sinning.

I think it was largely because they didn't have faith in what God said. They really didn't believe it. They didn't take it seriously and so they then introduced sin and death to all of their progeny. Then the Bible goes on to say, "*All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*" All of us (maybe not in exactly the same way) but in like manner all of us have sinned.

We may plead ignorance. We may plead deception and I think that we can honestly do that. But God concedes that we have been ignorant. God concedes that we've been deceived by Satan and He very quickly (in His mercy) forgives us whenever we come to a knowledge of that and we repent and ask Him for the forgiveness.

What has happened to your life since conversion, since you came to a knowledge of the truth, since God called you and began removing the veil of ignorance and deception? Do you believe God *more*—to a greater degree with greater intensity now? Are you taking His word seriously enough to come out of the former attitudes and deeds?

I think the Bible shows that a drift toward apostasy is a fact of life for converted people. That's what II Thessalonians 2 is talking about. It's something that each one of us has to deal with. You recall how in the book of Hebrews chapter 2, Paul says, "*How should we neglect so great a salvation?*" These people were drifting into apostasy. It's more likely we're going to drift into apostasy than to make a sudden turn in any direction away from

the true way.

We have a tendency to drift toward apostasy as time goes by, because as time goes by the things of God become less exciting, less sharp to us, less clear maybe—a little bit vaguer. We have a tendency to just drift off to the side. So we find in II Thessalonians 2 people turning aside—that's what apostasy means—from revealed truth because they don't love it the way they should.

All too often (and I think you'll agree to this), we hem and haw; we procrastinate about doing or not doing things that we clearly understand God has shown us (that we must change). But this attitude of procrastination or hemming and hawing or putting things off tends to prove Solomon's statement in Ecclesiastes 8:11 where he says, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."

The past keeps coming back to haunt us doesn't it? I mean, what we were before conversion—the thoughts, the attitudes and the deeds of the old man are *still* there, aren't they. They're buried, to some extent, but they're like a spring that's been compressed. It almost seems that if we let up for just a moment those old thoughts, attitudes and deeds will spring right out to the fore once again.

Sometimes the old man is even hard to identify, let alone overcome. Yet, it is something that has to be done. It is our project from God. We have to overcome the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.

Now a person who's been in the church for quite a while may say, "*But I've always had a temper. I've always been forgetful. I've always been a loner. I've always had a foul mouth.*" You can compile your own list. Always? Maybe, but yet it still has to change.

I want you to turn to Romans 7, verse 15. I'm going to read this to you from the Revised English Bible because it is so clearly stated in here. Paul says:

Romans 7:15-17 (Revised) I do not even acknowledge my own actions as mine. For what I do is not what I want to do, but what I detest. But if what I do is against my will then clearly I agree with the law and hold it to be admirable. This means it is no longer I who performs the action, but sin that dwells in me.

The spring, you see? Sin is still there. Is anybody going to doubt that the Apostle Paul

Four Views of Christ (Part 7) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

was a deeply converted man? And yet, he (like we) had this dichotomy at work within him. With his mind he **admired**—he wanted to serve the law of God—and yet the old man was still there waiting to spring out into the fore, so much so that Paul said that what he wanted to do he didn't do and what he detested, *that's* what he did.

Let's go on.

Romans 7:18-20 (Revised) For I know that nothing good dwells [a converted man is saying this—converted for many years, an apostle of God] in me, my unspiritual self I mean. For though the will to do good is there, the ability to affect it is not. The good which I want to do I fail to do, but what I do is the wrong which is against my will. And if what I do is against my will, clearly it is no longer I who am the agent but sin that has its dwelling in me.

Clearly, brethren, we are not alone. Even the great of Christianity struggled with it. Paul anguished over it. And yet we find at the end of the chapter, verse 24:

Romans 7:24-25 (Revised) Wretched creature that I am, who is there to rescue me from this state of death? Who but God. Thanks be to Him through Jesus Christ our Lord. To sum up then, left to myself I serve God's law with my mind, but with my unspiritual nature I serve the law of sin.

Paul was confident that he was going to be delivered from it. We can have the same kind of confidence.

