

**“FAITH
AND THE
GOOD DOCTRINE”**

A Handbook of Biblical Doctrine

By

JOHN WADDEY

Dedication

*To Orin and Maggie Purdom,
my maternal grandparents,
and
Wilfred Purdom Waddey,
my mother,
Through whom
the stream of faith
came to me.*

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INTRODUCTION

Books are born for a reason. Some are written to make the author famous or to gain him money. Some are done to tell a story or to honor some person or institution. Some are created to harm enemies and some to promote the author's favorite idea. This book was prepared in order to provide fellow-Christians with a resource of information on a wide variety of Biblical themes.

The religious world classifies this kind of material as theology. I prefer to describe it as studies in biblical doctrines. The reader will notice that I have studiously avoided giving my opinions about the subjects discussed. Instead I have striven to set forth what the Bible states about these various topics. While our brethren have produced thousands of books, there have been relatively few that provided an extended collection of doctrinal studies. It is hoped that this volume will be useful to fill that need.

There are two ways to utilize this book. One can read it from front to back and gain valuable information on 155 different biblical subjects. Or he can use it as a reference volume to look up particular subjects on which he desires information. I freely acknowledge that there are many important topics that are not covered in this book. There are easily enough to fill another volume. While we have failed to include some topics that you might wish to study, we have provided material on themes on which many saints desire information.

In a book covering so many different topics, some of which have been the warmly debated by contending minds, it is to be expected that readers may not agree with my every conclusion. That should not discourage you from making good use of it. Most likely you disagree on some point with the man who serves as minister of your congregation. It would likely be true of your parents and maybe even your mate. So consider the information, check the scriptures cited. In those chapters where you are not persuaded, do with them as you do when eating fish. Keep the tasty flesh but discard the bones.

The author has been studying and teaching God's Word for some 54 years. The sun is now in the western sky and he must hasten to complete the things he hopes will survive him. His mind and heart overflow with information and ideas which he hopes to commit to the printed page. If God is willing and his days are extended, other books on other biblical themes will soon be forth coming.

John Waddey

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GOD

1.

BELIEF IN GOD IS ESSENTIAL FOR REAL HAPPINESS

God is! He lives! He reigns! He cares for you! We live in a skeptical world. While there are few outspoken atheists, millions live with weak faith, not able to articulate intelligent reasons for their belief in God. Biblical faith is much more than a warm, emotional feeling that there might be someone up there somewhere! Faith comes from hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17). True faith is based on solid evidence. It is a logical, reasoned conclusion based on observation, experience and revealed truth.

* Consider the cosmos. “The heavens declare the glory of God, the firmament showeth his handiwork” (Ps. 19:1). Look up on a starry night. Millions of witnesses radiating light and energy, hurtling through space with minute mathematical precision, cry out, “God made us!”

* Look about you. The lowly weed, the primitive snail testify of a creator. Man cannot make one of these living things. All men together with all their wealth, power, knowledge and technology cannot do so. It took a supernatural power to make them. Take a handful of dirt, a cup of water, a sample of air and analyze them. Their complex design and interrelationship with all things living speak of an all-wise intelligence we call God.

* Before a mirror, view yourself. Your intricate eye, delicate ear, articulate tongue; your magnificent mind all are evidence of God’s creation. Such does not and cannot happen by accident. Ask yourself, how did you learn to talk? Someone had to teach you! How did the first human beings learn to talk? An intelligent being had to teach them!

* Look at your watch. Its existence demands an intelligent creator. Look at the design in every aspect of the creation. Design demands an intelligent creator. Who decided that birds need hollow bones or that plants need bees for pollination?

* Your capacity to love and hate, to choose good or evil, to feel remorse at wrong done, your desire to go to a better place when this life is over, all testify that you are made in the image of God. What animal has such ability?

Paul taught the Romans that by observing the things that are made we can clearly see God’s everlasting power and divinity (Rom. 1:20). To enable us to understand and believe in God’s goodness, his righteousness, his love for us and his will for our lives, God sent his Son to live among us. Jesus said, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father (John 14:9). He also gave us a message in written form. We call it the Bible. It is a unique book, unlike any other ever written. It tell us the things we could never learn by observing nature. When read and believed, it produces faith in our hearts (Rom. 10:17). Belief and submission to God are essential to complete happiness. We are incurably religious. We “cannot live by bread alone” (Matt. 4:4). Eternity is instilled in our hearts (Eccle. 3:11). To stifle religious needs distorts our personalities. Believing in God, we can see and understand ourselves as we truly are; creatures wholly dependent upon God. It enables us to see purpose in life and the dignity of our fellow-man. Belief enables us to live in harmony with God (Heb. 11:6). It give us a sure hope of life with God after this life is over. I believe, do you?

2.

A PORTRAIT ALBUM OF OUR GOD

Isaiah asked his audience, “To whom then will ye liken God? Or what likeness will ye compare unto him?” (Is. 40:18). Fallen man craves a material god he can see and touch. Our God is invisible to mortal eyes (I Tim. 6:16). No man hath seen Him and lived (Ex.33:20). Although his everlasting power and divinity have always been clearly seen in the creation, sinful men, “professing themselves to be wise,...became fools and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts and creeping things” (Rom. 1:20-23). While images of God created by the art and craftsmanship of mortals is forbidden, we must in our minds find appropriate illustrations or comparisons to help us conceptualize Him whom we worship.

* **Jehovah is the creator** of all that exists. In the beginning he created the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1). He made man in his own image (Gen. 1:26). Everything he made was very good (Gen. 1:31). By his powerful word he created the vast cosmos and its inhabitants (Ps. 33:6). The creation declares his glory (Ps. 19:1). To God, the creator, we owe our existence.

* **Jehovah is the generous provider.** Every good and perfect gift cometh down from above, from God (Jas. 1:17). Our heavenly Father feeds birds and creatures of the earth (Matt. 6:25-26). With special care He provides for his saints (Ps. 34:9-10; 37:25). To Him we should always be thankful for his rich provisions. The food we eat should always be sanctified through the word of God and prayer” (I Tim. 4:5).

* **God is the great law-giver.** After giving the Israelites the Ten Commandments, Moses said, “this is the commandment, the statutes, and the ordinances, which Jehovah your God commanded to teach you...” (Deut. 6:1). Among the ancient peoples, no greater, more noble code was known than that which God provided for the Hebrews. He has given us, the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2) which is our New Testament. It is incumbent on all men to “walk...in all the way that I (the Lord) command you” (Jer. 7:23).

* **God is the supreme judge of humanity.** “For we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of God” (Rom. 14:10). Before him, “every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess to God.” The words that Christ Jesus spoke will be the standard of our judgment (John 12:48).

* **God is the Father of humanity.** Thus we are taught to pray, “Our Father who art in heaven” (Matt. 6:9). He is the ideal father. He is superior even to the best of earthly fathers. He gave us our life, both physical and spiritual (Heb. 12:9). He sustains us, protects and provides for us. He nurtures, disciplines and trains us (Heb. 12:7). He loves us with “an everlasting love” (Jer. 31:3).

* **Our God is like a husband to his people.** “For thy Maker is thy husband: Jehovah of hosts is his name” (Is. 54:5). A faithful, loving husband provides for and protects his beloved wife. All of that, Jehovah does for his people.

* **Jehovah is like a mighty warrior** who makes war against his enemies and defends and protects his people. One of his descriptive names is “Jehovah of hosts” (Is. 1:24). He is the leader of the armies of heaven. David paints this picture of God as a warrior, “Arise, O Jehovah, in thine anger; lift up thyself against the rage of mine adversaries, and awake for me...” (Ps. 7:6). He is strong above all others, fearless and undefeatable. No enemy can stand before him. No righteous soul need fear him. He is our great champion and defender.

* **God is like a shepherd.** Thus David sang, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want” (Ps. 23:1). Though we are weak and helpless before cruel and powerful enemies, we need not fear for He will protect us. He will provide our

every need. When we are sick or injured, He nurses and cares for us, restoring us to good health. He knows each of us by name (John 10:2-4).

What a majestic and wonderful God we serve! May we approach him “with reverence and awe” that our worship and service may be well-pleasing and acceptable unto Him (Heb. 12:28).

3.

GOOD REASONS FOR BELIEVING IN GOD

Only ten percent of our society identify themselves as atheists. However, many of those who believe in God base their faith on family tradition or hope of a happy eternity rather than on the solid reasons God has provided.

While saving faith comes from hearing the word of Christ (Rom. 10:17), evidence for the existence of God abounds in nature and in reason.

* David wrote, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork” (Ps. 19:1). Although they are without vocal ability, “their line is gone out through all the earth, And their words to the end of the world...” (19:4). One cannot look up at the starry heavens without pondering, “Who made this vast universe? ” “Who set it in motion?” “Who preserves it?” Since no man, nor all of humanity is capable of so doing, it must be the handiwork of superhuman being, who is worthy of our adoration and worship.

* When a thinking person contemplates the vast power that operates within the cosmos we are forced to ask, What is the source of that power? Does power emanate from nothing? A light bulb does not lighten itself, it must have a source of power. Only an all powerful God is an adequate explanation for this enormous energy.

* When we consider the existence of life, whether of man or beasts, birds or fishes, we are forced to ask, From whence came this life? The long experience of the human race teaches us without fail that life only comes from prior life. There is absolutely no record of a living thing emerging from non-living matter. It is God who “giveth life and breath, and all things” (Acts 17:25).

* Paul told the citizens of Lystra that God “left not himself without witness, in that he did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness” (Acts 14:17). The food we eat is a reminder of God’s providential care of his creation. Think of the billions of creatures inhabiting the earth and sea, and the fact that their food is provided. We are reminded that our “heavenly Father feedeth them” (Matt. 6:26).

* The Apostle reminded the Roman Christians that “the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance” (2:4). Every day, in a thousand ways, God’s goodness is demonstrated to all who are honest to acknowledge it.

* The basic structure of reality testifies to the triune God. Our God is manifested as Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). Our world of reality consist of time, space and matter. We ourselves consist of body, soul and spirit (I Thess. 5:23).

* The human race is a witness for God. Solomon observed that God has planted eternity in our hearts (Eccle. 3:11). Thus we see in every tribe of people a religious impulse. Even atheists tend to deify their great leaders, humanity as a whole, reason or pleasure. They have their beliefs and writings that are treated as sacrosanct. But in all tribes and nations, be they primitive or advanced, we find people praying in times of crisis. They long for a golden age. They hope for life after death. They build their shrines. There is in all people a sense of right and wrong and a sense that

evil must be punished. Except for the few who are truly sociopaths, the human conscience provokes guilt and shame for wrong conduct. It rewards us for right conduct. Paul writes that “Gentiles that have not the (written) law (of God), do by nature the things of the law...they show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith, and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them (Rom. 2:14-15). From whence does this religious impulse arise? Certainly not from animals. None of them reflect such a need for religious expression. It is not a matter of ignorance, for even highly educated people reflect this innate need. Man feels driven to look to some source or power beyond himself. That of course is the God of creation.

* Human language is a witness for God. How did you learn to speak? You learned from those with whom you were raised. Spoken language is not automatic for human beings. The child born profoundly deaf, will never speak verbally unless he has rigorous training by specialists. The question is who taught the first of the human race to talk? They did not learn it from animals nor of their own ability. Some intelligent being had to teach them to speak. The only possibility is that God, the Creator who interacted with them taught them to speak!

* The sinful act of cursing and taking God’s name in vain is a witness of Jehovah’s existence. In every nation, angry sinners curse and swear by the name of God or Jesus Christ. Did you ever hear anyone say Moses damn you, or Buddha, Vishna, Allah or Mohammed damn you? But wicked men do swear by God, the most high God who created all and rules all and by Jesus Christ his Son!

* The myths and legends of the many nations testify to the facts of God, creation, the Great Deluge, etc. Even nations whose mythology involves many gods, in their earliest stages, spoke of a Supreme God. They all relate tales of a beginning of all things, a creation. Virtually all of them know something of a massive flood that destroyed all but a remnant of life. These dim, distorted shadows are remnants of the facts of Jehovah the Creator and Judge of humanity.

* The Jewish people are a witness for God’s existence. To them God said, “Ye are my witnesses, saith Jehovah” (Is. 43:10). We know their origin. God selected one man and woman (Abraham and Sarah) and from them created this remarkable nation (Gen. 12:1-3). We know of the remarkable deliverance of the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt by the leadership of Moses (Ex. 12:1-13:22). We know the origin of their unique religion. For some 1500 years they stood virtually alone in a world of idolatry, as the people of one God (Ex. 20:2-3)! Their peculiar customs of worship, of food and dress, their institutions are all well known. The history of their punishment for their failures and sin and their deliverance, protection and provision by their God is undisputed. After repeated attempts to exterminate them, they still survive, small in number, witnesses to Jehovah!

* God’s judgments on wicked nations testifies to his existence. Sodom and Gomorrah, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Egypt of the Pharaohs, Rome, these and scores of other wicked societies who defied God and persecuted his people perished, often in most unusual ways. They were all overthrown by a power greater than themselves. Who or what was the cause of these judgements sent upon the wicked? The prophet Daniel wrote, “the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will...(Dan. 4:25) “He removeth kings, and setteth up kings...” (Dan. 2:21). When wise men contemplate the dealings of God with the nations of the past, they tremble at his judgments!

* Our seven day week with six days for labor and one for rest points us to God. Is it not strange that in every nation of the world men observe this weekly schedule. Our year is easily accounted for by the earth’s annual journey around the sun. Months are measured by the waxing and waning of the moon. Days are determined for us by the earth’s rotation on her axis. But whence came the seven day week with a day of rest? The only archetype is that noted in the Creation account of Genesis chapter one. Moses wrote of the sabbath, “It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed” (Ex. 31:17).

* In most of the world, the Bible, God’s unique book, is available to people. Even those who do not have it, or have not read it, know it to be different than any other book. Some hate it. Others have tried to destroy or outlaw it, but still it stands. Its remarkable survival is another witness to the God who gave it. It is established in heaven (Ps.

119:89). Jesus assured us, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35). In it, God has spoken to humanity (Heb. 1:1).

* Jesus of Nazareth stands out as the most significant man in human history. His name towers above all others in the annals of humanity. He is unique in his birth, his life, his teaching, his mighty works, his death, resurrection and ascension. He alone was virgin born (Matt. 1:23); was without sin (I Pet. 2:22); was raised from the dead, never to die again (Rom. 1:4). He is "the true light which lighteth every man, coming into the world" (John 1:9). Every man is under obligation to confess him as Lord and obey him (Phil. 2:11).

To this very day, God the Father, seeketh men and women who will worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:23). Those who refuse to believe in the Most High God are without excuse, given the many witnesses to his everlasting power and divinity (Rom. 1:20).

4.

THE OMNIPOTENCE OF GOD

The greatest theme of the Bible is God. Among the many attributes of God is his omnipotence. He is "the Lord God, the Almighty" (Rev. 4:8) Nothing is too hard for him (Gen. 18:14). "He hath done whatsoever he pleased" (Ps. 115:3).

Omnipotence Defined. This grand concept affirms that God "can do without effort, and by volition, whatever he wills..." (Charles Hodge). "The power of God is that ability and strength whereby he can bring to pass whatsoever he pleases...(Charnock). He can accomplish his will without difficulty or resistance. He cannot be checked, restrained or frustrated.

God was known to the patriarchs as El-Shaddai, God Almighty (Ex. 6:2-3). The term Shaddai when connected with the Hebrew word EL (God) means, "the mighty One to nourish, satisfy and supply" (Nathan Stone). Thus we see his power to send forth blessings for he is the all-bountiful one.

Attributes of His Power. God has all power in heaven and on earth, thus it is total and complete (Matt. 28:18). His power is everlasting (Rom. 1:20). It is inexhaustible. "The everlasting God...fainteth not, neither is weary..." (Is. 40:28). He needs no slumber or sleep as men do (Ps. 121:3-4). Great and powerful men wax weary and grow old. Their power is soon expended, but not Jehovah's. God's great power resides in himself alone, thus he is invincible. I even I am he, and there is no god with me and there is none that can deliver out of my hand" (Deut. 32:39). So great is his power that he needs only to will a thing for it to be. "By the word of Jehovah were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth...For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast" (Ps. 33:6, 9). God needs no matter with which to work, he made the cosmos from nothing (Heb. 11:3).

The power of God is always exercised in harmony with his nature and purpose. He cannot lie, because he is a God of truth (Heb. 6:18). Neither can he die for he is immortal (I Tim. 6:16). Because he is ever faithful, he cannot deny himself (II Tim. 2:13). God will do nothing unworthy of himself. He will do nothing contrary to his prior will. For example, God could have destroyed the race when Adam sinned, but he had already decreed to save the world through his Son, Jesus (Eph. 1:4-5).

There are some things which cannot be done for they are absurdities and contradictions. God will not make a square circle for once it is made circular, it is no longer square. He will not make a rock bigger than he can move. He will not make a thing both black and white at the same time for the two colors are mutually exclusive. These and dozens of similar irrational questions are often asked by scoffers and those with limited reasoning ability.

God's power is exercised in harmony with an established order which we call the "laws of nature." This provides us a predictable universe, rather than one composed of an ongoing series of special happenings called miracles. (This is not to deny that miracles have been done, but simply to affirm that they are the exception and not the rule of the everyday administration of the creation.) Thus babies are conceived in a standard way. The seasons of the year predictable. Water always flows downhill. We can plan our lives and activities based on those predictable laws.

God does not exercise all of his power. He could destroy our sinful world today, but he allows all things to continue as they have for several thousand years. He could program and determine our every move but he grants us personal autonomy. Thus we say God has "power over his power" not to exercise it in some situations (A. H. Strong). He can do all that he wills, but he wills not to do all he is capable of doing. We call this the **power of self-limitation**. The power of heaven is always administered with justice. "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of thy throne..." (Ps. 89:14). Men with great power often abuse their power or use it unfairly, but not our God!

Benevolence is another attribute of God's power. His gifts are good and perfect (James 1:17). Yet God is not mocked by the wicked who despise his gifts. He has power to assure that they will reap what they have sown (Gal. 6:7).

Manifestations of His Power: The power of El-Shaddai is seen in numerous areas. When we look at the creation we see "his everlasting power and divinity" (Rom. 1:20). The universe has been sustained from the beginning to this hour by "the word of his power" (Heb. 1:3). Providential power is seen in the good and perfect gifts he sends down to us (Jas. 1:17); in the sun and the rain sent on both the just and unjust (Matt. 5:45). Great power was displayed in the mighty miracles wrought on behalf of his people. What power it took to divide the Red Sea; to cause the sun to stand still; to still the storm on Galilee. With Nicodemus we confess "no one can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him" (John 3:2).

His power is seen in his control of the nations of the world. The proud king of Babylon learned "that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will" (Dan. 4:25). The Prophets give us a divine perspective of human history: how God raised up kings and nations, used them for his honor and purpose and then destroyed them (Is. 10:5-19). The psalmist writes of God's power to frustrate the wicked. "Jehovah hath made himself known, he hath executed judgment; the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands" (Ps. 9-16). For the righteous, God's power works all things together for good (Rom. 8:28).

God has sufficient power to destroy the physical cosmos which he created (II Pet. 3:5-7). He will use his power to raise the dead in a general resurrection (John 5:25-26). He has already "appointed a day in which he will thus judge the world in righteousness..." (Acts 17:30). Jesus warned us to "fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28). Correspondingly, "he is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto" him (Heb. 7:25).

Our Response to The Omnipotent God. Along with the cherubim we should always adore him in worship (Rev. 4:11). We should fear him and keep his commandments (Eccl. 12:13). We should trust him as our Lord and Savior (I Tim. 6:17). We should rejoice in his great power for by it "we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus...Amen" (Eph. 3:20-21).

5.

THE INDOMITABLE WILL OF GOD

The faithful child of God is eager to know and do the will of his heavenly Father (Ps. 40:8). He prays that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matt. 6:10). Often, we are mystified by the events unfolding around us. We struggle to understand God's will on such occasions. In his book, **The Will of God**, Leslie Weatherhead describes three dimensions of God's will: **His Intentional Will**, **His Circumstantial Will** and **His Ultimate Will**. By remembering these three aspects of God's will we will see them revealed in our study of his sacred book.

It was God's **intention** that man should live forever in a wonderful paradise, free from sin, suffering and death. There he would enjoy sweet communion with his Creator and Provider. Thus God made man in his image (Gen.1:27). He placed him in the beautiful Garden of Eden where his every need was supplied (Gen. 2:8-9). The tree of life sustained his vitality and assured his immortality (Gen. 3:22). God himself came down and visited with his children (Gen.3:8).

The Prince of Evil envied the happiness of man and set about to thwart the will of God. God had placed but one restriction upon them. They were prohibited from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The penalty for so doing would be death (Gen. 2:17). God preserved for us the tragic story of their temptation and fall. Using a serpent, Satan first allured Eve. He disputed God's warning, telling her "Ye shall not surely die" (Gen. 3:4). He promised her that eating the forbidden fruit would make her as God. He showed her its delightful appearance and told her it was good for food. It would make her wise. Overwhelmed by the charm of it all she ate of the fruit. Adam joined her in so doing (Gen. 3:1-6) But the results were not what they had anticipated. Guilt, shame and fear came upon them. When God came down to visit them they tried to hide from Him (Gen. 3:10). And God said, "Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and has eaten of the tree....cursed is the ground for thy sake;...in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground;...for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. 3:17-20).. The trembling pair were driven out of their paradisaical home. A cherubim with a fiery sword stood guard lest they attempt to eat of the tree of life and live for ever (Gen. 3:22-24).

With these circumstances God's intentional will was temporarily thwarted. But God will not be defeated by man or Devil. He then set in motion his **circumstantial will** that would overcome these obstacles and see his original plan restored. He announced to the sinful pair that "the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head even though his heel would be bruise in the act (Gen.3:15). Couched in this mysterious promise was an elaborate plan to salvage man and restore him to his original state and standing with God. It was not God's will that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (II Pet. 3:9). The details of this plan of redemption were gradually revealed and worked out over hundreds of years as He prepared humanity for the coming of their savior. Then in c.a. 4 B.C. God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law that he might redeem them..."(Gal. 4:4). His only Son would come down and restore them to God's fellowship by paying the price for the transgressions (John 3:16).

With the death of His beloved Son, the sin debt of man was paid (I Cor. 15:3). His blood was fully sufficient to wash away all the sins of those who turn to him for salvation (I John 1:7). In his death, He also purchased his church (Acts 20:28). He provided his people a message of good news that revealed his power to save sinners and how they could receive the blessing (Rom. 1:16). He commissioned them to take it to all the world (Mark 16:15). All of humanity was invited to be reconciled to God (Matt. 11:28; I Tim. 2:4). On that glorious day when he returns to raise the dead and change the living (I Thess. 4:16-17), then death will be conquered (I Cor. 15:26). We will be

caught up to meet the Lord in the air. With all of humanity assembled before his throne, the Master will separate the righteous from the wicked (Matt. 25:31-32). The righteous will be restored to the paradise God prepared for them (Rev. 21:1-5; 22:1-5). There in the heavenly Eden we will have access to the tree of life and the water of life. There our fellowship with our Father will be restored. The curse, with its sorrow, pain and death will be lifted. Satan, the architect of all our misery will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone (Rev. 20:10).

Then we will see **God's ultimate will for mankind realized**. Clothed with immortality, we will spend our eternity in that heavenly paradise in the blessed presence of our Creator and Savior. "...He chose us in him before the foundation of the world...having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will..." which he purposed in Christ (Eph. 1:5-6,9). With angels we will sing "The counsel of the Jehovah standeth fast for ever" (Ps. 33:11). "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past tracing out!...To him be the glory for ever" (Rom. 11: 33-36).

6.

IS GOD JUST IN HIS DEALING WITH MEN?

The question is often raised, how can God be just and yet let the ignorant soul be lost who has never heard the gospel? The nature of this question demands a Biblical solution. Philosophy and human opinion can never give a satisfactory answer. The consequences of this issue are universal and eternal, therefore Christians must find the proper answer and boldly proclaim it to all who ask.

Are the Ignorant Heathen Sinners?

Paul's verdict on the whole human race is declared in Romans chapter 3. "They are all under sin; as it is written, there is none righteous, no not one; ...or all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (vss. 9-10; 23). To Gentile Christians in Ephesus, Paul wrote, "And you did he make alive, when ye were dead through your trespasses and sins, wherein ye once walked according to the course of this world ...among whom we also all once lived in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest..." (Eph. 2:1-3). Before the gospel came to the Ephesians they were in exactly the same conditions as the heathen in China today who have not heard the gospel. Thus they are dead spiritually because of their sins, they are children of wrath. In Ephesians 2:12, he continues by stating that when a Gentile is separated from Christ he has no hope since he is without God. Only in Jesus can he be reconciled to God. Now, if the primitive man, separated from Christ, has no hope, what is his expectation in judgment?

Then there is Jesus' great commission, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:15-16). Question: Is the ignorant heathen included in the category "the whole creation?" If yes, and he can be saved in his ignorance, why does he need the gospel? To argue that the primitive man is in a safe condition makes the commission of Jesus foolish. You cannot save a saved man. A man must be lost before he can be saved. You cannot save a man from freezing who lives in equatorial Africa, nor can you save a man from sin if he is safe in his condition. All creatures need the gospel to be saved because all men are lost. Having established that all men are sinners; I ask you, are they lost sinners?

Why Are They Lost?

We noted above that all men are sinners and therefore lost. Now we will probe a little deeper as to their problem. Sin separates the sinner from God (Is. 59:1-2). Sin always brings consequences. The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23).

Someone asks, but how can they sin without a Bible or knowledge of God's will? First, consider the practice of idolatry, a practice that is virtually universal outside the few western nations. Paul reasons "That which is known of God is manifest in them; for God manifested it unto them. For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse: because that knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasonings ...and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man....." (Rom. 1:19-23). Idolatry is without excuse! It was so before Christ came, it is so today. The creation itself demands a supernatural God who is greater than man himself. No image made by man's hands can suffice! Thus, all who engage in idolatry sin against Jehovah.

But how can they sin without the Bible, you may ask? Again, we call the Apostles to testify. "For when Gentiles that have not the law do by nature the things of the law, these, not having the law are the law unto themselves; in that they show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith and their thoughts, one with another, accusing or else excusing them" (Rom. 2:14-15). Although they have no written law, yet they do have law, the law of the conscience written on their hearts. This sense of moral responsibility is universal. There is in every rational man a sense of ought and ought not. Every society has its code of moral law. No man can escape his amenability to such law. When he keeps that law, his conscience approves of his conduct, when he breaks it, his conscience accuses him. Even for the Christian, Paul says, "Happy is he that judgeth not himself in that which he approveth. But he that doubteth is condemned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith and whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. 14:22-23). When the heathen does what he knows to be wrong he has sinned. When he fails to live up to his known moral duties he likewise sins (Jas. 4:17).

In addition to the above, there was a point in time when the knowledge of the true God and his righteous ways were revealed to the human family. These revelations from the Patriarchal Age were to be passed down from father to son even as did righteous Abraham (Gen. 18:19). Paul points out that those Gentiles "refused to have God in their knowledge" (Rom. 1:28). Because of the vanity of their thinking and the darkness of their hearts they refuse to glorify Jehovah or give thanks unto him. They preferred gods of their own creation, gods like unto themselves. Because of this, God gave them up unto a reprobate mind. But their sin of rebellion and rejection had awful consequences for their children for generations to come. Perhaps this helps us to see the significance of God's warning in Deuteronomy 5:9. After proscribing idolatry he says, "For I Jehovah thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the third and fourth generation of them that hate me."

Having proven that the heathen are sinners, I ask what are the consequences of thereof? "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God and your sins have hid his face from you....." (Is. 59:2). They are lost because they are sinners.

But It Seems Unjust

To some people, for God to allow the ignorant heathen to be lost seems very unjust. But we have established that they are lost because of their own personal sin. God cannot be blamed for their condition. The real question is, can God be just and save a sinner without the sinner's faith and obedience to the gospel? A vital theme of the gospel is that sin demands punishment. Since all men are sinners, all deserve punishment. But God so loved the race of man that he let his own Son die in their stead so that he could be just and still justify him that had faith in Jesus (Rom. 3:26). If God elects to save some without faith in the Son, would this not be partiality since he demands it of others? If God decided to let some unbelievers be saved would it not be unfair to the Son who was made to die so that all who believed in him could be saved,? Our God is just (Is. 45:21). He always does that which is right in judging men (Gen. 18:25).

God is just because he has made provisions to save all men. He is not willing that any perish (II Pet. 3:9). He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 18:23). He gave his only son to save all sinners who would believe on him (John 3:16). He gave the church to be as a beacon light to all men in darkness (Phil. 2:15). He gave the gospel which has the power to save all men (Rom. 1:16). He laid upon every Christian the duty of preaching that gospel to every creature (Matt. 28:19-20). God has promised, "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the

teaching.....” (John 7:17). We Christians may be unjust because we have not dedicated ourselves to the great task of evangelizing the world, but our God is just. Let no man raise a question about God’s integrity in dealing with sinner!

A point often overlooked in this discussion is that though Scripture teaches that even ignorant heathen sinners will be lost if they obey not the gospel (II Thess. 1:7-9), it also teaches that punishment will be suited to the guilt of the sinner. Jesus said, “That servant, who knew his Lord’s will, and made not ready, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes shall be beaten with few stripes” (Luke 12:47-48). This indicates that both the disobedient, enlightened American with the gospel message all about him and the ignorant pagan who never saw a Bible will both be lost. However, the former shall be more severely punished for he sinned against greater light and opportunity. This is justice!

Serious Implications

The theory that the disadvantaged heathen can somehow be saved carries with it many serious implications. It implies Christ’s death was unnecessary. For if today’s heathen can be saved without the gospel, why could not the entire Gentile world of the first century have been similarly saved? If God could be just and excuse one, why could he not likewise excuse all? Then the Son would have been spared Calvary.

If the theory is correct, then there is great value in being an ignorant pagan with no knowledge of Jesus and the Bible, since you can be saved in that situation. That being true, it would be very cruel and unjust for Christians to take the gospel to them, since the knowledge it brought would damn their souls if not obeyed. That would place the missionary in the awkward role of being responsible for the damnation of every soul who heard his gospel message and did not obey it. Again, if ignorance will justify, then Bible translation is more deadly than smallpox. It will cause millions to become guilty of sin if they do not accept it.

If the heathen are saved, then the Word of God is wrong in all those places where it teaches they are lost; then Jesus was mistaken in saying that all creatures need saving since this implies that they all are lost (Mark 16:15-16). Really, rather than vindicating God, the theory casts a reflection over His integrity.

Consequences

The consequences of this belief are devastating in many areas. It destroys all the motivation and urging for world evangelism. If the heathen can be saved in their ignorance, why bother going to them? Why endure the discomforts and problems of living in strange, hostile environments and societies, if they can be saved anyway. Why sacrifice time and money that could be spent at home, if the lost are not really lost?

Why should we be concerned with Bible translations? The great amount of time, energy and money taken to produce and then circulate the Bible is totally unnecessary if the heathen can be saved without it.

This belief, when held regarding the heathen, tends to grow on a man’s mind. Soon he can rationalize how God can also save the sincere but uniformed neighbor who lives next door. The last stop is a form of universalism like is seen in modern Protestantism.

In reality Satan is the author of this theory because if he can get the church to buy it, then evangelism will cease, the heathen will be left to die in their sins and be forever lost.

Why is this strange notion so popular among modern Christians? Could it be an attempt to rationalize and justify their failure to evangelize the world? If they are too busy or selfish to do this task, and the poor heathen are lost, then they are guilty of criminal negligence. But if it is the case that the heathen will be saved anyway, what difference does it make? The negligent disciples can imagine, “Let us eat, drink, and be merry, enjoy our good life of ease and our good God will fix everything up.” Do not believe it brethren. All sinners are lost and only the gospel can save them. Christians also will be lost who fail to do their part to evangelize the nations!

7.

THINGS THAT GOD HATES*

All have heard numerous sermons' on the love of God. Surely there is no grander, more thrilling theme. But have you ever heard a lesson on the hatred of God? Contrary to popular notion, God does have such negative emotions. Of course, the hatred of God is on a far different plane than the hatred of men. Men hate each other, but God loves all men, even his enemies (Rom. 5:6-10). Men hate because of selfishness. When someone or something threatens their cherished position or possession, they experience the emotions of envy, jealousy, fear and hate. Often, sinners hate the good man for the good he is doing, as they did Jesus (John 7:7). God's hatred never affects his love for man. He loves all including the lost (John 3:16). To fully know and appreciate the personality of God we should note some of those things he hates.

God **loves righteousness but hates iniquity** (Heb. 1:19). Righteousness is right doing. Iniquity is sin, or the perversion of right. Iniquity thwarts God's plans and purposes for man. It ruins the soul made in the image of God. It robs God's children of heaven's reward (Matt. 7:21-23). God loves sinners, but he hates their iniquitous ways.

God **hates false religion**. Jesus said, "Thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitans which I also hate" (Rev. 2:6). Truth makes men free (John 8:32). Error and falsehood enslave and bring men to hell (Hos. 4:6; Prov. 16:25). Like God, we should hate and abhor the false systems that lead men away from God. When the blind lead the blind, both fall into the ditch (Matt. 15:14). Some folks view world religious such as Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam and praise their beauty. But how can that which is deadly and destructive be truly beautiful? Denominationalism is not just a harmless variety of true Christianity. It is a plant which the Father hath not planted, which he will root up (Matt. 15:13). Those who pursue God through the medium of human traditions do so in vain (Matt. 15:9). Like David, we, too, should hate every false way (Ps. 119:104).

Solomon gives a divine catalogue of things which God hates in Proverbs 6:16-17:

A. **Haughty eyes**. This suggest the proud, arrogant soul whose eyes reflect contempt for his fellow-man and God's righteous law. The "pride of life" is not of the Father but of the world (I John 2:15-16). Christians must put away pride and arrogance.

B. **A lying tongue**. All liars will have their part in the lake of fire (Rev. 21:8). We are tempted to excuse the "little" or "harmless" lies so long as we abstain from vicious diabolic lies. Remember *all* liars will pay the price. It is incumbent upon us to "put away falsehood" and speak truth if we would please the Master (Eph. 4:25).

C. **Hands that shed innocent blood**. He speaks not of chickens or pigs. God gave man dominion over the creatures (Gen. 1:28). God hates the shedding of innocent human blood. He ordained that "whoso sheddeth man's blood by man shall his blood be shed" (Gen. 9:6). Thus, God ordained capital punishment for the murderer. God surely hates the astounding amount of brutal violence on America's streets. He hates the violence of the Communist governments which have exterminated millions of dissenters. But he also hates the practice of abortion which since 1973 has snuffed out in American alone over 50 million lives.

D. A heart that deviseth wicked purposes. God will give up those who have a “reprobate mind” (Rom. 1:28). There is a type of heart that is desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9). Such individuals are dedicated to wickedness. They scheme, plot and plan to do mischievous deeds toward others. Sometimes they hide their meanness behind a cloak of pretended righteousness. The pure in heart will be blest of God in this life and see him in eternity (Matt.5:8). Not so the wicked minded.

E. Feet swift in running to mischief. There is a marked difference between accidentally falling into sin and deliberately running into it. Wilful sin is especially hateful to God (Heb. 10:26-27). In fact, the wilful sinner can expect a fiery judgment. Because God so views deliberate sin, his children daily pray, “lead us not unto temptation” (Matt. 6:13).

F. False witnesses. Such are a special variety of liars. They are malicious and deadly. We have no way of computing the damage done to the home, to society and the church because of false witnesses. Under Moses’ law the false witness who testified against his neighbor was to be punished as “he had thought to do unto his brother” (Deut. 19:19). God’s children will always speak the truth and lie not (I Tim. 2:7).

G. He that soweth discord among brethren. If factious people could perceive how God hates division and strife they would surely repent of their contentiousness. We see just how bad such attitudes and conduct are when we consider the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21). Strife, factions, division, and parties (cliques) he lists along with fornication, idolatry and drunkenness. He concludes that no man can go to heaven while practicing such things. The road to eternity is strewn with lost souls who were destroyed by discord in the church. Only the peacemakers are called the children of God (Matt. 5:9).

H. In Malachi 2:16, we are told that God hates **the breaking up of homes** by divorce. Some argue that Jesus’ teaching is too severe. “Modern man cannot be expected to live by such stringent rules!” Such folks obviously have never realized how God views the sacredness of the home. God hates putting away and so should we.

Holy hatred being an attribute of God, then it is fitting that they who would be godly share that emotion toward the things God hates. “The fear of Jehovah is to **hate evil**” (Prov. 8:13). With David we “hate and **abhor** falsehood” (Ps. 119:163). Paul exhorts us to “abhor that which is evil....” (Rom.12:9). The Ephesian saints were commended for **hating** “the works of the Nicolaitans ” Rev. 3:6). Jude exhorts us to hate “even the garment spotted by the flesh” (vs. 23).

While we should hate evil with God, may we never be found hating God or his holy law. Moses warns, “He (God) will not be slack to him that hateth him. He will repay him to his face. Thou shalt therefore keep the commandment....” (Deut. 7:10-11).

* The author is indebted to Gobel Music for the main idea of this lesson.

8.

THE MANY NAMES OF GOD

When our God chose to reveal himself to mankind, no single word in the vocabulary of man was found adequate to convey the fulness of his mercy, glory and power. Just as the rainbow consists of many hues of color, so many names are necessary to paint an adequate portrait of our God. As we consider some of these names we will see that each one conveys a specific description of his being.

* Opening our Bibles, the first divine reference is “**God**.” This is our English translation of the Hebrew name “**Elohim**” (Gen. 1:1). This term for the Holy One is used some 2300 times. The most remarkable thing about Elohim is that it is a plural word. Thus we read “God (Elohim) said, let *us* make man in *our* image...” (Gen.1:26). Thus in the very beginning of the sacred record God reveals the fact the Father is not alone. The Spirit moved upon the face of the water (Gen. 1:2). John tells us that all things were made through “the Word” who later became flesh. Him we know as Jesus the Son of God (John 1:1-3, 14). The term suggests “a plurality in unity.” Dr. Campbell Morgan writes, “It refers to absolute, unqualified, unlimited energy.” God is the “Almighty God” (Elohim) (Gen. 17:2). To Abraham and his descendants He promised, “I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee...and I will be their Elohim” (Gen.17:7-8).

* Some 250 times God is referred to under the name “**El**.” This name speaks of God’s great strength and power. Moses told his people, “For Jehovah...the great God (El), the mighty, and the terrible, who regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward” (Deut. 10:17). Isaiah predicted that Messiah would also be called “Mighty God (El)” (Is. 9:6).

* God is sometimes called “**Elah or Eloah**” which means God who is adorable. Some 60 times it is used by sacred writers. David asks, “Who is God (Eloah) save Jehovah” (II Sam.22:32). God asked his people, “Is there a God (Eloah) besides me?”

* Melchizedek was the “priest of (**El Elyon**) God Most High” (Gen. 14:18). Daniel told haughty Nebuchadnezzar, “the Most High (El Elyon) ruleth in the kingdom of men” (Dan. 4:25). We are “saints of the Most High (El Elyon)” whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom (Dan. 7:27).

* Our God is also called “**El-Roi**,” the God who seeth. When God saw the plight of Hagar who had fled from the wrath of Sarah, he had mercy on her, consoled her and sent her back to Abraham’s house. “She called the name of Jehovah that spake unto her, ‘Thou art a God that seeth;’ for she said, Have I, even here, looked after him that seeth me?” (Gen. 16:13). His careful watch over his creation is reflected in Jesus’ words about the little sparrows; “not one of them is forgotten in the sight of God” (Luke 12:7).

* When Jacob erected an altar near Shechem, he dedicated it “**El-Elohe-Israel**,” the God of Israel (Gen. 33:20).

* When Abraham spoke to Abimelech, he explained that “when God (**El Olam**), the God of Eternity caused me to wander from my father’s house...” (Gen. 20:13). The Israelites who had spent 40 years without a permanent home were assured that “The eternal God is thy dwelling-place...” (Deut. 33:27). It is in His house that we will spend our eternity (John 14:1-3).

* God’s great power is reflected in the name “**El Shaddai**” the Almighty and All-Sufficient God. God revealed himself to Abraham saying, “I am God Almighty” (Gen. 17:1). The angel asked of Abraham, “Is anything too hard for Jehovah?” (Gen. 18:14). When blessing Joseph, old Jacob said, “...By the God of thy father, who shall help thee, and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee, With blessings of heaven above”(Gen. 49:25). El, the God of great power, and Shaddai, the all bountiful One, would bless and keep him. The Psalmist wrote, “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High (El Shaddai) shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty” (Ps. 91:1).

* Our God is often described and referred to as “**Adonai**” which is rendered “Lord” in our English Bibles. Thus he is the Lord Jehovah (Ezek. 13:13). Over 200 times, in Ezekiel alone, we read of the “Lord God” or “Lord Jehovah.” David prayed “O Lord, be not far from me...my God and my Lord” (Ps. 35:22-23). In calling God Lord, we are expressing our recognition of his power and authority over us; we show reverence to him as our Master.

* David tells us to “Cast up a highway for him that rideth through the deserts, His name is Jehovah (**Jah**)...” (Ps. 67:4). Jah is the Independent One. He is dependent on no one. Isaiah tells us to “trust ye in Jehovah for ever; for in Jehovah (Jah) is an everlasting rock...” (Is. 26:4). He is a very present help in time of trouble (Ps. 46:1).

* We are told to worship, bow down and kneel before Jehovah our Maker (**Jehovah-Hoseenu**) (Ps. 95:6). This speaks of God’s creative power and reminds us that we are his offspring (Acts 17:29). Paul writes, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ...” (Eph. 2:10).

* When God provided a ram for Abraham to offer as his sacrifice, he called the place “**Jehovah-jireh**” which meant, “In the mount of Jehovah it shall be provided” (Gen. 22:14). Jehovah-jireh reminds us that our God will provide our every need. This Paul believed. He wrote, “My God shall supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory...” (Phil. 4:19). On this name we base our belief in God’s divine providence. Thus we know that every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father of lights (Jas. 1:17). He provided for us His only begotten Son, the only sacrifice able to save us from our sins (John 3:16).

* God is **Jehovah-Rophi**, our Lord and Physician. When the wandering Hebrews were desperate for water they found water at Marah, but the water was tainted. They cried unto Jehovah and he provided them with material to make the water potable. He reminded them “**I am Jehovah that healeth thee**” (Ex. 15:27). David tells us to “Bless Jehovah..and forget not all his benefits:...who healeth all thy diseases” (Ps. 103:2-3). Because of His goodness and power, even those who do not know the name Jehovah-Rophi, instinctively call upon God for help when they are afflicted. Jesus is our great physician.

* Gideon built an altar unto Jehovah, “and called it **Jehovah-shalom**” which meant Jehovah is the God of peace (Judg. 6:24). Paul closed the doctrinal section of his letter to the Romans with “Now the God of peace be with you” (Rom. 15:33). In his letter to the Ephesians he tells us that Christ “is our peace” (Eph. 2:14). He closed his second letter to the Thessalonians saying, “Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in all ways” (II Thess. 3:16). To this day, the common mode of greeting among Jews is “Shalom.” Jesus expects all of his disciples to be peace-makers (Matt. 5:9).

* The Hebrew prophets often contemplated God as the great leader of the angelic armies of heaven. The word they used to describe that aspect of God was “**Jehovah-Tsebaoth**,” the Lord of Hosts. When they were harassed by their enemies, when they needed deliverance, the Israelites lifted up their prayers to Jehovah of hosts. “Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country” (Zech. 8:7). In Revelation 19 we see Christ riding forth on the white horse of victory, leading the armies of heaven (Rev. 19:11-16).

* Among the Israelites, one of their favorite names for God was “**Jehovah-rohi**,” Jehovah my shepherd. The most famous of these references is David’s, in the 23rd Psalm, where the first four verses praise Jehovah-rohi. “The Lord is my shepherd; He maketh me to lie down in green pasture; He leadeth me beside still waters. He restoreth my soul...Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.” Psalm 80 opens with the request, “Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel. Jehovah-rohi was a natural expression for the Hebrews, who were a largely pastoral people. They looked to their God for leadership, provision, protection and healing. Jesus is our “good shepherd” (John 10:14).

* Jeremiah referred to God as “**Jehovah-Tsidnenu**,” which meant Jehovah our Righteousness. “In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called: Jehovah our righteousness” (Jer. 23:6). Jeremiah knew what Paul expressed. Our salvation does not depend on “a righteousness of (our) own,...but that which is through faith...”(Phil. 3:9). To the Corinthians, Paul wrote, “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord” (I Cor. 1:29-31).