Let's go back one chapter, just in case we might be deceived into thinking maybe Paul thought that because sin sprung up in him every once in a while, that somehow or another he was not against sin.

Romans 6:15-19 (Revised) What then [he says], are we to sin because we are not under the law but under grace? Of course not! You know well enough that if you bind yourself to obey a master you are slaves of the master you obey. This is true whether the master is sin and the outcome death or obedience and the outcome righteousness. Once you were slaves of sin, but now thank God you have yielded wholehearted obedience to that pattern of teaching to which you were made subject. Emancipated, free, liberated from sin, you have become slaves of righteousness. To use the language that suits your human weakness, and as you once yielded your

Four Views of Christ (Part 7) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

bodies to the service of impurity and lawlessness, making for moral anarchy, so now you **must** yield them to the service of righteousness, making for a holy life.

So despite Paul admitting to having this struggle, he clearly shows that he came down on the side of those stressing that we cannot live life as a Christian in the same way that we did before conversion.

The word yielding or submitting indicates that we have choices to make. The liberty that we have is the liberty to make the right choices because before conversion, we were not really free to do that. That's what being free in Christ does. It liberates us to face up to what we are and make the choices for the best reason that we possibly could. It takes strenuous effort to live according to God's way, but we have made ourselves slaves to Him through this calling.

One might ask, "*What's the big deal? Why all this concern about whether one sins a little bit or not?*" Well let me show you. This time we're going to turn to Ephesians, the 2nd chapter.

Ephesians 2:1-2 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience.

I don't know how many times you've read those two verses (undoubtedly hundreds of times). Even in the course of sermons you've heard, because the ministry has a tendency to go over verses like this fairly often. But again, in the course of time in the church, it's very easy to drift from the effect of what these verses are saying. We begin to take them for granted. But I don't want us to take them for granted.

He said that we were **dead! D E A D** in trespasses and sins. Now surely that can't be taken literally. Well I'll tell you, if you have a tendency to overlook that verse and slide by it, that would be a mistake in attitude, because the Bible takes sin and death very seriously. It's takes death just as seriously as it does sin. The two go together. Does not Ezekiel say, "*The soul that sins, it shall DIE?*" The life that sins, it shall die! Do you see equality between the two words? Sin equals death.

There's a New Testament parallel to that. The Apostle Paul says, "*The wages of sin is*

death." You do one and it leads to the other. If one sins, at the end of life is death. The idea brethren, the concept of the immorality of the soul—immorality as a natural birthright simply because one has been born—is something that is **absolutely foreign** to the Bible. There is no life inherent within us.

The Biblical solution to death is resurrection. One has to be *made* alive. Resurrection requires an act of God that is **awesome**—somewhat akin to the recreation that we see in Genesis the 1st chapter, when God restored life to the entire earth and gave Adam and Eve (made of the clay of the ground) life as well.

Think about this. Only God can resurrect. Man's fate [without God] is death—we're going to die. Death is a reality and sin leads to death. Since any hope for life beyond death depends upon God, then any hope of any life beyond death depends entirely upon how we stand before God. Sin cuts a person off from God, therefore sin equals death.

Western civilization's concept of immortality came out of Egypt by way of Greece through the teachings of men like Plato. It has so captured the imagination of our thinking that the realistic and true Biblical concept of sin and death is difficult for us to take seriously.

Remember how I started this sermon. Are we taking God seriously? God tells us in His word that we do not have immortality as a birthright. It is something that has to be given. Because we sin we earn death. Because hope of a life after death depends upon the relationship with God and sin cuts us off from God, sin *equals* death.

You can begin to understand why this dichotomy Paul described in Romans 7 was so important to him. He was struggling. He didn't want to do it and he was wondering how he was going to get out of this struggle. Yet he also taught that we should make every effort to overcome sin.

Let's consider this: If we are immortal simply by reason of being born and immortality equals the state of blessedness we are all hoping for, then why do we need to take the problem of sin, of morality, of how we treat each other, and how we worship God seriously?