* When He saw the corruption and ungodliness of the people of Judah, God said to Ezekiel, “And mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: I will bring upon thee according to thy ways; and thine abomination shall be in the midst of thee; and ye shall know that I, Jehovah do smite” (**Jehovah-Makkeh**) (Ezek. 7:9). To those who only know

of God's love and mercy and those who only want such a God, this may come as a surprise. God is also righteous and he expects the same of his people. He hates iniquity. He is Judge of men and nations. When they rebel against his will and refuse to repent he will punish them, hence his name, Jehovah-Makkeh.

* As Ezekiel beheld in visions the restored city of Jerusalem, he noted "and the name of the city from that day shall be, Jehovah is there" (**Jehovah Shammah**) (Ezek. 48:35). When God's shekinah occupied the Holy of Holies of the newly built tabernacle, it was proof to the Hebrews that God was with them. When David took Jerusalem from the Jebusites and brought the tabernacle there, the people understood that God was with them in the holy precincts at Jerusalem. Later Solomon built his temple and it was understood that the shining light that resided in the Holy of Holies was proof of God's presence. Habakkuk said, "Jehovah is in his holy temple..." (Hab. 2:20). Today God's Spirit resides in his church. Paul wrote the church in Corinth, "Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (I Cor. 3:16). When John saw visions of the heavenly city, he saw the throne of God and the marvelous shekinah, the glory of the Lord. He tells us "And God himself shall be with them and be their God" (Rev. 21:3). Each time the church assembles, Jesus assures us that he will be there with us (Matt. 18:20).

* The last of these names of our God that we will consider is "**Father.**" Because of Jesus' instruction, this familiar name is the one most commonly used in prayer (Matt. 6:9). Given our own experience with our earthly fathers and man's experience as father of his children, it is a word of special tenderness and affection. It is known in every tribe and language. He is our father by creation. He cares for us as a loving father.

In addition to these names of our God, there are dozens of titles and metaphors describing him. The serious student will enjoy pursuing the significance of each of them.

9.

JEHOVAH, GOD'S MEMORIAL NAME

When Moses was commissioned to go to Egypt to deliver God's people from slavery, he asked for the name of Him that was sending him. He felt the need to explain his commission and authority to the Hebrews. God's reply was "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, Jehovah, the God of your fathers, ...sent me unto you..." (Ex. 3:15). Thus the God who blessed them, who provided for their physical needs, guided and protected them was Jehovah. The name Jehovah is used for God 6,823 times in the Old Testament. It is mentioned first in Genesis 2:7. It was Jehovah who fashioned Adam from the dust and breathed into his nostrils the breathe of life and provided paradisaical home it. In the King James text the word **Yhwh** is rendered LORD or GOD in caps.

As it takes many rays of light to make up the power of the sun, so it takes many descriptive names to fully demonstrate and properly illustrate the nature of our God. In this lesson we concentrate on the meaning of the sacred name, Jehovah. **Yhwh** derives from the Hebrew verb "**havah**" which means "to be" or "being." When we think of God as Jehovah he is the Being who is absolutely self-existent; the one who possesses in himself essential life; permanent existence. Thus he is the One who has always existed, the "I Am" of Exodus 3:14. The meaning of **Yhwh** is underived existence, eternality and unchangeableness (Mal. 3:6). The several names of God which occur in Scripture are derived from His works except for this one. The ancient Hebrews called **Yhwh** the "plain name" because it teaches plainly and unequivocally the substance of God (Moses Maimonides). Jehovah is the symbol which stands in the Hebrew tongue for the eternal, Independent, Self-subsisting One, the Sole Source of Life and its Preserver. It is everywhere a proper name, denoting the person of God and him alone.

Among the Hebrews, Jehovah was the unspoken name. Following the Babylonian Captivity, Jews developed a superstitious practice regarding the sacred name. They said, it is too sacred to be spoken by mortal man. One rabbi said, "Whoever dared to pronounce this name would forfeit his place in the world to come. Only the high priest could utter it and that in the Holy of Holies of the temple, once each year. Even now they do not write or pronounce it. When reading Scripture, they came to **Yhwh**, they would substitute some less sacred name. The usually substitute was **Adonai**, which is translated Lord. Or else they substituted such expression as "the name," "The Great and Terrible Name," "The Ineffable Name," "The Incommunicate Name," "The Holy Name," "The Distinguished Name," "The Four-letter Name" which is known as the "**Tetragrammaton**." The rabbis said that only Messiah was capable of correctly pronouncing the sacred name. As a consequence of this superstition, the correct pronunciation was eventually lost and is unknown to this day.

The original form of the written Hebrew language had no vowels, only consonants. Vowel sounds were added by the reader. Later vowel signs or marks were added to aid in pronunciation. The sacred name was written YHWH. Hebrew scholars have suggested the following possible pronunciations: **Yahve, Yahveh, Yahweh, Jehovah**. The King James translators followed the rabbinic custom and always rendered YHWH as LORD or GOD, printed in caps. Beginning with the American Standard translation of 1901, the word was rendered Jehovah. Scholars have concluded that the vowel sounds of **Adonai** are likely the vowels that make YHWH pronounceable. Added together they give us the pronunciation, Jehovah. There is no equivalent term in any other language.

The significance of the sacred name Jehovah. It reveals to us the God of moral and spiritual attributes. As Jehovah, he placed man under moral obligation. He gave him laws to be obeyed (Ex. 19:3-5). He promised punishment for disobedience (Gen. 2:15-17; Gen. 6:3-13). David wrote, "Jehovah is righteous; he loveth righteousness" (Ps. 11:7). Through Moses God said, "Ye shall be holy; for I Jehovah your God am holy" (Lev. 19:2).

Jehovah is a God of love. "Jehovah appeared...saying, yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore, with loving-kindness have I drawn thee (Jer.31:3). "Jehovah...his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel (Judg. 10:16). "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim...my heart is turned within me, my compassions are kindled together" (Hos. 11:8).

Jehovah reveals himself as a God of mercy. "Jehovah descended in the cloud and proclaimed Jehovah...a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness and truth." (Ex. 34:6).

Jehovah is the deliverer of his people. "And the Egyptians shall know that I am Jehovah, when I stretch forth my hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them" (Ex. 7:5).

Jehovah is the God of revelation, i.e., the God of prophecy and promise. When God wished to make a special revelation of himself, he used the name "Jehovah." "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, Jehovah, the God of your fathers...hath sent me unto you: this is my name forever, and this is my memorial..." (Ex. 3:15). Jehovah inspired the prophets. "Thus saith Jehovah" is used over 500 times in the Old Testament (Is. 56:1). He inspired the sacred writers to guarantee the correct transmission of His message. "The Spirit of Jehovah spake by me and his word was upon my tongue" (II Sam. 23:2). Through his incarnate Son, the living Word, Jehovah spoke his message of salvation for humanity. Jehovah promised our new covenant (Jer. 31:31-34) and delivered it to us as His Holy Spirit guided the writers into all the truth (John 16:13).

What Jehovah expects of us. As a foundation for their faith, the Hebrews were taught, "Jehovah our God is one Jehovah. Thou shalt love Jehovah with all thy heart; ...soul and might" (Deut. 6:4). "These words, which I

command thee...shall be upon they heart and thou shalt teach them to thy children: (Deut. 6:6-7). He taught them, "Ye shall not tempt Jehovah your God" (Deut. 6:16). "...What doth Jehovah thy God require of thee, but to walk in all his ways and to love him, and to serve Jehovah thy God with all they heart and with all they soul, to keep the commandments of Jehovah and his statutes ...for thy good" (Deut. 10: 12-13).

While on Sinai Moses said to God, "Show me thy glory. And he (Jehovah) said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and will proclaim the name of Jehovah before thee; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." (Ex. 33:18-19). "And Jehovah passed by before him and proclaimed, Jehovah, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness and truth, keeping loving kindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin..." (Ex 34:6). Our resolution should be that of Psalmist, "I will sing unto Jehovah as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God" (Ps. 104:33).
JHW

10.

THE ANGEL OF JEHOVAH

One of the most interesting and fascinating personalities of the entire Bible is "the angel of Jehovah". Perhaps no other Bible character is so little known or understood as he. Who is this angel of Jehovah? The answer to that question will be the subject of our study.

Characteristics of Angels

To properly understand about *the angel*, we first need to review the characteristics of angels in general. Angels are created beings. They were made through Christ in ancient times (Col. 1:16-17). Being creatures, angels are not divine in nature. They are not omnipotent, omniscient or omnipresent. Angels are holy, but they are capable of sinning (II Peter 2:4). Their very name indicates that they are **messengers of God**. Man is never allowed to worship angels, since only God may be worshiped (Rev. 22:8-9).

Activities of the Angel of Jehovah

In the Old Testament we find at least 23 separate references to his work for God's people. In Genesis 16: 7-14 the angel of Jehovah appeared to Hagar, the handmaiden of Sarah as she wandered in the wilderness. He promised her a son and a large posterity. "And she called the name of Jehovah that spake unto her, Thou are a God that seeth..."

In Genesis 18:1-2 we read that Jehovah appeared unto Abraham at Mamre. "He lifted up his eyes and looked, and lo, three men stood over against him. . ." He invited them in and fed them a meal. One of them promised that Sarah would bear a son within a year (18:10). When Sarah laughed at the idea, the man claimed that nothing was too hard for Jehovah (18:14). He told Abraham that he was come down to investigate the situation at Sodom. Abraham perceived that he was the judge of all the earth (18:25). After Abraham had secured a promise from the man concerning Sodom, **Jehovah** went away: (18:32). Then we read that he (Jehovah) rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah "brimstone and fire..." (19:24). Notice that while he appeared to be an ordinary man, in reality it was Jehovah that visited Abraham that day.

Genesis 22:9-18 records the story of Abraham offering Isaac. Just as the aged patriarch lifted his hand to plunge the sacrificial knife into his only son, "The angel of Jehovah called unto him out of heaven". When Abraham saw the ram which had been provided, he called the place Jehovah-jireh (22:14). And the angel of Jehovah called unto

Abraham a second time...and said, "By myself have I sworn, **saith Jehovah...**" (22:16). He then renewed the covenant promise of the Messiah.

Genesis 28:10-17 tells of Jacob's dream at Bethel. He saw a ladder set up on earth and the top of it reached to heaven, "and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And behold Jehovah stood above it..." (The footnote says that Jehovah stood beside him). Moses tells us in Genesis 31:11-13 that it was the angel of Jehovah that was "the God of Bethel" whom Jacob saw. When Jacob was returning to his homeland he wrestled with a man throughout the night. The man said, "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob but Israel for thou hast striven with God . . . And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel for said he, I have seen God face to face..." (Gen. 32:22-30a). Hosea later wrote of Jacob, "In the womb he took his brother by the heel, and in his manhood he had power with God, yea, he had power over **the angel. . .even Jehovah**, the God of hosts..." (Hosea 12:3-5). On his death bed, Jacob blessed his sons by the name of God, the angel who had redeemed him from all evil (Gen.48:15-16).

When Moses saw the burning bush, "The angel of Jehovah appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of the bush...and when Jehovah saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush...and he said, draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." when asked by Moses what was his name, he responded that it was "I AM THAT I AM" who spake with him (Ex. 3:2-14).

It was the angel of God who went before the camp of Israel" when they made their exodus from Egypt (Ex.14:19-20). Yet in chapter 13:2 of the same book we are told that it was Jehovah who went before them in the pillar of cloud and fire.

Concerning his angel, Jehovah warned Israel, "Behold, I send an angel before thee, to keep thee by the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Take ye heed before him, and hearken unto his voice, provoke him not, for he will not pardon your transgression; for my name is in him" (Ex.23:20-23). Note that they had to obey the angel and that he could forgive their sins.

When the Hebrews made the golden calf, God withdrew his special angel and only promised to send an ordinary angel. This so frightened and distressed Moses and the people that Moses fervently interceded for God to reconsider. Upon their repentance God did decide to send his angel to once again lead them (Ex. 33:1-3; 12-16). Isaiah comments that this was "the angel of his presence" that guided and protected them (63:9). The expression literally means **angel of his face**.

As Joshua prepared the nation to march on Jericho "he lifted up his eyes and looked, and , behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand." When asked, the man replied that he was "prince of the hosts of Jehovah...and Joshua fell on his face to the earth and did worship...and the prince of Jehovah's host said unto Joshua, put off thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place where on thou standest is holy" (Jos. 5:13-15). Continuing the narrative in 6:2, we read that "Jehovah said unto Joshua". So this man whom Joshua worshiped was in reality Jehovah.

Three times the book of Judges records appearances of this notable angel. He appeared to the nation at Bochim to reprove them for their disobedience (2:1-5). He appeared to Gideon to commission him to save Israel from Midian. Here again the angel is called Jehovah (6:11-14). In Judges 13, he appeared to Manoah and his wife and promised them a son, Samson. When Manoah offered him food to eat the angel ordered him to "offer it unto Jehovah" as a sacrifice (13:16). "Manoah knew not that he was the angel of Jehovah. And Manoah said unto the angel of Jehovah, What is thy name, that, when thy words come to pass, we may do thee honor? And the angel of Jehovah said unto him, "Wherefore asketh thou after my name, seeing it is **wonderful**? (13:16-18). When the burnt offering was made "the angel of Jehovah ascended in the flame of the altar" (13:20).

In II Kings 19: 33-36, Jehovah promised to save Jerusalem and king Hezekiah from the armies of Sennecherib, king of Assyria. "The angel of Jehovah went forth and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred fourscore and five thousand...".

When David sinned by taking a military census of his nation, God sent a pestilence upon the nation by his angel. "And David lifted up his eyes and saw the angel of Jehovah standing between earth and heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem." David and the elders fell upon their faces and prayed (I Chron. 21:9-30).

Daniel saw the angel of Jehovah in 553 B.C. while an exile in Babylon. He saw "a man, clothed in linen whose loins were girded with pure gold of Uphaz; his body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as flaming torches, and his arms and his feet like unto burnished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude." Daniel felt totally undone in his August presence. He had come to reveal the future of the nation to Daniel (10:5-14).

A Summary of Facts About the Angel of Jehovah

We have seen that passages that begin with the angel as their subject commonly shift the names to **Jehovah, God or Lord** as in Exodus 3:2-6. The angel claims God's power and authority. For example, he forgave sins (Ex. 23:4). But this only God can do (Mk. 2:5-10). He revealed the future (Dan. 9:14). He had the power to judge, to save or destroy (I Chron. 21:14-15). God's people are allowed to worship this angel. But we are strictly forbidden to worship an ordinary angel (Rev. 22:8-9).

Who Then Is The Angel of Jehovah?

He is certainly not a created being. He is not a man although he often appeared as such. He is not simply a created angel. Nor is he God the Father, for John tells us that no man hath seen God at any time (John 1:18). Remember that the angel directed Manoah to worship another than himself (Judges 13:15).

The following observations will establish that this mighty angel was no less than the Word of God, the pre-incarnate Christ. The angel of Jehovah told Moses that his name was "I AM THAT I AM", but Jesus claimed that he was I AM (John 8:58).

The angel led Israel through the wilderness and provided their needs (Ex. 14:19-20). Moses reported that Jehovah directed Moses to smite the rock that the people might drink in the desert. But Paul tells us that the rock they drank of was Christ (I Cor. 10:2-4).

In Joshua, the angel is the prince or leader of Jehovah's host or army (5:14). In Revelation 19 we see the army of heaven and its notable leader. Then John sees his name which is "The Word of God" (19:11-16). In his gospel John identifies the Word of God as the only begotten of the father who became flesh (John 1:1-3, 14).

The angel told Manoah that his name was *wonderful* (Judges 13:16-18). Isaiah in his famous prophecy of Messiah said, "His name shall be called wonderful. . ." (9:6).

Isaiah calls him "The angel of God's presence, " which means, "of his face!" (63:9). The Hebrew writer says Christ is "the very image of his (God's) substance" (1:3). Edward Young says, "The angel of His face is the angel who is His face or in whom His face is made clear. In him the Lord is Himself present" (**The Book of Isaiah**, Vol. 3, p. 482).

Jacob saw the ladder reaching from earth to heaven with angels ascending and descending and Jehovah standing beside it (footnote), (Gen. 28:13). Jesus declares himself to be that ladder (John 1:51).

The angel of Jehovah can be worshiped (Josh. 5:4). No mere man or created angel can be worshiped acceptably (Acts 10: 25, 26; Rev. 22:8-9). But Jesus commonly accepted the worship of men (Matt. 28:17).

The angel is repeatedly called Jehovah. But Jesus is also called Jehovah. Isaiah 43:11 affirms that there is no savior but Jehovah. But Paul in Titus 2:13 describes Jesus as our great God and *savior*. Therefore, Jesus is Jehovah. We do

not affirm that Jesus is the Father. We simply recognize the fact that inspired writers ascribe the descriptive noun Jehovah to all three of the sacred Godhead. The word Jehovah describes a person who is eternal and self-existent. This is true of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Daniel saw the angel in his regal glory in 10:5-6. John, the apostle, saw the same glorious being on Patmos. He saw "one like unto a son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle. And his head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow, and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace, and his voice as the voice of many waters...and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." It was the Son of God who had been crucified but resurrected (Rev. 1:12-18).

These appearances of the angel of Jehovah in ancient times are called theophanies, i.e., when God assumes the form of an angel or a man in order to speak and act visibly and audibly with men, to provide them some revelation or guidance.

These many references demonstrate that our Lord existed from eternity with the Father, just as John affirmed in his biography (John 1:1-3). They tell us of the Savior's activities in behalf of the redeemed during those long years when mankind groped in darkness for a guiding hand, before he came as Jesus, son of Mary.

In the light of these scriptures let us honor and adore the Messiah who blest man in ancient times as the mighty angel of Jehovah and continue to do so as Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of the living God.

11.

GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL CARE OF HIS WORLD

As Jesus ascended into heaven, he left this wonderful promise with his disciples: "...lo I am with you always, even to the end of the world" (Matt. 28:20). This is the grandest theme the human mind can conceive. That the great God of the universe would stoop down and take hold of the affairs of his people to work all things together for their good is marvelous beyond words.

Faith in God's special providence gives even the weakest saint the courage to launch out into the dark, dangerous unknown to carry the message of salvation to the lost. Assurance that God fights his battles for him, inspires one man of God to put a thousand enemies of Christ to flight. Conviction of this great truth enables the co-worker of God to move mountains of obstacles to establish another outpost for Christ. The comfort of this doctrine allows the disciple of Jesus to pillow his head and sleep soundly, no matter where or in what circumstances he may be. The sureness of this promise enables a child of God to lay down his life for the faith, even as did Stephen.

Knowledge of, and faith in, divine providence is one of the greatest deficiencies among God's people today. Many saints have so limited God's power in their thinking, that they border on deism...and do not even recognize the fact! Yet we cannot even think of prayer without thinking of providence. For providence is God's way of answering the prayers of his people. Without providence, prayer is wasted breath. Too long we have discounted or even denied God's power and influence in our lives. We speak of **fate** or **luck**, **coincidence** and **accidents** when we should believe that God has provided, just as he has said he would. Rather than proudly tell what we have done, we should humbly tell what God has done through us (Acts 15:4).

PROVIDENCE DEFINED

"Divine providence, therefore, has reference to the preservation, care and government which God exercises over all things that he has created, in order that they may accomplish the ends for which they were created." (W. F. Tillett, **Providence and Power**, Cokesbury, Nashville, 1926, p.6).

Scripture pictures two phases of providence, one **general**, the other **special**.

"The widespread care and supervision which God exercises over his created universe is commonly designated as his general providence, which embraces all creatures, the evil and the good; in addition to which general providence, there is a more special and particular providence which the Heavenly Father exercises over and in behalf of those whose willing wills are in accord with the Divine Will" (**Ibid.**, p. 7-8).

To accomplish His will on earth, God uses three methods: (1). **Natural Laws**; (2). **Miracles**; and (3). **Divine Providence**. Providence employs no miracle. It is distinct from the normal course of nature, yet it is always in accord with these natural laws. It is God working in a special way, but in a non-miraculous way.

AGENTS OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE

In exercising his providential care of his world, God makes use of agents. Through these agents he works to accomplish his will.

He used **the physical elements**. The psalmist sings of "Fire, hail; snow and vapors; stormy winds fulfilling his word" (Ps. 148:8). Through Amos God declared, "And I also have withholden the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest; and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city...yet have ye not returned unto me, saith Jehovah" (Amos 4:7).

That which appears to be an **accident**, might in reality be God's providential working. An accident is defined, as "that which takes place without one's foresight or expectation, especially one of an unfortunate character." An example is found in Exodus 21:12-13, "He that smiteth a man, so that he dieth, shall surely be put to death. And **if a man lie not in wait, but God deliver his into his hand**; then I will appoint, thee a place whither he shall flee." In Deuteronomy 19:4-5, we find just such a situation described where a man is accidentally killed when the head flies from a woodsman's ax and strikes him.

God uses **men** in his providence. He said "of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure" (Is. 44:28). David wrote "The wicked which are thy sword" (Ps. 17:13).

Angels are agents of God. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation?" (Heb. 1:14).

The Holy Spirit acts providentially. He comforts us (John 15:26), He strengthens us (Eph. 3:16). He leads us (Rom. 8:14). He helps our infirmities, intercedes for us and works all things together for our good (Rom. 8:26-28).

SOME DIMENSIONS OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE

We see God's providence in **providing for his children's needs**. Paul affirmed, "My God shall supply every need of yours" (Phil. 4:19). "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way, Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand" (Ps. 37:23-24). Jesus said, "Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you...If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" (Matt. 7:7-11). In temporal matters God provides the means, capacities and opportunities, we must make use of them! All these blessings are conditioned upon faithful obedience and humble prayer.

Providence is seen in God **protecting his children**. "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous and his ears are open unto their cry...the righteous cry...and the Lord delivereth them out of all their trouble" (Ps. 34:15-17). David observed, "For they intend evil against thee; they conceive a device which they are not able to perform" (Ps. 21:11). Again Paul writes, "We know that to them that love God all things work together for good..." and "If God is for us, who is against us?" (Rom. 8:28;31). God steps in to provide when our efforts are exhausted or blocked. He will not do for us what we can do for ourselves.

Providence is seen in God **chastening his children** for their correction and growth in righteousness. "My son, regard not lightly the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art reprov'd of him; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth...Furthermore, we had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection to the father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemeth good to them; but he for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness" (Heb.12:5-10).

God providentially **governs the nations of the world**. Daniel declared that God "removeth kings and setteth up kings." Again, he told proud Nebuchadnezzar that he must learn and accept "that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men and giveth it to whomsoever he will" (Dan. 2:21; 4:25).

Through providence, God **punishes wicked people**. He declared, "I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria" (Is. 10:12). The author of the books of Samuel recorded, "For Jehovah had ordained to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel to the intent that Jehovah might bring evil upon Absalom" (II Sam. 17:14). Often God turns the tables on the wicked. "The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made; in the net which they hid is their own foot taken" (Ps. 7:15). Haman was hung on the very gallows he had erected for the death of righteous Mordecai (Esther 7:9-10).

In his providence, God **uses good people** like Joseph and Esther, but **he also uses the wicked**. "The wicked are thy sword" wrote David (Ps. 17:13). Again he wrote, "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee and the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain" (Ps. 76:10

KJV).

PROVIDENCE AND FREE WILL

It is sometimes objected, "If God uses men to do his will, then man has no freedom of will." God has constituted men with the power to choose and do good or evil and thus to determine their own reward. He makes no one do right or wrong. He does not interpose in our actions until they affect others. Then in his providence, God becomes concerned to hinder, permit or even to order them as may best serve the wise ends of his government.

Concerning the righteous man and free will, Tillett says,

"The determining factor in special providence, as we interpret it, is found in the free will of the individual in so far as, and because he is continually seeking to know and to do the will of God. God can and does guide holy and obedient souls into the attainment of spiritual experiences and a blessed life of joyful service for others to an extent that is made impossible by the sinful wills of others who are wholly indifferent to his will. It thus appears that if the thing that makes providence special is the individual's attitude of mind and heart and will toward God by virtue of which he is specially responsive to the leading of (God), then it is the praying soul, the sin-forsaking, truth-seeking, duty-loving child of God that is heir to all that is most precious in the divine promises pertaining to special providence" (**Ibid.**, p. 8).

Not everything that is done is God's will. Sin and evil committed are expressly forbidden. But he does not allow these sins to destroy his ultimate will or purpose.

We must always distinguish between the evils men suffer and the evils men do. The former, God may order; the latter he allows, then uses. God never suggests wicked designs to men. But when they have formed a wicked plan, he often deters, reroutes or uses for his own ends their wicked deed. A good example of this is seen in Joseph's enslavement by his ten brothers. Joseph was convinced, "It was not you that sent me hither, but God" (Gen. 45:8). The brothers had knowingly done wrong and were responsible, but God had accomplished his own ends through their wickedness.

God directs where, when and in what proportion men, nations and the elements shall bless or punish. The greatest glory of providence is when he turns evil and through it brings good to his people. the greatest example of this was in the murder of Jesus, which God overruled to the salvation of the world.

When we willfully and deliberately violate nature's laws (God's natural laws), we need not expect him to intervene to save us.

God keeps all things in his hands, not because he has absolutely predetermined the fates of men but that he may govern the world wisely and justly and reward and punish men as they deserve...thus accomplishing his divine will.

EVANGELISM AND PROVIDENCE

In the work of seeking and saving the lost we find the highest purpose of divine providence.

By providence, God prepares men for the task of soul-winning. Paul wrote, "But when it was the good pleasure of God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me through his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles..." (Gal. 1:15-16). So also was Jeremiah prepared. To him God said, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee; I have

appointed thee a prophet unto the nations" (Jer. 1:4-5). In the light of providence we see the meaning of Jesus' exhortation, "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, **that he send forth laborers into his harvest.**"

(Matt. (9:38). If providence is not a divine reality this prayer would be a vain and useless thing!

Through his providence, **God opens doors that might have blocked the spread of the gospel.** Paul and Barnabas "rehearsed all things that God had done with them, and that he had opened a door of faith unto the Gentiles" (Acts 14:27). In Col 4:3, Paul requested their prayers that God may open unto him a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ. To the Corinthians, he wrote that "a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries" (16:9). Without the sure expectation of providential assistance, why should Jesus tell us, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matt. 7:7)?

As God opens doors into nations, cities or communities, so **he can open the doors of the human heart.** Luke records that Lydia "...one that worshiped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened to given heed unto the things which were spoken by Paul" (Acts 16:14). We read of no miracle; no direct operation of the Holy Spirit and yet in some way God opened the heart of this woman. Why should we pray for help in our work of evangelizing if there is no providence to answer that prayer?

By providence, **the Lord gets the gospel message to those who are seeking his way.** "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching" (John 7:17). Providence brought Philip to the Ethiopian treasurer (Acts 8:26-40). Most every preacher and missionary could tell of experiences where seeming coincidence brought the teacher and the seeker together so that the lost soul might be saved.

Providence helps us overcome obstacles that hinder the spread of the gospel. God "removeth kings and setteth up kings" (Dan. 2:21). "The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will" (Dan. 4:25). Like he stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, to restore Israel (II Chron. 36:22), today he can move the powers that be, in order to advance the kingdom of Jesus. We can praise God for bringing down the tyrannical regime of the Soviet Union. In olden times God used the scourge of war to bring people to repentance that they might return to Him. Can he not do the same today? (Compare Is. 10:5-20). Much of Europe and Asia were made receptive to the gospel by the suffering of World War II. In the Revelation of John, we see God seated on his throne, the book of the future in his hand...already written (Rev. 5:1-8). The ultimate victory of King Jesus is the central theme of that prophecy. By his ruling providence, God will bring it to pass.

Through providence, God provides for the needs of his saints. He is **Jehovah-jireh** (Gen. 22:14). David claimed, "I have been young and now am old: yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (Ps. 37:25). God provides, even multiplies, our seed for sowing (II Cor. 9:10). Paul promises, "My God shall supply every need of yours according to his riches..." (Phil. 4:19). To the faithful steward, God promises to open the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it (Mal. 3:10).

God provides protection for his people. The psalmist says, "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them" (Ps. 34:7). Paul assures us that God can and will work all things together for our good, if we love him (Rom. 8:28). The apostle continues, "What shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:31-32). The apostle then soars to the heights with these thrilling words, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:37-39).

Providence may raise up an Esther to save God's people, or it may hang a Haman on his own gallows.

Providence will guide us safely through temptation and the snares of the devil. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it" (I Cor. 10:13).

It may well be that Providence will block the path of our choice as when Paul and Silas were blocked from working in Asia and Bithynia (Acts 16:6-7). God had a plan for them in Macedonia!

We must always remember that **providence does not exclude suffering, death, even martyrdom. God, in providential love, often finds it necessary to chasten his children.** "For whom the lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Heb. 12:6). Jesus forewarns us, "Remember the word that I said unto you, A servant is not greater than his lord. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:20). God may not choose to remove that thorn in the flesh, but he will give grace sufficient to endure it (II Cor. 12:8-9).

Never forget that:

"The great purpose of God's special providence over and in behalf of his children is not to rescue their temporal prosperity, or physical blessings, but their spiritual good, their ever increasing holiness and usefulness, and their fitness for heaven. Stephen died, yet Jesus was with him unto death. 'Precious in the sight of Jehovah is the death of his saints'" (Ps. 116:15).

"Few things are more hurtful to Christian faith and life, and more degrading to the Christian doctrine of special providence than to associate it mainly with and largely confine it to, material and temporal blessings." (Tillett, p. 111).

"God does not take his children from under the operation of nature's laws when they work hardships and physical ills. The blessings where he blesses his children, is, and we cannot say this too often or emphasize it too strongly, to be looked for and found in the realm of moral and spiritual good" (**ibid.**)

"The one thing God is working for, above everything else, in those whom he loves, is their freedom from sin, their holiness of heart and life, their beauty of character, and their largest usefulness"(**ibid.**)

"Indeed, God's special providence may take away wealth and bring poverty in its stead (as with Job or Paul) in order to impart 'true riches'. It may defeat rather than further one's worldly hopes and ambitions; may be made manifest in sickness, not less than in health, and may result in death instead of life" (**ibid.** p. 109).

Remember Jesus, the apostles and especially Paul. His imprisonment had fallen out to the furtherance of the gospel (Phil. 1:12).

PROVIDENCE TODAY

Today, God's people continue to add chapters to the history of the spread and growth of the church begun by Luke in

the Book of Acts. Space does not allow me to record in detail the thrilling stories of Otis Gatewood and others God used in evangelizing Europe after World War II; of J. C. Bailey, J. C. Choate and the host of workers who have swept throughout India with the gospel; of C. A. O. Essien whom God used to bring the gospel first to Nigeria; of Juan Monroy, God's chosen vessel for taking the gospel to Spain; of Bob Hare, Epi Bilak and others who were used of God to get the gospel to the captive people of Eastern Europe; of Joseph Naumiuk, Henry Ciszek and those whom God raised up to establish his cause in Poland. How else could we explain Bibles being printed in Communist Czechoslovakia, on Pravada presses and sold to the Lord's church at half or less of their value. How do we account for the collapse of the great Communist empire of Soviet Russia...without a bloodbath. And how after fifty years of intensive atheistic indoctrination, the immediate opening of doors and hearts to the gospel of Christ. Like wild fire in dry brush the gospel is spreading in the former Communist world. The Christian interprets all of this as divine providence.

We could write a hundred volumes and not exhaust the stories of God's great providence in the life of the twenty-first century church. In fact most missionaries who have gone forth in the name of Christ could easily write a volume on the providential experiences of their lives.

We readily concede that God's providential care is of such a nature that we cannot prove that each event is God's special working. We prove some Bible doctrines by citing book chapter and verse; but providential blessings are judged by human experience in the light of scripture teaching. Yet only those whose hearts and souls are cold and bound up in the grave-clothes of lifeless legalism would doubt that God still actively provides for his children. And after they have shaken their heads, doubting; after they have denied the obvious; the scripture will still proclaim, "The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working" (Jas. 5:16). Robert Hall said, "The prayer of faith is the only power in the universe to which the great Jehovah yields."

Words can never convey from one mind to another the vision beheld from the mountain top. Only by personally climbing the mountain and seeing with ones own eyes, can a person adequately realize the vision. So with divine providence!

As you go forth serving Christ always remember these lines:

"There is an eye that never sleeps,
 Beneath the shades of night.
There is an ear that never shuts,
 When sink the beams of light.

There is an arm that never tires,
 When human strength gives way.
There is a love that never fails,
 When earthly love decays.

But there's a power which man can wield,
 When mortal aid is vain,
That eye, that arm, that love to reach,

That list'ning ear to gain.

That power is prayer, which soars on high,
Through Jesus, to the throne,
And moves the hand which moves the world,
To bring salvation down." (Author Unknown)

Take courage for "He is with you always, even to the end of the world!

12.

GOD AND THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH

Our God not only created the universe, he rules it to this day. Haughty King Nebuchadnezzar learned the hard way that "the Most High Ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will." (Daniel 4:25). Much wild speculation about modern nations and prophecy is seen in current religious literature and broadcasting. Virtually all of it is false and misleading. God does not specifically prophesy of Russia, China, the United States, or any other modern nation. He does set forth in Scripture principles showing how He deals with nations in every age.

1. Righteousness exalts a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people (Proverbs 14:34). In every age nations that were basically righteous have prospered under God's providential care. Conversely those societies that chose to ignore the moral and spiritual standards of the Creator have languished and died.

2. God chastens nations that are rebellious towards Him hoping to recover them. Assyria was the rod of God's anger and the staff of his indignation which he sent against a profane nation of Judah (Isaiah 10:5-12). Joel interpreted the locust plague and the drought which struck his land as "a day of Jehovah" (Joel 1:15-20). Later, he urged the people to repent that God might lift his sore judgments from their land (Joel 2:12-20). The economic depression which stalked post exile Judah was said to be because they had neglected God's house while selfishly pursuing their own interest (Haggai 1:3-10).

3. God has no "chosen nation" in the world today. "In every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is acceptable to him" (Acts 10:34-35). Contrary to the idea that the Jewish people are yet God's favored people, Paul affirms, "There is no distinction between Jew and Greek: for the same Lord is Lord of all, and is rich unto all that call upon him" (Romans 10:12). God has "cast away" Israel as a political nation yet he is anxious to save every Jew who will accept Christ as Lord (Romans 11:15, 20, 23). God's kingdom today is the spiritual kingdom of Christ which transcends all national boundaries and racial groupings. The church is a kingdom not of this world (John 18:36).

4. Nations can become so wicked that they fill "the cup of iniquity" and must be destroyed. God could not deliver the land of Canaan to faithful Abraham during his lifetime because the iniquity of the Ammonites was not yet full (Genesis 15:17). The Hebrews had to wait some 400 years before a just God could eject the Ammonites and give their land to Abraham's heirs (Genesis 15:14). When Moses led Israel out of Egyptian bondage, God warned, "Defile not ye yourself in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you; and the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land vomiteth out her inhabitants" (Leviticus 18:24-25). So wicked were they that the sovereign Creator ordered them to be exterminated without mercy (Joshua 6:17). At a later date the Amalekites reached that same depth of moral degradation and they too were consigned to

annihilation (I Samuel 15:1-4, 12).

5. A righteous remnant will preserve a nation from destruction. When Sodom and Gomorrah had become vile in their sexual corruption, God commissioned three heavenly messengers to investigate the condition. In conversation with Abraham, one of these agreed that if ten righteous souls were found, God would spare the whole (Gen. 18:22-32). Jesus described his disciples as "the light of the world" and "the salt of the earth" (Matthew 5:13-16). As long as there is a reasonable segment of society left to honor God, to work for improvement, God will be tolerant in withholding judgment. But woe to that land whose righteous remnant vanishes. That nation's funeral is not far off.

6. God wants all men of all nations to be saved and become citizens in his spiritual kingdom. Peter reminds us that God is not willing for any to perish but wishes all to come to repentance (II Peter 3:9).

7. Our task as Christians is to be busy fulfilling the Lord's commission by taking the gospel invitation to every man and woman on planet earth (Matthew 28:19-20). Christ promises to open doors for us which no man can close (Revelation 3:8). No nation can successfully keep the leaven of Christ out, when God's people commit themselves to his holy cause.

8. All the kingdoms of this earth will pass away on that day when God sends his illustrious Son back to consummate all things. The day and hour is unknown to mortal men (Matthew 24:42). Therefore, we must always be ready for the event (Matthew 24:44). The earth and the works therein shall be burned up (II Peter 3:10) and the inhabitants of all the ages will be gathered before the judgment throne of Christ (John 5:28-29).

Let all of the King's children remember that their citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20). May we always view our stay here as strangers and pilgrims who look for a better country at home with the Father (Hebrews 11:13-16). Daily we should strive to be the light of the world, holding forth the word of life to a lost and dying world (Philippians 2:15-16). Although the kingdoms of earth may pass one by one, Christ's great kingdom will never be shaken (Hebrews 12:28). It shall stand forever (Daniel 2:44).

13.

FAITH AND THE MIRACULOUS

Modern man wants a religion that will provide him comfort, fellowship, counsel and consolation. His education, pride and culture often drives him to question the existence of a personal God that created the universe and that on occasion intervenes in it. Especially does he resist the idea that God has rules that he expects man to obey and that he will punish those who rebel against his will.

Man much prefers to believe in a distant, uninvolved God who perhaps created matter but left all things to evolve without his attention or involvement. The idea of miracles he finds too hard to believe since he cannot see such things demonstrated today. The idea of a supernatural book, given to man from God, perfect in content seems incredible to him. Jesus, he accepts and admires but he cannot bring himself to believe in his virgin birth, his perfection, his miracles, etc.

The question of miracles rests squarely upon the existence and nature of God. If there is no God there is no need to discuss miracles. When discussing this topic with skeptics and unbelievers we must first convince them it is entirely reasonable to believe in God. When discussing it with Christians we approach it on the assumption that they believe

in the God revealed in the Bible. If God exists he is by definition fully capable of doing all these miraculous things recorded in the Bible. The fact that God is almighty means that nothing is too hard for him (Gen. 18:14). If he cannot work in a supernatural way, then he is not God.

The cosmos has not always existed, else it would have run down and deteriorated into dust. The second law of thermo-dynamics says that all things are gradually wearing out and deteriorating. Just as bodies grow old and wear out so do the major things of the universe. The sun will gradually consuming itself. Great boulders are crushed and broken by glaciers, gravity, freezing, floods, and wind and erosion. Someone or something had to have created the cosmos. That someone is God. The creation was a grand series of miracles occasioned by his spoken word (Ps. 33:6, 9). He tells us that “what is seen hath not been made out of things which appear” (Heb. 11:3).

When he created the cosmos and set it in motion God instituted an untold series of laws to govern all things in it, whether living or non-living. Once enacted, these rules are static, unchangeable and universal in nature and man must comply with them. The progress of civilization has consisted of man discovering these laws, conforming to them or learning how to temporarily overcome them. The ability to fly is one of these accomplishments. If God could create the cosmos and make the laws of nature that govern it, he would have no difficulty in suspending those rules suspending those laws when he so desired in order to punish his enemies or bless his people.

If he is God and he wanted man to do his will, he would have no problem communicating that will to humanity. He designed language. It is no marvel that God then would communicate to man in the language he made. The writer of Hebrews reminds us that “God...hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son” (Heb. 1:1).

When we contemplate the miracles, of the Bible we need to distinguish between the three avenues through which God works in our world. **First** and most commonly, he governs the world by his natural laws. Thus Jesus said he sends the rain on the just and the unjust. Sunshine and rain, seed time and harvest bless all alike, be they saints or sinners (Matt. 5:45). Likewise disasters, caused by nature, are indiscriminate, harming both good and bad. **Second**, God manages the affairs of the world to work all things together for good to those who love him (Rom. 8:28). Thus he responds to the prayers of his children and sends judgements on the wicked. **Third**, God has on rare occasions intervened in the affairs of man with miraculous demonstrations of his power. Among these were his judgements on Egypt, the opening of the Red Sea and his preservation of and provision for the Hebrews in their wilderness wanderings; His protection of his fledgling nation against their heathen enemies; the birth and ministry of his Son and the founding and initial expansion of the church. The miracles of the apostolic age faded and disappeared following the completion of the New Testament documents and the death of the apostles (I Cor. 13:8-10). Their purpose had been accomplished.

While we affirm and defend the miracles revealed in the pages of the Bible, we do not see such miracles being performed by man today. We do not say that God cannot do such if he so desires, but observation tells us that the miracles claimed by modern faith-healers are poor imitations of the genuine miracles done by Christ and his apostles. Compared with the mighty wonders recorded in Scripture they are found wanting and we reject them as counterfeit.

14.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF BELIEF AND UNBELIEF

To believe or not to believe? that is the question. There are many good reasons for believing in God, a day of judgment and life beyond the grave. An all-wise and all-powerful God explains the origin of the universe, the wonderful diversity of life on the earth and the human race. A day of judgement assures us that there is a set time to reward the good and punish the wicked, some of whom have not been given justice in this life. An eternity, where all who have loved and served God will be rewarded is a comforting thought. Those who have rejected Him can also live in an appropriate environment.

Christians believe in God because they wish to acknowledge Him as their Creator and Provider. They love and trust His Son Jesus, because he gave his life to save them from the calamity of their sins. They live a life of faith because they want to spend eternity with God and all the saved. The destiny they believe in and hope for is called heaven. Unbelievers, reject all of the above. It seems unbecoming, unreasonable and even offensive to them to believe in something they cannot subject to scientific experiment.

But in the nature of things, unbelievers also have a destiny. If they are right, at death the only thing they can look forward to is a cremation or a burial. Thus their destiny, is to be food for worms and weeds. But if they chance to be wrong, they are in deep trouble. It would be a terrible injustice for God to force such people into his heaven. They would be most miserable in such an environment. They would have to associate with all of those Christians for whom they have so much antipathy. They would be forced to acknowledge God on a daily basis...even bow their knees before Jesus and confess him as Lord (Phil. 2:10-11). Such a burden would be entirely too much to put on a person who had spent a lifetime denying and opposing God. Thus their only option will be life with the Father of Unbelief, in a place described as the second death and a lake of fire and brimstone (Rev. 21:8).

There often comes a time when the fortunes of life cause an unbeliever to rethink his origin, purpose in life and destiny. Should that day come to you, this side of the grave, we will be happy to share with you the good news about God's love and how you can correct the wrongs in your life and find peace in Him.

15.

THE FAITH OF AN UNBELIEVER

"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God!" (Psalm 14:1). The unbeliever is to be pitied above all men, for:

- * He has nothing solid to trust in, since everything in this life is transitory and without stability.
- * He has no hope for a better life afterwards.
- * He must live in constant fear and doubt for his theory might be wrong.
- * He has no divine system of morality, he must create his own. This capacity he does not possess.
- * By his own argument he is only a brute animal that can use tools.
- * He cannot demand and expect anything noble from his fellows since he believes they are only highly developed animals and that naturalism should be their code. The most he can expect is the "survival of the fittest" and "might makes right."
- * He is more credulous than any Christian for he believes:
 1. That something came from nothing by itself.
 2. That life came from inorganic material without supernatural aid.
 3. That matter in motion produced by sheer accident, order, design, purpose and intelligence.
 4. That evolution is an established fact.

* He believes in no God when the overwhelming facts demand a supernatural personality that created this cosmos and the unbeliever himself.

If one's faith is weak, why choose the hardest path? We Christians believe because of reasonable evidence that God is; that He created us and our world; that the Bible is the divine record of man's origin, mission and destiny; that Jesus is God's Son and our Savior. What shall ye be, wise or foolish?

16.

SOME REASONS FOR UNBELIEF AND ANTAGONISM TOWARDS GOD

There are some lost sinners whose hearts only need to be stirred to make the flame of faith come alive. Yet others refuse to recognize God as the Lord of their lives. They are wholly indifferent to the whole subject of faith and religion. But there is a third class of unbelievers who make the supreme object of their lives the propagation of their skepticism. With evangelistic skill and enthusiasm, they seek to inject the contagion of their belief into the veins of everyone they come in contact with. Why are some people so hateful and militant against our Jehovah? In his classic book on Christian Evidences, **Therefore Stand**, the late Wilbur Smith sets forth a number of reasons for this response of the unbeliever toward God. We will note nine of them.

1. Man, fallen away from fellowship with God, is biased and prejudiced toward his former friend whom he has wronged. We see this same emotion in human friendships that become alienated and romance that goes sour. It seems difficult for friends to become alienated without a degree of hostility emerging and strangely enough it is usually the offending party that harbors the hostility. The sacred writer makes note of this, for example, Paul reminds the Colossians, "And you being in time past alienated and enemies in your evil works..." (1:21). Jesus said the world hated him, "Because I testify of it, that its works are evil" (John 7:7). David pondered the very point in Ps. 2:1-3, asking "why do the nations rage and the people mediate a vain thing?" The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against Jehovah and against his anointed, saying, 'Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from us.'" Sinners are hostile to the Lord because his goodness constantly reminds them of their own sin and condemnation.

2. There is a darkness that clouds the mind of men apart from God. II Corinthians 4:3-4 points out that the gospel is veiled or hidden in them that perish; "In which the god of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel... should not dawn upon them." Satan's influence over the human mind is similar to that of one man who dominates another's thinking and conduct. A good example is the evil Charles Manson who totally lorded over the minds and lives of his young hippie followers. The Gentiles knew God but refused to glorify him and give him thanks for his blessings. They "became vain in their reasoning and their senseless heart was **darkened**." The French commentator Godet points out: "**Reasoning** is always taken by writers of the New Testament in an unfavorable sense; it denotes the unregulated activity of the understanding, in the service of a corrupt heart." Paul

writes of sinners who "walk in the vanity of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart. . . ." (Eph. 4:17-18). Again he speaks of "men corrupted in mind and bereft of truth" (I Tim. 6:6).

3. The pride of sinful man makes him militant against God. There lurks in the hearts of sinners a desire to be their own God. Satan's temptation to Eve was, "Ye shall be gods" (Gen. 3:5, See footnote). So he tempts all men. Jesus asked, "How can ye believe who receive glory one of another, and the glory that cometh from the only God ye seek not" (John 5:44). When man confesses the holy Christ, he declares himself unholy. When he bows to the independent God, he admits his dependence. It humiliates man's false pride and destroys his self-sufficiency to acknowledge the Sovereign God. Dr. H. F. Osborn writes, "From the period of the early days of Greek thought, man has been eager to discover some natural cause of evolution and to abandon the idea of supernatural intervention in the order of nature." **The Origin and Evolution of Life**, p. ix. Dr. Jeffry Brun in his **Survey of European Civilization** says, "The new learning offered man a more vainglorious picture of himself, and rooted itself in his pride; whereas **his religious beliefs have been the fruit of his humility**." pp. 9-11. Even today it is common to read of the humanist who is predicting that man is nearing a state of divinity in his evolutionary growth and technical progress. Such thinking is at war with the one God. In all things the mind of sinful man would be its own measure, guide and rule. It exalts its own imaginations which it loves and applauds, dotes on and adheres to. Man's besetting sin is to invent his own moral and spiritual guidelines (Eccle. 7:29). This philosophy makes **self** the absolute judge of what is to be believed; what is right and wrong. It rejects an objective supernatural guidance, scorning what does not suit self. Thus where false pride prevails, where it is not put to death by the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:13), man will never receive the gospel in an acceptable way. Or if he accepts Christianity in part, he will seek means for negating and rejecting its full demands.

4. Then there is in some a determination to live without God. David says in Ps. 14:1, "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." The thrust of the original text is, "The fool hath said, there is no God for me." Thus the decision and verdict of his heart is to reject the very concept of God. It implies that he seeks out arguments to persuade himself that there is no God. Now as always, some humans refuse to have God in their knowledge (Rom. 1:28). If men are to persist in godlessness, they are compelled to create reasons for their unbelief. It is not that the facts force men to disbelieve. Sinners are determined to reject God because their chosen lifestyle requires a freedom from all restraint.

5. There are educational influences in our modern age that by their very nature create an attitude of skepticism. In most secular colleges and universities there are numbers of professors whose learning had filled them with vanity and arrogance, who dedicate themselves to liberating their students from what they style the "bondage of religious superstition." The student who is subjected to such influences will often succumb. Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train up a child in the way he shall go, and even when he is old he will not depart from it." However, the reverse of this is also true. Train up a child in unbelief, and when he is old he will be an infidel.

6. The increasing supremacy of natural things to the subordination of the spiritual things contributes to the problem. The cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke out the nobler heavenly recognition's (Luke 8:14). Materialistic man does not feel he needs a transcendent God to aid him. So he scoffs at and ridicules those who do sense their need.

7. The exaltation of science and knowledge tends to turn man away from God. Man is so absorbed in the pursuit of nature's secrets that he is increasingly ignorant of his inner spiritual life and needs. It has always been true that to the most sophisticated intellectuals, the word of the cross is foolish. The world in its wisdom has never known God (I Cor. 1:18, 21, 26). Worldly wisdom affects the proud men just like alcohol affects the alcoholic. Drunk on his own pride he rejects his Creator.

8. Sin begets unbelief in wicked hearts. Jesus said, "Everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his works be reproved" (John 3:20). When a man does not love the truth but has pleasure in his unrighteousness, he will surely reject the God of truth" (II Thess. 2:12). Evil men seek to hinder or hold back that truth in their unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18). Sinners never wish to look into the mirror of God's Word to discover

cover just how deformed and perverted they truly are.

9. Ignorance of the Word of God and true Christianity contributes to the atheism of the world. When men are ignorant of God's righteousness, they will always seek to establish a righteousness of their own (Rom. 10:13). For some this is atheistic humanism when man exalts himself to the place of God. Since faith comes from hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17), the man who has no knowledge of the Scripture cannot be expected to believe. The appalling ignorance of God's truth that prevails in most hearts is a fertile seed bed for infidelity. Some who are enemies of God have only known perversions of Christianity such as Catholicism, Protestantism or the cults. These they confuse with the Lord's true system and then they reject it all. Such people point to the cruelty and wars of Catholicism as their reason for rejecting Christianity. But true Christianity has never promoted or engaged in a war. If this distinction were understood, this reason would be neutralized at once.

Ours is a day of militant unbelief. Like a mighty tidal wave it is sweeping across our land and much of the world. Perhaps the knowledge herein shared will better equip us to go forth and fight the good fight of faith. Through our King Jesus, we will be more than conquerors (Rom. 8:37).

17.

THAT WHICH ATHEISTS FEAR AND HATE

We have a lively group of atheists, infidels and skeptics living among us. They are constantly throwing rocks at Christians and their religion. Rarely a week passes without a letter or article lashing out against those who hold the faith they have rejected.

Unbelievers have enjoyed some 45 years of success in forcing Christians, their faith, their values and their culture from the public life and forum of our nation. They are incensed that some disciples of Christ yet are willing to stand up and fight back for the preservation of that which they hold dear. It infuriates the godless when the godly speak out and challenge their faulty assumptions, point out the bitter fruits of their system. One gets the distinct impression that those who deny God would forbid Christians from publicly expressing their point of view if only they had the power to do so.

We are witnessing a clash between two contending faith systems: one is faith in the God of the Bible the other faith in man and human philosophy.

- * Christians believe in a living God, Jehovah.
- * Christians have believe Jesus of Nazareth to be God's Son and their savior.
- * Christians live by the code given by Christ.
- * Christians promote things sacred, pure, and beneficial for society.
- * They are taught to respect the lives, rights and property of others.

- * Christians do good to all men including atheists. They build hospitals, orphanages, homes for the aged and infirm and schools. They defend the weak and helpless.
 - * Christians promote respect for government and law and the officials thereof.
 - * Christians tend not to support politicians or causes that despise and make war against their faith
 - * When Christians vote they cast their ballots for honest, patriotic candidates that share their values
 - * Christians pray to their God and work diligently for the safety and welfare of their nation. They put a high premium on patriotism
 - * The great majority of the early immigrants to this country were Christians in search of a home where they could worship and serve God without oppression of state churches and tyrannical rulers.
- They brought their faith and Christian values and helped to shape the ideals on which the nation and government were founded.
- * Christians view their children as a gift from God and thus wish to raise them according to his divine standard. This includes, being good citizens, and good neighbors as well as religious. They do not wish for them to be corrupted by an educational and entertainment system that antagonistic to their faith.

For these reasons they and their religion are hated and opposed by militant unbelievers. For 70 years the Communist rulers of the Soviet Empire labored to build a society without God or Christianity. It came to a sorry end. God forbid that we ever try such a vain experiment in America.

JESUS

18.

THE VIRGIN BIRTH OF CHRIST

The Christian religion is built upon that fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Being the Son of God, he was born not in the normal fashion, but of a virgin, by the power of God, without a human father. Enemies of Christ have worked unceasingly to discredit this foundational doctrine. The most shocking fact is that some Protestant theologians and ministers carry Satan's flag in this effort. For example, Martin Rist, professor at Denver's Iliff School of Theology wrote, "that belief in the Virgin Birth is now untenable" (**Denver Post**, Feb. 4, 1961). The late James Pike, Protestant Episcopal Bishop of California said, "the Virgin Birth is a myth." (**Time Magazine**, Feb. 24, 1961)).

Are we who believe Jesus was the virgin-born Son of God justified in our faith? Consider these reasons why we thus believe:

I. The Hebrew Prophets Predicted the Incarnation of Jesus and his Virgin Birth. Prophecies were windows through which God shed light on future events.

- * God said to Satan, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed, and he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:15). The seed, i.e., the child, of the women shall destroy Satan, though he shall suffer at Satan's hands before his victory. It is the seed of the women that shall bruise Satan.

Nothing is said of the man! As the woman was first to sin, she also brought salvation into the world. Paul later wrote, “when the fulness of time came, God sent forth his son, born of a woman” (Gal. 4:4).

* Seven hundred years before the birth of Jesus, Isaiah predicted, “Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign: behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel,” which means God with us (7:14). By giving the world a virgin-born messiah, God eliminated the possibility that a counterfeit messiah could succeed. Only the virgin born man would be able to lay claim to this holy office. Matthew quotes this verse as confirmation of his record of the miraculous birth of Jesus (1:22-23).

* Again, Isaiah wrote, “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom...” (9:6-7). The coming King would be human, a child born of the lineage of David; yet he would be divine because he was called Mighty God and Everlasting Father.

* Micah foretold a ruler in Israel whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting (5:2). Long before the babe was born, the Lord who came to live in that body had executed his work as the Word of God.

II. The New Testament Writers Offer Compelling Evidence for the Virgin Birth.

* Luke tells us, “the angel Gabriel was sent from God...to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph...and the angel said unto her, “Fear not Mary; for thou hast found favor with God. And behold, thou shalt conceive in they womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High...And Mary said unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, the Holy Spirit shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore also the holy thing which is begotten shall be called the Son of God.” (1:26-28). Note that Mary testified that she was a virgin. The angel also foretold the sex of the child. Luke was an educated man and a physician, fully aware of how babies were conceived, yet he gives us this information without doubt or hesitation.

* Matthew tells us, “Now the birth of Jesus was on this wise: When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit...When Joseph was about to put her away privily...an angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream saying, Joseph thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit...and Joseph...did as the...Lord commanded him, and took unto him his wife and knew her not till she had brought forth a son...” (1:18-25). The genealogy of Christ traces all the fathers who begat the sons in the family tree save in the case of Joseph. It is not said that Joseph begat Jesus, but that he was born of Mary (Matt. 1:15-16). The earthly father’s name is omitted and the mother’s substituted precisely because Joseph was not the one who fathered him.

* Jesus himself taught that he was the “true bread of life sent down from heaven” (John 6:32-38) and in numerous cases he asserted that he was divine!

* Paul wrote that God declared Christ to be the Son of God with power (Rom. 1:4), and again that in Christ “God was manifested in the flesh...” (I Tim. 3:16).

* The following early Christian leaders testify, in writings still extant, that the church of the second century believed in the virgin birth. Aristides, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Justin Martyr and Ignatius. Ignatius, leader of the church in Antioch of Syria (d. 117 AD), wrote, they were “fully persuaded as touching our Lord, that he was truly of the race of David according to the flesh, but Son of God by the Divine Will and power, truly born of a virgin and baptized by John...” (Letter to Smyrna 1:1-2).

III. Things Dependent Upon the Virgin Birth of Christ.

The religious liberal who denies the virgin birth glibly assures us that this does not weaken the position of the

Christian faith. Paul warned, by their fair words and smooth speech they deceive the hearts of the innocent (Rom. 16:18). Consider the following:

* **His Integrity.** Jesus is either divine, as depicted in the Bible, or else he was one of the greatest impostors the world has ever known. If he were born naturally, as liberals say, then we should apologize to the Jews and admit they were right when they accused him of blasphemy for making himself equal with God (John 5:18; 10:33)!

* **His Lordship.** Time and again Jesus is referred to as Lord, yet the word Lord in both the Old and New Testaments has to do with “the Supreme Being or God of the Universe.” If he were human born, he cannot be Lord!

* **The Saviorhood of Jesus.** His name means, he shall save his people from their sins (Matt. 1:21). No mere man can save himself, much less anyone else, because he is caught in the same quicksand of sin as are they. Jesus can save us because he is divine. He has all the power of God at his disposal and he was sinless (Matt. 28:19; I Pet. 2:22). This too demands his virgin birth.

* **The Bodily Resurrection of Christ.** Has any ordinary man ever been raised from the dead, never to die again? Jesus was, but then he was no ordinary man. He was God in the flesh, virgin-born.

* **The Second Coming of Jesus.** If he were only a man, human born, he could not come again to raise us and take us to glory. If he was only mortal, he surely died and today his dust is mingled with the soil of Palestine. But the virgin-born, divine man has the power to come again.

* If he is but a human being, born of an earthly father, then **he could not atone for our sins** on the cross. He would have the same infirmities as the rest of us. Only the death of the sinless God-man could atone for humanity’s sin.

* If Christ is not the Word of God come down to earth, born of the virgin Mary, then **we can have no hope for a resurrection and life after death.**

If Jesus was not virgin-born, then either he was the production of pre-marital fornication on the part of Joseph and Mary, or the illegitimate son of some unknown father! To reject the virgin birth as unscientific because it is so obviously miraculous would force us to also reject the entire Bible, God and Christ! All stand or all together, miraculous!

IV. The Price of Unbelief. Those who deny the virgin birth, that they may be freed from carrying the baggage of the miraculous, pay a dear price for their endeavor to accommodate the supernaturalism of Christianity to the poverty smitten weakness of their own faith. Those would who shift the fatherhood of Jesus from the eternal God to the act of some sinful man are, unworthy to wear his precious name. Denial of this great truth of Christianity is a surrender to the noisy clamor of an unbelieving, spiritually ignorant and scoffing world. The pre-incarnate Christ, lived from the beginning with the Father. He himself was the great Creator (John 1:3) and is the great Sustainer of all things (Heb. 1:2-3). Christ, the Creator, through the virgin birth, took the form of a created being became a man. Through this supernatural birth Christ, (who is God) became man without ceasing to be God (Phil. 2:5-8). Jehovah brought Eve in to the world from the body of a man without a mother. He brought Jesus in to the world from a woman with a human father.

Not one shred of evidence has been brought to light by telescope, microscope or spectroscope, or any other instrument of science to disprove the account of our Savior’s virgin birth. Ministers and theologians who deny the virgin birth are like Hymenaeus and Alexander, they have made shipwreck concerning the faith and they overthrow the faith of some (I Tim. 1:19-20). Those who still believe in God and the Bible should rise up in holy indignation and drive them out of their sanctuaries. If men wish to be unbelievers, let them leave the churches to be so!

THE DIVINE NATURE OF JESUS

The fourth century church was wracked by a divisive controversy over the nature of Christ. The long accepted view was that Jesus shared the divinity of God the Father. That he had existed from eternity, being uncreated. To save mankind, He voluntarily came to earth and took a human body, without losing his divine nature. Thus he was God incarnate, or in the flesh. This view was championed by Athanasius of Alexandria in Egypt (296-373 A.D.). The leader of the new view that challenged the eternal and divine nature of Jesus was Arius, also of Alexandria (d. 336). The controversy was so intense it threatened the unity of the church throughout the Mediterranean world. The resolution of this issue was the occasion of the Nicean Council organized by Emperor Constantine in 325 A.D. Arius was condemned as a false teacher and his views were judged to be heretical. But the controversy raged for many years before Arianism gave way to the traditional biblical view. Remnants of Arianism have survived across the centuries. The most prominent group espousing this view in our day is the Jehovah's Witness church. The denial of Jesus' divine nature is a cardinal doctrine of their faith.

To understand this matter consider the following truths:

The word "God" is not the exclusive name of the Father in heaven. It is a word that tells us about the nature of the Father. As God, he is all-wise, all-powerful, omni-present. He is perfectly righteous, holy and just. He is our sustainer, our provider and our judge. He is eternal. He is worthy of our worship. Other attributes could be listed but these illustrate my point. The writers of the Bible sometimes refer to Jesus as God.

1. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God**...and the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth" (John 1:1, 14). The Word was God. The Word became flesh as the only begotten of the Father. These lines apply only to Jesus. Thus Jesus shares the nature of God with the Father.
2. "All things were made through him (the Word) and without him was not anything made..."(John 1:3). But "In the beginning God created the heavens and earth" (Gen. 1:1). Hence Jesus is God the creator.
3. When the apostle Thomas saw the resurrected Christ he confessed "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28).
4. "...Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped..." (Phil. 2:6). Jesus existed in the form of God and was on an equality with God. That is, Jesus shares the very nature of his Father.
5. "but of the Son he (the Father) saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever" (Heb. 1:8). Here the Father himself calls the Son **God**, thus we are fully justified in so doing.
6. We are looking forward to the "appearing of the glory of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ..." (Tit. 2:13). Thus Paul understood that Jesus was our great God and Savior. We should do the same.
7. Jesus said, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). But the Father is God and Jesus is one with Him. Hence Jesus is also God."
8. "I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God...the Almighty" (Rev. 1:8). But Jesus says that he is "the Alpha and the Omega" (Rev. 22:12, 16). Hence Jesus is God!

* To see this truth about Jesus we must understand the word "Godhead" (Col. 2:9; Acts 17:29). This term refers to the divine government of the universe. The Godhead includes Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Together these three

divine persons are commonly referred to as the trinity, i.e. the sacred Three. While Jesus is God in his nature, he is not the Father nor the Holy Spirit.

* It is essential that we understand that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, together, are the one Godhead. Each one has the nature of God. Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3) but in so doing they lied unto God (Acts 5:4).

* The word Jehovah is also used to describe each of the Sacred Three. "I, am Jehovah; and besides me there is no savior" (Is. 43:11 American Standard Translation). But Jesus is our great God and Savior (Tit. 2:13). Therefore Jesus is Jehovah.

* Much of the confusion surrounding this topic stems from a misunderstanding of the word "**firstborn**." In Colossians, Paul refers to Jesus as "the firstborn of all creation" (1:15) and the firstborn from the dead (1:18). The misunderstanding arises when students fail to distinguish between the three uses of the term firstborn.

1. It referred to the first male offspring of a Hebrew's domestic animals. That offspring was devoted to God (Ex. 13:2,12).

2. It also referred to the first male child born to a couple (Ex. 13:2,22: 29). While the firstborn animal was sacrificed, the firstborn son was redeemed or bought back by the giving of a gift prescribed by God (Num. 18:15-16). This reminded the Children of Israel of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage. They were allowed to keep their firstborn son, in exchange for their redemption gift that helped to support the Levites, and the priesthood. Thus Jesus was the first male child born to Joseph and Mary (although Joseph was not the literal father of Jesus). Thus the couple went to the temple to offer the sacrifice of the firstborn, according to the Law of God (Luke 2:22-24).

3. The term firstborn also was used to designate the son who would be the **first, or principle heir of the father** of the family. Upon the father's death, the firstborn son became head of the clan, with authority over them. He was their religious leader. He also received a double portion of the father's estate. Normally this inheritance would go to the first son to be born, but it was not always the case. If the son born first should prove himself unworthy of the office, the father could designate another, more worthy, son to be his "firstborn" heir. Reuben was Jacob's firstborn son (Gen. 29:31-32), but he disgraced himself and dishonored his father by his involvement with his father's concubine (35:22). Thus Jacob designated Joseph to be his firstborn. (This is seen in that he received a double portion among the tribes. Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh were treated equal to the other brothers' tribes).

That Jesus is firstborn of the dead is easily seen. He was the first person to experience death and then be resurrected never to die again (I Cor. 15:20, 23).

That He was the first and only Son of God to be physically born of a woman is without dispute (John 3:16).

That he is the firstborn of all creation does not mean that he originated or was born or created first. John tells us he existed from the beginning (John 1:1-3). His throne is forever and ever (Heb. 1:8). Paul describes Jesus as our "King, eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God" (I Tim. 1:16-17). But God has designated **Jesus as his chief or principal heir**. The Son created all things and all things were created unto or for him (Col. 1:16). In this sense He holds the office of the Father's chosen firstborn.

These passages should suffice to convince any honest soul that Jesus is eternal and shares Godhood with the Father. As such we should worship him even as we do the Father. The apostles worshiped the risen Christ (Matt. 28:17). Anyone who denies this fact does not truly and properly represent Jesus.

20.

THE DIVINITY OF JESUS

Jesus once ask his disciples, “Who do men say that the son of man is? And they said, some say John the Baptist; some Elijah; and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, **Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.** And Jesus answered and said unto Him, Blessed art thou Simon Bar-Jonah; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I say unto thee that thou are Peter, and **upon this rock** I will build my church.” The Christian religion is founded upon the divinity of Jesus. It rests on the fact that he was not an ordinary man like you or me. Rather, he was a heavenly person. He was God, even as the Father and Holy Spirit are God. If it can be proven that Jesus was not a divine person, that he was merely a great man, then Christianity and all it stands for is of necessity a fraud and can be easily overthrown and destroyed. If Christ is not **God’s Son in the full meaning of that term**, then the only bridge between man and God is destroyed--the only link between life and eternity is smashed, the only hope for sin cursed humanity sinks in the bottomless sea of despair. If Christ is not divine, we are of all creatures most pitiable. Knowing this, Satan and his henchmen have worked knowing unceasingly through the ages to prove him an ordinary man, a created being! Some of Satan’s most diabolical, yet diplomatic assistants, occupy August positions in our land.

Some are university professors who delight in destroying the faith of the young minds intrusted to them. They scoff at the Bible, it’s teachings, the idea of God and the person of Jesus. There are men of science who leave their field of knowledge and seek to replace the Christian’s belief in an all powerful Creator-God with the empty theory of evolution and a godless universe of mere matter. Many Protestant theological seminaries have willfully become tools in Satan’s hand, indoctrinating young ministerial students with an infidelic idea that Jesus was simply a good moral man, a wise philosopher and a gifted teacher. They present him as merely a good man, born naturally as were we. They deny that he actually worked miracles. They insist that his disciples exaggerated the good he things he did. They say he was not quite perfect and died never to rise again. To them His death accomplished no more than President Lincoln’s and His teachings must be revised to fit man’s present educational level. All of this denial we reject as **atheism disguised as Christian theology!** Many of the historic Protestant churches have ministers who subscribe to this infidel creed. They are wolves in sheep’s clothing! May God have mercy on the congregations they minister to.

Jesus stands unique in all the annals of human history because he is divine, the Son of the living God. **His birth marks his divinity.** Seven hundred years before he was born, the prophet Isaiah foretold, “The Lord himself will give you a sign; behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel” (Is. 7:14). Luke, the sacred historian, records the birth of Christ in these words, “the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee named Nazareth to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph...Mary...and the angel said, Fear not, Mary for thou hast found favor with God. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shall bring forth a son and shall call his name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Most High...and Mary said unto the angel, How shall this be seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and power of the Highest shall over shadow thee: therefore also the holy thing which is begotten shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:26-35) Jesus was Immanuel which means **God with us!**

His sinless life proved Jesus to be supernatural. Peter bore witnesses of Jesus that “he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth” (I Pet. 2:21). His enemies stood speechless when Jesus challenged; “Which of you convicteth me of sin?” (John 8:46). Judas confessed he had betrayed innocent blood (Matt. 27:4). And Pilate said, “I find no fault in this man” (John 18:38). Where is another man of any era, race or culture **who did no sin?**

His manner of teaching and the message he delivered revealed his divinity. In his great Sermon on the Mount, Jesus challenged their assumptions about the old Law of Moses and its code of conduct. He boldly declared “but I say unto you.” In some cases his message was the opposite of Moses’ Law! (Matt. 5:38-39). Matthew comments

inclosing the record, “the people were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them, as one having authority” (Matt. 7:28-29). His enemies sent a spy who returned awed, saying, “Never a man so spake” (John 7:46). Having completed his mission, he claimed, “**all authority** has been given unto me in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18). Thus we revere him as our Lord (Rom. 10:9).

Jesus claimed divinity. His enemies challenged him because he called God his own Father making himself equal with God. (John 5:18)

Only a divine person could do the works that Jesus did. Nicodemus confessed “no one can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him” (John 3:2). He changed water to wine, fed 5,000 with only a handful of food, he stilled the tempest, he walked on the water, he healed the sick, gave sight to the blind and raised the dead. Would “God have given such power to an imposter?”

Many are the witnesses that testify Jesus was truly the Son of God. John the Baptist bore witness that Jesus was the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29). God in heaven audibly spoke to Peter, James and John saying, “this is my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased; hear ye him” (Matt. 17:5). The apostles, after many months of living with him, confessed he was the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Even the soldiers that participated in the crucifixion was forced to say, “Truly in this was the Son of God” (Matt. 27:54).

When lifted **up on the cross, the elements bore witness to His divinity.** “Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour...and the veil of the temple was rent in two, from top to bottom and the earth did quake and the rocks were rent. And the tombs were opened and many bodies of the saints that had fallen asleep were raised and entered into the city and appeared to many” (Matt. 27:45-53). Never did another man die amid such remarkable happenings as did Jesus.

The overwhelming proof of **his majestic divinity was established by his resurrection from the dead.** “He was declared to be the Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (Rom. 1:4). Paul told the wise philosophers of Athens that God would judge the world by Jesus and He has given assurance unto all men “in that he hath raised Him from the dead.” (Acts 17:31). He was raised never to die again (I Tim. 6:16)!

Jesus is divine God even as the Father and Holy Spirit are divine. “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God (the Father) and the **Word was God.** The same was in the beginning with God and all things were made through him...and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we behold his glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father...” (John 1:1-2; 14). Paul wrote that before Jesus’ earthly advent, He “existed on an equality with God” (Phil. 2:5) and that “in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the godhead bodily” (Col 2:9). This we believe, and by this we live. It is our hope in death. It is the reality of our eternal salvation. We must ever be prepared to defend the grand truth when His enemies deny it or try to diminish the meaning thereof.

Jesus is Divine! He left his heavenly home; came to this low land of sin and sorrow; lived, taught, suffered and died that our sins might be forgiven (I Cor. 15:3). God raised Him from the dead and highly exalted him that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow...” and that every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord” (Phil 2:9-11) You must now decide “What shall I do with Jesus?”

Some men feel that Christianity is OK for women and children but real men don't need it. They have mistakenly concluded that Jesus was a weak, feminine fellow to whom masculine men would not give the time of day. Perhaps they have been deceived by the artists' portrayals of Jesus, many of which depict him as frail, weak and feminine. The artists probably were trying to portray his youth, innocence and gentleness. But the Jesus revealed in the gospels is not the weak, timid, trembling soul of the artists. Many years ago Bruce Barton wrote a wonderful book, **The Man Nobody Knows**. In it he demonstrated that rather than being weak, Jesus of Nazareth was indeed, a masculine, strong and courageous man.

* He worked in a carpenter's shop (Mark 6:3). There was no power equipment, no motorized transportation. Every aspect of that work was heavy, manual labor. Those who engaged in it grew physically strong.

* Being from a poor family, his diet, dress and social life was Spartan; no dining on luxurious food, or sporting of fine raiment. He was a working man.

* During his brief ministry, Jesus walked the dusty roads of Palestine. Only once do we read of him riding, and it was on a borrowed beast (Luke 19:35). There were no litters born on servant's shoulders, no fine carriage in which to ride. He walked. Only a strong physical constitution could endure such rigors.

* The manliness of Jesus is seen in those who became his disciples: tough, hard-working fishermen, like Peter and Andrew; hot-headed young men like James and John (Mark 3:17); hardened revolutionaries like Simon the Zealot (Luke 6:15). They adored and served him and willingly died for his Cause.

* It is seen in the multitude of women who followed Jesus (Luke 8:3). Women are not attracted to weak, fearful and feminine men.

* His manliness was demonstrated in his ministry. Twice he walked into the Jewish temple and drove the money changers out (John 2:15; Mark 11:15-19). Read the report and notice that no man stepped forward to challenge his action. They were intimidated by his manly strength and fortitude. He fearlessly rebuked the powerful leaders of Judaism, openly, calling them hypocrites and a generation of vipers (Matt. 23:29-33). They could only gnash their teeth or slip away in embarrassment.

* When the band of soldiers came to arrest him, unarmed, he bravely stood up and confronted them. They melted in fear (John 18:6).

* When he was flogged (John 19:1) and physically abused, he endured their wrath without tears or cries for mercy. Only after hours of abuse did he collapse under the weight of the cross (Mark 15:21). This tells us that he was extremely robust and strong.

* When the heartless soldiers drove the iron spikes into his hands and feet, he did not beg for mercy, rather he forgave them for their ignorance (Luke 23:34) and expressed concern for the welfare of his mother (John 19:26-27). When, after six hours of agony, he expired, they had not succeeded in killing him. "He yielded up his spirit" (Matt. 27:50). As creator and Lord, the power of life and death were his (John 10:18).

With this clearer picture of Jesus before us, we should all kneel before Jesus, as did Thomas, and confess him as "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28)? Never has there been a more manly man on the face of this earth.

22.

THE SOCIABLE JESUS

To be a Christian is to be like Jesus, to follow his example in our daily life (I Pet. 2:21). One aspect of the life of

our Lord which we need to emulate is his willingness to interact with people on a social level.

* We read that he came eating and drinking with his neighbors (Lk. 7:34).

* He participated in the wedding feast of friends at Cana (John 2:1-11). There, his first great miracle was performed.

* He accepted the hospitality of Simon the Pharisee and enjoyed his table fellowship (Lk. 7:37-50). While there, he had opportunity to save a sinful woman.

* He went into the home of Zaccheaus, the publican and spent time with him (Lk. 19:1-10). He brought salvation to his house.

* Frequently the Master enjoyed the hospitality of his dear friends Mary, Martha and Lazarus of Bethany. On one occasion, he was able to repay their kindness by rescuing Lazarus from death (John 11:1-44).

* While traveling through Samaria, Jesus paused to rest at Jacob's well, near Sychar. When a woman appeared to draw water, he engaged her in friendly conversation. The results were remarkable for the woman and a multitude of her neighbors were saved (John 4:4-42).

* On two of his preaching missions, Jesus himself provided a meal for the several thousands of his followers (John 6:1-13; Mk. 8:1-14).

* Perhaps the most touching of his social interactions was the final supper he shared with his twelve apostles. On that occasion he displayed ultimate humility by washing the feet of his factious, quarreling disciples. He gave them a lasting memorial of his suffering and death (Matt. 26:17-29; John 13:1-30).

To be like Jesus is to be sociable with those about us. We sometimes see disciples who do not enjoy associating with other Christians. They never open their homes to others. Some are downright unsociable. Those who fall into this category must learn that an important aspect of discipleship is to love our Christian brothers and sisters (I Pet. Heb. 13:1). We are to prefer one another (Rom. 12:10). We are to use hospitality as good stewards of the grace of God (I Pet. 4:9-10).

Rather than an obligation or a duty, let us see hospitality as one of the blessed privileges of Christianity.

23.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF CHRIST'S DEATH ON THE CROSS?

Paul preached "Jesus Christ and him crucified" (I Cor. 2:2). He later wrote, "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures" (I Cor. 15:3).

When Jesus was crucified for our sins a spectacular event occurred. "Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabbachthani? That is, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?...and he yielded up his spirit. And behold the veil of the temple was rent in two from top to the bottom; and the earth did quake; and the rocks were rent; and the tombs were opened..." (Matt. 27:45-53).

It is interesting that Jesus did not cry out or beg for mercy prior to this point. He endured the most brutal treatment

prior to and including the brutal nailing of his hands and feet to the cross. But when the sun was darkened something caused him to cry out in great agony, “My God, why have you forsaken me?” Did God in those three hours of darkness forsake him? If so, why? Isaiah 53:4-6 foresaw that God would lay on the Messiah the iniquity of us all. The world’s burden of guilt was laid upon him that awful day.

What does it mean for a man to be lost? It is to be separated from God. “Your sins have separated between you and your God” (Is. 59:2). When God laid the guilt of our sins upon Jesus, he at that point in time was separated from God, just as the guilty sinner will be separated in eternity. So great was the agony of that experience that he cried out to his Father. The answer to his question is, He was thus separated for that brief time so we would not have to be separated from God for eternity. When those awful hours expired, He gave up the ghost and his liberated spirit went to Paradise (Luke 23:43). On the third day His spirit was reunited with his body and he arose from Joseph’s tomb.

As we rejoice in our salvation and our hope of heaven, let us never forget that “we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son...” (Rom. 5:10). Think of the price our salvation cost the sinless Son of God. Through his torturous death, Jesus, brought “to nought him that had the power of death, that is the devil: and ...deliver(ed) all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb. 2:14-15). These thoughts remind us of one of our great hymns; “Because He Loved Me So.”

24.

THE BURIAL AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS

Had the story of Jesus ended on the cross we Christians would be of all men most pitiable. A dead Christ could save no one. We live rejoicing and face death with confidence and optimism because not only did Christ die for our sins, “he was buried... and ..raised on the third day according to the Scriptures” (I Cor. 15:3-4).

The Burial

By the hands of lawless men the Jews did crucify and slay Jehovah’s Son. The sun had begun its decline when the darkness rolled away to reveal the foul deed they had done. Those unctuous hypocrites who had murdered the innocent Savior were concerned lest the forthcoming Sabbath day be compromised by corpses hanging on the three crosses (John 19:31). They did not break the Master’s legs as they did the thieves’, but “one of the soldiers with a spear, pierced his side. And straightway there came out blood and water.” John the beloved apostle was eyewitness to this final act of violence (John 19:33-35). Jesus was dead already, but the spear pierced his heart and from the wound flowed blood and water. No one could deny the fact of his death.

The corpse was claimed by an unlikely person. Joseph of Arimathea was “a councillor of honorable estate,” i.e., he was a member of the great Sanhedrian council that governed the religious affairs of the nation (Mk. 14:43). Being a good and righteous man, he had not consented to the foul deed of his fellow Sanhedrists (Lk. 23:50-51). With others of the faithful remnant, he was looking for the kingdom of God. Joseph had been impressed with Jesus’ teaching but had not openly committed himself for fear of the Jews (John 19:38). Seeing the dastardly thing his brethren had done made Joseph ashamed that he had not taken his stand earlier. At great risk to himself, he boldly went to Pilate and requested permission to give the Master a proper burial. The Romans would have left the bodies impaled until devoured by beasts and birds of prey. The murderous Jews would have cast them into a pauper’s grave. Granted his request by the Roman governor, Joseph took the lifeless body from the cross and wrapped it in a large linen cloth bought for that purpose (Mk. 15:46).

Near the site of the crucifixion there was a garden containing a tomb, hewn out of stone. There they carried the body of Jesus. Nicodemus, a fellow officer of the Sanhedrian, met the funeral party at the tomb, bringing a hundred

pounds (1200 ounces by Roman measurement) of myrrh and aloe for use in preparing the body for the grave (John 19:39). Roman pounds were twelve ounces. (1) He too, had been hesitant to publicly declare his allegiance to the Lord, but now he stepped forward to do what he could. The Jews did not embalm as did the Egyptians, or as we do today. Rather they wrapped the body in swathes of cloth laced with aromatic spices. In the beautiful forty-fifth Psalm, which the writer of Hebrews declared to be messianic, the writer says, “Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever.... All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes and cassia...” (Ps. 45:6-8; Heb. 1:8). Likely they took the large cloth purchased by Joseph, tore it into strips and wrapped each member of the body, the head being wrapped in a separate napkin according to the burial custom of the Hebrews (John 19:40; 20:6-7).

The burial tomb was large enough for a man to stand inside (John 20:6). The body would have been laid on a ledge left projecting from the wall. Such tombs may yet be seen in the Holy Land. Isaiah had said of Messiah, “They made his grave with the wicked, and with a rich man in his death” (Is. 53:9). Though they crucified him with malefactors, he was buried as a prince. It was a new tomb where no dead body had yet been laid (John 19:41). The sacrifice for man’s sin must not be defiled by ceremonial uncleanness (Lev. 22:4).

The sun was now near the horizon, the Sabbath would begin at 6:00 p.m. Even though their task was uncompleted, the mourning friends rolled the great stone against the door of the tomb and made their way home for the Sabbath rest.

The Impossible Assignment

On the Sabbath day following, the chief priests and the Pharisees approached Pilate with a request to secure the body of Jesus lest it be stolen by his disciples (Matt. 27:62-65). They remembered with great anxiety his promise to rise again after three days. With the governor’s permission they sealed the stone covering the entrance and posted a guard of soldiers (Matt. 27:63-67). The seal may possibly have involved stretching cords across the great stone and sealing them with wax imprinted with the governor’s signet. Any disturbance would break the seal and be noticed (See Dan. 6:17). In this we see the providence of God in using his enemies to seal and watch the tomb so that it would be impossible to say that his disciples had stolen the body. Had the Lord’s followers sealed and guarded the tomb, it would have left the event of his resurrection open to the suspicion of fraud.

“Pilate said unto them, ye have a guard, make it as sure as ye can” (Matt. 27:65). There are two ways of understanding his words: 1). An imperative: Do everything you can to make sure the body stays in the tomb,” 2). Despairingly: “Make it as sure as you are able” given the spectacular events of his death and the miracles of his ministry. However we view the words, the assignment was impossible. The gates of Hades could not and would not prevail against him (Matt. 16:18). The divine promise to raise him had been made (Matt. 12:39-40). The proper time needed only to elapse and Heaven would fulfill its word.

Three Days in The Tomb

Across the ages there has been confusion about the time involved in the Lord’s entombment. This problem is seen in Matthew’s record. “.....and the third day he shall be raised up” (Matt. 20:19). “...as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matt. 12:40). He was crucified on Friday, the day of preparation for the great Sabbath day of the Passover (27:62). Death came sometime after the ninth hour (3:00 p.m.), when Jesus cried, “*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani*” (Matt. 27:46). He was buried before the Sabbath began at 6:00 (Lk. 23:54). The body rested through the Sabbath but early on the morning of “the first day of the week,” Mary Magdalene found the tomb open (John 20:1). Thus we can roughly calculate his entombment to have lasted: 1 hour on Friday, before 6:00 p.m.; 24 hours of the Sabbath; 12 hours or so on the first day; approximately 37 hours, in all.

Those who press for a literal interpretation of three days and three nights must find a way to have him in the grave seventy-two hours. D. R. Dungan in his fine textbook, **Hermeneutics**, observes, “If we take the **ordinals** among the Greeks, (first, second, third, etc.), they are always to be relied upon but if we have the indication in the use of **cardinals**, (one, two, three, etc.), we may feel sure that it is not as we would say it” (2) Albert Barnes notes that it was a maxim among the Jews that a part of a day was to be counted as a day in computing time. (3) Thus the

Savior's prediction was that his death experience would be like that of Jonah's in the sea monster. The Jews evidently saw no contradiction in his prediction and the actual facts. Had there been a discrepancy, we can be sure that they would have attacked his credibility the point; which they did not.

The Empty Tomb

When Christ was laid in Joseph's tomb, nothing appeared more weak and doomed than the movement he had launched. The handful of disciples who were left were unlearned and ignorant men. They were discouraged and defeated. They had no base of power as the world views it. Their Master had died a most ignominious death and now lay enclosed in the tomb with millions who had died before him. The gates of Hades slammed shut when the great stone was rolled into its slot. Satan had won his most signal victory. All Hell rejoiced, the righteous wept.

"But early on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, bringing the spices which they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb and they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus" (Luke 24:1-3). Among the women who found the tomb opened were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James. Mary Magdalene immediately ran to Peter and John thinking the body had been stolen (John 20:1-2). Meanwhile two angels appeared to the other women who lingered at the tomb, telling them, "He is not here; for he is risen, even as he said...go quickly, and tell his disciples..." (Matt. 28:7).

The Linen Clothes Lying

Upon hearing the report of Mary Magdalene, Peter and John dashed away to see for themselves. John out ran Peter and : "...stooping and looking in, he seeth the linen cloths lying," "...Simon Peter therefore also cometh, following him, and entered into the tomb; and he beheld the linen cloths lying, and the napkin, that was upon his head, not lying with the linen cloths, but rolled up in a place by itself..." (John 20:4-7). Lenski comments:

"What he sees is remarkable indeed: the linen bands (11:40) lying wholly undisturbed in their proper place with the body of Jesus gone out of them. " "...This is the astounding phenomenon: "The linen bands lying. Nothing whatever had been done with them, they were merely lying. We are not to imagine that they had been unwound from the body as was done with the grave bands of Lazarus when he came to life. Neither had they been cut or stripped off in some other way. They lay just as they had been bound about the limbs and body, only the body was no longer in them, and thus the wrappings lay flat." (4)

Had robbers stolen the body they would have taken it with the bands in place. If his friends had taken it, they would not have taken time to unwrap it. Even had they done so, they would not have arranged the clothes as if they were around corpse. This clearly is evidence of the strongest kind that Jesus simply passed out of his grave clothes with his resurrected body even as he entered into the locked room where the disciples were without having to open the door (John 20:19). That the cloth which covered his head was neatly "rolled up in a place by itself" (John 20:7) tells us that his removal was not the work of robbers. They would have tossed it aside in their haste. Christ or one of the angels evidently neatly rolled the cloth and laid it aside as a testimony of his resurrection.

While Mary Magdalene hurried back to tell Peter and John what she had seen, the other women entered the burial chamber and beheld two men in "dazzling apparel" (Lk 24:4). Later Mary returned and saw "two angels in white, sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain" (John 20:11-12). This scene reminds us of the cherubim that adorned the mercy seat in the temple (Ex. 25:18-20). It was on the old mercy seat between the cherubim that the blood of the atonement was sprinkled each year (Lev. 16:14-16). Now the bier on which our Lord's crucified body was laid is our mercy seat. It speaks of forgiveness of sins and hope for life that is eternal.

They Disbelieved

When the women "told these things unto the apostles...these words appeared in their sight as idle talk; and they disbelieved" (Lk. 25:11). Mark tell us that they disbelieved Mary Magdalene's testimony as well as that of the two

disciples who saw him on the way to Emmaus. “And afterward he was manifested unto the eleven themselves as they sat at meat; and he upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them that had seen him after he was risen” (Mk. 16:14).

It seems amazing to us that the apostles found it so hard to believe in the face of the repeated manifestations of the risen Savior and the testimony of the peers who saw him. This however, is a vital part of the record and proof of his resurrection. This shows us conclusively that they had not conspired to concoct a story about Jesus being raised from the dead. “They were not convinced until it was impossible for them to deny it.” (5)

In this they were no different than are we moderns. Being finally persuaded, they could not help but preach it to every creature, no matter the personal risk involved

The Power of the Resurrection

Paul wrote, “Yea verily and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord... that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings becoming conformed unto his death; if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection of the dead” (Phil. 3:8-10). The resurrection is truly one of the foundation pillars of Christianity.

The Importance of the Resurrection

To the Corinthians, Paul emphasized the importance the resurrection. He reason, “If Christ hath not been raised” 1) Our preaching is vain; 2) Your faith in vain; 3) The apostles are found false witnesses; 4) We are yet in our sins; 5) The dead have eternally perished; 6) We are of all men most pitiable, if Christ has not been raised (I Cor. 15:12-19).

The Proof of the Resurrection

But Christ has been raised from the dead, and this is no fond wish or hope. There is proof! Luke states in Acts 1:1-3 that “he also showed himself alive **..by many proofs**, appearing unto them by the space of forty days...” The truth of Jesus’ resurrection is substantiated by **many witnesses, who testified that they saw him alive after his death!** They were assured it was him!

* On Sunday morning Mary Magdalene and another Mary went to the tomb. There was an earthquake and an angel of the Lord rolled back the stone door and showed them an empty grave. As they returned to tell the other disciples, Jesus met them saying, “all hail, and they came and took hold of his feet and worshiped him” (Matt. 28:1-10).

* Later Jesus appeared unto Mary Magdalene alone at the sepulcher on the resurrection morning. He talked with her and she told the disciples, “I have seen the Lord, and that he had said these thing unto her” (John 20:11-18).

* He appeared to Peter the afternoon of resurrection day (I Cor. 15:5; Luke 24:34) and ...