Brethren, if life (like the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans have taught us) is merely existence and survival and at the end of which there is already immortality, then what is religion? Religion then is nothing more than a cultural institution teaching a philosophy. There are no ultimate decisions about life that are necessary, and any choices become

merely matters of whether or not we want to please ourselves for the moment. Character has only physical and momentary ramifications and settling things between God and us has little or no meaning. If immortality is already our birthright then it opens life to totally hedonistic approaches. There's no reason to be moral. But you turn to the Bible and the issues of ultimate decisions are a matter of life and death! The central problem is settling things between a holy God and sinful men.

I want you to turn to Psalm 73. We're just going to look at one verse in this Psalm of Asaph.

Psalm 73:25-28 Whom have I in heaven but You? [Who's the psalmist talking to? He's talking to God.] **And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You.** [What is he saying? Think about it!] My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. For indeed, those who are far from You **shall perish**; You have destroyed all those who desert You for harlotry. But it is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all Your works.

What the psalmist is saying is that when we get down to the nitty-gritty details of life, to the finer things, there is nobody that is important but God. That relationship has to be protected at all times. It has to be worked on. It has to be built. It has to grow. It's not because God is weak, but because of God's purpose everything depends upon that relationship. Everything depends upon whether God is satisfied.

It is the ultimate that we trust and please Him because all the issues of whether we are dead in our sins or whether we are alive to righteousness and eternal life revolve around and are focused on this relationship. The Bible takes sin and death very seriously.

In the New Testament, where the horizons of why we were born are expanded without limit, [there is] birth into the kingdom of God. The end—the goal to which everything is progressing—is not survival. It's judgment, God's judgment.

Listen to these verses. Pay attention because judgment is now on the household of God (I Peter 4:17). Jesus said, "Marvel not at this for the time is coming in which all that are in the grave shall come forth—they that have done good to the resurrection of life and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation," (or as my New King James says "condemnation"). That's one verse.

Hebrews 9:27 says, "It is appointed for all men once to die and then the judgment." In

Four Views of Christ (Part 7) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

two different places (II Corinthians 5 and Romans 14) Paul said, "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." That's happening to us right now. The central issues of a man's life are God, sin and sin equals' death. If we are resurrected from one, we are also resurrected from the other.

Resurrection **can be** a present reality. Did you notice what that verse said in Ephesians 2:1? He **has made alive**. We were dead because we were sinning and the one equals the other. But now we have been made alive who were dead in trespasses and sin. In other words, immortality is there now. The final answer hasn't been given yet, but now there is immortality within us and we have a hope beyond the grave. But we have to do (and God expects that we do) everything we can not just to protect it, but to grow into everything that immortality represents in the time that we can.

All of this, to this point, has been an introduction. It's been rather long, but I feel that it's necessary and I want to get back to the series I've been giving on the Four Views of Christ and conclude it.

Recall that in the previous sermons (in this series), I've been expounding the distinctiveness of each book because this is what shows what the author is emphasizing. But is there anything that they have in common? Each one of them has something in common with one or two others, but there is one thing that they all have in common.

You recall that from time to time I've been reminding you of I John 4:17 which says, "As He is so are we in this world." One of the things John is saying here is that there is a parallel between our lives as Christians and what Christ experienced while He was on the earth.

We will experience some trials and lessons in our lives because we are part of a kingdom. Other times we will experience those lessons because we are servants. At other times we will experience things because we are sons of men, and we will experience things because we are sons of God. There is a good, logical, scriptural reason for this. We're going to tie several scriptures together.

I Corinthians 12:13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

We are all members of one body. We all know that this is an analogy, but maybe there

is a closer relationship than we generally think.

Can you recall Matthew 25 and the parable about the sheep and the goats? "*Inasmuch as you have done this unto these, the least of My brethren, you have done it unto Me.*" Do we take that seriously, or are we taking it for granted and glossing over it? Of course, the other side of it is, "*because you haven't done this to My brethren you haven't done it to Me.*" Christ identifies Himself with us that closely. "*As He is so are we in this world.*" We are part of a body.

Ephesians 1:22-23 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Here the body analogy is not quite as strong, but it is still very clearly there. The head is the part of the body which is on top. That indicates authority. More importantly, it's from that area which thinking, direction, choices and all of the subconscious activities of the body are regulated from.