* To the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk. 24:13-15), and they testified, “the Lord is risen... and they rehearsed the things that happened in the way, and how he was known of them in the breaking of the bread”

* He appeared then to all the apostles, save Thomas, on the resurrection evening, “Jesus came and stood in the midst and saith unto them, Peace be unto you... he showed them his hands and his side...” They testified, “We have seen the Lord” (20:19-25).

* A week later he again appeared to the eleven apostles. Thomas, who had doubted the story of the others was told, “reach hither thy finger and see my hands; and reach hither thy hand and put it into my side...” Thomas answered and said, “My Lord and my God” (John 20:26).

* A few days afterward, Jesus appeared to several of the apostles as they were fishing at the Sea of Galilee. He

caused them to have a great catch of fish. He then invited them to share breakfast with him. “And none of the disciples durst inquire of him, Who art thou? Knowing it was the Lord” (John 21:1-23).

* He appeared to above five hundred disciples at once (I Cor 15:6), and to the apostles on an appointed mountain in Galilee. “And when they saw him, they worshiped him, but some doubted” (Matt. 28:16-20).

* James saw him alive (I Cor. 15:7).

* He then led his apostles from Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives and blessed them and ascended into the heavens in their sight (Lk. 24:50).

* Saul of Tarsus, the persecutor of Christians, met the risen Christ face to face on the road to Damascus (Acts 22:6-9,14). The change in Saul and his work as the Apostle Paul established his claim to have seen the risen Lord.

These witnesses give us empirical evidence that should satisfy even the most skeptical soul.

* They **saw him** to be the same man they had followed .

* They **saw him eat food** as he had before.

* They **saw his wounds of crucifixion**.

* **The voice they heard was the same** one that had taught them before.

* They **felt his body and his wounds**. It was not a dream, a ghost or an illusion. They saw Jesus alive after he was raised from the dead!

The empty tomb gives testimony of his resurrection. Joseph, Nicodemus, Mary Magdalene and other disciples tenderly took the body of Jesus from the cross, prepared it and laid it to rest in Joseph’s new tomb. The chief priests and Pharisees, remembering his prediction, that he would rise on the third day, secured permission from Pilate and “went and made the sepulcher sure, sealing the stone, the guard being with them” (Matt. 27:66).

Many witnesses testify that the tomb was found empty on Sunday morning.

* Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome went to anoint the body (as the custom was). They found an empty tomb (Mk. 16:1-8).

* Peter and John on hearing the report ran and entered the tomb, finding it empty (John 20:2-6).

* The Roman guard, whose lives were jeopardized by allowing the corpse to disappear, said it was gone (Matt. 28:11).

* The Sanhedrian Council of the Jews verified that the body was gone, in that they paid much money to the soldiers to spread a lie that the disciples had stolen the body while they slept (Matt. 28:12).

What happened to his body? Either his friends, his enemies or God took his body from the tomb.

* **His friends could not have taken it**, because the grave was sealed and a guard placed there to prevent just such a happening.

* **His enemies would not have taken his body**, for it was this which they were trying to prevent. Thus we are left with but one conclusion;

* **God raised his body** from death and took him from the tomb.

The evidence of his power over death during in his ministry convinces us that he had the power to rise from the dead. As he raised Lazarus before many witnesses, he could raise himself. Jesus said, “I lay down my life, that I may take it again... I have power to take it again (John 10:17-18).

The transformation wrought in the Apostles is proof of his resurrection. A few days before, they had deserted him and fled in fear of their lives. They cowered in a locked room in the city. Now see them standing before that same

mob who had murdered their Lord, and boldly proclaiming the resurrected Christ (Acts 2:14-36)

The prophet foretold Christ's resurrection. "I beheld the Lord always before my face... Because thou wilt not leave my soul unto Hades, neither wilt thou give thy Holy One to see corruption" (Ps. 16:8).

The inability of his enemies to produce the body so that they might disprove the apostle's witness is proof of the resurrection. If they had stolen the body we can be sure that they would have publicly displayed it and destroyed their claim.

The impact upon Jerusalem of the resurrection gospel, demonstrated the factuality of Christ's being raised. Within a few days, over 5,000 men had become his disciples (Acts 4:4).

The influence of the resurrection gospel (Phil. 3:10) upon those who receive it and upon our whole world today is a positive testimony to its truthfulness.

What the Resurrection Means to Us Today

* The resurrection is the "axle and hub" of the gospel. Paul wrote, "I make known unto you the gospel which I preached unto you... Christ died for our sins... and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day..." (I Cor. 15:1-4).

* The apostle wrote that Jesus "was declared to be the Son of God with power...by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4).

* It proves his testimonies to be reliable and true, thus,

* It demands our faith (Rom. 10:9). "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. 10:9).

* To the Romans Paul said, "Jesus...was delivered for our trespasses and was raised for our justification" (Rom. 4:5).

* His resurrection conquered death. "Death is swallowed up in the victory" (I Cor. 15:54).

* His resurrection assures our resurrection and immortality. Romans 8:11 says, "if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life to your mortal bodies."

* The resurrection gives Christians comfort at the time of death. Paul writes, "concerning them that fall asleep...sorrow not even as the rest, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him (I Thess. 4:13-18).

* God "...begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead...(I Pet. 1:3).

* The resurrection gospel is a powerful force for good in our lives. Paul speaks of the "power of his resurrection" (Phil. 3:10), and affirms we can do all things through him that strengthens us (Phil. 4:13).

* The disciples' faith in the resurrection was responsible for the phenomenal growth of the early church.

* It made possible the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, Jesus said, "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you (John 16:7). Peter declared, "Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted...he hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear" (Acts 2:33).

* The great day of judgment is dependent on the resurrection. The Lord has appointed a day in which he will judge the world...by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:31).

Without the bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead, there can be no Christianity. No wonder Satan seeks to disprove it and keep people from believing it. He that rejects the resurrection must reject the whole of Christianity.

True Christians believe Christ was actually resurrected from the dead and lives and reigns today. This is the good news of the gospel!

JHW

End Notes

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25.

THE DOCTRINE OF IMPUTATION

Without Christ, mankind's situation was and is perilous. We stand before God, guilty sinners. All of our righteousnesses are as filthy garments (Is. 64:6). Our goodness is marred by our sin. Our works are inadequate to atone for our wrongs. Our wealth has no currency in securing pardon of sins. When our situation was hopeless, God sent his only Son to be our sin-offering (II Cor. 5:21; John 3:16). "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree..." (I Pet. 2:24). "The Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all" (Is. 53:4-6).

When we accept Christ with obedient faith (Rom. 1:5) God does several things that together constitute our salvation:

- * He washes away our sins by the blood of his son when we are baptized (Acts 22:16).
- * Being born again of water and Spirit (John 3:3-5), he makes us new creatures in Christ (II Cor. 5:17).
- * He gives us the gift of his Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38), which makes us partakers of the divine nature (II Pet. 1:4).
- * To those safely in Christ (Gal. 3:26), God no longer imputes or charges their sins (II Cor. 5:19).
- * Paul says, "Of him (God) are ye in Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption..." (I Cor. 1:30). Notice that those in Christ share his righteousness.

* Later Paul writes, “that we might become the righteousness of God in him (Christ)” (II Cor. 5:21).

* Thus Christ in us is our hope of glory (Col. 1:27).

The word “impute” is used several times in the King James Version (See Rom. 4:8, 11, 22-24; II Cor. 5:19; Jas. 2:23). Later translations render it “reckon,” “charge,” “keep account of” “not count against.” The teaching is not that in salvation we miraculously become perfect, sinless creatures. By experience every honest Christian knows such is not the case. It means that because we are now his children in Christ, rather than rebellious alien sinners, God does not charge our sins and failures to our account. We enjoy perpetual forgiveness of all our confessed sins (I John 1:9-10). As a righteous judge, God is able to do this not because we have personally achieved sinlessness, but because Jesus has shouldered our debt of sin, paid out account in full, forgiven us and made us children of God. Thus we say the righteousness of Christ is ours, since it is because his sacrifice on our behalf has made it possible. Faith is instrumental in bringing us to Christ and sustaining our relationship with him. When we have faith like Abraham had it is counted or imputed to us for righteousness (Rom. 4:2, 22). Righteousness is what is given. It is given only to those who have obedient, trusting faith.

26.

CHRIST IS NOW REIGNING ON THE THRONE OF HIS KINGDOM

When the angel announced the forthcoming birth of our Lord he said, “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end” (Matt. 1:32-33).

When he has ascended back to heaven, Peter told the people of Jerusalem, that David, “being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins he would set one upon his throne: he foreseeing this spake of the resurrection of Christ... Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted...Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ...” (Acts 2:31-36). Thus the Apostle Peter believed that although Christ is now in heaven, he is in fact reigning on David’s throne.

Christ’s throne is in heaven, at the right hand of God. When he ascended, he “sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2). Daniel saw all of this some 600 years before. In a vision, he saw coming in “the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the ancient of days and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom that all the peoples, nations, and languages

should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion...and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed” (Dan. 7:13-14). Thus the writer of Hebrews states, “but of the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God is forever and ever” (1:8). Since his enthronement, Christ is King of Kings and Lord of Lords (I Tim. 6:15). He will reign as king so long as the earth shall stand.

Christ’s kingdom is his church! This is clearly seen in Matthew 16:18-19. At Caesarea Philippi, Jesus said, “Upon this rock I will build my church...and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.” These two terms simply describe different aspects of the Lord’s kingdom. The word church describes the people who are called out of sin into a life in the kingdom of Christ. The word kingdom identifies the type of governance of the Master’s domain. He is king with all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18). As Paul puts it, He is head over all things to the church which is his body (Eph. 1:22).

Christ’s kingdom/church was established in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost following his resurrection (Acts 2:47 KJV). Every soul saved is called into God’s kingdom (I Thess 2:12). Our “inheritance (is) in the kingdom of Christ and God” (Eph. 5:5-7). Christians are “fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God” (Col. 4:11). The Apostles and Prophets went forth “preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus” (Acts. 8:12; Acts 28:31). John the Apostle was a “partaker...in the tribulation and the kingdom...which are in Jesus” (Rev. 1:9).

Jesus’ death on the cross was no surprise to Him or the Father. God’s plan for saving humanity by the death of his Son was part of his eternal purpose (Eph. 3:9-11). Jesus declared, “I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself” (John 10:17-18). When the armed band came to arrest him, Jesus would not allow Peter to defend him with his sword. He reminded him that he could call twelve legions of angels for his defense (Matt. 26:52-53), but that was not part of the plan. Afterwards, Peter told the citizens of Jerusalem that Christ’s death was according to the “determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23).

Since his coronation at God’s right hand, Christ has reigned over his kingdom. He will continue his reign until the time appointed. “Then cometh the end when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father...For he must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet” (I Cor. 15:24-25).

From all of the above we can draw the following conclusions:

* The millennial assertions that Christ was defeated in his plan to establish his kingdom are wrong

If Satan could thwart His plan to establish his kingdom back them, how can we be sure he will not do the same when Christ comes again?

* That the church is a temporary substitute till he can come again and establish his kingdom is untrue. Scripture is clear, the church is the kingdom of Christ. His church/kingdom exists today.

* That the Lord has been forced to wait for some 2,000 years and is still unable to establish and reign over his kingdom is false. We know his kingdom has existed since the year of his death and we are now citizens in his kingdom and under his dominion.

* In fact, the entire premillennial system is built on a foundation of faulty interpretations and misguided assertions.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

27.

THE HOLY SPIRIT: HIS NATURE AND ACTIVITIES

No biblical theme is grander or greater than the Holy Spirit. This is true because the Holy Spirit is revealed to us as a member of the divine family, the godhead, that created and rules over creation, man and the church. Some 90 times the writers of the Old Testament refer to the Spirit of God. New Testament writers mention him some 260 times. We find the Spirit referred to or described under 39 different names or titles.

Of the many great themes of Scripture, the Holy Spirit has been the least studied and consequently the least understood by our brethren. We can attribute this to several factors.

- * Information regarding the Holy Spirit and his role in the drama of redemption is not as abundant as we could wish.
- * There is a significant amount of mystery about the Spirit and his work.
- * Our religious neighbors have built elaborate systems of doctrine and practice concerning the Holy Spirit, based on a faulty understanding of the Scripture. To avoid their misguided speculations many brethren have hesitated to pursue the subject, lest they fall into their error.
- * Some of our own teachers who were overly proud of their intellectual attainments and biblical knowledge have made it their business to attack anyone who publicly expressed views about the Spirit and his work that were contrary to their views. Their method was to brand the brother who dared to express his conclusions as a “Pentecostal” or as denominational. This successfully silence many good men.
- * The biblical training provided for most of our ministerial students has dealt with more practical matters than with some of the more profound doctrinal themes of Scripture. Their education regarding the Holy Spirit was more a drill in the mistaken views of the Spirit and his work, held by various sects, rather than a serious, in depth, study of the Spirit of God.

There are numerous **good reasons for discovering all we can about the Holy Spirit.**

- * His role in preserving the teachings of Jesus (John 14:25).
- * His role in the resurrection of Jesus (Rom. 8:11).
- * His role in launching the Christ on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 1:8; 2:1-4).
- * His role in giving us our Scripture (II Pet. 1:21).
- * His role in our salvation (John 3:5; Tit. 3:5).
- * His role in helping us grow into Christian maturity (II Cor. 3:17-18).

The **Holy Spirit shares the divine nature with the God the Father and Jesus the Son.** When Ananias and Sapphira lied about their gift unto God Peter said, “Ananias, why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Spirit...thou has not lied unto men, but unto God” (Acts 5:3-5). Thus we repeatedly find the Spirit linked with the Father and Son as their equal.

- * We were baptized “into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19).
- * In Romans 15:30, Paul besought his readers “by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayer to God...”

* In II Corinthians 13:14, the Apostle said, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”

* In Ephesians 4:4-5 we are told there is “one Spirit,” “one Lord,” and “one God and Father of all.”

* To the Philippians Paul writes of our “exhortation in Christ,” our “fellowship of the Spirit,” and “the glory of God the Father” (2:1, 5, 11).

* In Revelation 22:16-18, John writes of Jesus, the Spirit and God.

The Holy Spirit is a divine person. He has all the attributes of personhood. This we mention because some have mistakenly described the Spirit as the influence or power of God the Father or the mind or thought of the Father. To such teachers, the Spirit is an impersonal “it.” The careful student notes that male pronouns are used to refer to the Spirit. Jesus said, “When he the Spirit of Truth, is come, he shall guide you...He shall glorify me...” (John 16:13-14).

The Spirit does things that only a person can do.

* He bears witness of Christ (John 15:26).

* He hears and speaks (John 16:13).

* He teaches (Luke 12:12).

* He has a mind (Rom. 8:27) and volition (Acts 16:7).

* It is through the Spirit that God has revealed his will unto humanity (I Cor. 2:10).

The **Work of the Holy Spirit** stretches from eternity to eternity. Christ, through the “eternal Spirit, offered himself...unto God” (Heb. 9:14). He played a vital role in the creation of the heavens and earth (Gen. 1:2; Ps. 104:30). The Spirit will play a role in our resurrection from the dead (Rom. 8:11). In John’s vision of heaven, he saw the Holy Spirit standing before the throne of God the Father as seven lamps of fire (Rev. 4:5). Among the Hebrews the number “seven” was used to signify plentitude, completeness and perfection. Jesus promised that when the Spirit came to comfort his disciples, “he may be with you forever” (John 14:16). The Holy Spirit continues his divine ministry with us today, no longer with spectacular miracles, but leading us through the Scripture he inspired and his providential supervision.

The Spirit was involved in the virgin conception and birth of Jesus. Gabriel explained to Mary, “The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore also the holy thing which is begotten shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35).

The Spirit of God anointed and empowered Jesus at his baptism (Acts 10:38). He raised Jesus from the dead (Rom.1:4; 8:11).

The Christian Age is the age of the Holy Spirit. Jesus sent the Spirit to lead his people after his departure (John 16:7-15). The Spirit’s presence with the Lord’s church is to last forever (John 14:16). He is Heavens’ agent for the administration of the kingdom of God on earth.

The Holy Spirit empowered the Apostles for their great mission (Acts 1:8). He guided them into all the truth (John 16:13). The Spirit himself provided the power to launch the church. This was manifested to multitudes by the sound like a mighty rushing wind (a tornado) and what appeared to be tongues of fire resting on the Apostles. They were baptized, i.e., immersed in his mighty power which enabled them to speak in languages previously unknown to them. With this gift they could preach the gospel to all men of all nations without delay and confirm their message by miraculous signs (Acts 2:1-4; Mark 16:20).

Every person saved, from Pentecost to the present, has received remission of sins and “the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). As Jesus put it, all who are saved must be born of “water and the Spirit (or) he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5).

Every Christian should understand “that (his) body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in (him), which (he has)

from God..." (I Cor. 6:19). The Spirit strengthens the Christian in his inner man (Eph. 3:16), sanctifies him (II Thess. 2:13), and helps him to overcome and defeat the sinful weaknesses of the flesh (Rom. 8:13). He transforms saved men or women into the likeness of Christ (II Cor. 3:18). The Spirit of God helps us with our prayers, interceding for us when we need his blessed assistance (Rom. 8:26-27).

The Holy Spirit inspired, that is, gave the message and appropriate words to writers of both the Old and New Testaments. David said, "The Spirit of Jehovah spake by me and his word was upon my tongue" (II Sam. 23:2). Peter explained that "men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (II Pet. 1:22). Paul's statement was "...unto us God revealed them through the Spirit..." (I Cor. 2:10). By the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit Paul declared, "We have the mind of Christ" (I Cor. 2:13,16).

No Christian should claim that he understands all there is to know about the Holy Spirit. As with the Father and Son and their sovereign rule there is much that is unknown and unknowable by our finite minds. But there is a body of information about the Spirit, provided by God in that pages of our Bible. That information is totally reliable and we can read, believe and live by it. To find, accept and live by this teaching regarding the Holy Spirit will be comforting, enriching and life-changing.

28.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE CHRISTIAN

Few Biblical topics have received as much attention in recent years as the Holy Spirit. Sadly much of that discussion has been highly controversial. Christians need to hear in a positive, constructive way what the Holy Spirit does for them. In the Epistle to the Ephesians, Paul tells us just how much the Spirit meant to him and them.

I. The Holy Spirit is the seal of our acceptance: "Ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. 1:13). Ancient kings had their signets or seals by which they identified their possessions and official documents. For a document to be sealed guaranteed its validity. For an object to bear the imprint of the seal meant it belonged to the king. For us to be thus sealed means that we are God's possession. Further, Paul reasons that the Holy Spirit is the "earnest of our inheritance" (Eph. 1:14). An "earnest" is a down payment on a purchase that secures it for the one making it. In salvation, we have nothing wherewith to pay God for a mansion in his eternal abode. Instead he gives to all his children his own "earnest," the Holy Spirit. All who repent and are baptized, in the name of Jesus receive "the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). God's divine earnest is only given to those who become his spiritual children. "Because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his son into our hearts. . ." (Gal. 4:6). In olden times the "*shkinah*," the symbol of God's presence, dwelt in the temple at Jerusalem. Today the Christian's body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, which is in (him)" (I Cor. 6:19).

II. There are blessings which the Holy Spirit imparts to the child of God. No miraculous gifts are available to us today. These only came in two ways: baptism of the Holy Spirit or the laying on of the apostles' hands. The apostles received power when the Holy Spirit came upon them (Acts 1:8). Others had to have apostolic hands laid upon them to receive supernatural gifts (Acts 8:14:17). Neither of these means for transferring miraculous gifts are with us

today. They were given for the purpose of confirming the preaching of the apostolic age (Mark 16:19-20). The New Testament having long been given and adequately confirmed, additional signs are no longer needed. A simple comparison of Biblical miracles with those claimed by modern "charismatics" demonstrates the phoniness of the latter. Who walks on water, raises the dead and turns water to wine? Who drinks deadly poison and takes up serpents without harm?

There are non-miraculous gifts attributed to God's Holy Spirit. God strengthens us with power "through his Spirit in the inward man" (Eph 3:16). "And in like manner the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity." When "we know not how to pray as we ought. . .the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us according to the will of God" (Rom. 8:26-27). "The love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which was given unto us" (Rom. 5:5).

The reception of these divine gifts is tied to the sacred Word of God which the Holy Spirit caused to be written. Without the Scriptures we would be like those men of Ephesus who did not even know that the Spirit had been given (Acts 19:2). God's word is the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17), the instrument by which he works. The implanted word which was given by the Holy Spirit is able to save our souls (James 1:21). In every case of conversion revealed in the Acts of Apostles, souls were saved only after hearing the Word of God taught and obeying the Lord's instructions. Even Saul of Tarsus who saw the Christ in person, still had to wait for the Word of God to be delivered unto him before he could "arise and be baptized (to) wash away (his) sins" (Acts 22:16). The Lord will open a sinner's heart today even as he did Lydia's, through the preaching of the gospel (Acts 16:14). When you respond by submitting to baptism he will purge your sins (Acts 22:16).

III. No additional information or revelation is being made known by the Holy Spirit today. The apostles of Jesus were guided into "all the truth" John 16:13). Jude tells us that the faith. . . was "once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). With the Old and New Testaments "the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (II Tim. 3:16-17). Through the knowledge of his word, we have "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (II Peter 1:3). No one should look for divine illumination when interpreting Scripture. Such is not promised. Experience demonstrates that those who make such claims are wholly contradictory in their claimed guidance. Would the Spirit who wants us "all to speak the same thing" lead one to become a Mormon and another a Baptist (I Cor. 1:10) ?

All "latter day revelations" attributed to the Holy Spirit are either contrary to the Scripture or the same as Scripture. If they are the former, they stand condemned, if the latter, they are unneeded. In either case they are confusing and detrimental to those that are seeking salvation.

V. Without God's Holy Spirit in your life, you cannot be saved. "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom.8:9). It is impossible to have the Spirit prior to or without Christian baptism. Believers should repent and be baptized to receive remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). God, in mercy saves us, "through the washing of regeneration (baptism) and the renewing of the Holy Spirit, which he pours out upon us richly, through Jesus Christ our Savior" (Titus 3:5-6).

What a rich blessing it is to be God's child, to be "partakers of the divine nature" (II Peter 1:4). May we ever live so as never to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom we are sealed unto the day of redemption (Eph 4:30).

29.

SEALED OF GOD

Ezekiel, in the ninth chapter of his book, records an awful vision of judgment upon the men of Jerusalem. However, the Lord's faithful disciples were preserved because they were marked with the seal of God (Ezekiel 9:1-6). So in the Revelation, God's faithful ones are sealed upon their foreheads so as to be identified and protected in the judgment that was to come upon men (Rev. 7:1-4). The idea of a divine seal placed upon God's children runs throughout the New Covenant. Surely all men should desire to know and understand what this seal is; what it means, and how to receive it?

1. **What is the seal of God** placed upon Christians? It is important to remember that we are thinking of an analogy. God does not literally write upon our foreheads with ink or mark us with a brand. But he does something like that when we become his children. This act of God marks us as belonging to him. Paul answers our question in Ephesians 1:13-14. Those who hear the word of the gospel and believe are "**sealed with the Holy Spirit** of promise."

2. **Who gives us the seal?** II Corinthians 1:21-22 answers this question. "... God ... also sealed us, and gave us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." No man can give us the heavenly mark of identification.

3. **Who receives this seal?** John tells us it is given to "the servants of God" (Revelation 7:3). In Ephesians 1:13-14, we are told that it is given to those who are **heirs** of eternal life. Luke tells us that the seal of the Holy Spirit is given only to those that **obey** him (Acts 5:32). And Galatians 4:6 says, "because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts..." So then this seal is impressed upon all who become Christians.

4. **When then are we sealed?** When the Jews of Jerusalem were convicted by Peter's sermon, they cried out, "What must we do?" The apostle responded, "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). When we are saved we receive the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5). Again in Ephesians 1:13, Paul says we are sealed **in Christ**. But we get into Christ by baptism, (Galatians 3:26-27). So then, we are sealed when we obey Christ in baptism.

5. **What does the seal mean to me?** First, it marks me as the possession of God. Christians are a "people for God's own possession" (I Peter 2:9). It identifies us as kings and priests of God (Revelation 1:6). It is also our earnest or down payment of heaven (Ephesians 1:14). It is God's sacred pledge that what he began in us will be completed. The Holy Spirit, with which we are filled, also sheds the love of God abroad in our hearts (Romans 5:5). It guarantees our bodily resurrection from the dead (Romans 8:11). The Spirit in our lives brings liberty and transforms us into the image of Christ (II Corinthians 3:17-18). We are strengthened with power by his Spirit in our inward man (Ephesians 3:16). We experience righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17). These blessings are ours if we have been sealed by God with his Holy Spirit.

6. **What our seal means to the unsaved.** The seal upon each Christian is a constant reminder to the lost of their undone condition. Although no visible, literal mark is evident, there is the intangible mark, obvious to all, in the Christian's life. It is seen in the love, joy, peace, long suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness and self-control, the fruit of the Spirit of God, in the life of all saved men (Galatians 5:2).

7. **The indelibility of the seal.** According to Paul, we are sealed unto the day of redemption (Ephesians 4:30). Jesus promises, "He that overcometh, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out thence no more, and I will write upon him the name of my God..." (Revelation 3:12). Such words describe that permanency of our salvation and relationship to God. "Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39).

The only thing that could rob us of the heavenly seal is our own sin. When caught in the web of his own sin, David prayed, "Take not the Holy Spirit from me" (Psalms 51:11). We can grieve the Spirit (Ephesians 4:30); quench the Spirit (I Thessalonians 5:19); and even despise the Spirit (Hebrews 10:29), by our continuance in sin. When we do thus, we cannot expect to retain our standing as the "sealed of God."

Having considered these precious thoughts from the Book Divine, we ask, Have you the seal of God upon you?

30.

HOLY SPIRIT BAPTISM

John the Baptist predicted that Messiah would baptize the people “in the Holy Spirit and in fire” (Matt. 3:11). As he prepared to leave them, Jesus promised the Apostles, “ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit, not many days hence” (Acts 1:5).

The Apostles received that promise on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). It enabled them to speak in foreign languages which they had not studied or previously acquired. The purpose of this was so they could preach the gospel to men of all nations without delay (Acts 2:4, 6, 11). It bestowed upon them the power to work mighty signs and wonders which confirmed to their hearers that God indeed had sent them and was working in them (Mark 16:17-20).

The Holy Spirit brought to their remembrance all the things Christ had taught them (John 14:26) and guided them into all the truth (John 16:13). It led them in establishing Christ church on earth and spreading it throughout the Roman world. It supervised them in giving us the inspired New Testament (II Pet. 1:20-21).

Later, the Gentile, Cornelius, and his household received Holy Spirit baptism just as the Apostles had and for a different reason (Acts 10:44-48., 11:15). This was an unusual demonstration. It was to convince the other Apostles and believing Jews that God would accept Gentiles in his church just as He had them. When Peter related this event he said, “the Holy Spirit fell on them, even as on us at the beginning” (Acts 11:15). This indicated it was a unique happening not common to general conversions. Peter concluded, “If then God gave unto them the like gift as he did also unto us, when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I, that I could withstand God?” (Acts 11:17). Upon hearing this, the other Apostles agreed to accept them (Acts 11:18). Cornelius and those with him did perform at least one miracle, they spake in tongues! (Acts 10:46).

Should we expect to receive Holy Spirit baptism today? Most preachers say yes. What does the Bible say? The two cases cited above are the only instances of Holy Spirit baptism recorded in the Bible.

From Scripture we learn the following facts. Holy Spirit baptism is a fulfilled promise (Acts 1:8). It empowered the apostles and their chosen helpers to reveal and confirm God's word. By it, God's acceptance of the Gentiles was demonstrated. Paul wrote in 63 A.D. “there is *one baptism*” (Eph. 4:5). It was administered by a symbolic burial (Rom. 6:4) in water (John 3:23). Jesus commanded this baptism into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). God says there is one baptism. If we are to expect Holy Spirit baptism, that would make two. If one claims he has Holy Spirit baptism, he should speak in unstudied foreign languages. He should be able to raise the dead, heal the sick, take up serpents and drink deadly poison (Mark 16:17-18). Failure to do this is sure proof one has not received Holy Spirit baptism. Modern day claims of Holy Spirit baptism are not at all like those of Scripture. There was no shouting, cataleptic fits, jabbering and general confusion as is often connected with it today.

(I Cor. 14:33).

Believe in Christ and be baptized in water and you shall be saved (Mark 16:16). Do not look for a baptism in the Holy Spirit.

ANGELS

31.

THE DOCTRINE OF ANGELS

In our day, we hear much talk about angels. The bulk of it is gleaned from novels, magazines, movies and television. Consequently, most of it, in part or in whole, is faulty information. The unbelieving portion of our society scoffs at the idea of angels along with that of God. Yet, among this group are those who are working feverishly, hoping to discover “intelligent” life in outer space.

Angels are mentioned, throughout the Bible, as a reality. As God’s believing children, we accept that as proof of their existence, since God’s Word is truth (John 17:17). Thus we look to that record to learn what can be known about angels. It is the only reliable source of information on this ethereal subject. All else is mere speculation.

What Is An Angel? The word rendered angel simply means “**a messenger**.” An examination of the uses of the word in Scripture reveals three different kinds of angels.

* There are **earthly angels**. Christ’s letters to the seven churches of Asia were directed to their respective “angels” (Rev. 3:2). This refers to the men who would deliver the letters to their congregations.

* In one of his Judgement parables, Jesus tells us that hell “is prepared for **the devil and his angels**” (Matt. 25:41). These we can label as evil angels.

* Of course there are the **heavenly angels**. In the closing chapter of the Revelation, the Apostle John was told that God had “sent his angel to show unto his servants the things which must shortly come to pass” (Rev. 22:6). It is these that interest us most.

What is the Origin of Angels? Angels were created by Christ, in the beginning. “All things were made through him” (John 1:3). In his praise of Christ, Paul writes, “for in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through him, and unto him; and he is before all things...” (Col. 1:16-17). In this grand verse we find the origin of the heavenly angels. The angels were evidently created before the material universe and its inhabitants, for God asked Job, “Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth...when the morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy?” The angels were there to witness that marvelous event. When the innocent couple were created and placed in the garden of Eden, we read that Satan was there to tempt them (Gen. 3:1-7). He was the leader of that band of rebellious angels who because of their sin, God had previously cast down from heaven to hell (II Pet. 2:4).

What is the Appearance of Angels? In their natural state, angels are invisible to the unaided human eye. The false prophet Balaam could not see the angel that blocked his pathway (Num. 22:31). Nor could Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, see the angels surrounding and protecting the city of Dothan, where he and the prophet were

trapped (II Kings 6:15-17). Elisha prayed that God “would open his eyes” and lo, he saw “the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about” them.

As to their form, most often they appeared as men. Two angels visited Lot in Sodom (Gen. 19:1). To Lot and his wicked neighbors, they appeared as men (19:5, 12). When the Apostles reached the empty tomb of Christ, “they saw a young man sitting on the right side...” (Mark 16:5). It was an angel (Matt. 28:5). No mention is made of female angels.

Sometimes they took other forms. As mentioned above, at Dothan, they appeared as horses and chariots of fire (II Kings. 6:17). On Mt. Horeb “the angel of the Lord appeared unto (Moses) in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush” (Ex. 3:2). The author of Hebrews wrote, “Who maketh his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire” (Heb. 1:7).

What are the Attributes of Angels? * They are wise and intelligent beings, but they are not omniscient. Jesus said, “but of that day, and hour (his second coming) knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven...” (Matt 24:36). There are at least some things they do not know.

* They are not omnipresent. God’s angels had to travel from Abraham’s lodging to Lot in Sodom (Gen. 18:1, 16). Daniel relates that “the man Gabriel...being caused to fly swiftly touched me...”(9:20). They seem not to be bound as we are by space and time for this entire episode occurred while Daniel “was speaking in prayer” (9:21). John writes of seeing “an angel flying in mid-heaven...” (Rev. 14:6). They are not bound by gravity.

* Angels are powerful, but not omnipotent. An angel rolled away the great stone that covered entrance of the tomb of Jesus (Matt. 28:2). An angel was able to cause Peter’s two chains to fall from his hands, he caused the great iron gate of the city to open for them (Acts 12:6-10). An angel determined to rain a plague upon the city of Jerusalem, but David’s confession, prayer and sacrifice prompted God to stay the angel’s destruction (II Sam. 24:10-25)

* Jesus said, the angels do not marry. “In the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as angels in heaven” (Matt. 22:30).

* Angels are holy (Mark 8:38), but they are not to be worshiped. When John “fell down to worship before the feet of the angel that showed (him) these things” he was told, “See thou do it not: I am a fellow servant with thee...worship God” (Rev. 22:8-9).

* Angels are accountable to the rule and authority of God. “Bless the Lord, ye his angels...that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word” (Ps. 103:20). This means they are capable of sin and subject to punishment for so doing. Thus Peter tells us, “If God spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell...to be reserved unto judgment...” (II Pet. 2:4). Sin, by its very nature, is “transgression of God’s law.” (I John 3:4).

* The number of the angels is “innumerable” (Heb. 12:22). Jesus declared he could call for more than twelve legions of angels to fight for him (Matt. 26:53). The Roman legion consisted of some 6,000 troops. More than twelve legions of angels would have been in excess of 72,000.

What is the Mission of God’s Angels? * Of special interest to Christians is the fact that they minister unto, watch over and care for God’s children. Having survived the long ordeal of his temptation in the wilderness, “Behold, angels came and ministered unto’ Jesus” (Matt. 4: 11). When our Lord agonized in Gethsemane, an angel from heaven strengthened him (Luke 22:43).

* As the saints fervently prayed for Peter’s release from prison and deliverance from death, “an angel of the Lord stood by him” and brought him safely out (Acts 12:5-11). God dispatches them to answer our prayers.

* They protect us from harm. Thus we are assured, “There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.” (Ps. 91:11). “The angel of the Lord encampeth around about them that fear him, and delivereth them.” (Ps. 34:7). The author of Hebrews reminds of this truth by asking, “Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation?” Our Master warns us, “See that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always

behold the face of my Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 18:10).

* God uses the angels as his agents in governing the affairs of his world. In his vision, John saw, “four angels, standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that no wind should blow on the earth” until the divine order was given (Rev. 7:1).

* They are God’s agents to punish wicked men and protect his people. “And Jehovah sent an angel, who cut off all the mighty men of valor and the leaders and captains in the camp of the king of Assyria” (II Chron. 32:21-22). “An angel of the Lord smote (Herod) because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms...” (Acts 12:23).

* Angels are greatly interested in the salvation of the lost. “There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth” (Luke 15:10).

* The angels of God escort the souls of departed saints to their waiting place in the Hadean realm. When righteous Lazarus died, “he was carried away by the angels into Abraham’s bosom” (Luke 16:22).

* The angels will serve the Lord Jesus in the Day of Judgment. “The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity and shall cast them into the furnace of fire” (Matt. 13:41). Paul vividly describes the scene “At the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel ...”(II Thess. 1:7-9).

What is the Destiny of the Angels? In the heavenly Jerusalem there will be an innumerable host of angels along with the saved of Christ’s church who are enrolled in heaven (Heb. 12:22-23). In his grand vision of heaven, John saw “all the angels standing round about the throne...and they fell before the throne, on their faces, and worshiped God...” (Rev. 7:11). This is the destiny of the holy angels. But what of those who chose to rebel against the will and authority of God? The lake of fire “is prepared is prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt. 25:41).

Conclusion: This great theme exceeds our ability to fully comprehend its depth and scope. But what we have seen in this lesson fills our heart with joy, comfort and consolation. God tells us that angels are assigned to minister to us who are heirs of salvation (Heb. 1:14). We know not how many dangers they have helped us avoid, how many evils they have kept at bay, how many blessings that have come our way by the hands of the heavenly servants of our great God. We find great comfort in knowing that these powerful servants of our Master will be there to comfort and assist us when it is our time to depart this life. While we do not worship them, or pray to them, we do thank God for these special agents he has commissioned to minister to us as we make the journey of life.

* The heart of this lesson was gleaned from a sermon by 19th century preacher, some 50 years ago. If my memory is correct, it was by John Sweeney.

SATAN

32.

SATAN: HIS ORIGIN, MISSION AND DESTINY

We live in a world charged with both good and evil. We are so created that each must determine his own destiny by choosing to do good or evil. Our Creator daily exerts his great power to prompt us to choose the good that he may bless us. Satan, the father of all evil, uses every scheme to lead us to sin. It is imperative that we be acquainted with our foe if we are to win in this desperate struggle.

The Origin of Satan

The Bible makes no attempt to prove Satan's reality or existence. It assumes this as fact. Scripture does not specifically detail the origin of Satan. However, there are some statements and truths that seem to incidentally shed light on this mystery.

Through Christ, God created *all things* (Col. 1:16). This included all things of earth and the heavenly creatures, i.e., angels. All things God created were very good (Gen. 1:31).

Some of the angels were not satisfied with their station assigned by the Almighty. They rebelled and fell from their holy sphere. Jude says, "And angels that kept not their own principality (proper habitation), he hath kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment" (vs. 6). "God spared not angels when they sinned...but cast them down to Tartarus" (II Pet. 2:4). Paul speaks of pride being the condemnation of the devil (I Tim. 3:6). There is perhaps an allusion to this historic event in Revelation 12:7-9. There John tells of a "war in heaven" Michael and his angels going forth to war with the dragon...and his angels; and they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast down...the Devil and Satan, he was cast down to the earth and his angels...with him." Although John's application was to the struggle between the church and the pagan Roman empire, he seems to allude to some great event from the past.

Satan's Mission

Satan's mission is to alienate and destroy all men from God and make them his slaves. Hardly had the first couple begun their lives when the arch-fiend made his appearance. With diabolical skill he deceived the woman and succeeded in bringing sin and death to them and all their descendants who would follow them (Gen. 3:1-19). No wonder Jesus called him a liar and murderer from the beginning (John 8:44). He is the accuser of Christ's brethren (Rev. 12:10). He dared to walk into the August presence of God and accuse faithful Job. Then with fiendish glee he set about to torment his victim to sin (Job 1:6ff). Joshua, God's high-priest, had for an adversary, Satan, standing at this right hand (Zech. 3:1). So brazen is he, that he even tried to seduce and corrupt Jesus (Matt. 4:1-11). To Peter Jesus said, "Satan hath desire thee that he may sift thee as wheat" (Lk. 22:31). Unable to personally corrupt Christ, "the devil...entered into the heart of Judas" and led him to betray his Master (John 13:2).

Facts We Need to Know About Satan

Paul wrote so "that no advantage be gained over us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his devices" (II Cor. 2:11). He is constantly scheming and planning to destroy us.

The devil would have you think he is a man with horns, a red suit, a long tail and pitchfork. Really he is a spiritual being who works through human beings. Nor is he a "roaring lion," but he is "as" a lion. That is, he stalks his victim in a cruel, heartless, and deadly fashion.

For his helpers, Satan has hosts of wicked spirits (Eph. 6:11-12). He has wicked men who fashion themselves into apostles of Christ...and even Satan fashioneth himself into an angel of light. His ministers present themselves as ministers of righteousness (II Cor. 11:13-15).

The evil one does not spend much time on thieves, drunkards, liars and the like. They are his already. He concentrates on good people; especially those who are Christians.

Satan is in the 'religion business.' He has churches (Rev. 2:9). He has a theology (Rev. 2:24). He has spiritual children (John 8:44). He has a spiritual kingdom (Col. 1:13).

Satan has usurped and controls the kingdoms of the earth (Luke 4:5). Because of his power over the people of the world, he is called the "prince of this world" (John 12:31), and the "god of this world" (II Cor. 4:4)

Satan hates the church of Christ and actively persecutes and seeks to destroy it (Rev. 12:13; II Tim. 3:12).

Satan's Destiny

The destiny of Satan is clearly predicted. "The devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone...and they shall be tormented day and night forever..." (Rev. 20:10).

Conclusion: Our defense against Satan is the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Eph. 6:17), and faith in the same and its author (I John 5:4). Revelation 20:1-3 pictures Satan bound by chain. A careful reading of Christ's temptation in Matt. 4 reveals that chain to be the Word of God.

God has provided us the armor and weapons for this perpetual battle: a girdle of truth, a breastplate of righteousness, shoes of the gospel of peace, a shield of faith, a helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, the Bible (Eph. 6:10-17). With prayer these make us invincible. But did you notice, no protection is given for our back? We must actively resist Satan and he will flee from us (Jas. 4:7). In spite of Satan's great antiquity, experience, power and evil devices, we can be "more than conquerors" through Jesus who loved us and died for us (Rom. 8:37).

33.

SATAN'S WAR AGAINST THE SEED OF THE WOMAN

On that distant day when God created man in His own image (Gen. 1:26), that he might live forever and glorify His name, Satan resolved to defeat His purpose. He quickly corrupted Adam and Eve, robbing them of their immortality. God then promised that "the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head..." (Gen.3:15). Satan, undeterred, resolved to destroy the promised seed and thwart God's plan.

I. The case of righteous Able. Satan incited his brother Cain to kill to kill his godly brother (Gen. 4:1-8). God intervened and exiled Cain and his family. Seth was then given to bear the promise (Gen. 4:25).

II. In Noah's day Satan nearly succeeded. He corrupted the entire race, save for Noah and his family (Gen. 6:5-6, 8). The wicked population was destroyed with water, but God spared Noah and his family. The promise was vouched safe to Shem.

III. The case of Jacob and Esau. The promise was conferred on Jacob, the younger of the twins. But Esau planned to kill Him (Gen.27:41). God protected Jacob and brought him safely home.

IV. Years passed and the Hebrews were reduced to servitude in Egypt. The Pharaoh ordered the destruction of all the boys at birth. (Ex. 1:16). But God raised up Moses to deliver them. He arranged for him to be sheltered and nourished in Pharaoh's own house. There he was trained for his future mission. God rained destruction on the Egyptians and delivered Israel. The seed was saved.

V. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, defeated, destroyed and deported the Hebrew nation that bore the seed. In captivity, God preserved, protected and purified his people. Then he raised up the Persians to free them and restore them to their homeland.

VI. Haman the Agagite, counselor to the King of Persia, wanted to exterminate the entire Jewish nation (Esth. 9:24). His well-laid plan seemed unstoppable. But God raised up Esther to save them. Haman and his sons were hung on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai the Jew (Esth 9:13).

VII. Antiochus Epiphanes (175-164), king of Syria, attacked the Hebrews and sought to destroy their religion and bring them under his idolatrous system. He burned their Scripture, he defiled their temple, and destroyed their synagogues. He forbade the practice of their sacred rites. But God raised up the Maccabean brothers to defeat his devilish plan.

VIII. Finally, Mary gave birth to the promised seed. Her son, Jesus, would save the people from their sins (Matt. 1:21). Satan moved evil King Herod the Great to attempt to destroy the babe (Matt. 2:13-16). When his plan was spoiled he slaughtered all the babes of Bethlehem. But the seed was secreted to Egypt until Herod's death. In Nazareth, Jesus grew to manhood. This is vividly depicted in Revelation 12:1-5 where the great dragon waited to devour her child.

IX. The murder of Jesus was the darkest chapter in human history. Satan succeeded in making the chosen people reject their savior and demand his death (John 19:7). They wanted, not just his death, but the most painful, degrading and humiliating death known to men. When Christ was lifted up on the cross, the Evil One thought his greatest victory had been won. But Jesus had foretold, that if he were lifted up (like a banner on the pole) he would draw all men unto him (John 12:32). Although they took every precaution to assure that he would not escape his tomb, on the third day it was found empty. He was gone! The Roman guards kept his disciples from taking his body. The last thing his enemies wanted was for his body to go missing. God had raised him just as he had promised (Matt. 16:21). Redemption was accomplished. Satan was fallen like a star from the heavens (Luke 10:18).

X. Today this great war continues with the Devil raging against Christ's church, his people. Satan's seed are those who knowingly and willingly set themselves at enmity with Christ and his church (John 8:44). God's seed abide

in Christ's faithful followers. Those who do not his righteousness are the children of the devil (I John 3:9-10).

No matter how fierce the struggle, we are not discouraged since "the God of peace shall bruise Satan under (our) feet shortly" (Rom. 16:20) and we will be "more than conquerors through him that loved us (Rom. 8:37).

34.

THE KINGDOM OF DARKNESS*

In revealing his will to us, God chose words and concepts that vividly contrast truth and error. Among the descriptions most commonly used are **light and darkness**. John writes "God is light and in him is no darkness at all" (I John 1:5). In salvation we are "delivered out of the power of darkness, Satan's domain, and translated into the kingdom of God's son (Col. 1:13). Throughout our New Testament **darkness** stands symbolically for the opposite of God's way.