Does the body or head experience life's events apart from each other? You know the answer to that. What the body goes through the head goes through. What the head goes through the body goes through.

I Corinthians 12:14-18 For in fact the body is not one member but many. [We are the body of Christ. Christ is just as much a part of that body as we are. The body is a unit.] If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? [Ridiculous!] And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.

God does things without confusion. He does things in an orderly manner and everybody has been put into the body because He has done it. He has put them into the position in the body that He wants them to be in.

A person may be an elderly widow or widower, but they're just as much a part of the body as some vigorous young man or woman in the prime of their health. If a person

Four Views of Christ (Part 7) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

has an eighth grade education they are just as much a part of the body as someone who has a doctor's degree. If God has put them in the body, they are part of it and the body needs them, or God would not have done it. He doesn't do things without purpose.

I Corinthians 12:21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."

There is purpose, there is reason (Paul is saying) behind each person being fit into the body as God saw fit.

I Corinthians 12:26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffers with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ and members individually.

The body is a unity. All of its parts experience things together. Some parts are more involved and more affected at different times than others. In a literal body, there are times when the feet work very hard. There are other times when the hand works hard or the ear works hard, and when the ear's working hard, maybe the feet aren't working hard or the hands aren't working hard. There are times when the eye works hard when the ear doesn't have to work at all. Do you see what I mean? There are times of involvement that one part of the body is being affected more than the other. But ALL of the time—ALL of the body is being affected by what any part of it is going through. And that includes Christ. When He goes through something it affects the body as well. There is really a unity that He is showing here.

Let's add one more factor to this.

Hebrews 2:10 For it was fitting for Him [Christ], for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings

Hebrews 2:14 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.

I'm concentrating here on the word 'author' in the New King James. We have here the *archegos* factor (*archegos* being the Greek word from which author is translated) and

Four Views of Christ (Part 7) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

part of Paul's purpose is to show that Christ trod the same path as we. Isn't that what verses 10 and 14 say? Christ, the Head of the body, trod the same path as we. **Now**, the instruction works both ways! If He is on the same path as us, we are on the same path as Him! The body, the head, the torso, legs and feet all go together. The only difference is He is the Head. He is the *Archegos*. He is the Captain. He is the Trailblazer. He is the Author. What He experiences we likewise are going to experience—perhaps not to the same intensity or degree—but nonetheless to some degree we are going to experience what He experienced ***if we are on the same path***.

Let's add something else to this just to see how close this relationship is. Turn to Ephesians, chapter 1. I'm going to read a series of verses and you'll begin to see a pattern taking place.

Ephesians 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful ***in*** [What does the word 'in' mean? It means inside of, a part of.] Christ Jesus.

If something is in the house, is it out in the garage? It's in the house. Are we in Christ? Are we a part of His body or aren't we? Are we an appendage that's floating along? No, we are in Him.

Ephesians 1:3-4 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places ***in*** Christ, just as He chose us ***in*** Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love

Ephesians 1:6-7 . . . to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted ***in*** the Beloved [that's the body of Christ, the church]. ***In*** Him [and I might add here ***only*** because we are ***in*** Him] we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace . . .

Ephesians 1:10 . . . that in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together ***in one*** all things ***in*** Christ [in one body in Christ, in one institution, in one church], both which are in heaven and which are on earth [my Bible even has a dash there, setting this off to draw attention]—***in*** Him.

We could go on. This thing is ***all*** through the epistles beginning with the writings of Paul.

Four Views of Christ (Part 7) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

We are *in* Him! And if we are *in Him*, then this analogy that I am drawing for you is a true analogy. We are the parts of the body of which He is the Head and what the Head experiences, the body experiences. We are on the same path as He is, except He is the Archegos, He is the Author and He is the Trailblazer. What He experiences, we are also going to experience.

Let's draw this a little bit further. In Romans 6:6—are you beginning to get the idea of how important this relationship is and how important sin and death are to God, and how important sin and death are to us, because we are part of this body and because our hope of eternal life hinges upon the relationship with God and remaining within Him and not departing the path He is on or the path that He trod?