The Christless life is one of darkness. Before becoming Christians we "were...darkness, but are now light in the Lord" (Eph. 5:8). Christ made the darkness of sin, ignorance, error and superstition to vanish away (I John 2:8). Christians "are all sons of light, and sons of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness" (I Thess. 5:5).

Darkness is hostile to the light. This is true in the material realm and more so in the spiritual. Christ "was the light of men. And the light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness apprehended (or overcame) it not" (John 1:4-5). Jesus said "everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his works should be reproved. But he that doeth the truth cometh to the light..." (John 3:20). As Christians, our "wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the world-rulers of this darkness..." (Eph. 6:12). This mortal conflict between truth and life will never cease till the victorious Christ banishes darkness (Revelation 22:5).

Darkness symbolizes the ignorance of a life apart from Christ. Without light, one is soon confused and lost in the darkness of a literal night. So is the spiritual realm. Jesus said "yet a little while is the light among you. Walk while ye have the light, that darkness overtake you not; and he that walketh in the darkness knoweth not whither he goeth"(John 12:35). Jesus is the guiding light by which we make our journey successfully to our eternal home (John 8:12). Even as Israel was provided the glorious light to lead them from bondage to Canaan, so Christ leads us (Ex. 13:21). Whoever believes on Jesus does not abide in darkness. Those who reject him are like a blind man groping along in the darkness.

Darkness describes the chaos of life without God. Paul writes "it is God that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (II Cor. 4:6). He alludes to God's first act upon the dark chaos of the unfinished creation (Gen. 1:23). Only after God brought forth light was he able to make the earth suitable for living things and man. As the physical world would be chaotic without the **sun** so without the moral light of his **Son** the world would be in moral, spiritual chaos.

The immorality of the Christless life is depicted as darkness. (Rom. 13:12-14) reads "The **night** is far spent and the **day** is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of **darkness**, and let us put on the armor of **light**. Let us walk becomingly, as in the day" not in reveling and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and jealousy. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof. "Works of darkness are most often pursued in the darkness of night; such as wild partying, drunkenness, adultery and abandonment. People whose deeds are evil love the darkness, like the doleful creatures of the nocturnal realm. They

frollic in the shadows and then hide themselves when the light appears (John 3:19). So also doest the criminal element.

Darkness is always unfruitful. In Ephesians 5:11, Paul speaks of “the unfruitful works of darkness.” Without light, growing things soon wither and die. So there can be no fruit of the spirit in a life lived in the darkness of spiritual ignorance and sin (Gal. 5:22-23).

Lack of love and hatefulness always accompany darkness. John warn “he that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother, is in the darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light.....but he that hateth his brother is in the darkness, and walketh in the darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because the darkness hath blinded his eyes” (I John 2:9-11). Love is like the warm, life-giving sunshine, hatred like the cold dark night. How sad to see a person professing Christ and yet harboring hatred towards a brother. Such actions are contradictory and mutually exclusive.

Darkness is the abode of Christ’s enemies and the final destiny of the wicked. Satan’s domain is that of darkness (Col. 1:13). Apostate disciples are like “wandering stars, for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved forever.” Wicked angels are “kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment...” (Jude 6). The Lord will consign the wicked to “outer darkness” where they will be punished forever (Matt. 22:13).

Conclusion: Jesus gave his life to deliver us from the power of darkness (Col. 1:13). Today, God is calling us out of darkness into his marvelous light (I Pet. 2:9). Faithful Christians must continually walk in the light of Jesus’ blessed gospel (I John 1:6-7). We must have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather even reprove them (Eph. 5:11-12). As Israel followed their guiding light to their land of freedom and rest, so may we follow Jesus the light of the world.

* The author is indebted to William Barclay for the heart of this lesson.

35.

HOW DO WE BIND SATAN?

In Revelation 20:1-2 John describes a mighty angel coming down binding Satan and casting him into an abyss. There the only deceiver would be kept for a thousand years.

In most religious circles there is a foolish idea commonly believed concerning the binding of Satan. This doctrine claims that the Devil is now exercising unrestrained control over the peoples of this earth but that some day he will be bound: that is, in some miraculous way he will be totally impotent and then righteousness will reign over all the

earth. Time does not permit me to deal with this premillennial heresy in full. So for the present we will deal with one phase of this theory: Can we bind Satan now? If so, how can we do it?

To understand how to bind Satan we must first understand how Satan works. God has always had a law for man to live under: from the simple, single law given to Adam and Eve to the Perfect Law of Liberty to which we are amenable today. Every transgression of that law is sin (I John 3:4). Every unforgiven sin will be punished by separation from God (Isaiah 59:1-2).

Satan's unaltering design has ever been to get men and women to sin, and thus be separated from God, damned as he is himself. This he accomplishes by temptations. He uses the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life (I John 2:15). Eve's allurements and fall came through these same three channels of temptation. James tells us that "every man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lust and enticed. Then the lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin, and the sin, when it is full grown, bringeth forth death (1:14-15).

Jesus bound Satan. We see how he did so in the record of his temptation. When the evil one assailed him through the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life, Jesus fended him off with pertinent appeals to the written word of God: "Thus it is written." Satan was forced to leave without victory (Matthew 4:1-11).

When the Pharisees saw Jesus casting out demons, they accused him of doing it by the power of Satan. Jesus refuted their cavil by the famous axiom, "a house divided against itself cannot stand." Then he said "or how can one enter into the house of the strong man and spoil his goods, except he first **bind the strong man**". (Matthew 12:22-29)

Satan had most of the world under his control: before Jesus could free and save them, he must bind that haughty potentate. Not only did Christ conquer Satan in the wilderness, but he went right into his house and spoiled the devil of his most priceless possession, death. Jesus became one of us "that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage (Hebrews 2:14-15).

When Christ was raised, Satan had been spoiled of his universal way of death, "for now all that are in the grave shall hear his voice and come forth" - alive (John 5:28-29).

Can we today bind Satan? Yes! Just as Jesus did! By the Word of God, the Bible (Romans 1:16). By submission to God and by resisting his temptations. "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." (James 4:7). By sober watchfulness. "Be sober, be watchful, your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour, whom resist, steadfast in the faith" (I Peter 5:8-9). Thus Paul assures Christians, "Sin shall not have dominion over you for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14). Before Jesus came and instituted his law of grace and forgiveness, Satan, could have dominion. This was because once he could lead a person to sin and the old law, lacking the grace and mercy to forgive, readily condemned him to death. Now, even though Satan succeeds in getting us to sin, we can come to Christ with obedient faith, and his blood will cleanse us from these sins (I John 1:7).

Satan still exists: The condition of the world is a testimony to his existence and power. Yet to the child of God, he is chained or bound just like a vicious dog is chained to a tree. If you stand outside the reach of that chain, he cannot harm you. So it is with us and Satan today. God's truth is the chain that binds him but only when it is applied as Jesus did. Those who are ignorant of God's Word, or who do not live by its precepts will be the victims of the great enemy of souls.

No one ever sincerely followed Christ, obeyed his teaching, without becoming a better person; without overcoming Satan.

36.

PAGANISM

Christianity, in the widest sense of that term, is professed by only some 20% of the earth's population. The rest of the people worship in various forms of paganism. Excluding Islam, these people worship gods made by man's hands.

The consequences of paganism are appalling. All of these religions leave their followers in the depths of moral degradation. Every kind of immorality, deceit and dishonesty prevails. Socially, the strong dominate the weak, women are degraded before men. The poor are treated as the dirt of the ground. Financially the nations that are addicted to idolatry are generally poor with a very few men holding most of the money. Domestically, the home is the throne of the tyrant father, women are little more than slaves. Children are sired with little thought of moral or spiritual training. Politically, these nations are generally oppressed or they are oppressive. The rights of men mean little to pagan rulers. The welfare of a society is of no serious concern. Those in power enrich themselves at the expense of their poor subjects.

The only effective weapon against idolatry is the gospel of Jesus. It will tear down the strongholds of ignorance. (II Cor. 10:3-5). While the major Protestant churches have done much in the past to combat paganism it is sad to see a willingness to accept the pagan religious as equal partners by the liberal leaders of today's Protestantism.

Idolatry is wrong on numerous counts. We will notice four areas in which it is condemned of God.

Idol worship dishonors God the Creator of man. Paul writes: "Because that, knowing God, they glorified Him not as God neither gave thanks...professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts and creeping things." (Rom. 1:21-23). Even as Jehovah strictly charged ancient Israel, so it is today, "I am Jehovah thy God...thou shalt have no other gods before me, Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image...Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve, them for I Jehovah, thy God, am a jealous God..." (Deut.5:5-9). It is hard for Americans to visualize human beings prostrating themselves before images of beasts or men, debasing themselves in the most abject manner before the creation of human hands. Yet one has only to board a jet air liner and in a matter of hours he can be in Asia or Africa where such is the rule of life, not the exception. While unbelieving religious liberals and altruistic anthropologists speak of the splendor and beauty of heathen worship, Christians are shocked, disgusted and appalled by it. It is gross and sensual, far from beautiful. It dishonors the God, in whose image man is made, to offer such vile worship.

Idolatry is wrong because it is vain and foolish. Isaiah ridicules the idol worshipers of his day in chapter 44:12-20 of his book. "The (black) smith maketh an axe, and worked in the coals and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with his strong arm;...the carpenter sketcheth out a line; he marketh it out with a pencil; he shapeth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and shapeth it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man, to dwell in a house. He heweth him down cedars,...and strengtheneth for himself one among the trees of the forest: he planteth a fir-tree, and the rain doth nourish it. Then shall it be for a man to burn; and he taketh thereof, and warmeth himself: yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread: yea, he maketh a god, and worshipeth it; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied; yea he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire. And the

residue thereof he maketh a god even his graven image; he falleth down unto it and worshipeth, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou are my god. They know not, neither do they consider: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see and their hearts that they cannot understand. (Behold how Satan blinds them! II Cor. 4:4). And none calleth to mind, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire: yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination(idol)? Shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? He feedeth on ashes; a deceived heart hath turned him aside; and he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie inn my right-hand?" Again in 46:1-2, Isaiah cuts sarcastically at Bel and Nebo, the gods of Babylon, as he foresees the people fleeing their city with their idols strapped to the backs of their beasts. Not only can they not save their worshipers, the gods themselves must be saved from capture or destruction by their devotees. Man, the crowning jewel of all creation, made in God's likeness with intelligence, superior to all other creatures, should perceive the folly of such senseless worship. Paul argues in Rom. 1:20 that all idolaters are "without excuse" since with their native intelligence and basic sense they could realize the one God's everlasting power and divinity. He further charges that such idolatrous worship is the result of man becoming vain in his reasoning and professing himself to be wise. Man seeks a god like himself so that he can do the desires of his flesh with the approval of his conscience and his society.

Idolatry is wrong because it is cruel and degrading. Idolatrous rites have included human sacrifice, ritual fornication, sensual dancing, torture of devotees, and sacrificial victims. Idolatry has cruelly crushed the masses of people under foot as the Hindu Brahmins have the harijans (the low caste) people of India, treating them far worse than they treated their beasts and even vermin and insects. Multiplied millions yet cringe in fear of demons, evil spirits and shaman (witch doctors) who claim to hold supernatural powers. People let rats and cows eat the grain with impunity while millions fight to cling to the threads of life as they battle starvation. In Thailand, Buddhist women are told they cannot enter Nirvana (the highest state) as women, they must be reincarnated as men. Polygamy is basically a product of corrupt religion that teaches that man's future happiness depends upon the number of spirits he can generate to take into eternity with him.

Idolatry is wrong because it leads away men from the true God and farther and farther into rebellion. Paul vividly portrays this downward path in Romans 1: "Professing themselves to be wise, they become fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness, that their bodies should be dishonored among themselves... God gave them up unto vile passions (homosexual perversion)... And even as they refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up unto a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, strife, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, hateful to God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, unmerciful..."(vs. 22-31). The author used to think that this sordid, morbid picture was only of the first century Romans. A trip to any pagan nation in Africa or Asia will be a living commentary on Paul's words. The road of idolatry is away from Jehovah and in the opposite direction of righteousness, justice, and truth. From Paul we learn that men first reject God in their heart, then they are rejected by Him. Man becomes like the God or god which he worships. The faithful Christian grows to be like the righteous Jehovah. The heathen is like the devil gods he worships.

As these words were being written I looked out of my window in New Delhi, India and saw the situation described above. What can we do to help these poor benighted souls who languish under the yoke of Satan's false religions? The answer is simple and plain. "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved..."(Mk. 16:15-16). This is not simplistic for the Scripture tells us that the gospel of His Son Jesus is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth. (Rom. 1:16).

Christians in America, look around you and be grateful, look up and be thankful, and send the blessed light of the gospel into all the world.

DEMONS

37.

THE DOCTRINE OF DEMONS

A world in rebellion against God finds itself obsessed with the occult, devil worship, witchcraft and demon possession. Books and movies are profiteering off of this morbid spiritual degeneracy. The current interest in demons prompts us to search the Scriptures to learn what God reveals on this mysterious subject. The speculations of the curious and the impostures of the wicked who scheme and play on the credulity of the ignorant and fearful have helped to create and maintain the wild systems of demonology that have prevailed through the years (**Imperial Bible Dictionary**, Vol. II, p. 144).

What Is A Demon?

The most common New Testament term is *daimonion*, translated **demon**, ASV (**devils**, KJV). Originally it denoted supernatural powers, generally in a good sense. The term and its cognates grew to describe both good and bad powers. By New Testament times it referred exclusively to evil beings. Some times they are called evil spirits, unclean spirits, foul spirits, angels of the devil, world rulers of this darkness, and hosts of wicked spirits in heavenly places. Also commonly used in the epistles are the terms, **principalities** and **powers**. **Principalities** is from *archai* and speaks of "angelic and demonic power" (**Arndt & Gingrich Lexicon**, p. 112). Powers is the Greek *exousia* and suggests "rulers and functionaries of the spirit world" (**ibid.**, p. 278). Satan is the prince of the powers of the air (Eph. 2:2). Beelzebub was the prince of demons to the Jews (Matt. 12:24) (Rudell White, **Demons, Firm Foundation**, Mar. 12, 1974, p.7).

Under *daimonion*, Thayer gives the following as his second definition, "A spirit, a being inferior to God, superior to men" **Thayer's Lexicon**, p.123).

Based on the writings of the ancient Greeks, Alexander Campbell concluded that demons are the spirits of deceased, wicked men. Hesiod wrote, "The spirits of mortals become demons when separated from their earthly bodies." Plutarch states, " the demons of the Greeks were the ghosts and genii of departed men; and that they go up and down the earth as observers, and even rewarders, of men; and although not actors themselves, they encourage others to act in harmony with their lives and characters."

Josephus, the Jewish historian of the first century, says, "Demons are the spirits of wicked men, who enter into living men and destroy them, unless they are so happy as to meet with speedy relief." Philo, the leading Jewish philosopher of the same period, writes, "The souls of dead men are called demons." Justin Martyr, reflects the thinking of most early church fathers when he says, "Those who are seized and tormented by the souls of the dead, whom all call demons and madmen."

Lardner sums up the above quite well with these words, "The notion of demons, or the souls of dead men, having power over living men, was universally prevalent among the heathen of these times and believed by many Christians."

After setting forth the above definitions of the word demon, Campbell cited this rule of interpretation, "Every word not specially explained or defined in a particular sense, by any standard writer of any particular age and country, is to be taken and applied in the current or commonly-received signification of that country and age in which the writer lived and wrote." Alexander Campbell, **Popular Lectures and Addresses**, p. 386). This conclusion we accept. However, regardless of our conclusion on this point, the rest of our information would be the same.

The Character of Demons

In the New Testament, "Demons are...spoken of as personal, conscious, powerful, responsible agents, who perceive and understand, who hate and rage, who speak, act and tremble. Our Lord always deals with them as such" (**Imperial Bible Dictionary** Vol. II, p. 148). They are always pictured as foul, evil spirits that work harm to their victims. Demons are under Satan's controlling power. In Mark 3:22-23, the Jews charged, "He hath Beelzebub and by the prince of the demons casteth out the demons. And he...(Jesus).. said unto them...How can Satan cast out Satan?" Jesus then believed Satan to control the evil spirits. It would be good here to remind ourselves that the King James Version uses the term "devil" where the American Standard uses demon. But demons are not to be confused with Satan, the Devil.

Demon Possession

Demons did actually possess the minds and bodies of human beings in the days of Christ and the Apostles. There are at least twenty-six instances in the New Testament that speak of demon possession. A total of 80 places speak of demons in some way. In all of these we have matter of fact statements that can only be understood as accepting the reality of the affliction. A distinction is made between those who suffer some physical or mental illness or condition and those who have similar symptoms caused by demon possession. "And he healed many that were sick with divers diseases, and cast out many demons" (Mark 1:32-34). Demon possession was more than epilepsy or insanity for these are listed as maladies cured in addition to demon possession (Matt. 4:24). Certain women had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities (Luke 8:2). Skeptics have argued that there were no real demons, rather it was the attributing to some unknown spirit power that which was unexplainable to ancient man, or that the Lord knew better but accommodated himself to the level of knowledge of that day. How can these doubters account for the response of the herd of swine at Gadara when the demons were cast out of Legion and allowed to enter them? (Mark 5:10-14).

Possession Described

"Possession is that unnatural operation, in which one or more impure spirits, through any sort of agency, intrude into a human body, make themselves masters of the instruments of sensation, of movement, and of speech; attach the power of the soul to them, and in shorter or longer paroxysms make themselves manifest in strange sounds, gestures, and movements, for the most part of a mocking, licentious, and violent kind." (Eschenmeyer as quoted in Franz Delitzsch, **A System of Biblical Psychology**).

"The soul finds itself no longer in possession of its body, a strange something has forced itself between it and its body, and exerts a disturbing and hindering influence upon the bodily organs of the psychical life" (Ebard, from Delitzsch, **Ibid**).

"We find in the demoniac the sense of a bondage in which he does not acquiesce, of his true life absolutely shattered, of an alien power which has mastered him wholly, and now is cruelly lording over him, and ever drawing further away from Him in whom only any created intelligence can find rest and peace. His state is in the most literal sense of the word; a 'possession:' another is ruling in the high places of his soul, and has cast down the rightful lord from his seat; and he knows this; and out of his consciousness of it there goes forth from him a cry for

redemption..." R. C.Trench, p. 170-171).

"The distinguishing feature of possession is the complete or incomplete loss of the sufferer's reason or power of will; his actions, his words, and almost his thoughts are mastered by the evil spirit till his personality seems to be destroyed, or if not destroyed, so overborne as to produce the consciousness of a twofold will within him, like that sometimes felt in a dream" (**M'Clintock and Strong Cyclopedia of the Bible**, Vol. II, p. 642). "This influence is clearly distinguished from the ordinary power of corruption and temptation wielded by Satan through the permission of God: Its relation to it indeed, appears to be exactly that of a miracle to God's ordinary Providence..." (**Ibid**).

Results of Demon Possession

Victims of demon possession suffered a variety of afflictions. Each case was different. We note the following examples. The man of Gadara raved and roared frightfully, was wild, fierce and dangerous to himself and others. He had supernatural strength, was insane, went naked and frequented the tombs and deserted places (Matt. 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-15). One man, possessed of a demon was blind and dumb (Matt. 12:22). In another case a demon made a child dumb and dashed him down in epileptic-like seizures. He foamed at the mouth and ground his teeth and pined away (Mark 9:17-18). A young girl had a spirit of divination (Acts 16:16-18). A man with a demon attacked and mastered two men (Acts 19: 13-16). From the frequency of its mention and the fact that "many demons were brought" on many different occasions, we would conclude that it was a fairly common experience in Palestine in the first century (Compare Matt. 4:23-24;8:16 "Many possessed with demons" Luke 7:21; Mark 16:17-20). There is no indication that the experience of seeing one possessed with demons was a rare thing.

Demons Were Cast Out

Christ cast out demons repeatedly. Never was there a hint of failure in his exorcisms. It was proof that "the kingdom of God" had come upon the Jews (Luke 11:20). It, along with other miracles of healing, was sent as proof to John the Baptist that Jesus was indeed Messiah (Luke 7:18-22). Paul cited miracles, including exorcisms, as proof of Jesus messiahship (Acts 10:38). The Apostles themselves cast out demons and worked miracles and thus their word was confirmed to their hearers (Mark 16:17-20; Heb. 2:3-4). James Henderson notes, "The demoniacs, recovered by his word to a sound body and a right mind, were more palpable convincing trophies of his power, and more palpable representatives of his work, than were his own disciples..." (Imperial Bible Dictionary p. 150).

Jesus conferred this power upon the apostles and the seventy when he sent them out to preach (Luke 9:17-20). Some, not of the immediate apostolic band, also cast out devils in Jesus' name (Luke 9:49). Christ did not forbid him. On the other hand, when certain Jewish exorcists attempted to use Christ's name to cast demons out, they failed (Acts 19: 13-16). They were routed by the demon possessed victim.

When Christ and the apostles cast out demons, it was done instantly (Matt. 17:18) "and the demon went out of him: and the boy was cured from that hour." "And his daughter was healed from that hour" of the demon (Matt. 15:22-28). Paul charged the evil spirit "in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And it came out that very hour" (Acts 16:18).

Inspired men cast out demons publicly before many witnesses, both friends and enemies. Never did they charge a fee or take a collection either before or after that or any other miracle they performed. How unlike "miracle workers" and exorcists today.

It is also important to remember that those men of God who could cast out demons were able also to work other notable miracles. Jesus promised them, "And these signs shall accompany them that believe: in my name shall they cast out demons, they shall speak with new tongues (languages, Acts 2:6,8); they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall in no wise hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover" (Mark. 16:17-18). If a man cannot do all of these, neither can he cast out demons.

Miscellaneous Observations

Several interesting facts about demons can be gleaned from the scriptures. Jesus said in a parable, "the unclean spirit when he is gone out of man, passeth through waterless places, seeking rest and finding none, he saith, I will turn back unto my house whence I came out. And when he is come, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he and taketh to him seven other spirits more evil than himself; and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man cometh worse than the first." (Luke 11:24-26) From this we can see:

1. Demons can exist outside of a "host" body;
2. They have the intelligence and the will of their own;
3. They desire to inhabit a human body;
4. A man who has been freed is liable to be repossessed if he does not fill the void left in his life with wholesome spiritual things;
5. More than one demon could possess a person. Mary Magdalene had seven demons cast out of her (Luke 8:2).

From the case of the demoniac of Gadara, we learn:

1. That demons maintained a separate personality while inhabiting a victim.
2. The demons had a supernatural knowledge. They recognized Christ as Messiah.
3. They recognized Christ's power over them. "And the demons besought his saying, If thou cast us out, send us away into the herd of swine"(Matt. 8:31).
4. They preferred even the body of a pig to no host body for a habitation.

Evil spirits often recognized Christ and his power over them and publicly made this known through their victim. "And Jesus rebuked him (the demon) saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him, and the unclean spirit, tearing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him" (Mark 1:23-26, also Luke 4:41). Jesus addressed the demons as intelligent beings over which he had power.

Biblical and Post-Biblical Exorcisms

By a simple command, Christ cast out demons and they fled immediately. The Apostles cast them out in the name of Christ (Acts 16:18; Luke 10:17). No magical formulae or repeated efforts were needed. What a strange contrast that record is with the exorcisms of the Jews and Catholicism.

An ancient Jewish exorcism chant went: "Burst, curst, dashed, banned be Bar-Tit; Bar-Tema, Chashmogoz, Merigoz and Isteaham" (Edersheim, **Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah**, Vol. 2, p. 77).

The following is a Roman Catholic ritual for exorcism from ancient times. "The priest, having arrayed himself in the official robes, first sprinkles the demoniac with holy water and then recites the prayer of the litany of all saints, the paternoster, and Psalm 53 (54 in our Bible); after this the two orations, in which he makes the sign of the cross over the demoniac and commands the evil spirit to depart by the power of the mysteries of the incarnation, passion, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, the gift of the Holy Ghost and Christ's return to judge the world. After this follows the reading of John 1, Mark 16:15-18; Luke 10:17-19. Then the priest lays both hands on the head of the demoniac and says *Ecce crucem Domini. Fugite, partes adversa: vicit leo de tribu Juda*. After this comes the Oratio with the special formula of exorcism Exorcizo te, immunde spiritus while the priest crosses the brow and breast of the demoniac three times in the name of the Trinity. If the spirit does not then depart, the service is begun anew" (Whitehouse, **Hastings Dictionary of the Bible**, Vol. 1, p. 812).

"Towards the end of the third century, an order of exorcists was established in the Christian church, which contributed materially to promote the growth of superstition, and led to much fraud and imposture. The practice also of a form of exorcism was introduced into the administration of baptism, on the ground, that as every one previous to baptism was in bondage to the devil, so he must in baptism be formally released from the evil spirit and be made to receive the good. The priest therefore was instructed to breathe thrice upon the face of the subject of baptism, and

to say, Depart from him, foul spirit, and give place to the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete. Then followed another breathing upon the face, with the words, Receive the Holy Spirit through this same breathing and the blessing of God." This order still stood in the Latin ritual at the close of the last century (**Imperial Bible Dictionary**, Vol. II, p. 265).

The Duration Of Demonic Power On Earth

Although evil spirits and demons are mentioned in the Old Testament, we have no evidence of demon possession there like we have in the New Testament. We have nothing in our world today that resembles the demon possession as described in the Bible. It seems that at that period of time when Christ and the Holy Spirit worked mightily upon the earth, God allowed Satan this added dimension of power. The repeated citing of instances by the inspired writers showing Christ's power over demons and the Apostle's like-power, indicated that this phenomena gave them opportunity to demonstrate their power over these devilish beings and so establish that God was working in and through them. Jesus said this in Luke 11:20.

"To this end was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (I John 3:8). He came to bind the strong man and spoil his possessions (Matt. 12:29). That strong man was Satan. By Jesus' sacrificial death, the world was judged and the prince of this world was cast out (John 12:31). By the cross he despoiled principalities and the powers (both terms refer to angelic and demonic powers of the spirit world) (Arndt & Gingrich Lexicon, p. 112). He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. The RSV says he disarmed these demonic powers. Paul describes the victorious Christ in triumphal parade with the defeated and captured enemies displayed behind him (Eph. 4:8). This would surely include the agents of Satan of the spirit world.

As Christ reigns in heaven, angels, authorities and powers have been made subject to him (I Peter 3:22). In his victory on Calvary and his triumph over the tomb he brought to nought the devil (Heb. 2:14) who is the prince of demons. All of these establish the point that Christ had a great victory over Satan and his evil workers in His death and resurrection. From that point onward, demon possession diminished and soon after the death of the apostles we have no bonafide record of real demon possession like the New Testament records. "Nor was it less natural that it should have died away gradually before the great direct, and still greater direct influence of Christ's kingdom. Accordingly we find early fathers alluding to its existence as a common thing...dwelling upon the power of Christian exorcism to cast it out...by degrees the mention is less and less frequent, till the very idea is lost or perverted" (**M'Clintock & Strong**, Vol.II, p. 642). When the Seventy evangelists returned from the successful mission, they said, "Lord, even the demons are subject unto us in thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan fallen as lightening from heaven" (Luke 10:17). This seems to be predictive of the results of the wonderful triumph of the cross.

Do Demons Possess Men Today?

If we conclude people are demon possessed today, then we would be forced to conclude that supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit were needed to expel them. If that miraculous gift is still with us, would not all the others be also? (Compare Mark 16:17-18).

If sinners are demon possessed today, we would need supernatural power to cast out the demon so they could believe and be saved. But the gospel is the power of God to save (Rom. 1:16). Therefore, we need no such miraculous power.

Paul says God will not let us be tempted above that which we are able to bear (I Cor. 10:13). Demon possession was beyond man's power to control. We Christians are to choose whether to obey Christ or Satan (Rom. 6:16-17). But the victims of demons were not free to choose.

When Christ came down to establish the kingdom of God, Satan was allowed the power to extend his vile influence to include the possession of human bodies and minds by his evil spirits. This then, gave Christ and his helpers opportunity to publicly show the power of God over Satan by casting out demons. Jesus said this proved that the kingdom of God had come (Matt. 12:28). When the kingdom had been fully established, when the need for

supernatural gifts had been fulfilled, God's miraculous gifts were withdrawn and Satan's power to possess by demons likewise ceased. (Compare I Cor. 13:8-11).

Evil spirits still exist today, but are not able to possess minds and bodies. They along with their master suffered an overwhelming defeat in Jerusalem that weekend in 33 A.D. when our Lord was crucified and resurrected from the dead. He crushed the Serpent's head. He led captivity captive (Eph.4:8). He despoiled principalities and powers and openly made a spectacle of them triumphing over them (Col. 2:15). Today, the influence of Satan and his demons is exerted only through doctrines, seductions and temptations (I Tim. 4:1). We must arm ourselves and resist him with the Word of God, the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17). If we resist him he will flee from us (Jas. 4:7).

Apparent Possession Explained

One last point should be noted. What is the explanation of the apparent demon possessions we hear of? Many strange cases are reported by travelers to benighted lands of paganism. Even some unexplained cases are seen here in the states. Having established the fact that demons are not allowed by God to afflict men today, there must be some natural explanation for the apparent cases. Perhaps it is schizophrenia, the split personality or perhaps the condition known as multiple personalities. Obsession with the occult and evil spirits coupled with ignorance of Biblical truth on the subject could lead to an imagined possession, the mind supplying all the symptoms even as in bodily illnesses. Insanity, severe nervous conditions and epilepsy might be mistaken for demon possession since those possessed in Bible times sometimes showed these symptoms. Then there are always the charlatans who stimulate such things as this for the sake of gain. They often use the power of suggestion over the weak minds to make them think that their condition is demoniacal.

Conclusion

Thank God that Jesus despoiled principalities and powers when he arose from the dead and ascended on high. Thank God for the truth that makes men free (John 8:32). Thank God that we can know that we may not be subjected to the horrors of demon possession today. JHW

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MAN

38.

GOD MADE MAN

In a society dominated by secular, humanistic and evolutionary thought it is easy for us to forget the basic fundamentals of our existence. To refresh our minds, consider the following:

* “God created man in his own image” (Gen.1:27). Our origin is not to be found among animals of the jungle.

* “Jehovah God formed man of the dust of the ground” (Gen. 2:7). Our bodies are of the earth and being mortal shall return unto it (Eccle. 12:7). We are not gods as some teach, nor shall we ever be. Neither do we share divinity with the universal spirit as some say.

* God endowed man with an eternal spirit that is “in his image.” (Gen. 2:7, 1:26). Thus man is rational, and responsible. He has volition and can choose whom he will serve (Jos. 24:15). He will also have to give account for the deeds done in this life (II Cor. 5:10). God gave man the liberty to choose good or evil. Only those who choose to serve Him will spend eternity to God.

* God gave man dominion over the earth and the lower creatures there of (Gen. 1:27); not to waste or abuse them but to use them as a good steward of God’s provisions.

* God made man heterosexual. “Male and female created he them’ (Gen. 1:27). He ordained that in marriage “a man (shall) leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife...” (Gen. 2:24). No provision was made for same gender marriages.

* God made the man to be the head of the family. “The husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church” (Eph. 5:23).

* God expects his man to love, provide for and protect his family. Not to do so makes him worse than an infidel (I Tim. 5:8; Eph. 5:25).

* He expects his man to be morally and spiritually upright. “Denying ungodliness and worldly lust, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world” (Tit. 2:12).

* He made the man to be the spiritual leader of his family. He is to “nurture his children in the chastening and admonition of the Lord.” (Eph. 6:4).

* God ordained that men should lead his church. Elders are selected from men who are the husbands of one wife” (Tit. 1:6). In the realm of the church, God says, “I permit not a woman to teach, nor to have dominion over a man” (I Tim. 2:12).

As the offspring of God (Acts 17:29), we should gladly accept role for which He made us and strive to meet the Creator’s expectation for us.

39.

MAN’S LIFE CONSISTS OF BODY, SOUL AND SPIRIT

Paul blessed the Thessalonian Christians saying, “And the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Thess. 5:23). In this prayer, the apostle implored God to sanctify and consecrate every part of the entire being of each disciple. They had been set apart for God upon their initial obedience to the gospel and were thus sanctified (I Cor. 1:2; 6:11). This passage makes it evident, however, that sanctification is not a one-time completed action. It is a process. As the child of God grows to higher levels of maturity, he becomes more thoroughly dedicated and consecrated to God’s service. Thus our goal should be that we might be sanctified wholly. There should be no nook or corner of our lives into which the Lord’s influence does not reach.

To express his wish that their sanctification and preservation be complete, Paul prays for their body, soul and spirit. His words reveal to us truth about the nature of man. Three possibilities are before us:

(1). That of the **materialist**; who says that man is wholly mortal with no immortal spirit that can be distinguished from his body. There is a religious version of this, i.e., the Jehovah’s Witness doctrine of man, and the secular version of atheistic humanists. In their book **Let God Be True**, the Witnesses write, “also we see that the claim of religionists that man has an immortal soul, and therefore differs from the beast, is not scriptural” (p. 68).

(2). Some teach that man is a **dual being** of body and spirit. They say the terms soul and spirit are used interchangeably and synonymously in scripture. Those who hold this view are styled **dichotomists**.

(3). **Trichotomists** teach that man is constituted of body, soul and spirit.

As Christians who view the Bible as our standard and authority, we flatly reject the view of the materialists. Scripture throughout speaks of the immaterial, spiritual nature of man. Solomon says, “...and the dust returneth to the earth as it was, and the spirit returneth unto God who gave it” (Eccle. 12:7). Paul writes, “...though our outward man is decaying yet our inward man is renewed day by day” (II Cor. 4:16). Again he says, “We are...willing to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord” (II Cor. 5:8). These and other scriptures easily refute the materialistic view.

The second and third categories are more difficult to decide between, with Bible-believing scholars in both camps.

Those of the Calvinistic school are unanimous in defending the dichotomistic view, while the Anglican scholars generally hold the trichotomistic view of man. Our commitment to the authority of Scripture demands that we have more than the opinion of a given school. What saith the Scripture? This is the answer for which we seek.

While some verses speak only of “soul and body” such as Matthew 10:28, we must deal with those that suggest the threefold nature of man. In addition to our text, the writer of Hebrews speaks of the Word of God “dividing soul and spirit” (Heb. 4:12). If it is impossible to consider the two separately, then how could the Lord divide them?

Genesis 2:7 seems to distinguish three aspects of man “...God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” Here we see the clay, i.e., the physical frame of man; the breath of life, i.e., **the spirit** and him becoming a living being, i.e., **a soul**.

TERMS DEFINED

Body (*soma*). The body is referred to as a temple (I Cor. 6:19), a home (II Cor. 5:6-9), and the outward man (II Cor. 4:16). Scripture speaks of the body as being weak (Matt. 26:41). It comes from a human father and mother (Heb. 12:7; John 3:6). It decays (II Cor. 4:16), it dies (Jas. 2:26) and returns to the earth (Eccl. 12:7). The body will be raised in the resurrection; incorruptible, glorious and in power, suited to live with God in eternally (I Cor. 15:42-54).

Spirit (*pneuma*). W. E. Vine gives 17 connotations for *pneuma*. Concerning the spirit’s nature, Jesus said, “a spirit hath not flesh and bones” (Luke 24:39). The spirit is eternal (II Cor. 4:16) and invisible (John 3:8). It is that part of man which is made in God’s image (Gen. 1:26-27). It resides within the body in this realm of life. Daniel’s spirit was grieved in the midst of his body (7:15). God is the father of our spirit (Heb. 12:9). He forms the spirit within us (Zech. 12:1) and at death the spirit returns unto him (Eccl. 12:7). In death the spirit retains consciousness (Luke 16:23-24). It is immortal, being eternal in existence (II Cor. 4:16; 5:1; II Pet. 2:9).

Soul (*psuche*). This word is assigned 10 various meanings in the lexicons. It differs from the spirit and generally mean “**life**,” “the natural life of the body.”

SOUL AND SPIRIT DISTINGUISHED

P. J. Gloag in the **Pulpit Commentary** says, “Each of the two words is sometimes used for our whole invisible nature, but , when distinguished from the spirit, the soul is the lower part of our immaterial being, which belongs in common to the whole animal creation, the seat of the appetites, desires, affections” (**Pulpit Commentary** (Vol. 21, p. 119-120). He continues, “The spirit is the highest part of man, that which assimilates him to God; renders him capable of religion, and susceptible of being acted upon by the Spirit of God. The ‘soul’ is the inferior part of his mental nature, the seat of his passions and desires, of the natural propensities. The ‘body’ is the corporeal frame” (**Ibid.** p. 106).

Henry Alford writes, “The spirit is the highest and distinctive part of man, the immortal and responsible *soul* in our common parlance. The soul (here) is the lower or animal soul, containing the passions and desires which we have in common with the brutes, but which in us is ennobled and drawn up by the spirit.” (Henry Alford, **The New Testament for English Readers**, p. 1335).

W. E. Vine observes, “The spirit may be recognized as the life principle bestowed on man by God, the soul as the resulting life constituted in the individual” (**Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words** p. 589).

According to James 2:26, “the body apart from the spirit is dead.” Conversely, the spirit’s presence in the body equals life. This is demonstrated in Genesis 2:7 when Jehovah breathed into the lifeless body of Adam the breath (spirit) of life, he became a living soul, or became alive. Thus the soul in the more technical sense is the biological life which we share in common with all other living creatures. The spirit is that which makes us distinctly God’s offspring (Acts 17:29).

T. P. Brown illustrates this with an analogy of an electrical light. There is the bulb and the electricity. When the two are combined the result is light. The bulb represents our body, the electrical energy represents the human spirit. When the electricity enters the bulb and causes light it represents a living soul.

In death, the spirit leaves the body (Jas. 2:26) and returns to God (Eccle.12:7). It awaits the resurrection of the physical body in the Hadean realm called Paradise or Abraham’s bosom (Luke. 16:22-26). The departure of the spirit results in death, the end of physical life (soul) and the disintegration of the physical body.

At the resurrection our inward man or spirit will be reunited with a glorified body suited for eternity. Those who died in Christ will live eternally with God in heaven (I Cor. 15:42-44) and those who did not obey the gospel will suffer eternal punishment (II Thess. 1:8-10).

Concerning the role of the soul, Vincent says, “The soul is the principle of individuality, the seat of personal impressions, having a side in contact with the material element of humanity and well as with the spiritual element. It is this the mediating organ between the spirit and the body, receiving impressions from within and without. Spirit is the highest, deepest, noblest part of our humanity, the point of contact between God and man” (M. R., Vincent, **Word Studies in the New Testament**, Vol. 1, p. 262). This can be illustrated by the form of a pyramid with the body as the foundation, the spirit and the apex and the soul in an intermediary position.

Lenski comments, “The spirit of man ought to rule supreme, wholly controlled by God’s Spirit, and ought to be *pneumatikos*. Sin enabled the *psuche* to control so that man became *psuchikos* (sensual), his bodily appetites having sway (R. C. H. Lenski, **The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians to the Thessalonians**, p. 367). The Christian’s soul is thus controlled by the spirit and is not like the soul of pagans which runs away with the spirit and given reign to the body” (**Ibid**, p. 368).

The fact that the terms soul and spirit are often used interchangeably and each with a wide variety of meanings make this topic surely one of the most difficult in Scripture. We conclude this section with a summary Bro. Bro. Guy Woods, “The Soul, as it relates to man, is a generic term; the spirit, a specific term. In such a frame of reference it is easy to define spirit, it is the immortal nature infused directly from God (Heb. 12:8-9). The soul being generic, relies on the context to indicate its meaning and is used in the following four ways in the scriptures; (1) The whole person (Acts 2:41; I Pet. 3:20). (2). The physical life which man possesses in common with the lower creation (Ps. 78:50). (3). The intellectual nature and higher spiritual nature (I Cor. 2:14), the natural man here is literally the soulish man, (see ASV margin) (4). Synonymously with spirit” (G. N. Woods **Gospel Advocate**, Vol 121, No. 24, June 14, 1979, p. 376).

Awareness of these facts and careful attention to the context are the keys to a proper exegesis of those texts that speak of soul and of spirit.

40.

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

This is the age of the group. It seems we have lost our individuality in the crowd. Our duty to God is fulfilled individually. We will not be saved because of our family connections, our community, or nationality, membership in a lodge, or denomination. We shall all stand "before the judgment seat of Christ that **each one** may receive the things done in the body according to what he hath done whether it be good or bad" (II Cor. 5:10). John "saw the dead...standing before the throne...and the dead were judged...every man according to their works" (Rev. 20:12-13).

In the parable of the talents, Jesus tells us that God gives each of us talents according to our personal ability. He will reckon with us according to what we have done as individuals (Matt. 25:14-30). The parables in Luke 15:3-10 tell the Lord's concern for the individual. One lost coin out of ten, one lost sheep out of one-hundred, yet the Lord makes every effort to save that one. When you read these stories, remember that one is **you!**

You must make your personal decision to accept or reject God's only begotten Son who died that you might have everlasting life (John 3:16). You must believe in Him with all your heart, trusting Him to be your personal Savior (John 3:36). Because of your faith, you will repent of your sins, (Acts 3:19), and confess your love for Him (Rom. 10:9-10). You must personally obey His command to be buried with Him in the watery grave of baptism (Acts 10:48, Rom. 6:3-4). This will bring you personally into contact with His saving blood (Rev. 1:5). It will put you into the one true church of Christ (I Cor. 12:13). No one else can do this for you. Don't neglect you duty and opportunity.

41.

PARADISE LOST AND FOUND

"Paradise Lost" and "Paradise Regained" are epic poems written in blank verse by the blind Puritan poet, John Milton. They were published in 1667 and 1671. The poet relates the story of the tragic fall of Adam and Eve into sin and the loss of their paradisiacal home. The second volume tells how Christ, the second Adam, successfully met the

tempter and recovered paradise for mankind. Of course, Milton's poems are based upon the Scripture record. Not only do few read Milton's classics, few truly comprehend the Biblical record of Paradise Lost and Found.

The Paradise That Was Lost

Moses presents for us the story of a garden planted by the Creator in Eden in which he placed the first of our kind (Genesis 2:7-10). It was a perfect earth in which they dwelt. Their garden home was a paradise. Every tree which was "pleasant to the sight and good for food" was there. The tree of life also grew there, which sustained their immortality. Sparkling rivers provided them water of life. Sufficient work was assigned to save them from boredom (Genesis 2:15). No disease, suffering or death was known in that Edenic home. Death was only known as a vague penalty threatened for disobedience (Genesis 2:17). Genesis 9:3 seems to suggest that man did not even eat the flesh of animals in that glorious domicile. Child-birth was not the painful experience it is today (Genesis 3:16). There were no thorns nor thistles to plague man then (Genesis 3:18). Before the ground was cursed, man's toils were rewarded with a more bountiful return (Genesis 3:17). But the grandest feature of all was their intimate fellowship and communion with God. Before the fall, he walked and talked with them as a Father would his children (Genesis 3:8). The man and his wife knew no sin or shame (Genesis 2:25).

How Their Paradise Was Lost

According to Genesis 2:16-17 only one thing was forbidden in the garden, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This was necessary to test their faithfulness. It provided an opportunity to use their will power and the freedom of choice which distinguished them from the lower creatures.

The temptation and fall is recorded in the first eight verses of Genesis three. Satan, the arch enemy of God and man, chose the lowly serpent through which he schemed to destroy the precious children of the Creator. His method of tempting was simple. He lied to the innocent pair. He contradicted the Lord's ruling, blatantly saying, "Ye shall not surely die" (Genesis 3:4). Jesus described Satan as a liar from the beginning, the father of lies (John 8:44). Having shaken their confidence in the word of their Lord, he then voiced the ultimate absurdity, "Ye shall be gods" (Genesis 3:5) (the Hebrew expresses this). Seeing Eve's resistance weakening, he appealed to the lust of her flesh, the lust of her eye and the pride of her heart (Genesis 3:6). Her defenses shattered, she took the forbidden fruit and ate. This technique has been used successfully on every soul born to this day (I John 2:15-16). Poor Eve was beguiled by the master seducer (II Corinthians 11:3), but Adam sinned with his eyes wide open, fully aware of the consequences. Thus God laid the burden of responsibility on him. In Romans 5:12, Paul writes, "Through one man sin entered the world and death through sin." In this seemingly simple deed they had transgressed God's law, they had sinned (I John 3:4).

The Awful Consequences of the Deed

Little did they know how awesome would be the results of their disobedience. Immediately guilt, shame and fear swept over them. They hid themselves from their loving benefactor. They tried to fashion coverings of leaves to conceal their nakedness. Death was let loose in their world. In its train came disease, suffering and sorrow. The woman now was further subjected to man and her childbearing was made a painful experience (Genesis 3:16). Adam now was forced to toil and sweat in earning his bread (Genesis 3:18-19). Even the earth itself was blighted under the curse which sin brought (Genesis 3:17). Wreck and ruin spread themselves across the once fair abode of man and the whole creation groaned, longing to be delivered from the curse of man's folly (Rom. 8:20-22).

The guilty, cowering couple were driven in shame from their once lovely home lest they eat of the tree of life and live forever in their pitiful state (Genesis 3:12-13). This separation from God meant spiritual death (Isaiah 59:1-2), a condition far worse than the physical dying already mentioned. Surely that was the saddest day in human history. All the sorrows of the ages were born that gloomy day. To this day the blighting effects of their folly are shared by one and all of creation.

Paradise Regained

In the glorious scenes of heaven depicted in the Revelation, John saw "a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God.... On this side of the river and on that was the tree of life... and there shall be no curse any more, and his servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face... and they shall reign for ever and ever" (Revelation 22:1-5). Thus in the eternal ages God will restore to mankind, the Paradise long ago lost in Eden. Throughout John's marvelous volume are found glimpses of that future paradise that reminds us of the first one.

* In Genesis we saw the material earth created; in Revelation it is seen passing away and a new earth being given (Revelation 21:1).

* In Genesis the sun and moon were created; in Revelation there is no more need for them. Jesus will provide adequate light (Revelation 22:5; 21:23).

* Genesis tells of the marriage of the first Adam; in Revelation we see the marriage of the second Adam, Christ (Revelation 19:7-9).

* Genesis portrays the first appearance of man's great enemy Satan. In Revelation we see Satan destroyed in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10).

* In Genesis we saw sin's entrance; in Revelation sin is destroyed. God promises, "There shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that maketh an abomination and a lie but only they that are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Revelation 21:27).

* Genesis tells of the beginning of sorrow, suffering and death, but in heaven all these are done away (Revelation 21:4).

* Genesis reveals the curse which settled on the earth because of sin. In eternity the curse is removed (Revelation 22:3).

* In Genesis man had personal communion and fellowship with God which he forfeited. In the heavenly paradise, both are restored. "Behold the tabernacle of God is with man, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his people and God himself shall be with them...." (Revelation 21:3).

* In Eden, man had the tree of life and water of life but lost them. In the coming paradise both shall be restored (Revelation 22:1-2).

* In the beginning there was immortality which sin destroyed. But in the eternal realms, immortality will once more be bestowed upon man. "Death shall be no more...." (Revelation 21:4). There will be realized that thrilling promise of the Savior, "He that heareth my word and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life...." (John 5:24).

How Was Our Paradise Regained?

As our first parents stood trembling before their offended Maker they heard the following words which shed a gleam of light over that dreary day. "I will put enmity between thee (Satan) and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15). Likely they did not comprehend nor fathom the hope which these words foretold. Only when the events of Calvary had been fully revealed did their children grasp the significance of those glorious words. Christ "abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel...." (II Timothy 1:10). Paul explained to the Roman saints, "For if by the trespass of one (Adam) the many died, much more did the grace of God, and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound unto the many" (Romans 5:15b). Christ has restored to us that which was lost in Eden. "So then as though one trespass the judgment came unto all men to condemnation even so through one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men to justification of life. For as through one man's disobedience the many were sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous" (Romans 5:18-19).

Thank God, my brethren, that through the life and suffering of our Lord, victory over Satan, sin and death was won for all the children of sorrow. Today the cherub with the flaming sword has been removed. Now twelve gates stand ever open (Revelation 21:12, 25) with heavenly angels waiting to welcome the ransomed and to drive every enemy away. The Lord God invites all men and women to come live with him in Paradise restored (Revelation 22:17). The privilege is extended to all who are Adam's children. The decision to accept or reject is ours to make, even as it was with the first couple in Eden's garden.

42.

GOD AND HUMAN SUFFERING

Tragedies, sickness and sufferings come to us because we live in a world under the curse of sin. Before Adam and Eve sinned life was a paradise. They were warned that if they disobeyed God they would surely die (Gen. 2:17). They sinned and the consequence was that they lost access to the tree of life that guaranteed their health and immortality (Gen. 3:22-23). That day the process of decay and aging began. From that moment onward every child born was destined to eventually die. Some live long lives before death overtakes them, others die young, some miscarry or are still born.

Disease, accidents and death are now part of the moral, physical system in which we live. God does not have to personally intervene and say, "This one will be sick, or this one will die today." Disease, accidents and violence are the precursors of death. If God did not intervene in any way each of us would eventually contract various diseases. Some we will overcome, some will overcome us. Accidents occur for many reasons, some from seemingly no reason at all. Should a child leave a marble or a pencil on the floor and you step on it, slip and fall, it is not God's fault. Nor is it his fault when an engine fails on an airplane causing it to crash.

Under the curse our planet is now subject to natural disasters such as storms, earthquakes, floods, fires, lightning strikes, volcanic eruptions, hurricanes and tornadoes. God does not have to send these things. Natural processes produce them. Thus we have scientists constantly studying such natural phenomena and advising us how to avoid the consequence of them. Coastal dwellers are warned to evacuate inland when a hurricane is approaching. Warnings tell folks to seek shelter from tornadoes. Those in flood plains are warned to seek higher ground if the waters are rising. These destructive systems operate from natural causes.

We do not deny that God can and sometimes does send natural disasters on wicked people as he did in Noah's day, but it would be a mistake to assume that every such event is a direct of his. God is responsible only in the sense that he imposed the penalty of death on the human race because of the sin of Adam and Eve and placed the earth under a curse (Rom 8:19-22). Be reminded that that couple constituted the entire human race when they disobeyed God. If we must establish blame for our suffering it would be laid at the feet of Satan who deceived Eve, and beguiled her into disobeying God's plain prohibition (Gen. 3:3-7; II Cor. 11:3).

When we contract a disease that causes us to suffer and die, it may be that we have done nothing specifically deserving of that. Many times the finest Christians suffer greatly in life. But since we are the children of Adam and Eve and living under the curse, we bear the consequences. The same would certainly be true of little children. There may be some instances where God will smite a wicked person with disease or death, as he did Herod (Acts 12:21-23). But sometimes a wicked person will live to be a hundred and rarely be sick. Yet in the end he succumbs to death.

Much of our suffering we bring on ourselves by neglect or abuse of our bodies, by carelessness or by foolishness. For example. If we do not eat properly we can become malnourished and sickly. If we overeat we might incur diabetes, cardiovascular problems, etc. If we do not get proper exercise we suffer for it. Smokers pay for their habit by illness and shorten lives. Those who abuse alcohol do the same, plus they are much more likely to be involved in serious accidents. Many young people suffer serious injuries or even death because they drive in a reckless and foolish way. I knew a young man who suffered a broken neck while hang-gliding. Such suffering can not be blamed on God.

Some of mankind's suffering comes because of the sins of others. An abusive parent can inflict great pain on an innocent child. An abusive person can inflict pain on his or her mate. Criminals harm innocent people in robberies and home invasions, rapes, etc. In such cases we can more clearly see the hand of Satan at work. Evil aggressors who make war on their neighbors inflict great suffering on them.

There are some cases where God allows good people to suffer in order to test and refine their faith. Job is a vivid example of this. That book is dedicated to the question, why do the righteous suffer? Suffering helps to put this life and this world into proper perspective. Our citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20). This world is not our home, we are pilgrims passing through to a better place (I Pet.2:11). If this life were perfect without suffering and hardships, we would not want to leave it for our home with God (II Cor. 4:17-5:2). Suffering also teaches us to call upon God for help and to depend on him (Ps. 119:67-71). He assures us that he will work all events of life, both good and painful for our ultimate good (Rom. 8:28).

43.

WHERE DOES MAN'S SPIRIT GO AT DEATH?

Since death stands before each of us (Heb. 9:27), most will eventually wonder about what lies beyond this realm of life. The answer to such a question is beyond any philosopher or teacher who depends on the findings of science or human wisdom. Only in God's Word can we find the information that will satisfy our curiosity and comfort our hearts. Jesus reminds us that what God's Holy Book says is truth (John 17:17).

Paul wrote that Christ brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (II Tim. 1:10). Prior to his coming, little was known about the future of those who have died. Job wondered, "If a man die, shall he live again?" (Job 14:14). From the teaching of Christ we can know the following:

- * The body without the spirit is dead (Jas. 2:26). This is the definition of death.
- * At death, the body returns to the dust (Eccle. 12:7), but the spirit returns to God who gave it. There it lives on in its appointed place.
- * When death occurs, the body of the righteous person is placed in the tomb, while his righteous spirit is carried by the angels to a place of joy and happiness, known to the Jews as Abraham's bosom (i.e., in his near presence) (Luke 16:22).
- * The body of the wicked man is likewise buried but his spirit is delivered to a place of torment (Luke 16:28).
- * Jesus told a dying man, "today thou shalt be with me **in Paradise**" (Luke 23:43). This was not the final reward, for Jesus said later, "I am not yet ascended unto the Father" (John 20:17). Where then did the soul of Christ go at

death? David wrote of Him, "**Thou wilt not leave my soul to Hades**" (Acts 2:27 RSV). At death, the spirits of all people go to Hades "the unseen abode of the dead." The word Hades does not indicate whether one will suffer or be happy! Hades is described in Luke 16:19-31. Two types of men are seen, one righteous and one wicked. Both died and went to Hades, the place of the dead. The righteous man, Lazarus, awoke in Paradise, in Abraham's bosom. The Wicked Man was in torment.

* After death, it was impossible to alter their destiny. A great gulf separated them. No one could cross over it (Luke 16:26). No changes in one's state are possible after death (Luke 16:26).

* Both the righteous and the wicked are conscious in their place of waiting (Luke 16:23-25). They can communicate with those around them. They have memory of those left behind. Moses and Elijah, long dead, appeared to Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:3).

* Hades is not the final abode, for there is yet to be a resurrection and judgement. "The hour cometh when **all** that are in the tombs shall hear His voice and come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment (John 5:28-29). The resurrected body will be reunited with the soul (I Cor. 15:50-54).

* The resurrection body will be incorruptible, i.e., it will never deteriorate and die (I Cor. 15:42). It will be a glorious spiritual body (I Cor. 15: 43-44). Thus it will be suited for eternal life, i.e., immortality.

* This will occur when Jesus returns. The dead in Christ (Christians) will be raised and the righteous ones yet living will be instantly changed (i.e., provided with a resurrection body) (I Thess. 4:16-17). All the rest of the dead, (those unsaved) will also be raised at that time (John 5:28-29).

* At that point in time we will all stand before the judgement seat of Christ and receive the deeds done in this body (II Cor. 5:10).

* Before the judgment seat of Christ we will hear our eternal destiny. "These (wicked) shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life" (Matt. 25:46).

* Many Christian poets and hymn writers fail to make a distinction in the Christian's place of rest (Abraham's bosom) and our final destination of a place in the Father's house (John 14:3). It is when Jesus comes that he will take us to where he lives. This has led to some misunderstanding about the abode of the deceased. JHW

44.

WOMAN'S ROLE IN THE CHURCH AND HOME

What a sad and dreary world it would be if there were no mothers, wives and daughters to bless our lives and homes. Surely among the most precious gifts of God to man was the gift of women.

GOD'S WILL FOR WOMEN

To properly address the several false doctrines regarding women, we would do well to review first what the Bible teaches about her role, her privileges and limitations.

In creation "Adam was first formed, then Eve" (I Timothy 2:13). In the fall, "Adam was not beguiled, but the woman being beguiled hath fallen into transgression" (I Timothy 2:14). Paul further reasons "For a man indeed ought not to have his head veiled, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of the man" ...for neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man" (I Corinthians 11:7-9).

In the light of the above facts God instructs that "wives, be in subjection unto (their) own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church" (Ephesians 5:22-23). Older women are reminded to "train the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sober-minded, chaste, workers at home, kind, being in subjection to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed" (Titus 2:4-5). To Timothy Paul writes, "I desire therefore that the younger women (KJV) marry, bear children, rule the household..." (I Timothy 5:14). Thus in the home relation we see woman's role as one of subjection to her husband, gladly accepting the privilege of motherhood and the responsibility for the domestic well-being of her family.

Her position in the church is also spelled out by Paul. "In all the churches of the saints, let the women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but let them be in subjection as also saith the law... for it is shameful for a woman to speak in the church" (I Corinthians 14:33-35). To Timothy he writes: "Let a woman learn in quietness with all subjection. But I permit not a woman to teach, nor to have dominion over a man, but to be in quietness..." (I Timothy 2:11-12). Thus her role in the church is one of subjection and quietness, allowing the men to fill the public roles of elders, preachers and teachers of mixed public assemblies.

FALSE VIEWS ABOUT THE ROLE OF WOMEN

False teachings are of two general kinds:

- a.) That which allows what God forbids.
- b.) That which forbids what God allows.

We shall review a number of these faulty views and examine them in light of the Scriptures.

Some would allow women to preach and teach "over men". In days past this was primarily seen among Pentecostal and Nazarene types of churches. Today main-line Protestant churches such as the United Methodist, Episcopalians, Disciples of Christ and others have opened their pulpits to women.

Arguments for Women Preachers Refuted

Those who allow women to preach, reason that if God calls them to preach, that would authorize them to do so. The problem with this is two fold.

a.) God does not call anyone to preach in a supernatural way. He called apostles and prophets for their special work and then inspired them to do it as in Paul's case (Galatians 1:11-16). Today he calls all sinners to Christ through the gospel (II Thessalonians 2:14) and in that same gospel record he charges us to preach the word (II Timothy 4:1-2). In the same Bible he prohibits women to teach or have authority over a man (I Timothy 2:12). The "call to preach" claimed by women is a figment of their imagination. It is wishful thinking, fulfilling the desire of their hearts.

b.) God would not call a woman to do that which he has already expressly forbidden. To do such would make his will contradictory and untrustworthy. It would discredit his immutability, making him as unreliable as man. James assures us that there is no variation with him (James 1:17).

Defenders of women preachers cite Galatians 3:28 which says that in Christ "there can be no male and female" and conclude that a woman may do anything a man may do. It is a fundamental rule of interpretation that a meaning cannot be attached to a verse that sets it at odds with other plainly spoken teachings of Scripture. Their use of Paul's words in Galatians flies in the face of his message to the Corinthians and Timothy.

To the Corinthians he says:

"Let the women keep silence in the church"

"It is not permitted unto them to speak"

"For it is shameful for a woman to speak in the church"

This was the belief and practice "of all the churches of the saints"

The words he wrote were "the commandments of the Lord" (I Corinthians 14:33-37).

To Timothy he modifies his prohibition by saying "I permit not a woman to teach, nor to have dominion **over a man**, but to be in quietness" (I Timothy 2:12).

The view expressed by those promoting women preachers makes the Word of God confusing, contradictory and unreliable. Some argue that Paul's prohibition was not God's will at all. Rather, they say he was a bachelor who did not want to see women given equal opportunity to lead the church; that he was confused by the customs and culture of his day. They conclude that we moderns are not bound by Paul's obsolete opinions. This view is immediately discredited by Paul's two-fold affirmation that it was already the practice of all the churches, and that the words he wrote were the commandment of the Lord. Further if this part of Paul's teaching was his personal (erroneous) opinion, how can we know which parts of his teaching are from God and which part opinion? The same could be asked about the entire Bible.

Of course those liberal churches that have joined the "feminist movement" and opened their pulpits, do not see the Scriptures as divinely inspired and authoritative for any matter. We remind them however that the words that Jesus spoke will judge them in the last day (John 12:48).

It is often said that "regulations such as these are simply traditions of the early church and thus not of binding force. The church of every age determines what traditions will be held." While we grant that there are numerous special customs and human traditions that are not matters of salvation, we dispute that whether a woman can teach "over a man" is one of them. Scripture does not treat it as such. There is a plain unequivocal prohibition of the practice. The reasons given have to do with creation and fundamental male/female relationships as ordained by God for every age.

Closely akin to the foregoing discussion is the practice of appointing women as elders or rulers over congregations of disciples. This has been seen in some Presbyterian and Disciples of Christ bodies. However Paul's instructions relating to the qualifications of elders clearly show the fallacy of this practice, for the bishop **must be "the husband of one wife"** (I Timothy 3:2). Also the very word bishop which means **overseer** would keep a woman from the post, since she is forbidden to have dominion **over** a man (I Timothy 2:12). The pronouns used in reference to elders always are masculine and elders are to be entreated as **fathers** (I Timothy 5:1).

Those who would place women in the pulpits of churches or in the office of elders do so in the face of Bible authority and stand condemned thereby. Faithful Christians honor God's law in this and all other matters.

It should be stated for balance sake that a woman may teach other women and children without transgression of the verses cited above. In fact if no men are present a Christian woman could teach, lead singing, preside at communion and even baptize. However as soon as Christian men are present to assume these leadership duties a godly woman will gladly relinquish them. It was an erroneous teaching that forbade women to teach classes of children or ladies for in those she did not teach "over a man". Rather she was assigned her responsibility by the elders and did what Paul instructed women to do in Titus 2:3-4).

Some False Views Regarding Women

A host of erroneous teachings have arisen about the role of women in the home and church. We will consider several of these false doctrines. The Roman Catholic church falsely teaches that certain women who choose to devote their lives to serving God must take a vow of chastity. "The vow of chastity consists in a promise made to God to refrain from matrimony and all sins of impurity.¹ The Scripture condemns this by saying "Let marriage be had in honor among all, and let the bed be undefiled..." (Hebrews 13:4). Paul wrote that when some fell away from the faith they would teach demonic doctrines such as forbidding to marry (I Timothy 4:1-3). It is conceded by Catholic scholars that laws of celibacy originated no earlier than Council of Elvira early in the fourth century.² Thus an enforced celibacy of men or women is rejected as a false teaching, contrary to God's word.

Some Forbid Makeup and Jewelry

Many churches of the "holiness variety" forbid their women to wear makeup and jewelry. Their rationale for this is based upon two verses. "In like manner, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shame-fastness and sobriety; not with braided hair, and gold or pearls or costly raiment; but (which becometh women professing godliness) through good works" (I Timothy 2:9-10. Peter writes; "whose adorning let it not be the outward adorning of braiding the hair, and of wearing jewels of gold, or of putting on apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in the incorruptible apparel of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" (I Peter 3:3-4).

An analysis of these verses shows the following contrasts:

God Wants Women:

1. To adorn themselves in modest apparel;
2. With shamefacedness;
3. And sobriety;
4. As becometh women professing godliness;
5. Adorning the hidden man of the heart in incorruptible apparel of a meek and quiet spirit.

God **Does Not Want** Women:

1. To adorn themselves with braided hair, gold, pearls or costly raiment;
2. To put emphasis on outward apparel to the neglect of the inner man.

The context shows that he is prescribing the modest life style and fashion of godly women. This is done by contrast. The godly sister's emphasis is on the inward man of the heart, the worldly woman concentrates on the outer, physical body. If the words are taken literally they ask more than anyone is willing to grant. Peter says "let it not be the ... putting on of apparel." All would qualify this by understanding it to mean that she must not put on immodest apparel or devote so much time and interest to the outer man's apparel that she neglects the inner man. If we understand it literally, then along with no gold, would be **no apparel**. It is also noteworthy that those who forbid jewelry and makeup do not forbid their women from styling their hair. Often they have elaborate coiffures - usually a few years out of date, lest they be offensive to their peers. While any woman may choose to use no makeup or jewelry, no one has the right to forbid these if they are used in a modest, discreet fashion.

Women Exist to Serve Men

Some see women as existing only for the benefit of the man in her life. This faulty view flows in two directions:

- a.) The "playboy view"
- b.) The "male chauvinist view"

The playboy says that woman exists to provide sensual pleasure for man; i.e., she is a sexual toy. The male chauvinist say that woman's role is to be a servant to the man. This was typical in most cultures until the present century and still prevails in most societies other than ours, British and western European nations.

Besides being totally selfish, both of these views fail to recognize that woman is made in the image of God even as the man is (Genesis 1:27). Both mistake the divine decree of submission for subjugation. Such men overlook their duty to "love (their) wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it" (Ephesians 5:25). They do not hold the high view of women expressed in the poem of the Worthy Woman in Proverbs 31:10-31. Such men are often found to physically and mentally abuse their women. In fact some will defend wife beating as a God-given prerogative. But Paul speaks to that in Ephesians 5:28-29: "Even so, ought husbands also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his own wife loveth himself; for no man ever hateth his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as Christ also the church." Even as a rational man would not beat himself, so he would not abuse his wife. The golden rule of Jesus would forbid such abusive attitudes toward women (Matthew 7:12). For if a man treats his wife as he would want to be treated, he would love, honor and respect her as a person made in God's image, with inherent dignity and worth. A prudent wife is a gift from God (Proverbs 19:14). Her price is far above rubies (Proverbs 31:10).

In considering false teaching relating to the role of women, we cannot overlook the pernicious philosophy of the "women's liberation movement." These folks, rejecting the Scriptures as authoritative, refuse to accept God's guidelines for the respective roles of men and women in the home, church and society. Paul, directed by the Holy Spirit, wrote "wives be in subjection to your husbands as is fitting the Lord" (Colossians 3:18). When the feminists refuse Paul's words they "rejecteth not man, but God who giveth his Holy Spirit..." (I Thessalonians 1:8). The things Paul wrote "are the commandment of the Lord" (I Corinthians 14:37). In reality the commitment of the feminists is to a different god and religion. The god is power and the religion is **Secular Humanism**. Their creed is set forth in the **Humanist Manifesto I, II**. It is not to be expected that people devoted to a different system would honor the decrees of Jehovah. The tragedy is when they find comfort and shelter within churches that profess allegiance to God and His Word!

In summation we affirm that God's plan for woman, when observed by both sexes, brings the highest degree of happiness to the home and the church. Woman's role of subjection does not imply inferiority. It does not forbid her to teach the Bible in situations where she is not over men. Nor does it forbid her to exercise authority and leadership in areas other than the church. Her divinely given role is no insult to her intelligence and talent.

The history of humanity from the fall to the present time has been blotted by subjugation and oppression of women. The only exception to this dark record is in those areas where the light of God's word has enlightened the minds and hearts of men. Rather than resist the limitations God has placed on them, women should rejoice and thank him for the benefits his system as brought unto them.

END NOTES

1. Bernard Von Acken, **A Handbook for Sisters**, St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co. 1930., pg. 265.
2. T. Lincoln Bouscaren, **Canon Law, A Text and Commentary**, Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1946, pg. 111.

SIN

45.

CHARACTERISTICS OF OF SIN

The word **SIN** means "to miss the mark," like an arrow might miss its target. "**All have sinned**" (Romans 3:23). Sin is "transgression of the law" (I John 3:4). To know to do good and do it not is sin (James 4:17). * **Sin separates us from God** (Isaiah 59:1-2).

* **Sin is Deceptive**. God warns against "the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:13). Sin is the work of Satan, the master liar and deceiver (John 8:44). The careless person can be easily overcome.

* **Sin is Delightful**. Moses rejected "the pleasures of sin" (Heb. 11:26). Sin's pleasure is a bait luring people into its snare.

* **Sin Demeans**. The prodigal son was brought to the depths of shame by his sin (Luke 15:14-19). Prisons house people who embraced a life of sin. Alcohol and drug abusers, prostitutes and those who pursue them, demonstrate how sin demeans people.

* **Sin Destroys.** The sin of the people of Sodom brought a fiery destruction upon them (Genesis 18:20-19:25). No sinner can escape the just judgment of an all-powerful, all-knowing God.

* **Sin is Dangerous.** "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31). Thinking people strive to avoid dangerous things, people and situations. They will also make a diligent effort to avoid the danger of sin.

* **Sin is Deadly.** "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). You earn your pay by working; a life of sin will earn you death. Sin may bring early or unexpected death to its indulgers. We hear of evil people, who die while committing their crimes. If they escape an untimely death, they will still experience a second death, eternal separation from God in hell (Rev. 21:8).

***Sin will be Detected.** Moses said, "be sure your sins will find you out" (Numbers 32:23). Even the most powerful sinners cannot successfully hide their deeds.

Unforgiven sin is a serious problem. Do you ask, "What can wash away my sins?" God replies, "The blood of Jesus...cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:7). If you believe this, you should "arise and be baptized to wash away (your) sins" (Acts 22:16).

46.

THE ANATOMY OF SIN

Like a deadly plague, sin spreads its poisonous breath over every intelligent creature on the earth, defiling, separating and killing all who fall under its influence. None escape, for all sin (Rom. 3:23).

THE ORIGIN OF SIN

All things were created by God through Christ (Col. 1:16). "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (Gen. 1:31).

Two classes of God's creation were granted the power of moral and spiritual volition, angels and men. Some of the angels rebelled against God and were cast down from their exalted station (II Pet. 2:4). Pride was a factor (I Tim.3:6). In Revelation 12:1-9 John seems to allude to this event. The chief of those fallen angels, Satan, tempted and lured the first human pair to disobey God and thus plunged them into sin (Gen. 3:1-6). Adam's sin opened the floodgate through which all the sin of subsequent generations would flow (Rom. 5:12). Satan is the father of lies, and all other sin, and a murderer from the beginning. (John. 8:44).

THE NATURE OF SIN

A number of terms and metaphors are used to describe sin. For example, "I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity did I not hide: I said, I will confess my transgression unto Jehovah and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (Ps. 32:5). Analysis of the many faces of sin helps us to understand and avoid its influence.

Sin is missing the mark (Rom. 3:23). God set the mark or goal before us. When fall short or go beyond that, we sin.

Sin is transgression of God's law (I John. 3:4). Duty is represented in the scripture as a path along which we should walk. To sin is to go out of the way of God's commandments into a forbidden land.

Sin is presented as rebellion. God is the creator and ruler of the universe. To sin is to rebel against his paternal rule.

It is to put oneself in the place of God. Some refuse to have God in their knowledge (Rom. 1:28). The men of Judah rebelled against God (Ezek. 20:21).

To sin against God implies a distrust of Him and willingness to deceive Him and act treacherously toward Him. Eve did not trust God's warning to them. She desired to be her own god. Israel's attitude at Kadesh concerning taking the promised land was described thusly: "How long will this people despise Me? And how long will they not believe me...? (Num. 14:11). Why do men hide their evil deeds in darkness and practice hypocrisy unless they think they can deceive God?

Sin is iniquity. Sin is a perversion or distortion. It is a wrong: a wrench or twist to our nature. It destroys the balance of our faculties and leaves us unbalanced, morally and spiritually. Man is like a spinning top that is thrown off its center. He is unable to recover himself. Sinners are workers of iniquity (Matt. 7:23). They do that which when measured by God's straight line appears twisted and crooked. Moses describes speaks of vile sins as confusion (Lev. 18:22-23).

Sin is a state of unrest, "But the wicked are like the troubled sea: for it cannot rest and its waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace saith my God, to the wicked" (Is. 57:20-21 also Jude. 12-13).

Sin is toil and travail. Wickedness is weariness. It is work without profit: painful, sorrowful, vanity. "The way of the transgressor is hard" (Prov. 13:15). "Mine iniquities are gone over my head; as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me" (Ps. 38: 4). In salvation, Christ gives rest from the burden of sin (Matt. 11:28).

Sin is ruin. It is a breaking in pieces, adversity, calamity, distress, misery and trouble. "Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly; on a sudden shall he be broken, and that without remedy" (Prov. 6:15).

Sin is vanity. The Hebrew word even suggests not so much a breach of law or injury done to another, as a course of conduct which, in the end, proves unprofitable to the doer. It represents the evil devices of man in the false, hollow, unreal aspect. It puts a stamp of nothingness or unreality upon every departure from God's law. "He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity" (Prov. 22:8, K.J.V.).

Sin is abnormal and unnatural. God made man for virtue and goodness, purity, love, faith and loyalty to Himself. Sin reverses all of this.

Sin comes in many varieties: sins of commission and omission secret sins, presumption sins, sins of ignorance. All are deadly. Sin separates man from God (Is. 59:1, 2). The wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23). Only the shedding of blood can remit sin (Heb. 9:22). Specifically, "the blood of Jesus cleanses from all sin" (I John. 1: 7).

47.

SIX EVILS AND THEIR CURES

The family of man needs salvation from sin. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). Since salvation is only in Christ (Acts. 4:11-12), all of those responsible persons not in Christ are lost. The grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to all men (Tit. 2:11). Yet to benefit from God's gracious offer, we must lay hold on the forgiveness He offers.

SIX EVILS

To escape the bondage of sin and enjoy salvation in Christ, we must recognize six existing evils and their heavenly cures.

A. The love of Sin. Sinners love their sin, else would they cease to practice it. This love for the evil pleasures of sin must be overcome if we would know pardon. John warns us, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" (I John. 2:15). Of course, he means the sinful things of the world; he specifies the lust of flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life. Moses refused the pleasures of sin (Heb. 11:24-25). Jesus told Nicodemus that men loved darkness rather than light for their works were evil (John: 3:19). Most of us have faced the problem of a favorite habit or pastime which gave us much pleasure, but was found to be wrong. How hard it is to conquer this love of sin.

B. The practice of Sin. Because we love sin, we practice it. A man does not continue to practice that which he despises. Being free moral agents, we make our own choices about practicing sin. Paul writes, "Let not sin reign in your mortal body" (Rom. 6:12). Again he says, "That they who practice such things (the catalogue of sins just enunciated) are worthy of death..." (Rom. 1:32). We must stop the practice of sin!

C. The State of Sin. In the spiritual realm there are only two realms: the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. These are presented under various figures in the scripture. God delivers us out of the power of darkness and translates us into the kingdom of His dear Son (Col. 1:13). John says, that Christians are of God, and "the whole world lieth in the evil one" (I John 5:19). Paul describes the sinner's state as death! (Eph. 2:1). We must escape the state of sin.

D. The Guilt of Sin. When we violate God's law, we are judged guilty. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is become guilty of all" (Jas. 2:10). In the 51st Psalm, we see a vivid picture of a man under the guilt of sin. "Have mercy on us God.....blot out my transgressions....cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me" (vss. 1-3). In Romans 7:14-25 Paul describes his struggle with sin, and its ensuing guilt, prior to his salvation in Christ. His anguished cry in (vs. 24) had been experienced by every convicted sinner. "Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" There must be deliverance from the guilt of sin.

E. The Power of Sin. Observation tells us that sin has great power over its subjects. Witness the alcoholic, the drug addict, the tobacco user, the gambler, the sensualist. See them struggle against the power of sin in their lives, and see how often they succumb to its deadly grip. Satan, the father of all sin, is like a roaring lion, stalking his prey until they are his (I Pet. 5:8). The devil has a myriad of tricks and devices to ensnare us and keep us in his power. Sin, like a cruel tyrant, reigns in the flesh of sinners (Rom. 6:12-14). We must break this awesome power of sin.

F. The Eternal Consequences of Sin. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). This is not just physical death, but the awful second death of mentioned in Revelation 20:10, 15). It is the lake of fire and brimstone where the wicked will spend their eternity; where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched. What can save us from these perilous consequences of sin?

THE CURE

God has graciously provided an adequate cure for each of those problems related to sin. We must know the cure and apply it to our lives if we would live.

A. Faith cures the love of sin. It changes your love from sinful things to God. Peter affirmed that God cleanses our hearts by faith (Acts. 15:9). Paul reminded the Christians in Rome that in becoming saints, they had died to sin, i.e., to the love of sin (Rom. 6:2). In the words of John, "This is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith" (I John 5:4). Faith in God crowds out the love of sin and thus frees us from its grasp.

B. Repentance cures the practice of sin. The meaning of the word "repent" is to turn away from. As Paul stated, "We who died to sin, shall we any longer live therein..." (Rom. 6:2). We are crucified with Christ in our salvation and are thus separated from the old sinful ways (Gal.2:20). Formerly, we walked in the darkness of sin. Having

repented, we now walk in the light of God's truth" (I John. I: 6-7). The man, who believes in Christ and truly repents, hates and despises the sin that once marred his life. One does not practice what thus abhors.

C. Baptism cures the state of sin. Since all alien sinners live in the state of sin and death, there must be a way to escape into the kingdom of the saved, i.e., God's kingdom. The Lord has ordained the escape route and it is set forth plainly in His word. God himself translates us out of the power of darkness into the kingdom of His Son (Col. 1:13). This is accomplished in our baptism into Christ. "For as many of you as were baptized into, Christ, did put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27). Notice that baptism is into Christ. Salvation is in Christ (II Tim. 2:12). But we are baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:27). Therefore we must be baptized to be saved. This helps us to see the important role that God has given the ordinance of baptism in the scheme of redemption. No man, understanding this, would refuse to submit to immersion in the name of Jesus.

D. Forgiveness cures the guilt of sin. One of the great problems plaguing modern men is guilt. Many are under physicians' care or even hospitalized because they can't get rid of their guilt and it is destroying their mental health. Thank God that Christians are free from the guilt of sin. We have remission of sin (Acts 2:38). We have the answer of a good conscience (I Pet. 3:21). Our emancipation proclamation is set forth in (Rom. 8:1). "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

E. The gift of the Holy Spirit cures the power of sin. Forgiveness does not make us immune from the power of sin, but God does give us the strength to meet and overcome all of sin's temptations. Paul prayed that God would strengthen the Ephesians with power through His Spirit in the inward man (Eph. 3:16). Again he writes "But if by the Spirit ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Rom 8:13). "There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but, God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted, above that ye are able..." (I Cor. 10:13). When Jesus was tempted he appealed to the Holy Scriptures to drive Satan away (Matt. 4:1-11). So will the faithful Christians use the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17).

F. Everlasting life provides escape from the eternal consequences of sin. Jesus said, "He that heareth my word, and believeth Him that sent me, hath eternal life and cometh not into judgment but hath passed out of death into life" (John. 5:24). In Revelation 20:6, John writes, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; over these the second death hath no power..." We experience that first resurrection when we were buried with Christ in baptism and rise to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3-5). Over the faithful Christian that awful second death in the lake of fire hath no power. Thank God that Christ appeared, bringing salvation to all men (Tit. 2:11-12). May we all lay hold on it and claim it for ourselves.

48.

DO WE INHERIT SIN?

Many churches teach that infants are born with the guilt of Adam's sin upon them. The **Westminster Confession of Faith** of the Presbyterian Church says, Adam and Eve, "being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity, descending from them by ordinary generation" (p. 42). This theory is commonly known as Original Sin. Does the Bible teach this?

The Bible nowhere implies that we inherit sin. It teaches rather the impossibility of such. Sin is transgression of God's law (I John 3:4). It is knowing to do good and doing it not (Jas. 4:17). These verses clearly teach that sin is that which one does or refuses to do. Infants cannot violate God's laws in either way. Therefore, they cannot sin.

God says a child does not inherit his parent's sin. Ezekiel pictures three generations: a righteous father, a wicked son, a righteous grandson. Neither righteousness nor sin can be inherited. He concludes, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die; **the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father**"(18:19-20) "Let God be...true but every man a liar" (Rom. 3:4).

Jesus taught the purity of infants. "Suffer the little children and forbid them not to come unto me; for to such belongeth the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 19:14). "Except ye turn and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3). If infants are born sinners, then Jesus is saying we must become as sinners to be saved. What rational person would accept such?

Some say Romans 5:12 proves this theory. "...through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death passed to all men for that all sinned." This does not say that sin or guilt passed to all men, but that physical death passed to all men. It does not teach the theory. "Difficult verses must be interpreted in the light of plain passages, the meaning of which cannot be misunderstood."

The doctrine of original sin originated "in the fourth and fifth centuries (when) the doctrine of original sin...became better known..." (**The New Code of Canon Law**, p. 72). This was first formulated into a doctrine by Augustine (354-430 a.d.). Historians state there was but little mention of this theory prior to him. It therefore originated with man 250-300 years later than the Bible.

Infants do not inherit sin. They are born pure but grow up in an environment of sin. When they become accountable and disobey God, they make themselves sinner's. You are responsible for your sins. Trust Christ and obey Him and be saved.

49.

SEVEN DEADLY SINS

Somewhere in the misty past, someone identified seven sins as most deadly. They were pride, covetousness, lust, envy, gluttony, anger and sloth. While I would not in any way diminish the wickedness and danger of those seven, I do think that Christians living in the 21st century are faced with another seven sins, equally as dangerous and destructive.

I. There is the sin of **Materialism**. The materialist thinks that happiness is found in getting and accumulating material things such as money and the things money can purchase. God, church, family, people and noble causes are neglected as the materialist pursues his quest for material things. Materialism is deceptive because material wealth and things cannot satisfy man's deepest needs nor bring him lasting happiness (Mark 8: 36). Scripture likens this sin to idolatry (Col. 3:5). Paul says the covetous soul will have no place in the kingdom of God (Eph. 5:5).

II. There is the sin of **Hedonism**. To hedonists pleasure is considered the ultimate good in life. They tend to resist any teaching or effort to circumscribe or limit their pursuit of and indulgence in pleasure. As used in contemporary English, hedonism involves indulging the flesh in anything that brings pleasure with little concern about the morality of the deed. Paul condemns those who are "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God" (II Tim. 3:4). Before they converted to Christ the Ephesians "lived in the lusts of (their) flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind" (Eph. 2:3). Those who pursue the lust of the flesh cannot have the love of the Father in them (I John 2:15-16).

III. There is **Skepticism** which manifests itself in atheism and agnosticism. The skeptic questions and challenges

the existence of God, the legitimacy of Christ, his deeds, his resurrection, his authority. The skeptic rejects the Bible as a divine and authoritative standard for man. He sets himself against the church or else ignores it as meaningless. The skeptic often works to confound and undo the faith of others. By definition, a skeptic is not an humble, obedient believer in God and the Son. Without such faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto God (Heb. 11:6). Unbelievers shall have their part in the lake of fire (Rev. 21:8).

IV. There is **Humanism**. While there is a Christian humanism that seeks man's highest good and encourages his best efforts in creativity, we speak of **secular humanism**. The secular humanist sees man as the highest and final authority. He considers man as his own god. This was Satan's deceptive promise to Eve (Gen. 3:5). The humanist has no concern for spiritual values. He sets his own moral and ethical values. His interest is in the here and now and he sees Christianity as an impediment in his path to self fulfillment and realization.

V. There is **Darwinism**. Charles Darwin's name stands for the theory he devised that denied that God created man, insisting rather that he **evolved** from lower kinds of animal life by purely naturalistic means. This of course denies that man is made in God's image and that God has the right to define what his conduct should be. It has resulted in a marked decline in moral values and conduct. People who consider themselves to be merely highly evolved animals have no appreciation for things moral and spiritual. Darwinian evolution has become the religion of the secular world as they try to understand and explain how things came to be without God. It denies the biblical record of creation (Gen. 1:1ff; John 1:1-3). It has spawned many of the great social evils of the past and present centuries such as the sexual revolution and abortion on demand. The social version of Darwinism gave the world Nazism and Communism.

VI. There is **Post Modernism**. This is the most recent of our deadly sins. It germinated during the last half of the 20th century and burst into full bloom with the opening of the present century. It is a philosophy of life, a world view at odds with Christianity as a world view. It denies absolutes and promotes relativism. It discounts all things old. It forbids passing judgment on things we view to be wrong. It sees all religions and moral systems as of equal value and importance.. It denies that there is an objective standard by which man must live. Each man is said to be free to live and operate by his subjective intuitions. It is a vain and deceitful philosophy of human origin that will keep a man from pleasing Christ (Col. 2:8).

VII. There is **Relativism**. It teaches that all knowledge, especially in ethics, science, and religion is not absolute but depends upon culture or individual social perspectives. It is an ancient system, first taught by Heraclitus (d.486 BC). It denies the possibility of a universal standard of right and wrong, of a Bible from God for all generations of men. Jesus gave us but one gospel for all men and all ages (Mark 16:15). In the end, relativism makes man to be the arbiter of right and wrong. Relativism is an important aspect of Post Modernism.

Beware these seven deadly sins. They are at war with God and His Word. They will wreck and destroy the soul who embraces them...including misguided Christians who embrace them. They will rob their devotees of their eternal reward.

50.

SUICIDE, A SIN UNTO DEATH

One of the major social problems of our day is suicide. Suicide is self-murder. The term is from the Latin *sui* (oneself) and *cidium* (to intentionally kill). This year some 25,000 Americans will destroy themselves. It is estimated that another 50,000 deaths will be undetected or unproven suicides. **Industry Week**, Nov. 30, 1970. Only about one in ten who attempt suicide are successful. So prevalent has this problem become that one American in ten has had their life touched by a case of suicide. It is not uncommon to hear of Christians who have made attempts upon their own lives. Sociologists have noted that the prevalence of suicide is highest amongst Protestants, and that Jews have a lower rate than Catholics.

This is the kind of problem that we seldom talk about until the tragedy strikes near us. But its prevalence and seriousness demands that we think about it and arrive at a correct understanding before being faced with it. Then it is usually too late.

SOME CAUSES OF SUICIDE

That **mental derangement** is a common cause is undisputed. However, while many suicide cases are the result of emotional illness, not all could be so classed. Some of the wisest and greatest intellects have chosen this path. Soldiers operating behind enemy lines and spies commonly carry suicide pills to avoid capture and torture. In some societies, especially among the Orientals, self-inflicted death is considered preferable to humiliation. China has traditionally allowed condemned criminals to commit suicide. It is still a live option in Japanese culture. Many important personalities who are found guilty of dishonesty or disloyalty choose death rather than to live in dishonor and be reduced to a level of poverty.

Pressure of Life and Business and Dread of Trouble are notable causes. Such can cause emotional breakdown which may lead to suicide. But even the sane when faced with intense pain, great misfortune, disgrace, or fear of destitution choose this escape. The Philippian jailor reflects this type (Acts 16:27).

Remorse and Despair lead to depression which is a frequent cause of suicide. Judas was such a case. He chose to hang himself rather than live with his guilt and shame (Matthew 27:5).

Sometimes a **desire to punish or hurt others** by making them feel guilty or responsible for their death prompts people to kill themselves. Adolescent children have been known to do this to their parents. Aged parents sometimes follow this route. Partners of unhappy marriages have occasionally done this.

THE FOOLISHNESS AND SINFULNESS OF SUICIDE

Suicide is a flagrant violation of God's prohibition, "Thou shalt not kill," (literally do no murder) (Romans 13:9). It is self-murder. The very nature of the deed makes it impossible to repent and ask forgiveness of it. This is why we style it a sin unto death.

To kill oneself is contrary to nature. The love of life and self-preservation are two of the strongest principles implanted in man by his Creator.

Such a deed reflects a lack of trust and confidence in God. The prospective suicide obviously believes that God has failed him. The Christian's God has promised, "I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5). To choose self-destruction is a declaration of unbelief in such promises. The person may feel that God has been unjust in assigning his station and work in life.

Self-murder is a contemptuous casting away and destroying as worthless, God's precious gift of life. Such is utter ingratitude, the opposite of the thankful heart we are commanded to have (Philippians 4:6).

Suicide is a refusal on man's part to accept God's assignment if it proves difficult or unpleasant. God expects us to be **faithful** stewards of whatever responsibilities He lays upon us. The Christian must be willing to "suffer hardship" as a good soldier of Christ (II Timothy 2:3). Suicide is cowardly abandonment of a trust God has given us. We, like Paul, must fight the good fight and keep the faith even unto death, (II Timothy 4:6-8).

The act of suicide is a serious injustice to family and friends. Our life is not for our benefit alone. It is given for the sake of others as well. Paul says that the husband and wife mutually possess each other (I Cor. 7:4). To destroy oneself is to rob and injure our loved ones in the most cruel and irreparable way. It is a clear violation of the rule called golden (Matthew 7:12). Surely you would not want your loved one to so deal with you.

The Christian's body is a temp for God's Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19). To commit suicide is to destroy God's

temple and we are warned that God will destroy one who does so (I Corinthians 3:16-17). It is fallacious to reason, "It is my life, I'll do with it as I please." God says, "Ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price" (I Corinthians 6:19-20). I have no right to destroy God's possession.

Suicide violates all of those scriptures which enjoin patient endurance of trials and tribulations, i.e., (James 1:2-4, I Peter 1:5-7). To enjoy heaven we must be faithful until death comes in its own due time. The crown of life is only for those who are faithful unto death (Revelation 2:10).

No misery in this life can compare to that which the victim of self-destruction recklessly plunges into. It is to stand before God guilty of murder. It denies one all possibility of repentance. It brings the judgment of a never ending punishment upon the offender.