Romans 6:6 Knowing this, that our old man was *crucified with Him*, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

Colossians 2:12; 3:1 Buried *with Him* in baptism, in which you also were *raised* with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead . . . If then you were raised *with Christ*, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.

Romans 8:17 And if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs *with Christ*, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

I hope I am supplying you with enough evidence to see that we are sharing life with and in Christ. The relationship is that close. The relationship is that important. The parallels are all through the Bible.

Even as we have been in Adam, by physical birth, indicating descent and nature, we are now in Christ indicating an actual real point of spiritual origin and descent. The Bible speaks of us being clothed with Him, of having His righteousness, of being as He is, etc.

. . .

Brethren, are we not being drawn into the same kingdom—the kingdom of God—also for the same basic reasons: to be sons of God, to be kings and priests? Doesn't it follow that our path to that destination will be very similar?

Back to the four views of Christ. What do all four books have in common? What is it that occupies the major part of what the four evangelists write of? It's the crucifixion, the

death and the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. It occupies 20% of the book of Mark, 25% of Matthew and Luke and 45% of the book of John. You think that isn't an important subject to God? What vital lesson is there for us contained in this? Out of the countless words and deeds of Jesus (which John said **all the books** in the world could not contain), the focus is: **the Son of Abraham dies!** The Servant suffers and dies! The Son of man suffers and dies! The Son of God suffers and dies!

In every one of them, one disciple betrays Him. He is denied by another who is striving rather than yielding. His friends depart from Him. He is judged, envied and feared by the religious leaders, and He is condemned by the political leaders. A criminal is preferred before Him. He is numbered with the transgressors. He is stripped of His possessions which are divided amongst His murderers. He is horribly beaten. He is crucified. He dies, is buried three days and three nights and He is resurrected!

What am I saying here? Again, please remember the principle I have been expounding—about us being **in** Christ, about us following the same path as the Head went along, the Archegos. **"As He is, so are we in the world!"**

Philippians 3:8-11 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found [**where?**] **in** Him [I'll tell you brethren, at the end of life, if we are **in Him, we are going to be resurrected** just like He was!] not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith **in** Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him [What is eternal life? John 17:3—Eternal life is to know God.] and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings [What is the main story in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John? The crucifixion, death and resurrection and all of the sufferings that surround that.], being conformed to His death, if by any means I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Brethren, if we are truly in Christ, then step-by-step we are being drawn along the same path that He trod toward death. But in this case, I am not thinking of martyrdom, but the death of self, which absolutely must precede a resurrection to spirit life. If we walk in the spirit, little by little the death of self is reached. Even as little by little, if we walk in the flesh, it is going to be removed from us. Even as Christ did not reach the crucifixion by one giant step, we do not reach death of self in one giant step. Death of self takes place in the common everyday acts of truth and faithfulness, or we go right back into the world with common everyday sins.

Would you be willing to deny the truth of God's word which says not to lie, to steal or to break the Sabbath (for example), in order to make a little money for yourself? Would you rather be considered as Caesar's friend than appear to be different to friends because of obedience to some law or principle of God?

Are you willing to turn aside, to deny the self [even] when worldly (and maybe even church friends) appeal to you that the way you are going (your way of life) is cutting you off from them? Boy, many of us have faced this in regard to our recent affiliation with another church. Think about these things in regard to Christ.

What if Jesus had exposed Judas? Think about this. He knew who was going to deny Him and He knew about it for a long time. He had every opportunity to expose him, and even at the last Passover He could have exposed Him. What do you think would have happened if He had exposed him on the last Passover? Don't you think those disciples probably would have wanted to tear Judas from limb to limb? Then what would have happened to the prophecies? What would have happened to the will of God?

What if Jesus had called upon twelve legions of angels, which He told Pilate He could have done? What if He had marshaled the forces of the thousands who were proclaiming Him as King? "*Hosanna, the King of Jews!*" He came in riding a donkey. They were willing to proclaim Him as Messiah. What if He had marshaled those thousands of people to be on His side to become an army? What if He had never exposed the scribes and Pharisees for what they were? Yes brethren, what if He had, in some way, avoided the will of God for him? We would have no Savior. He would have just lived out His life like Adam and there would be no Savior for mankind.