For a man to do such a deed is to place himself in God's place and take His prerogatives in his own hands. Only God has the right to kill and make alive (Genesis 50:19).

PREVENTIVES AGAINST THIS AWFUL SIN

Strong and constant faith in God will keep one from this desperate act. The faith building promises of Romans 8 will fortify us against the thought of such: "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmity" (vs. 26); "to them that love God all things work together for good" (vs. 28); "If God is for us who is against us?" (vs. 31); "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (vs 35); "In all these things we are more than conquerors" (vs 37). Read these promises and others and make them your strength for living.

Moderation in regard to things of this world will help to safeguard us. If we love these things too much, we are overwhelmed when we lose them. Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and do not worry overmuch about the material things of life, for the Father will provide what we need (Matthew 6:33).

Habitual self-control is a safeguard against suicide. The intemperate person is far more likely to commit this rash and thoughtless deed. Keep working to add temperance to your faith (II Peter 1:6). This will help you to accept all of your duties and responsibilities in life.

The continual practice of believing prayer is a powerful protective against suicide. Peter exhorts us to cast all our anxieties upon Him, because He cares for us (I Peter 5:7). Paul promises the peace of God which passes all understanding to the man who faces everything in prayer (Philippians 4:6). With this help, self-destruction is out of the question.

In addition to this, fellowship with the saints is most helpful. Since many suicides are lonely and feel unloved and unwanted, the Christian family provides those basic human needs. Saints help to bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2). Every Christian is needed and wanted and never lacks for meaningful and purposeful experiences.

We must accept and have total confidence in the grace and forgiveness of God to remove all the guilt and shame of sin. Despair of forgiveness is a chief cause of self-murder. The grace of God continually cleanses us of all sins when we confess our sins and walk in the light (I John 1:7-9). Likewise we must believe in and enjoy the great love of God. Many who make an attempt on their life believe that no one loves them. With David, we believe, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then Jehovah will take me up" (Psalms 27:10).

Fear of punishment beyond the grave provides a strong defense against suicide. Catholics, who are taught that suicide means certain damnation, have a very low rate of it. It is healthy to fear Him who can destroy both body and soul in hell (Matthew 10:28). This will help us balance our thoughts when problems arise.

No matter how heavy the burdens, how dark the night, nor how intense the pain, let us promptly and resolutely reject the very idea of suicide. It is in no wise an option for the child of God who wants to live with the Father in eternity.

THE BIBLE

51.

YOUR REMARKABLE BIBLE

Likely, on a shelf in your home is a book called The Bible. Far fewer have read this ancient book than own it. The Bible is a collection of 66 smaller books. It is divided into two major sections; the Old Testament, given to the ancient Hebrews to order their lives and worship (Deuteronomy 5:1-6) and the New Testament of Christ given to those who would follow Jesus. The first five books of the Old Testament were written by Moses some 3500 years ago. The New Testament was completed by the end of the first Christian century. The Bible consists of several different types of literature: law, history, biography, poetry, practical advice, philosophy, hymns, epistles and prophecy. Men from many stations of life participated in writing this book, yet it is perfectly harmonious in content. This is accounted for by the fact that the Holy Spirit of God guided all of them in their writing (II Peter 1:21). Paul says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God..." (II Timothy 3:16). "Inspired" means, "God breathed" and implies the message originally came from the mouth of God. Being of God, it is without error in its content. In the Old Testament, 2,500 phrase express the thought, "Thus saith the Lord." This supernatural nature of the Bible is seen in the following points:

* **It is indestructible.** It has survived the combined assaults of atheists, heathen, powerful governments, opposing religions and even disloyal friends. Its attackers have perished but it still stands, unscarred and impregnable.

* **It is incomprehensible.** Some of the greatest minds on earth have spent a life time studying this Holy Book only to find it as unfathomable as at the beginning of their quest. The finite mind of man cannot master an infinite production,

* **Its style is different** than any other book. **The brevity of its record** is remarkable. The most important body of information in the world can be carried in one's coat pocket or purse. **The omissions** of the record mark it as divine. Think of all the extra things you would have put in the Bible had you written it. God gave us only what we needed. **The impartiality** of this book is significant. The truth is told about its heroes, including their dismal failures. Men do not write their books after this fashion.

* **The fulfilled prophecies** call for an inspired author. Hundreds of predictions written down hundreds of years before the fact have been fulfilled in a remarkable way.

* **The discoveries of archaeology** have verified the Biblical record of history, geography and ancient people.

* **The positive impact of the Bible on humanity** distinguishes it from any other book ever written. Where the Bible is circulated, read and believed civilization reaches its highest peak and individual freedom is most fully realized. Where it is absent, tyranny, enslavement and ignorance prevail.

* The Bible is the essential foundation of Christianity, for without a Bible we would have no knowledge of Jesus, what to believe or do in order to please him.

* The Bible is the most important document in the development of Western Culture and civilization. Its is the foundation for our laws, our value system, our ethics, our concept of marriage and family and of social responsibility.

* It was the single most important volume in the development of our English language.

* The Bible is the most loved and probably the most hated book in our society.

Take time to read this Book sympathetically and carefully. You will feel in yourself the proof of its divine character. It will make you a wiser, better person. It will help you see yourself as you really are. It will give you direction for life and help you find peace with God. It is the standard by which you will be judged in eternity (John 12:48).

52.

A PORTRAIT OF TRUTH

There is the possibility of talking and writing about “truth” without understanding what the term “truth” conveys.. There is the **fact of truth**. It really exists although many philosophers question this fact. Truth exists independent of mankind. If no man believed in or understood the law of gravity, it would still be true. If no one believed or obeyed God’s Word, it would still be true. There are the **demands of truth**: (a). That we search for it (Ps. 119:131; Acts 17:11); (b). That we believe and embrace it when we find it (Prov. 23:23); (c). That we obey its precepts (I Pet. 1:22). There are the **rewards of truth**. It will make us free from ignorance, error and superstition (John 8:32). It will lead us home to God (John 14:6)

Across the ages wise men have expressed their understanding of truth. Consider the following words of wisdom:

* “The language of truth is simple” (Euripides). Saving truth is never beyond the comprehension of the common man.

* “Truth is always straightforward” (Sophocles). Beware the teacher whose doctrine or his plan requires a devious method.

* “Truth is truth to the end of reckoning” (Shakespeare). Once we have discovered and understood a truth, we need not forever be doubting and questioning it. If God’s Word clearly states a proposition, our responsibility to accept it and live by it.

* “Truth is truth howe’er it strike” (Robt. Browning). Some truth is pleasant to those who receive it. Other truths sting and burn like an antiseptic. The reception depends on the state of the receiver.

* “Peace if possible, but the truth at any rate” (Martin Luther). Yes, peace is valuable and needed but truth is our first priority.

* “Truth is truth, though from an enemy, and spoken in malice” (G. Lillo). “The nobler the truth or sentiment, the less imports the question of authorship” (R. Emerson). These lines reflect the old axiom, that “Truth is truth no matter who speaks it.”

* “The thing is not only to avoid error, but to attain immense masses of truth” (Carlyle). Too many spend all their currency on opposing and avoiding error, and have nothing left to invest in saving truth.

* “Old truths are always new to us, if they come with the smell of heaven upon them” (J. Bunyan). Postmodern people tend to shun ancient truth. The ideas of men may grow old and become obsolete, but not the ever lasting gospel of Christ (Rev. 14:6).

* “Truth will ever be unpalatable to those who are determined to relinquish error” (E. W. Montagu). This explains the behavior of many folks toward God’s written Word.

- * “ We must not let go manifest truths because we cannot answer all questions about them” (J. Collier). How many times have Christians been intimidated or silenced because they could not answer every quibble of the adversary.
- * “To love truth for truth’s sake is the principal part of human perfection in this world and the seed-plot of all other virtues” (John Locke). Those who do not love truth are destined for ruin (II Thess. 2:10-12).
- * “Some modern zealots appear to have no better knowledge of truth, nor better manner of judging it, than by counting noses” (J. Swift). These words well describe many politicians and preachers in this century.
- * “He who has once deviated from the truth usually commits perjury with no little scruple as he would tell a lie” (Cicero). Loyalty to truth is a fundamental ingredient of noble character. It must be ingrained in every Christian and they must ingrain it in their offspring.
- * “A man protesting against error is on the way toward uniting himself with all men that believe in truth” (Carlyle). It is an vital part of Christian discipleship that we oppose error as well as follow truth (I Tim.6:12).
- * “Truth crushed to earth shall rise again; The eternal years of God are hers: But Error wounded, writes with pain, and dies among his worshipers” (Wm. C. Bryant). Great is the consolation of these wise words. They comfort us when the Cause of Christ seems beaten down by the enemies of truth.
- * “In order to discover truth, we must be truthful ourselves, and must welcome those who point out our errors as heartily as those who approve and confirm our discoveries” (Max Muller). These words challenge our integrity. Are we humble enough to acknowledge and accept truth when it comes as correction from our neighbors?
- * “The truths we believe in are the pillars of our world” (Bulwer-Lytton). An essential purpose of the Lord’s church is to be the pillar and ground of truth (I Tim. 3:15).

If when we die, loved ones can engrave on our marker “He loved and sought for God’s truth” we could ask no greater honor.

53.

ABSOLUTE TRUTH

Truth is a vital commodity. Without truth we live in chaos and confusion. Jesus said that truth will make us free (John 8:32). Lies and error on the other hand can wreck and ruin our lives and even lead us into slavery.

There are three kinds of knowledge. There is what we might describe as **scientific knowledge**. Those who are the pioneer seekers in this realm of knowledge are like miners digging for precious metals or stones in the bowels of the earth. They search the vast reaches of nature and bit by bit they accumulate enough information to draw a

conclusion about a certain subject. Or at least, they can formulate a theory about it. The quantity of this scientific knowledge seems to be endless and multiplies daily. The limitations of the human mind and the brevity of man's life means that we never learn everything about this cosmos of which we are a part. Yesterday's theories, which all assumed to be true, are cast aside as new information is uncovered. So in many sectors of scientific knowledge that which is known is tentative and subject to amendment or maybe even rejection if new information discredits it.

There is **philosophic knowledge**. From earliest times there have been men who have wrestled with the issues of life and recorded for their students and posterity their understanding of the meaning of life, ethics, morals, etc. Schools of philosophy come and go like the seasons. The rage of one generation of scholars is only an item in a history book in the next. All philosophic knowledge is speculative, tentative and adaptable. While there may be scraps of truth scattered here and there in their speculations on the whole they reflect the limited wisdom of sinful men.

There is knowledge that has been revealed to us by the Creator of man and the universe. This truth is recorded in the ancient document that we call our Bible. Although our understanding of God's revealed truth is constantly growing, that truth itself is absolute and unchanging in nature.

Because of the nature of God, that which He tells us must be absolute and perfect in content. "Jehovah our God is holy" (Ps. 99:9). "God is not a man, that he should lie" (Num. 23:19). "The ordinances of Jehovah are true and righteous altogether" (Ps. 19:9). "I Jehovah, change not" (Mal. 3:6). God's revelation has no imperfections. It is altogether pure. It will not stand additions or subtractions (Prov. 30:6). It is perfect as it stands and must be taken as a whole. Being from the Creator and Ruler of the universe, it recognizes no limits, restrictions or qualifications placed on it by sinful men. Being the product of the omniscient God, it is certain, absolute, positive and authoritative in all it says. Learning and following God's truth makes us free from sin, ignorance, error and superstition (John 8:32).

The truths revealed in the Bible are absolute.

* "For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). You are not an exception!

* "Without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto God" (Heb. 11:6). There are no exceptions to this truth.

* "Except ye believe that I (Jesus) am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). There are no options regarding faith in Christ.

* "Neither is there any other name under heaven (than Jesus), that is given among men, wherein we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

* "The word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). No other standard will be accepted!

* "Except one be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). Either you will be born again or you will miss heaven! This is absolute truth!

* "So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 12:14). This is an appointment you will not miss!

* "Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7). This is absolutely true!

* "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). This too is an absolute statement of truth.

We could go on for pages, but my point is made. While the words of men will often fail the test of truth, the word of God is true and righteous all together (Ps.19:9). It is absolutely true and can be counted on in every situation of life.

54.

THE AUTHORITY IN CHRISTIANITY

Without an established code of law and authority, a kingdom cannot long exist. If its subject refuse to submit to the established authority, a nation will soon collapse. A kingdom whose citizens are divided in their allegiance to conflicting sources of authority is doomed to failure. These points are conceded by all, yet there is utter confusion as to the established law and authority in Christianity. Folks are trying to serve God, when they have not learned or accepted the authority established by God.

CONTEMPORARY THEORIES ABOUT RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY

* In Roman Catholicism it is argued that **the church, with its pope and his cardinals**, has the authority to interpret the Bible and to legislate law for the church. The history of Catholicism reveals the fallacy of this approach to authority. Churches are composed of fallible, often sinful, men. God made Christ to be the head of his Church (Eph. 1:22). That authority he has not surrendered to anyone.

* The larger Protestant churches look to their **creedal statements** as authoritative. Yet they find it necessary to revise them every few years. Yesterday's sins are today's privileges.

* **Traditions from the past** are revered as authoritative by some. Yet Jesus warned against traditions that make "void the word of God" (Matt. 15:8-9).

* The **founding fathers of a denomination** may be looked to as the voice of authority. But no man has the right to start his own church or to legislate for the people of God. It is just such men who are responsible for the mass confusion in the Christendom today.

* Most denominational bodies have **conventions where church leaders** decide what they will believe and do.

* Many contemporaries view **human reason** as the final authority in their religion. God reminded the Hebrews "...my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Is. 55:8-9). Reason subjected to the Revelation of God is man's most valuable asset. But when exalted beyond its proper realm, reason is the cause of his alienation.

* Multitudes see **conscience as their authority** in religion. Solomon said, "There is a way that seemeth right to a man but the ends thereof is the way of death" (Prov. 16:25). The conscience must be trained in truth before it can safely lead us; and God's Word is that truth (John 17:17). Feelings are not a safe guide.

* A large number of people make their decision about religious matters on the basis of their emotions. That which stirs them to awe or excitement or moves them to tears they judge to be right for them.

* A sizeable group in the Western nations are now looking to the ancient mystical religions of the East, as they search for something meaningful in religion.

* In the 21st century many now look to public opinion to determine what they believe and practice in religion.

* There are some who look to successful business models to find what will meet their needs.

WHERE DID GOD PLACE THE AUTHORITY IN CHRISTIANITY?

All authority has been given to the victorious Christ (Matt. 28:18). He is head over all things to the church (Eph. 1:22). His words will judge us in the last day (John 12:48). Jesus delegated his authority to his apostles, saying, Go teach all nations, baptizing them and “teaching them to observe all things... I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19-20). Their writings, our New Testament, is the only authority we possess. Those who seek to please God, speak and act only as Scripture authorizes. Peter wrote, “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God” (I Pet. 4:11). Thus the early church continued steadfastly in the apostles teaching” (Acts 2:42). John warns, “Whosoever abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching the same hath both the Father and the Son” (II John 9). The New Testament of Jesus is the absolute and only authority for Christ’s church and those who wish to please Him will look to it for direction in every matter of faith, worship and practice. Such is a distinguishing mark of a body of people who are truly and only, a church of Christ (Rom. 16:16).

55.

WHAT THE BIBLE IS LIKE

Such a marvelous, multifaceted thing is our Bible that no single illustration is adequate to describe it. Sacred writers use numerous pictures to describe God’s wonderful book and the various purposes it serves.

* God’s Word in Jeremiah’s mouth was like a **fire** (Jer. 5:14, 23:29). Fire refines and purifies, burning away the dross. It also destroys things that cannot resist its flames. So does God’s Word.

* The same prophet pictures Scripture as a **hammer**. “Is not my word like...a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?” (Jer. 23:29). A hammer can be a useful tool for building up a structure, but it can also smash and destroy that which is unwanted, undesirable, unyielding or imperfect. In the hands of a skilled blacksmith a hammer can beat and shape the hot iron into something useful. A capable teacher of God’s Word can save a soul from ruin. He can help rebuild a life or a broken family. God’s word can break a hard and stubborn heart and bring it to repentance. It can convict a sinner of his wickedness pronounce him guilty.

* Jeremiah also describes Scripture as **food** for the hungry soul. “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy words were unto me a joy and the rejoicing of my heart...” (Jer. 15:16). The author of Hebrews tells us that God’s Word contains both milk for babes in Christ and strong meat for adults in the faith (Heb. 5:13-14). As the physical man will weaken and perish without adequate physical food, so will the spirit of man perish if it does not receive sufficient spiritual food from God’s Word. Those who regularly partake of the Word will grown strong in the Lord (Matt. 4:4).

* Paul describes the Bible as the **sword of the Spirit** (Eph. 6:17). He sees the Bible as the offensive weapon given to the Christian soldier to use in confronting, battling and defeating sin and error. When Scripture is wisely used, the man of God can best any adversary with God’s Word.

* In his 19th Psalm, David compares the value of the Word of God to much **fine gold** (19:10). It is a treasure of spiritual wealth. It will bring to the spirit of man the wonderful things he needs and desires. It is worth pursuing and retaining once it is found.

* In the same psalm, David says that God’s Word is “Sweeter also than **honey** and the droppings of the honeycomb.” (Ps. 19:10). Refined sugar was unknown to ancient man. Honey was their only source of sweetness. It was highly prized and eagerly sought for. It delighted those privileged to eat it. So is God’s Word a delight to those who know and partake of it.

With such a wonderful treasure in our possession, how can we possibly neglect to read it, study it and make it the standard of our lives? May it be that every person who wears the name of Christ will be known as a person of the Book of God.

56.

THE BIBLE MUST BE RIGHTLY DIVIDED

"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15 KJV). Bible study can be the richest experience of one's life, or it can prove to be extremely frustrating. One reason some have difficulty in understanding God's message is that they fail to make the proper distinctions in Scripture. The following thoughts will help the sincere Bible student attain the knowledge he desires.

1. The Bible is a library of 66 books, written by some 40 men over a period of 1600 years. While each book must be read and studied for its own unique message, we must never neglect to note the interrelations of the books with each other. Moses wrote the first five books of our Old Testament. **Genesis** tells the origin of the Hebrew nation and how they got into Egypt. **Exodus** tells how they became enslaved and then were delivered. **Leviticus** tells how their national religion came to exist. **Numbers** relates how they spent 40 years wandering toward Canaan, their new homeland. **Deuteronomy** rehearses the exodus from Egypt and the 40 years of wilderness wandering. The historical background for the various psalms can be found in the books of **Samuel, Kings and Chronicles**. **Paul's epistles** must be studied in light of the history of the **Acts of the Apostles**.

2. Within the Scripture are words of both inspired and uninspired men. Care must be taken to ascertain who is speaking and if he is directed by the Holy Spirit or not. For example in Genesis 3:4-5, we read the words of Satan as he tempted Eve. Surely one would not treat these as he would the words of God or an inspired prophet. Inspiration guarantees that we have a true record of what was said. It does not guarantee that every person quoted was telling the whole truth.

3. The Bible is written in various literary styles. Books like **Genesis** and **Joshua** are history. Their message is expressed in simple prose. **Psalms** and **Proverbs** are poetic in nature and abound in figurative language. For example, David writes: "My heart is like wax; it is melted within me" (Psalms 22:14). Surely no one could view these words as literal. So it is with thousands of other expressions. A good rule to remember is "All words of Scripture are to be understood in their normal literal sense unless the context (the setting in which they are found) forbid such." Then we look for a figurative meaning. This lesson is extremely valuable when you study the prophets such as **Ezekiel** or **Revelation**. Another case in point is history and prophecy. Is the writer relating events past or present (history) or is he predicting things yet to come? Jeremiah relates the historical facts of Jerusalem's capture by Babylon (Jeremiah 52:1-30). But he also predicted the overthrow and destruction of Babylon in 50:21-28 which occurred 50 years later.

4. The Bible consists of an Old and New Covenant. In Hebrews the apostle speaks of "the first covenant" and then the "second covenant." The first covenant was the Old Testament law that God made with the Hebrew nation when he brought them out of Egypt (Hebrews 8:9). The new covenant was made by Jesus (Hebrews 8:6-8). The first covenant is now old and longer binding upon us (Hebrews 8:13). All men today are subject to the new covenant of Jesus (Matthew 28:18-19, John 12:48). Thus you do not need to build an ark, even though Noah was commanded to do so (Genesis 6:14). You need not offer a lamb for sacrifice even though the Hebrews were so obligated (Leviticus 1:10). You must, however, obey Jesus and his New Covenant, if you would please God. Christ asked, "why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). Of what value then is the Old Testament? Much in every way. It is the history of God's scheme of redemption. It tells us our origin and how

things came to be as they are. It is of immeasurable value as a background for our New Testament study. Paul writes that things "written aforetime were written for our learning..." (Romans 15:4). What great lessons we learn from its study. But if we wish to learn what to do to be saved, we must look to Jesus and his New Testament (Matthew 17:3-5). The same is true for instruction about the church or worship today.

What is the practical application of all this? This concept of the two covenants, properly understood, will keep you from serious religious error. We do not observe the seventh day Sabbath (Exodus 20:8) because it is an Old Testament ordinance given to the Israelites (Deuteronomy 5:12-15). We worship on the first day (Sunday) because it is the day of Christ's resurrection (John 20:1-9); the day the Holy Spirit came to begin his ministry (Acts 2:1-4, compare Leviticus 23:15-21); the day the church began (Acts 2:1-47); and the day early Christians worshiped (Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 16:1-2). The thief on the cross could be saved by Christ without baptism because he was yet under the Old Covenant which lasted till Christ died (Hebrews 9:16-17; Colossians 2:14-16). Under Christ's covenant we must believe and be baptized in order to be saved (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 10:48).

May each of us study to show ourselves approved unto God, rightly divining the word of truth (II Timothy 2:15).

57.

THE CHRISTIAN AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

Somehow a terrible misconception has been "leaked" in many areas concerning the attitude of churches of Christ toward the Old Testament. Some have concluded that we do not believe in that part of God's Word. Nothing could be further from the truth. We accept every word of that Testament and make constant use of it in our teaching. There are great benefits to be derived from a careful study of the old covenant.

IT IS GOD'S INSPIRED WORD

When Paul said that "Every scripture is inspired of God." (II Timothy 3:16), he obviously included the holy scripture that the Jews possessed. When Jesus affirmed that "the scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35), only the Old Testament was in existence. The Lord even went so far as to say that if we believe not Moses' writings we cannot believe in Christ himself (John 5:47). In Luke 24:44-45, Jesus explained that the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms were "the scriptures" or God's holy writings. This we believe and teach.

IT ANSWERS MANY QUESTIONS

The Old Covenant provides solid answers to life's most serious and perplexing questions. We would have no sure knowledge of the origin of the cosmos did we not have Genesis and other Old Testament verses that tell us God spoke these things into existence (Psalms 33:6). We would have no strong reply to the wild speculations of the evolutionist if God's Word did not give us the story of man's creation in Genesis one and two. Likewise, man's relation to God would be a mystery were it not for the creation record. We could only guess as to the origin of sin and the curse being upon man and creation, were it not for Genesis three. Such questions as the origins of the various nations and languages are answered only in the Genesis account. So also the riddle of the vast fossil record inscribed across the face of the whole earth is explained by the record of the flood in Noah's day. A hundred other questions are similarly answered in this book.

A FOUNDATION

The Old Testament is the foundation upon which the new covenant was erected. "So that the law is become our tutor

to bring us into Christ..." (Galatians 3:24). The law was a shadow of good things to come (Hebrews 10:1). It foreshadowed the coming Christian age. Jesus fulfilled all of those prophecies concerning Messiah written in the old scriptures (Luke 24:44-45). The New Testament takes up just where the Old leaves off. It has well been said, "The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed; the New Testament is the Old revealed."

A HISTORY

The Old Testament is a rich source of spiritual food for Christians. It provides multitudes of faith building lessons. "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning..." (Romans 15:4). Young Timothy had been taught those sacred writings from childhood and they made him wise unto salvation (II Timothy 3:15).

EXPLAINS NEW TESTAMENT TERMS

When one opens the New Testament he is immediately confronted with scores of institutions, persons and events that would forever be a mystery were it not for the Old Testament. What would we know of Melchizedek or Aaron, Moses or David without the Old Testament? What would we do with the hundreds of quotations from the Old Testament, without the context from which they came? Would we understand the allusion to sacrifices and the temple had we only our New Testament?

PROFIT FROM ITS CHARACTER STUDIES

In Hebrews eleven, the writer draws numerous lessons from the lives of Old Testament saints. So can we profit from all of its characters? We learn lessons both of things to observe and things to shun. "Now these were our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted" (I Corinthians 10:6).

EVIDENCE OF ITS PROPHECIES

Jesus said that the Jew's scriptures bore witness to him (I John 5:39). The angel declared that Jesus was the spirit of prophecy (Revelation 19:10). Peter told Cornelius that all the prophets bore witness of Christ (Acts 10:43). The 300 plus prophetic details of Christ's life and ministry provided an overwhelming basis for belief in Him as God's Son. The same is true of prophecies relating to the church.

Truly, we should be grateful to God for the Old Testament and read and study it thoroughly. However, it must be stated and understood that:

IT IS NOT OUR RULE OF FAITH AND PRACTICE

As Christians we are under Jesus and his New Covenant. Hear Paul, "But now we have been discharged from the law" (Romans 7:6). Again, he states that the old law "passeth away" and the new remains (II Corinthians 3:6-11). Christ "abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances" (Ephesians 2:15). He took the Old Covenant out of the way, nailing it to his cross (Colossians 2:14, 16-17). We have a better covenant, not like the one made on Sinai. That old covenant is becoming aged and is nigh unto vanishing away (Hebrews 8:6-13). When Peter would have equally honored Moses, the law giver, Elijah the prophet, and Christ, God spoke from His throne saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Matthew 17:3-5).

While we thank God for preserving for us the Old Testament, we look to the New for answers to such questions as: How to be saved? How to Worship God Acceptably? How to live for Christ?

58.

GOD HATH SPOKEN TO US IN HIS SON

“God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds...” (Hebrews 1:1-2).

William Barclay says “This the most sonorous piece of Greek in the whole New Testament. It is a passage that any classical Greek orator would have been proud to write.” These verses affirm that God, the Creator, has communicated with humanity. Some scoff at the idea that the Bible is a message from God. They reason that such is incredible and unbelievable thing.

* But if there is an intelligent, omnipotent God who created the world and mankind; if He made man in his image, endowed him with volition and expects him to obey Him, then:

* It is entirely reasonable to conclude that He would give man instructions setting forth His will in understandable terms.

* It is to be expected that such a document would be perfect in content, since it came from an all-knowing, power powerful, perfect Mind.

* He who designed the human mind would be thoroughly capable of designing a book simple enough to be understood by man; practical enough to be workable in every culture and generation.

* We would expect that He who gave his only Son to die a tortuous death to purchase the church would not leave her without adequate reliable, authoritative guidelines for her faith, worship and practice.

* It is entirely reasonable that He would be fully capable of giving humanity such a record and equally able to preserve it in tact for all generations to come.

Note the several lessons these short verses teach us:

I. **God Hath Spoken.** This asserts the fact of a revelation from the Creator to his creation. It is a divine message, unique from all others. In over 2300 cases Scripture writers said, “Thus saith the Lord.”

II. **God Hath Spoken.** These word in the present-perfect tense, tell us that God’s revelation is an accomplished fact. “The faith was once for all (times) delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). The apostles were guided “into all the truth” (John 16:13). Notice that the writer does not say that God continues to speak new information to man! The final chapter of our Bible was completed by the close of the first Christian century. Not one word has since been added. We are strictly warned to neither add to nor take from His Word (Revelation 22:18-19).

III. **God Hath Spoken.** He has communicated with us in language, with understandable words. Paul explained that he and other inspired writers had the Spirit which is from God, “that we might know the things that were freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth...” (I Corinthians 2:12-13). Peter said that “men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit” (II Peter 1:21). Paul wrote “in a few words, whereby, when ye read, ye can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ...” (Eph. 3:3). To Timothy, Paul wrote, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God” (II Tim. 3:16). The word “inspiration” means “God-breathed,” suggesting that Scripture first came from God’s mouth. God does not

communicate with us with feelings and impulses, only through His Word.

IV. God Hath Spoken **Unto Us**. He hath spoken to humanity, not to angels or demons. He speaks to all mankind, not just to a few professional clerics. The Bible belongs to every man.

V. God hath Spoken **Through His Son**. Jesus is the divine Word of God (John 1:1; 14). He came to declare the Father (John 1:18). The words Christ revealed were from the Father (John 12:49). His words will judge us in the last day (John 12:48-49). They are authoritative and must be obeyed if we wish to please Him (Matthew 28:18,20). We must never presume to go beyond his words (II John 9). All who be Christians are responsible to Christ alone, not to Moses or any of the Prophets (Matthew 17:1-5).

The responsibility of the church and every Christian is to hear and heed the blessed Word of God (Revelation 2:29).

59.

THE LAW OF CHRIST

Inspired writers refer to the New Testament as “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:2); “the perfect law, the law of liberty” (Jas. 1:23) and a “law of faith” (Rom. 3:27). This being the case, how say the change agents among us that we are not under a law of God? They love to say that we should not view the Bible as divine law. Are they so ignorant of the book they claim to teach? Do they not believe what the Scripture says of itself? Do they think they know more about God’s Book than the Holy Spirit who gave it? Could it be that in order to sell their agenda to a Bible-believing, Bible oriented people, they must first convince them that the Scripture is not law, therefore it will be no great thing if its words are ignored?

If the Bible is not divine law, then no man is a sinner. For “where there is no law, neither is there transgression” (Rom. 4:15). If we have no divine law, how can some be called “lawless” in their conduct? (II Thess. 2:7; I Tim. 1:9). If the Scripture is not law, how could some men in the church be desirous of teaching “the law?” (I Tim. 1:7). If there is no law in Christ, we would have no knowledge of sin, or of right and wrong, “for through the law cometh the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20). If the New Covenant is not God’s law, then no man need worry about being judged by it in the last day (John 12:48). If it is not law, then we can do anything we desire in the name of religion and not worry about having to give account unto God (II Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:12). If the Scripture is not law, then James and Paul were mistaken in calling it that. If that is so, how can we have confidence in other things they said? That would mean the New Covenant is not reliable and free from error, would it not? If God had wanted to tell us that his written word is His law to guide and govern us in matters of faith, practice and worship, what do our champions of change feel He should have said, beyond what he has said, to make it clear?

It is true that we are not under the Law of Moses (Heb. 8:6-13; Rom. 7:4). It is true that we are saved by God’s grace rather than by law-keeping (Eph. 2:8-9). It is a fact that our response to God must be one of faith rather than

an attempt to earn salvation by works of law (Rom. 3:21-22). But it is a flagrant error to teach men that God's Word should not be viewed as law. This lesson our change agents need to take heed to.

60.

GOD HAS GIVEN US A DIVINE PATTERN FOR THE CHURCH

Those promoting the agenda of change for Christ's church deny that God has given us a divine pattern which we are expected to follow. They ridicule those who believe otherwise. In derision they call them "*patternists*" and their approach to serving Christ "*patternism*." Of course this is the way members of the church of Christ have been serving Christ since the beginning of our back to the Bible movement. It is also the procedure God in his word teaches us to follow.

To reject the idea that God has given us a divine pattern to follow is to reject what is clearly taught in the following Scriptures:

- * Paul exhorted Timothy to "**Hold the pattern of sound words** which thou hast heard from me..."(II Tim. 1:13). The Greek term translated "pattern" is *tupos*, which Strong defines as "a model (for imitation)."
- * The author of Hebrews quotes God who said to Moses, "**See...that thou makest all thing according to the pattern** that was showed thee in the mount" (Heb. 8:5). His lesson to Christians was that they too must observe God's New Covenant pattern.
- * Paul reminded the Christians in Rome that in their conversion, they had obeyed "from the heart ...**that form of teaching** whereunto (they) were delivered" (Rom. 6:17). Thus there is a pattern for being saved!
- * The brethren in Thessalonica were commanded to withdraw their fellowship from every brother that walked disorderly and "not after **the traditions which they received of us**" (II Thess. 3:6).
- * Paul believed that Christ used him (Paul) as "**an ensample** of them that should thereafter believe on him..." (I Tim. 1:16). He often exhorted disciples to "imitate" his example (II Thess. 3:7; I Cor. 11:1).
- * Peter tells us that Christ left us "**an example** that (we) should follow his steps" (I Pet. 2:21). Such examples are intended to be followed!

Students of the Old Testament know that when God ordered Moses to build him a tabernacle, i.e., a portable house of worship, he said, "According to all that I show thee, the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the furniture thereof, even so shall ye make it" (Ex. 25:9). If God gave Israel a pattern and expected them to follow it, is it unreasonable that he would do the same for us who serve him under Christ? The reason we need a pattern is that "it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps" (Jer. 10:23).

All of these verses teach us that God has given us a pattern or example of what he expects of us and that it is our duty to conform to that pattern. That divine pattern is the message of Christ expressed in written words; in a permanent record for all men of all nations in all ages (Matt. 24:35). We know it as our New Testament.

Furthermore we are strictly warned neither to add to nor take away from that which he has given us (Rev. 22:18-19; Prov. 30:6). His words will be the standard by which we will be judged in eternity (John 12:48).

We can't help but wonder why anyone professing Christ would deny that which is so clearly taught in his Word. The agenda proposed by the agents of change cannot be implemented where the Divine pattern is respected and complied with. Hence to accomplish their goals, they must deny the concept of a heavenly pattern and persuade brethren to accept things which have no basis in Scripture and might even be contrary to portions of it. If no Divine pattern exists no one could object to their changes!

Everyone desirous of spending eternity in heavenly bliss should focus his mind on that day when he will stand before Christ, the Supreme Judge of humanity. For the dead will stand before the throne and the books will be opened and the dead will be judged by the things written in the books, according to their works (Rev. 22:11-12). God has a pattern for his church. Do you respect it? Are you complying with it?

61.

BIBLE 101 FOR NOVICES IN THE FAITH

Beginning college course are often numbered 101. A novice is a beginner in a church or profession. Paul reminds us that the man chosen to serve as an elder must not be a novice (I Tim. 3:6). We all were novices when we first entered the kingdom. The young man just beginning his career as a gospel preacher is a novice. Years of study, learning and practice will pass before he reaches full maturity. It used to be that the aspiring young preacher who attended one of our Christian Colleges received solid grounding in the fundamentals of the faith. Experience demonstrates that in many instances such is no longer the case. Schools of Preaching generally do better in this respect. For those who are novices in the faith or in their preaching career, we offer the following fundamentals that should be memorized and made a part of their spiritual bank of knowledge.

- * God in heaven designed the church of Christ exactly as he wanted it (Eph. 3:10-11).
- * He revealed his plan for his church in the New Testament of Christ and expects his children in every generation to build according to the pattern he has revealed (Heb. 8:5).
- * He planned only one church and it was purchased and established by His Son, Jesus (Eph. 4:4; I Cor. 12:13,20; Acts 20:28; Matt. 16:18). No provision was made for many different kinds of denominational churches.
- * He appointed Jesus head over all things to his one church (Eph. 1:22) and invested him with all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18).
- * Those who are disciples of Jesus must obey all things that he has commanded regarding the church, the faith and the practice of Christianity (Matt. 28:20).
- * The will of Jesus is found only in his New Testament. No man nor group has any reliable information or teaching regarding how to worship and serve God other than that revealed therein. Public opinion, tradition, culture or consensus of a group are not authoritative or acceptable.
- * The books written by the apostles and prophets have the same value and authority as the words of Jesus. Christ send his Holy Spirit to direct them in writing all the 27 books of his Testament (John 16:12-15). Paul claimed that the words he wrote were the commandments of the Lord (I Cor. 14:37). Hence we cannot attribute greater value or authority to the gospels than to the epistles.
- * The entire Bible is of divine origin and thus perfect in its content and message (II Tim. 3:16-17), free from errors and contradictions when properly understood (Ps. 19:7).

* Being divine in origin, the Bible is unchanging and everlasting (Matt. 24:35). It does not need to be renovated and updated to fit the need of 21st century sinners.

* The words of Scripture are the standard by which all of humanity will be judged in the last day (John 12:48; Rev. 20:11-12).

* The gospel which is only revealed in Scripture, is God's power to save lost humanity. Hence to save the lost we must preach the gospel to them (Rom. 1:16; Mark 16:16-17). Gimmicks and programs cannot be allowed to supplant gospel teaching.

* God saves sinners by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-9). However his grace is conditional. It is bestowed only upon them that believe (I Tim. 4:10) and them that obey the gospel (II Thess. 1:8). Otherwise we would have universal salvation which is clearly rejected in Scripture (Matt. 25:46).

* We are justified by faith (Rom. 5:1). But only obedient faith will save sinners (Gal. 5:6; Heb. 5:9).

* Christ has bound immersion in water as a condition of salvation (Mark 16:16; John 3:5; Acts 22:16)

* Baptism is a commandment of the Lord to which sinners must submit (Acts 10:48).

* God expects faithfulness of his disciples if they hope to be saved in eternity (Rev. 2:10). While faithfulness does not mean perfection (Rom. 3:23), it does mean that we seek to abide in his word (II John 9) in all that we do in our personal and congregational lives.

Hopefully these basic truths will become part and parcel of your understanding of the religion of Jesus. May they guide you in your worship and service in the kingdom of Christ and be reflected in the message you share with others.

62.

UNDERSTANDING THE MESSAGE OF GOD

It is not enough just to read the Scriptures, we must study to understand the meaning thereof. The confusion that reigns in the world of Christendom comes from failure to understand the meaning of the sacred message. It seems that every sect has its own peculiar dictionary that gives a unique denominational meaning to important words so that the Bible is made to teach their doctrine.

How shall we overcome this great problem and help all serious students everywhere arrive at a correct interpretation of the Word? God communicates his message to man in **words**. Man is capable of understanding a message in words of his language by applying certain rules for ascertaining their meaning. If we can identify those principles for determining the meaning of words generally, and then apply them to the words of the inspired writers, then we will understand the words of Scripture as surely as we would any other words. D R Dungan* gives the following.

RULES FOR FINDING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS

1. "All words are to be understood in their literal sense, unless the evident meaning of the context forbids. Figures are the exception, literal language is the rule; hence we are not to regard anything as figurative until we are compelled to do so by the evident import of the passage."

2. "Commands generally and ordinances always are to be understood in a literal sense... The general who would

issue orders in figurative language would certainly be misunderstood many times."

3. "The literal meaning of a word is the meaning which is given it by those to whom it is addressed. This may be determined by the author's use of the word in other places, or some other inspired men's use of it. If they offer no specific indication of their meaning, then we consult the classical use of it as offered in lexicons of the Biblical language."

4. "The Scriptures give to some words meanings which they do not have in the classics, and therefore the Bible becomes a dictionary of itself."

5. "Words of definite action can have but one meaning." If they could have more than one meaning in this respect they would not be words of **definite action**. Jump, walk, run, sit, dip, sprinkle, pour, hang, etc. are definite, and therefore but one meaning is possible to any of them. Hence when action is ordered by any one of them, it can not be obeyed by doing any other thing than that which is the meaning of the word employed."

6. The writer's definition is the best explanation that can be found. He knows better than anyone else, just what meaning he wishes to put into the word. When Matthew said **Immanuel** meant "God with us," that settled it once and for all".

7. "The proper definition of a word may be used in the place of the word. If the trial be made in this way, and the definition is wrong, the sense of the passage will be so destroyed as to make it apparent." Try the definition immersed in the place of baptized in Mark 1:5 and see this illustrated."

8. "Sometimes the meaning is determined by antithesis, i.e., two positions are matched one against the other. II Cor. 3:6-14 offers a good example of the antithesis which employs some peculiar usage's of words. However, they are easily understood by noting the contrast Paul makes between the old and new covenants."

9. The general and special scope of the writer determines the meaning of words. By the general scope, we mean the main purpose in the mind of the writer. By special scope, we mean any sub-purpose having reference to any particular part of the discussion. Having the main purpose of the letter in mind and the particular purpose in view, the interpretation is easy and safe. There has ever been a tendency to ignore the topic under discussion. Do not get sidetracked by the author's illustrations. For example, Rom. 7:1-6, is discussing the Jewish Christian's relation to Moses' law, marriage is only his illustration.

10. "Etymological construction will often tell the meaning of the word. Nearly all the names of Bible characters had meanings of importance. Places also had names which were descriptive. Beersheba meant "seven wells." Bethel meant "house of God."

11. "The meaning of a word is frequently known by the words used in the construction with it." Thus we can discover what part of speech it is; whether it is a verb or a noun."

12. "We may have sometimes to study the history of a word in order to get its meaning at any particular time." Words are constantly growing, and the meanings differ from generation to generation. The word *psallo* once meant to play on a harp or sing, but by New Testament times it had come to mean "to sing". **Demon** once meant the spirit of anyone deceased, whether good or bad. By the first century it meant **evil spirits** exclusively.

13. Illustrations or parables may give the secular sense in which a word is to be understood in the Scriptures.

14. In defining a term, nothing but primary meanings are to be used. Jacob Ditzler, a Methodist, debated J. S. Sweeney, a Christian, on a scriptural mode of baptism. Ditzler showed a secondary meaning of **baptize** was "to wash or sprinkle." Bro. Sweeney replied that a secondary meaning of **believe** was "to have an opinion" and a secondary meaning of **saved** was "to be pickled." His resulting translation of Mark 16:16 was, "He that hath an opinion and is sprinkled shall be pickled." Look for primary meanings.

Unless these rules are observed there is no telling where our studies may lead us. These are the same rules by which any other writings would be interpreted. May we all "give diligence to present ourselves approved unto God, workmen that need not be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth" (II Tim. 2:15 A.S.V.)

* Dungan, D. R. **Hermeneutics**, Cincinnati, Standard Publishing Company, no date.

63.

THINGS THAT KEEP US FROM UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE ALIKE

It has long troubled people that not everyone sees the Bible alike. The Bible's message is one. It is a universal message for all of humanity. Correctly understood, it will yield the same lessons for all men everywhere. But the fact remains that there are great differences in how people understand the Bible. Why?

* Everyone comes to the Bible from **his family's religious background**. He may have been raised in a Catholic or a Baptist home. It may have been a Hindu, Muslim or Buddhist family. He may have been raised in a family of unbelievers who mocked and ridiculed the Bible. If he is fortunate, he was raised in a godly Christian home. These past impressions will be with him as he opens God's book. They will shape his thinking and the meanings he attaches to certain words and concepts. In many cases they will be obstacles he must overcome.

* Everyone comes to the Bible with some **prior religious teaching**. This will be more than just having a Catholic or Muslim family. He might have attended a particular kind of church or received instruction in a non-Christian religion. This may have been received from listening to radio or television teaching, from literature he has read or in a school where he was educated. The ideas he first received will be either true, false or a blend of the two. Such fallacious ideas must be overcome before he will correctly understand God's Word.

* Everyone lives in a particular **cultural/religious environment**. A man raised in China will be greatly influenced by the government's militant atheism and the Buddhism of his society. The person raised in India will be exposed to Hinduism from his earliest days. In Saudi Arabia the culture and religion will be Islamic. In Poland it will be Catholic and in Eastern Europe, the Orthodox faith. Whatever his culture may be, it will greatly influence his religious thoughts and values. It will be as though he reads the Bible through glasses tinted by his culture.

* **A person's education** will affect the way he understands the Bible. The man with little or no education will have a difficult time understanding any serious literature, including the Bible. The person with a great deal of higher education may be filled with pride and thus find it hard to take the Bible seriously. The person who does not read or comprehend well will have a difficult time correctly understanding the Scripture. Some education is tainted with skepticism and is a channel for instilling belief in godless evolution. The recipient of such education will have a hard time accepting much that he reads in the Bible.

* **Without a logical approach** to one's reading he will fail to understand the Bible. Inspired writers set forth their facts and information. From them they drew their conclusions. In the New Testament this is most evident in the writings of Paul. The conclusion of a proposition may not be reached until the entire chapter has been read. We must be able to glean related information from other books and verses if we are to understand the Book.

* The **prior belief and attitude** the student holds regarding the Bible will influence his understanding. If he sees it only as a collection of myths and legends he will not understand it. If he thinks of it only as a love-letter from God he will miss its meaning. If he sees it only as a book of maxims and good advice he will fail to grasp its message.

* **Without a proper method of study** one cannot understand the Bible as God intended. Reading only one's favorite passage will leave a person with an incomplete view of the Bible. Skipping from page to page will not yield a meaningful understanding. Starting with the most difficult books will not result in correct knowledge. Rushing through the text without serious study cannot produce understanding. Failing to understand the difference in the Old and New Covenants will lead to confusion. Not recognizing and understanding the figurative and symbolic

language of the sacred writers will led confound the readers efforts.