Think about this in relation to yourself. What if *you* avoid the will of God for you? Will you just live out your life like Adam and then what? You know the answer to that already.

Please turn with me to I Corinthians 15.

I Corinthians 15:35-36 But someone will say, "How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?" Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies.

There are a number of principles here that are important to our understanding regarding what we do with our lives. Not everything I'm going to say is contained in these verses, but I think you will recognize the principles.

Four Views of Christ (Part 7) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

1. Unless a seed dies it produces no fruit. That's what Paul said. "What you sow is not made alive unless it dies." Think of this in relation to the major story—the major part of what Matthew, Mark, Luke and John wrote—it's about crucifixion, death and resurrection. Its application to our life today, in a practical way, is that there must be death of self. So unless a seed dies, it produces no fruit.

2. The fruit produced depends on what kind of seed is put in the ground. If you put a carrot seed in the ground you're not going to get a beet.

Brethren we are the seed the Bible is concerned about. We are even called Abraham's seed. The fruit is the fruit of God's Spirit, and in a larger sense, it is eternally living, resurrected sons of God.

The Bible treats death seriously because first of all, a person must die to sin—be buried in the waters of baptism and rise to newness of life so one can receive the Holy Spirit and the fruit of that Spirit can be produced. Once having received the Holy Spirit, a person must make strenuous efforts to continue to keep the old man dead and yet be alive to righteousness if the fruit is going to be produced.

Second, the person must be planted in death, but what arises depends on what was put into the ground. Remember Jesus' word in John 5:28-29, that the time is coming when all who are in the graves are going to hear God—those who have done good are going to be resurrected to life; those who have done evil to a resurrection of condemnation. Do you see what I mean here? What was put into the ground is going to determine what is going to come out. The seed that is put into the ground (you and me) better be good seed before it goes into the ground. It will be good seed *if* it has put to death the self and produced the fruit of God's Spirit. Are things beginning to connect? They most certainly are.

Judgment is now on the household of God and the four evangelists focus much of their attention on the crucifixion and the death and resurrection of Christ, because it is the means through which life is produced. Did you get that? It is the means through which life is produced.

First of all, if Christ had not trod that path we would have no Savior! And second, if we don't trod the same path, we won't produce the fruit of God's Spirit and when we get planted in the ground at our death we will not rise in the resurrection to life.

Four Views of Christ (Part 7) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

So **now** (since judgment is on the household of God) **is the time** to put to death the self. Let's look at some scriptures. I'm not going to do much in the way of expounding because they are self-explanatory.

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ.

Did Paul put to death the old man?

Galatians 5:24 And those who are Christ's [you and me] have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Put them to death. This is how life is produced, by the death of the seed.

Galatians 6:14 But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Do we have to overcome the world?

Colossians 2:20 Therefore if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations?

If you died with Christ why are you being worldly?

Colossians 3:1-3, 5-6 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you DIED, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience.

Romans 6:5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection.

Do you see it there? If we die to sin we're going to be resurrected. Is sin serious? Yes, because sin equals death. If we die to sin then the spirit of life is going to be in us and we'll be resurrected.

Romans 6:6 Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with [It doesn't happen all at once. See, that it might be done away with.], that we should no longer be slaves of sin. [That's the purpose.]

Romans 7:9; 8:8-13 I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. . . So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 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. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die [You'll simply be on a different path than Christ.]; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Nothing could be clearer. Brethren, the crucifixion, the death and resurrection of Christ is designed to show us that salvation is not through the flesh but of the spirit. The flesh is designed to die and all that it does will perish with it. We have been called not from death but **out** of it. There is no such thing, once a person becomes a Christian, of having the best of both worlds. We have our choice. It is either the way of Cain or it is the way of God.

Brethren, we don't live in Eden. The curse of sin and death is working in this world and there is only one way around it. Jesus said in John 6:29, "This is the work of God that you believe in Him whom He has sent." And in John 11:25, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live."

The real work of God is to produce faith in Christ in His people, because without faith it is impossible to please Him. Faith is the foundation, of the relationship with Him, because it motivates the right choices and [in turn] puts to death the self.