* **Without diligent study** one will never understand the Bible. This is the book of God. It is humanity's greatest literary treasure. It was 1600 years or so in making. It cannot be understood by skimming or speed reading. Only sustained, serious study and research will yield the desired results of Bible knowledge.

* To understand the Bible there must be a **willingness to accept that which is found therein**. Many folks have a difficult time accepting that which is new and different to them. Things that challenge their long-held views are rejected. The Bible speaks of the converts in Berea who received Paul's teaching with all readiness of mind (Acts 17:11). When a new truth is found the old ideas that are contrary to that must be discarded. This some find difficult to do.

None of these disabilities are permanent or indelible. They must and can be overcome. Across the ages, millions have successfully done so. Let every person who wants to live in heaven search the Scriptures daily. Let him apply himself with diligence to the wonderful words of inspiration that are able to save his soul (Jas. 1:21). They will yield to him the peaceable fruits of salvation.

64.

THE SILENCE OF THE SCRIPTURES

In his excellent history of the American Restoration Movement, James DeForest Murch made the following insightful statement concerning us of the Churches of Christ:

“Within the last generation the Church of Christ has made a phenomenal growth. This is due to two things: (1) Its people have stood like a Rock of Gibraltar for ‘the faith which was once delivered unto the saints,’ amid the doubt and confusion superinduced by liberalism. They have challenged the spirit of compromise and worldliness and dared to be a ‘peculiar people’ teaching and practicing what they believe is the Bible way of life. (2) They have come to realize that the silence of the Scriptures must be respected as well as the commandments of Scripture, but that obedience to its silences permits freedom of judgment and action” (**Christians Only**, p. 313).

There are two remarkable things about this quote. First, Murch was a national leader in the Independent Christian Churches whose predecessors rejected the law of silence 125 years ago and who almost to a man, still refuse to recognize this aspect of Christ's authority over his church. Second, is that we now have a sizeable number of professors, preachers and elders among us who are preaching and behaving as though there is no such a thing as “the law of silence.”

This principle of divine authority is revealed in a half dozen examples of Biblical history. When Jewish brethren journeyed to Antioch and told the Gentile converts, “except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved (Acts 15:1), Paul and Barnabas took the matter to the apostles at Jerusalem. After an inquiry, the apostle and elders wrote “For as much as...certain (men) who went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls; to whom we gave no commandment” (Act 15:24). Thus a teaching not commanded by apostolic authority is not to be allowed or accepted. Although there was no command forbidding circumcision, in the absence

of some positive instruction the practice could not be introduced into the life of the church.

The writer of Hebrews observes that Christ could not serve as a high priest on earth since he was of the tribe of Judah, "as to which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priests" (Heb. 7:14). No specific statement forbade a man from Judah serving in that exalted station, but it did not have to since God had said that the sons of Aaron the Levite would bear that office (Ex. 28:1).

Two other familiar events of Old Testament history vividly illustrate this point. The tragic case of the priests, Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, who perished while using strange fire in offering incense in Jehovah's sanctuary (Lev. 10:1-3). The fire they used was strange in that it was not taken from the sacred fire on the great brazen altar, as God had instructed them to do (Lev. 16:12; 6:12)

When David ordered the ark of God to be carried up to Jerusalem another tragedy occurred. It was placed on an ox cart and care was taken to insure that proper respect was shown. But when the oxen stumbled and the ark was about to fall, Uzzah reached out to steady it and God instantly struck him down (I Chron. 13:6-10). Shocked and saddened, David ordered the procession halted until they could research the matter and determine why God had so dealt with them. Consulting the Scriptures, they discovered that God had ordered the ark to be carried on the shoulders of priests. Although he had not specifically said, "Don't carry it on an ox cart," such was excluded by the positive directive given (I Chron. 15:2,13).

Today, to our shame and sorrow, many of our young preachers have never heard this lesson explained or else have been convinced it is of no significance for modern disciples. The most notable example of this failure is in the current discussion about our worship. These poor scholars who wish to introduced changes are asking, "Where does the Bible forbid us to do so?" Shame, shame, shame. The above lesson, which you should have learned in Freshman Bible, answers you with a thunderous voice.

65.

THE APOCRYPHA

Few people in today's church have any knowledge of that body of religious writings called **The Apocrypha**. The purpose of this paper is to bring together a collection of facts and information that will help the student to know and appreciate these writings of the ancient Jews and why they are not included in our spiritual canon. "It is the popular impression that after the writing of Malachi no worthy literary effort was made by the chosen people of Jehovah until the Apostles of Jesus began to pen the books of the New Testament. This is far from the facts. Some of the finest products of Hebrew religious zeal belong to the period between the Testament..." (H. E. Dana).

WHAT IS THE APOCRYPHA? A DEFINITION.

"The origin of this title is not definitely known. The word is a transliteration of the neuter plural of the Greek adjective *apokruphos*, meaning 'hidden, concealed' (Dana).

The term Apocrypha has had three distant usage's.

1. The word means 'hidden away' and it was first used of esoteric documents of secret or mystical cult groups of the early Christian age.
2. Normative Judaism and orthodox Christianity (were) repelled by the extravagance in this literature. The term 'secret' would come to mean 'spurious'. Apocryphal would take on the meaning which the adjective had with us of 'false' or fictitious.
3. The church fathers used the term Apocrypha in a third sense. These were books outside the canon proper, true, but not to be given up completely... sometimes the term deuterocanonical is used to describe them by this group.

"In general terms we may say the Apocrypha are those books in the Latin Vulgate not contained in the Hebrew canon of the Old Testament...But as generally known the Apocrypha consists of ten separate books, one addition to Esther, and three additions to Daniel--making fourteen in all" (Dana).

To look at it from another angle, "the Apocrypha...represents the difference between the contents of the Hebrew Bible and the Septuagint plus IV Ezra." (H.T. Andrews).

The books of the Old Testament Apocrypha are: I and II Esdras, Tobit, Judith, the Rest of Esther, The Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus called the Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach, Baruch, The Letter of Jeremiah, Bel and the Dragon, Song of the Three Holy Children, The Story of Susanna, The Prayer of Manasses, I and II Maccabees.

THE NATURE AND CHARACTER OF THE APOCRYPHA

"Some who have given too little attention to the facts, are contented to admire passages here and there which they find in the Apocrypha, without regarding the sources from which such passages have come. They are apt to forget that the best words which are found in these later writings of the Jews were only echoes from the Old Testament. The light which in some books shines upon the pages of the Apocrypha...is **the lingering light of the western sky**" (R. A. Redford).

Rather than being inspired scripture, the Apocryphal writings are a class of Jewish writing called **Haggadah**. "The Haggadah, on the other hand, was not law or precept at all, but simply independent and relatively irresponsible illustration and interpretation of the Scriptures in whatever regular or irregular form it might choose to take...The Haggadah might be cultivated by any Israelite, whatever his profession or rank; be perused as a business, or used to while away a leisure moment; be developed into volumes or confined to simple saga, tales and parables. ..To the Haggadah belonged everything that could not be included under the examination of the written, or the accommodation of the traditional law" (E. C. Bissell).

CONTRAST OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT APOCRYPHA

"The apocrypha books of the Old Testament have doubtless suffered not a little from being associated by name with those (apocrypha) of the New Testament. It is not necessary to say that they are of a wholly different character. The Apocrypha of the New Testament have never, by any branch of the Christian Church been regarded as a constituent part of the Bible and circulated with it; have never been thought worthy of a translation into the vernacular tongues, or even of much critical investigation by scholars; and their very titles have remained almost unknown to the majority of theological students."

VALUES TO BE FOUND IN THE APOCRYPHA

"As ancient literary productions, originating with one of the most remarkable peoples of antiquity...they still deserve particular interest and examination, as histories they supply important links in the scanty annals of a most interesting period. So, too, from a philosophical point of view they can, by no means, be set aside as worthless. Some of them witness in a marked degree to the influence of the leaders of the Greek philosophy in the centuries where they were written, and exhibit the peculiar product resulting from the contact of such philosophy with the sacred learning of

the Jews. But their chief value is unquestionably theological. They show how the Old Testament was interpreted and applied by the Jews themselves during the period stretching from the close of the canon to the coming of Christ; what progress was made in the apprehension and development of important truths, especially those relating to the unseen world and the future state, and serve as well by their exaggerations and mistakes as by their statement or reflection of facts to prepare the way for Him who spoke with authority and not as the scribes."

"The Old Testament Apocrypha have a value...quite independent of any questions of canonicity. They are witnesses that cannot be overlooked, if not in all respects such as we might desire. They have the value as witnesses, moreover, in what they **fail** to say as well as in that which, with no little confusion and contradiction, they do say. At least, as a foil they serve to set off in a clearer light the unrivalled dignity and worth of the writings with which they are associated. And as reflecting,, too, in all its various phases the popular life of the Jewish people in the period when they appeared, they can never be otherwise than important. It was one of the most eventful epochs in the history of Israel. During it they came in more or less direct contact with every civilized people of the earth; achieved, in the most heroic of struggles, and lost again their national independence; determined the canon of the Sacred Books; evolved the order of the Scribes and the worship of the synagogues; began the so-called hedge around the law which still exists in Mishna and Gemara; developed a bitter strife over points of interpretation...and the present books are a kind of cross-section of the period by means of which, in the way of example, all this political and moral activity reproduced before us. Besides they are a repository of not a few philological and grammatical treasures, furnish many a term and form employed by Christ and his Apostles as the vehicle of the grandest revelations, so that no through student of the New Testament can afford to overlook or despise them."

DEFICIENCIES OF THE APOCRYPHAL BOOKS

"There is a natural tendency to **exaggeration** which we find in all these works, there being no particular in which they are more clearly distinguished from the canonical books than in their want of simplicity and accuracy, the rhetorical figures, moreover, forming one of the best illustrations of this defect."

It is significant...that the traces of the Messianic hope which they contain are only of the faintest character. This hope, moreover, seems in no case to have centered clearly in the coming of a personal Messiah, but to have developed itself rather in longings for, and descriptions of a certain future kingdom...Various efforts have been made to explain this remarkable absence of allusion to the Messiah in the apocryphal books...It is more reasonable to suppose...that the Jews, at the time when the present books were written, had ceased to feel the need of the coming of the Messiah...As far as it referred to a deliverance from sin the later Jews seem to have lost all consciousness of the want of it. ..The law in its two parts as written and oral, was looked upon as sufficient for all needs, the complete revelation of God not only for the Jews but for the whole world. With the Captivity, the worship of idols was given up in order to make an idol of their own institutions, particularly of the Mosaic Code."

In very many respects, in fact, these books, so far from representing the continuity of the divine revelation and of the kingdom of God as set forth in the Old Testament, misinterpret and interrupt it. There is found in them, indeed, a further development of Old Testament ideas, but, at the same time, such lines of development are rather interesting than valuable. They are abnormal, and hence, unhealthy growths.

"In the Maccabees, in addition to the disappearance of the accuracy and simplicity to be expected in works of this character, we find a naive parade of legends, the most obvious anachronisms, the angelology of the Old Testament travestied and new doctrines taught which are utterly without Scriptural support.

The Israelitish history, in fact, is everywhere depicted on its worldly side, and the great moral goal of the same is obviously lost sight of, is, indeed, replaced by something else... We look in vain, moreover, for any traces of the sublimity and power that display themselves in the poetry of Job and of the Psalms, and especially for that fineness of conception, modesty of coloring, and general excellence of literary taste that always characterize the rhetorical figures of the Old Testament. And, finally, there is an extra ordinary narrowness of spirit, as well as the process of its growth from stage to stage, exhibited in the apocryphal books with respect to the Jewish people, their place in history, their relations to Jehovah, and their future destiny, that, in no sense fairly represents the teaching of the Old

Testament, but is rather a caricature of them..." (E.C. Bissell).

THE NON-CANONICAL CHARACTER OF THE APOCRYPHAL BOOKS

1. "**Their legendary and superstitious character.** It is a special sign of decay in honesty and discernment when such writings are passed off and accepted as belonging to actual history.
2. Another characteristic of the apocryphal writings is the **lower religious tone**, which expresses itself in ritualism, the advocacy of good works as the ground of acceptance before God, and the bigotry of national pride. ..The prophets were long gone, and the prophetic spirit had not returned. The sages had taken their place, and instead of Divine messages were wise sayings and lofty flights of eloquence, and attempts to clothe the predictions of the ancients times with the new dress of sensational realism.
3. The most interesting feature of the Apocrypha, however, is the presence there of what may be called a **new religious philosophy**, which was due to the influence of the Alexandrian School of thought on Jewish writers" (R. A. Redford).

CREATIVE FACTORS IN APOCRYPHAL WRITING

To appreciate the apocryphal writings, one needs to know something of the social, religious and political events that led to the writings of them. Dana states three causes:

1. "**Intense Devotion to the Law and Worship of Jehovah.** The strict and loyal Jews believed that the only hope of the world resided in Jewish legalism. One of the distinguishing features about the expected Messianic program was that the Messiah would call the world to conformity with the Law as interpreted by the rabbinical schools of Judaism. That is, he was to be a sort of second Moses. This devotion of legalism colored practically all the literary effort of the period."
2. "**Persecution by Heathen Nations.** The religious and racial exclusiveness of the Jews has subjected them to intense prejudice and hatred in all their history. At no period was this opposition more severe than in that now under consideration."
3. "**Efforts at Compromise made by the Liberal Jews.** Here lay the cause of the most intense antagonism which Jewish life ever experienced. Loyalty to traditional Judaism was never unanimous, even among the Jews of the Restoration. A strong Hellenistic drift set in among the Jews, and the ardent supporters of the national religion arose in mighty protest against the threatened apostasy." (H.E. Dana).

The Apocryphal writings were produced in Jerusalem and Alexandria and those from each place reflect the peculiar attitudes of religious thought of their location.

HISTORY OF THE APOCRYPHA AND THE CANON

"The Apocryphal books of the Old Testament either as a whole or in part were never admitted by the Jews into connection with what is known as the Hebrew canon. They became associated with the scriptures, at first, solely through the Septuagint version. The Jews speaking Greek who made use of that translation, having more relaxed views than their brethren in Palestine concerning inspiration and canonicity, and at the same time, regarding it simply as a version of the Scriptures, did not hesitate to connect with it, for ecclesiastical use such other moral works of Jewish authors as from time to time appeared, with but little discrimination as to their real merits. Josephus gives the number of books of the actual canon in his day as twenty-two (c. Ap. 1.8), and as the Jews in the time of the origin (**Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History**. 6:25) and Jerome (**Prologue to Books of Samuel**) were accustomed to reckon the books of our present canon at that number, it is doubtless true that Josephus included in his list simply and solely the books of our present canon. This testimony of Josephus is the more important because, as we know from his writings, he was well acquainted with several of the apocryphal books and used them freely. Further, it seems clear that the **Jews never had any other canon of the Scriptures** than that which is known as the Hebrew

and which, according to Josephus and other witnesses, was composed of the books that make up our present Old Testament Scriptures. . .

"It is not to be disputed, however, that the Jews of Alexandria and of the Dispersion generally, on the grounds above given, received to their collection of the sacred books as contained in the LXX, those also which we now designate as the Old Testament Apocrypha. But it is a most interesting fact, that notwithstanding that the New Testament writers in citing the Old Testament make use of this Greek translation, they do not, in a single well-accredited instance, quote any of the apocryphal works that were connected with it. "These books, in fact, as a whole, were never adopted into any catalogue of the Scriptures recognized by an early general council. It has been affirmed that three synods--all African and under the dominating influence of Augustine---formally sanctioned the Apocrypha along with the canonical books, putting all on the same rank. But this is saying quite too much... Moreover Augustine himself repeatedly makes a distinction between the Hebrew Canon and the Apocrypha, admitting that the latter are not of unquestionable authority.

"Of the Greek church generally it may be said, that as early as the fourth century, under Origen's influence, the Hebrew canon was accepted as properly fixing the limits of the Old Testament Scriptures, even the reading of the Apocrypha being in some cases forbidden, and this position the Greek church---the same is also true of the oldest Syrian Church---has maintained, with but a slight wavering of individual fathers, to the present day.

"Until that of Trent (A.D. 1545-1563), no general council of the church, other than in the first centuries or in the 'middle ages, had ever given any decision on the question of the limits of the canon or the contents of the Holy Scriptures. It is the criticisms of the Protestants, particularly of Erasmus and Luther, on the loose practice of Romanists respecting the Bible, that led to a consideration of the subject at this time."

DECREE OF THE COUNCIL OF TRENT ON THE CANON

"The holy, ecumenical and general council of Trent...following the example of the orthodox fathers, receives and venerates all the books of the Old and New Testaments...and also traditions pertaining to faith and conduct...with an equal feeling of devotion and reverence. " The list of books then follows including the Old Testament Apocrypha. "If, however, anyone does not receive the entire books with all their parts, as they are accustomed to be read in the Catholic church **and in the Old Latin Vulgate edition**, as sacred and canonical, let him be anathema."

"Another reason (for Rome's maintaining them) is to be found in the weighty circumstance that the apocryphal books might be found very useful, if not, indeed, absolutely essential in defending certain peculiar dogmas of the Romish church, as for instance, that of the intercession of angels (Tob. 12:12) and of departed saints (II Macc.15:141 cf. Bar. 3:4), of the merit of good works (Tob. 4:7; Eccus. 3:30), its teaching concerning purgatory and the desirability that the living pray for the dead (II Mann. 12:42 ff.)" (Bissell).

THE APOCRYPHA AND THE CHURCH

Jesus never quoted or alluded to the Apocrypha. During the ministry of the apostles, we find no use of it in their writings. However in the second century when the church adopted the Septuagint as its primary version of the Old Testament, many of the church Fathers accepted the Apocrypha along with the acknowledged canonical Scriptures. Although always disputed by some, the Apocrypha was generally used by the apostate church from then until now. Only the Protestant Reformation challenged its place as Scripture. The Roman church reaffirmed its loyalty to the apocrypha at the council of Trent, 1545-1563. The church of England took a mediate position stating: "And the other Books (as Jerome saith) the church doth read for example of life and instruction of manners; but yet doth it not apply them to establish any doctrine..." **Book of Common Prayer**, Art.6. This is no doubt contributed greatly to their remaining in the English Bible until 1827 and still being found in some to this day. "

"These books were introduced into the English version by Miles Coverdale in his translation made in the year 1535. Succeeding versions, also, as Matthews', the Great Bible, Crumwell's and those that followed published them, and hence they found their way, through not without opposition, into "authorized" translation of 1611." "After much

debate the British and Foreign Bible Society decided to exclude the Apocrypha from its Bibles and soon afterwards the American branch concurred, and this action generally set the pattern for English Bibles thereafter" (Baker's Dictionary of Theology). "Until the time of the Reformation, the books in our present Apocrypha were put in the appropriate places in the Old Testament (that is by name and contents) following the practice of the Septuagint..." The Apocrypha as a separate entity, a 'sort of ghetto between the Old and the New Testament' is the product of the religious controversies of the 16th century"(C. C . Roach).

REASONS WHY THE APOCRYPHA WERE REJECTED FROM THE CANON by Thomas Horne

- I. They possess no authority whatever, either external or internal, to procure their admission into the sacred canon.
 1. Not one of them is extant in Hebrew.
 2. They were written subsequently to the cessation of the prophetic spirit, though before the promulgation of the Gospel. The Jews unanimously agree that the prophetic spirit ceased with Malachi.
 3. Not one of the writers, in direct terms, advances any claim to inspiration. Some of them say what amounts to an acknowledgment that they were not inspired. See I Macc. 4:46, 9:27; II Macc. 15:38; Ecclu. 1:1.
 4. The apocrypha books were never received into the sacred canon by the Jewish church, and therefore they were not sanctioned by our Savior.
- II. The Apocryphal books were not admitted into the canon of Scripture during the first four centuries of the Christian Church. They were never read in the Christian church until the fourth century when as Jerome informs us, they were read "for example of life, and instruction of manners, but were not applied to establish any doctrine." The same authority was never ascribed to them as to the Old and New Testament; until the last council of Trent, at its fourth session, presumed to place them all (excepting the payer of Manesseh and the third and fourth books of Esdras) in the same rank with the inspired writings of Moses and the prophets.
- III. The Apocryphal books contain many things which are fabulous and contradictory to the canonical scriptures both in facts, doctrines and moral practices.
 1. Fabulous Statements: See the Rest of Esther 10:6 and 14:2 ; the. Story of Bel and the Dragon and II Macc. 1:19-22, 2:4.
 2. Contradictory Statements: Baruch 1:2 contradicts Jeremiah 43:6-7. I Esdras chapters 3 and 4 contradicts Ezra's account of the return of the Jews from Babylon. I and II Maccabees contradict each other on Antiochus Epipanes' death, I Macc. 6:4-16; II Macc. 1:13-16.
 3. Contradictory Doctrines: Prayers for the dead, II Mac. 12:43-44 ; Transmigration of Souls, Wisdom 8:19-20; Justification by Good Works, Tob. 12:8-9, Ecclu. 3:3, 35:3; Sinless Perfection, Ecclu.. 13:24
- IV. Immoral Practices are approved of: Lying, Tob. 5:12, 12:5 ; Suicide, II Macc. 14:41-46; Assassination, Judith 9:2-9; Magical incantations, Tob. 6:16-17
- V. There are passages in the apocryphal books, which are so inconsistent with the relations of all other profane historians, that they cannot be admitted without much greater evidence than belongs to these books.

CLASSIFICATION OF THE APOCRYPHA

1. **Historical Works** - I Esdras; I and II Maccabees.
2. **Didactic Works** - The Wisdom of Solomon; Ecclesiasticus.
3. **Religious Romances** - The Book of Tobit; The Book of Judith.

4. **Prophetic or Apocalyptic Works** - The Book of Baruch; IV Ezra (sometimes called II Esdras)

5. **Additions to the Old Testament** - The addition to the Book of Esther; The Prayer of Manasseh; the three additions to Daniel (a) The Song of the Three Holy Children (b) The Story of Susanna (c) The Story of Bel and the Dragon. Most of these additions might very properly be placed in the class of Religious Romances (H.T. Andrews)

A BRIEF STUDY OF THE APOCRYPHAL BOOKS

I ESDRAS. In the Septuagint this book is called the First Book of Esdras (Esdras A); II Esdras being equivalent to our canonical Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, which originally formed one work. In the Vulgate, on the other hand, it is termed the Third Book of Esdras; I and II Esdras representing our Books of Ezra and Nehemiah. To avoid confusion, some call this Greek Esdras. Contents, with but one exception, Chapters 3:1-5:6, this is a compilation from II Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah. It is chiefly historical and gives an alleged account of the return of the Jews from Babylon, the building of the Temple and the reestablishment of divine worship. Of its author and date we have no information except that it was written around 100 b.c. The writer was obviously uninspired for he contradicts the very books of Ezra and Nehemiah he sought to supplement.

II ESDRAS. "The second book of Esdras (sometimes called IV EZRA) is by common consent one of the most important books in the Apocrypha. It occupies the same place in the Apocrypha as the book of Revelation in the New Testament, and the only specimen of apocalyptic literature in it. **Contents:** The version of II Esdras in our Apocrypha contains the original book in a Christian frame. The first two and the last two chapters are a later addition and were attached to the book to make it suitable for use among Christians. It is generally divided into seven parts, answering to the seven visions which it describes. The author personates Ezra and "pretends to visions and revelations. But they are so fanciful, undigested, ridiculous and absurd, that it is clear that the Holy Spirit could have no concern in dictating them" It was likely written about 95 A.D. and speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem. One of the main problems he wrestles with is "Why has God cast off his people?"

TOBIT This book professes to tell the history of Tobit and his family, Jews, who were taken captive into Nineveh by Shalmaneser. It tells of the misfortunes of this and another Jewish family and of the happy ending that came from their union by marriage of a son and daughter. It is obviously a romance or novel intended to convey some religious principles. It contains numerous rabbinical fables and allusions to Babylonian demonology and magical rites. Although always regarded as apocryphal, Tobit was cited with respect by the early fathers of the church. It is counted one of the most popular and important of the apocryphal books. Of the author and date, we know nothing save that it was quoted by Polycarp in 112 a.d. The contents, lays great stress on legal observances and almsgiving. Belief in angels and demons plays an important role in it. Belief in magic is stated, and the necessity of proper burial of the dead is insisted upon.

JUDITH. The Book of Judith professes to relate the defeat of the Syrians by the Jews, though the instrumentality of their countrywoman Judith. There are so many geographical, historical and chronological difficulties in this book that Luther and others have considered it a drama or parable rather than real history. The book is a religious novel and it is only when this is understood that it becomes intelligible. Judith's home town of Bethulia was besieged by Holofernes, a general of Nebuchadrezzar, and she determined to save the city. Judith was a beautiful widow, faithful to God. Laying aside her widow's garb, she adorned herself in order to captivate the general. She was careful to carry her "clean" food along in a bag lest she be defiled by eating unclean food at the Gentile's table. Alone with Holofernes, he was soon overtaken by wine and she cut off his head. She deposited the head in her food bag and made her return to the Jewish camp and displayed it on the wall. The enemy army panicked when they saw their leader was dead and fled. Bethulia was saved. The Book of Judith was likely written during the persecution of the Jews in the Maccabean period. Its purpose is to induce men to keep the Law under the promise of God's protection. It stresses the regularity of fastings (8:6); avoidance of unclean meats (10:5; 12:2); attention to ritual washings of the law (7:7-9). The Temple also occupies an important place in the book. The author seems to sympathize with the Pharisaic philosophy.

THE REST OF ESTHER. The apocryphal Esther consists of six fragments which must be inserted in the Old

Testament Esther to make sense. The Septuagint scatters these six sections throughout the book of Esther. Chapter 10: 4-11:1 forms the conclusion of the Septuagint Esther. Chapter 11:2-12:6 forms its commencement. Chapter 13: 1-7 is placed after 3:13. Chapter 8:8-14:19 is placed after 4:17. Chapter 15 is substituted for 5:11-3. Chapter 16 is placed after 8:12. Two objects are seen in this additional material: (1) to expand the narrative of canonical Esther, (2) to give a religious tone to canonical Esther which never mentions the name of God. The Greek addition stresses the name of God, the providence of God and the prayers of Mordecai and Esther. A lengthy justification of Esther's using her charms is also given.

THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON. This work was not written by Solomon but by a Jewish sage living in Egypt who was concerned to use the fruits of Greek philosophy to bring his wavering Jewish brothers back to the faith of the fathers. Chapters 1-5 are polemical and attack the current unbelief and pessimism of the age. Here wisdom is present as the source of true happiness and blessings. Chapters 6-9 present the source of true wisdom and the means of obtaining it. It is a statement of his own experience. Chapters 10-12 are an appeal to the history of Israel to prove that wisdom has always been at the root of success, and the lack of it the cause of failure. Chapters 13-15 are a digression containing a very strong denunciation of idolatry. The book is partly polemical and partly apologetic. The opening chapters are a strong attack against the "ungodly". Likely the writer means the Sadducees, as he describes their beliefs. He refutes the philosophy of Hedonism that had captured the minds of many Jews, because it seems that their moral and spiritual virtue had not spared them from national and personal suffering. He bases his apologetic upon (1) his doctrine of a future life where wrongs will be righted; (2) an appeal to his personal experience; (3) an appeal to history. The writer emphasizes the Divine Fatherhood of God and his love. Also the omniscience and omnipotence of God is stressed. The divine attribute of wisdom is personified as a separate person. The author believed in the pre-existence of souls, which idea was borrowed from the Greeks. Of the author, nothing is known, save that he must have been an Alexandrian Jew. The dates seem to fall between 145 b.c. and 40 a.d.

THE WISDOM OF JESUS THE SON OF SIRACH, OR ECCLESIASTICS. There can be little doubt that Ecclesiasticus and the Wisdom of Solomon are the most valuable part of the Apocrypha for us today. They occupy the same position in the Apocrypha as Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes in our Old Testament. The word "Ecclesiasticus" means, "belonging to the church" or "used in the church," a title bestowed on certain books, which though not part of the canon were held to be suitable for use in public worship. The author is Jesus, the son of Sirach, who wrote it in Hebrew. It was translated into Greek by his grandson of the same name. From the book we learn that the author was a man of means and leisure who traveled widely. He was a philosophical observer of life and a loyal Israelite of the same persuasion as the later Sadducees. The Hebrew original seems to have been written about 190-170 b.c. and the Greek translation made between 130 and 120 b.c.. The book is a collection of meditations and proverbs relating to religion, morals and the conduct of life. It is in no definite order and is most difficult to outline. Chapters 1-43 contain a commendation of wisdom, and precepts for the regulation of life, that are adapted to persons of all classes and walks of life. Chapters 44-50 celebrate the patriarchs, prophets and other distinguished men among the Hebrews. Chapter 51 closes with a prayer of the author and an exhortation to pursue wisdom. Prominent characteristics of its ethical teaching are: (1) The influence of Greek philosophy, (2) The utilitarian character of the system as he attempts to connect his ethical system with his religion, (3) The externality of the ethical teaching. Little is said about aspirations, motives and ideals of the heart, (4) Limitation to the present life. There is no conception of a future existence in it, (5) Individualism. His ethics are for the individual, little interest is shown in society or national life. "Sirach must be sipped slowly if you want to appreciate its flavor" (Roach).

THE BOOK OF BARUCH. This book consists of three distinct documents: (1) The Preface (1:1-14). (2) A confession of sin and prayer for restoration to Divine favor (1:15-3:8). (3) A letter of encouragement to the Jews in Judah and the Dispersion (3:9-5:9). The preface gives what claims to be a historical introduction to the book. The scene is Babylon, five years after Jerusalem's destruction. Baruch, the author, reads his work to Jehoiachin and his court, who at once determine to send it to Jerusalem. Also they gather money for the Jews at Jerusalem to purchase sacrifices to offer on behalf of the king of Babylon. Of the author and date we have no certain knowledge except that he was a Hellenistic Jew and wrote about 100b.c. Four religious thoughts stand out in the book: (1) the writer's firm confidence in God and the divine promises to Israel (2) his pride in his religion (3) his anti-Gentile prejudices (4) his

devotion to the Law.

THE SONG OF THE THREE CHILDREN. This section, sometimes called the Prayer of Azarias, is an addition of 68 verses inserted by the Septuagint after Daniel 3:23. It naturally divides into three parts: (1) the prayer of Azarias (vs. 1-22) (2) a continuation of the narrative in Daniel 3:23 concerning the fiery furnace, (3) the thanksgiving song of the three martyrs (vs. 28-68). The hymn closely resembles the 148th Psalm. We know nothing of its author or date. Its historical value is of question. The 15th verse contains a direct falsehood; for it asserts that there was no prophet at that time, when it is well known that Daniel and Ezekiel both exercised the prophetic ministry in Babylon.

THE HISTORY OF SUSANNA. This is one of three additions made by the Apocrypha to the canonical Book of Daniel. In the Septuagint, it is placed before chapter 1; in the Vulgate, it is the 13th chapter. The story has no connection with the Book of Daniel, except to illustrate the wise judgement of the prophet. Susanna, the wife of Joachim, a wealthy Jew of Babylon, is sought after by two Jewish elders. Foiled in their intent, they charge her with adultery before the Council. She is condemned by the Council. Here Daniel enters the court and demands a new trial on the grounds that the witnesses perjured themselves. He proves his point, Susanna is acquitted and the elders are condemned. The purpose of the lesson seems to be to bring about (1) more stringent examination of witnesses; (2) the infliction of severe penalties on false witnesses. Nothing certain is known of its author or date.

THE HISTORY OF THE DESTRUCTION OF BEL AND THE DRAGON. This consists of two independent stories, which have no connection with the canonical book of Daniel or each other, except that both use the name of Daniel and both are directed against idolatry. The design of this fiction was to render idolatry ridiculous, and to exalt the true God; but the author has destroyed the illusion of his fiction by transporting to Babylon the worship of animals, which was never practiced there. This book forms the 14th chapter of Daniel in the Vulgate. **The Story of Bel.** The image of Bel was one of the chief objects of worship in Babylon. Daniel refused to obey the king in worshiping the image. The king argued that the image was real and alive as proven by the amount of food it consumed. Daniel asked for a test. Daniel suspecting trickery of the priests had the floor lightly strewn with fine ashes. Next morning, although the food is gone, the marks of naked feet are seen in the ashes. The priests are convicted and put to death. **The Story of the Dragon.** The story says that in Babylon there was a great dragon which was universally worshiped as divine. Daniel refused and challenged to kill the creature. The king gave his permission and he prepared a concoction of pitch. This was thrown to the dragon who ate it and burst asunder. The people were furious and demanded Daniel's death. He was thrown to the lions but remained unhurt and was finally restored to favor. The stories are both full of anachronisms and extravagances, and evidently are merely folklore adapted as a vehicle of religious instruction. They attack idolatry as foolish and wicked.

THE PRAYER OF MANASSES, alleges to be the prayer of Manasses, king of Judah, when he was captive in Babylon. The author seized upon the statement in II Chron. 33:18-19 which mentions a prayer by the king which is said to be written in the Book of the Kings of Israel. There is no justification for regarding this prayer as genuine. Everything in it points to the fact that it was an imaginative composition of a Hellenistic Jew during the last century b.c.. It has never been regarded as canonical and even the Catholic Council of Trent rejected it.

FIRST MACCABEES. This book is almost our only historical source from Ezra and Nehemiah to Josephus, but it deals with the most critical period in the history of the Jews from the Exile and Return to the coming of Christ. The narrative covers a period of forty years from the accession of Antiochus Epiphanes in 175 b.c. to the death of Simon Maccabee in 135 b.c. It gives a complete picture of the struggle of the Jews with the Syrians who sought to destroy their religion, culture and national existence. The book is divided into five sections: (1) The cause of the revolt (chapter 1); (2) The outbreak of the revolt (chapter 2) (3) The struggle under the leadership of Judas (chapters 3:1-9:22). This covers five years 166-161 b.c. (4) The leadership of Jonathan (chapters 9:23-12:53) which lasted from 161-143 b.c. Jonathan was made High Priest in 153 b.c. (5) The leadership of Simon, (chapters 13-16) from 143-135. He secured complete independence for the Jews. He was assassinated by his son-in-law, Ptolemy in 135. The author is unknown. He must have been a Palestinian Jew. It was likely written between 100 and 80 b.c. Notable characteristics of the book are: (1) Its historical value. It is a most valuable historical document, written with great

accuracy and fidelity, comparable to the best historical writings of that age. (2) It is free from legendary accretions. The narrative contains no miracles, no portents, no supernatural interventions. In this it stands alone among ancient histories. (3) Its religious tone. One of the most striking features is its religious reticence. Never once in the Greek text does the term 'God' or 'Lord' occur.

SECOND MACCABEES. This work is not a continuation of I Maccabees, as the title might imply. Rather, it is a parallel account which actually begins before the action of I Maccabees and concludes much earlier with the victory of Judas over Nicanor, 161 b.c. The book offers a half dozen additional bits of information to the record of I Maccabees. (1) Two letters from the Jews of Palestine to their brethren in Egypt (1:1- :18). (2) The writer's preface describing the aim and purpose of the book (2:19-32). (3) The attempt of Heliodorus to plunder the Temple (chapt 3). (4) The intrigues among the High Priests at Jerusalem (chapt. 4). (5) The attack on the Temple by Antiochus Epiphanes (chapt 5). (6) The martyrdom of Eleazar and the seven brethren (chapters 6 and 7). The writer definitely states that his object was to write for the pleasure and profit of his readers (2:25). II Maccabees is considerably less historical value than the first book. (1) Historical accuracy and chronological order are subordinated to the religious purpose of the book. (2) The writer loves to introduce marvelous and supernatural incidents. (3) There is a lack of true historical perspective. In spite of these failures, the book has considerable historical value. The first book presents a Sadducean viewpoint of religion. The second is written from the position of the Pharisees. It lays great stress on the resurrection of the dead, more than any other pre-Christian writing. We know nothing of its author, except that he was likely an Alexandrian.

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66.

MYSTERIES OF OUR FAITH

In our modern age, most people feel they have outgrown such things as mysteries. They tend to equate religious mysteries with superstitions, claims of Catholicism or the slight of hand trickery of self-proclaimed miracle workers. When the Bible speaks of mysteries, it ordinarily implies knowledge withheld. In the New Testament it speaks of knowledge once withheld, but now revealed. Rather than one mystery, there are many in our faith.

I. The mystery of Christ's earthly ministry. Paul writes, "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: He who was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the spirit, Seen of angels, Preached among the nations, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory" (I Tim. 3:16). Who can comprehend or fully explain the incarnation of Jesus, his virgin birth (John 1:14)? He was justified by the Holy Spirit at his baptism (Matt. 3:16), during his ministry(Luke 4:18), in his resurrection (Rom. 1:4) and in his written testimony (II Pet. 1:21). Angels announced his conception(Luke 1:26 ff), they sang at his birth (Luke 2:9-13), they were with him in his temptation (Matt. 4:11), in Gethsemane (Luke 22:43), at his arrest (Matt. 26:53), at his resurrection (Matt.28:2) and his ascension when he was received up in glory (Acts 1:10).

II. The mystery of God's will was made know to humanity in God's good time. "...the God and Father of our Lord Jesus...(made) known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good-pleasure which he purposed in him..." (Eph. 1:9). He summed up all thing in Christ, whether in heaven or on earth (Eph. 1:10). We would never have known or fathomed these mysteries had He not revealed them to us.

III. The gospel (the good news) about Jesus and our salvation was a mystery kept silent from time eternal, but was revealed to humanity through the apostolic ministry. Paul wrote, "how that by revelation was made known unto me the mystery, as I wrote before...whereby, when ye read, ye can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ; which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, as it hath now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; to wit, that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (Eph. 3:3-6).

IV. It was a mystery that Paul, a Jew, would be God's chosen instrument to take the gospel of Jesus to the Gentiles. Paul solicited prayers on his behalf that utterance would be given unto him "in opening (his) mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel..." (Eph. 6:19).

V. There were mysteries regarding the kingdom of heaven. Jesus said to the apostles, "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven..." (Matt. 13:11). Contrary to Jewish expectations, it was to be a spiritual, not a political kingdom. Jesus insisted "My kingdom is not of this world..but now is my kingdom not from hence" (John 18:36). It was to be a universal kingdom for all races, rather than reserved for Hebrews (Matt. 28:19).

VI. The relationship of Christ and his church was a mystery. Paul wrote that "the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church...Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it...This mystery is great: but I speak in regard of Christ and of the church" (Eph. 5:22-33). It teaches us to love and honor Christ and be obedient to him. It tells us He loves us in return, that he gave his life for our salvation. It reminds us that our relation to him is found in his body, the church. To be united with Christ in his church we must receive the washing of water with the word, which is Christian baptism (Acts 10:47-48). Most of the religious world has yet to understand this mystery.

VII. The resurrection of the dead is a great mystery. "Some one will say, How are the dead raised? And with what manner of body do they come?" (I Cor. 15:35). How could it possibly be that people long dead, whose bodies have completely returned to dust be mad alive again? Paul then explains the mystery, "...flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We all shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of the eye...for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (I Cor. 15: 35, 50-52). Christ was the first to be raised, never to die again. He is the living proof that they who belong to Him will be raised at his coming (I Cor. 15:23). Even the wicked will be raised, but to everlasting pain and sorrow (John 5:28-29).

VIII. The mysteries of Christ, his kingdom and his gospel are now revealed to mankind through the message of His inspired teachers. Thus Paul writes, "Whereby, when ye read, ye can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ; which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, as it hath now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit..." (Eph. 3:4-5). When we read or hear those inspired truths we will be comforted by the "full assurance of understanding, that (we) may know the mystery of God, even Christ, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden" (Col. 2:2-3). Our responsibility is to hold "the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience." (I Tim. 3:9). Great were these wonderful mysteries of God. We thank Him that they

have been revealed unto us in Christ Jesus our Lord.

THE SALVATION OF MAN

67.

WHAT WAS THE STATUS OF THE GENTILES DURING THE MOSAIC PERIOD?

Scripture reveals three major epochs or ages in which God has dealt with humanity. We identify them as the Patriarchal Age which began with Adam and; the Mosaic Age which began at Sinai which and the Christian Age which began on the Pentecost following Christ's resurrection.

The Patriarchal age ended for the Hebrews when God gave them a new law and covenant on Sinai. The Gentiles continued under the Patriarchal system that had been in force from the beginning. This we conclude from Paul's letter to the Romans.

* "For where there is no law, neither is there transgression" (Rom. 4:15). But the Gentiles were sinners. Romans 1 is the indictment of their many sins against God. Hence they were under some law from God, but not the law of Moses (Rom 2:14).

* Paul, speaking of Gentiles, says that "they show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience, bearing witness therewith, and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them..." (Rom. 2:15). This we sometimes call the law of the conscience. There is in all human beings an innate sense of right and wrong. Thus in every society of man, even the most primitive, there has been a moral code of what was right and wrong. Such codes always include laws against certain killings, incest, respect for parents, stealing, blasphemy, etc. They may be distorted or mere shadows of God's written law, yet their existence shows that somewhere in the ancient past they received such instruction from God. Note that when Gentiles kept the law written in their heart, their conscience "excused them" "in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men...by Jesus.." (Rom. 2:15-16). Also in every society of men there is an impulse to worship and offer gifts and sacrifices to some higher power. This too is a remnant of the early code that God gave to humanity.

A careful reading of the Old Testament reveals numerous people who were not Hebrews but were considered righteous before God.

* Melchizedek was a priest of God Most High. Yet he was a Canaanite. He blest Abraham who in turn gave him tithes (Gen. 14:18).

* Jethro Ruel, the father in law of Moses was a priest of God (Ex. 2:16; 18:10). He offered acceptable sacrifices (Ex. 18:12) and Moses and Aaron fellowshipped him.

* Balaam was a prophet of God who had intimate communication with Jehovah (Num. 22:1-20). He sold his soul for money, but before he was evidently a prophet of Jehovah.

* Job was a righteous man who offered sacrifices to God (1:1,5). Yet there is no evidence he served God under the

Law of Moses.

*Such men as the above were leading God's people in his worship and service, but not according to the law of Moses. The only other system they could have observed would be that of the Patriarchal Law.

* Another insight is found in God's concern for the Gentile people. He sent Joseph into Egypt to bless them as well as to provide a haven for his family.

* He saved Rahab and put her into the family stream of Christ,

* He saved Ruth and did the same.

* He was concerned to heal Naaman the Syrian.

* He sent Jonah to preach to the Ninevites that they might escape judgment. Note that the Gentile sailors who tried to save Jonah from death, prayed to Jehovah and offered sacrifice unto him (Jonah 1:14-16)

* He placed Daniel in high places in both the Babylonian and Persian governments as a blessing to those people. Note that Nebuchadnezzar praised and worshipped the God of Daniel (Dan. 4:34-37).

* He scattered the Jews among all the nations of the world to be beacons of light offering a ray of hope and direction to their Gentile neighbors.

* There was a Court of the Gentiles in the temple complex at Jerusalem. There Gentiles could draw nigh to the worship of Jehovah. This was the portion of the temple Jesus charged the Jews with making a dens of thieves (Mark 11:15-18).

Gentiles had two options. They could serve God under the patriarchal system, or they could proselyte to Judaism. There were two categories of proselytes. A full proselyte renounced his Gentile name, culture, dress and even his old diet. He took upon himself the full responsibilities of the law. The males were circumcised. Such were thenceforward considered Jews. In Luke 7 we read of a Roman centurion who begged Jesus to heal his servant. His Jewish neighbors urged Jesus to do so before the man "loveth our nation, and himself built us our synagogue" (7:2-4). A second group were known as "proselytes of the gate." These Gentiles were attracted to the God of the Hebrews, their Scripture, their elevated system of worship, their more wholesome and pious lifestyle. They hesitated however to break their ties with their families and culture, etc. They were allowed to come to the doors and widows of the synagogues and observe the worship from without. Hence they were called proselytes of the gate. In the book of Acts were repeatedly read of people referred to as "ye that fear God." (Acts 13:16). This is a reference to these proselytes of the gate. They were commonly referred to as "God-fearers."

* When Christ spoke of having other sheep, not of this fold (John 10:16) he was referring to Gentiles who along with the Hebrews would be brought together in the one fold of his coming church. Some were worshiping God as best they could with their limited knowledge, others other "standing outside the gates" of the synagogues hoping to hear some word of encouragement. But he almost certainly included all of us among the Gentiles whom he knew would one day embrace him as Lord and Savior and thus be added. In prophetic literature we call such predictive statements spoken of as a present reality, "the prophetic perfect tense."

Cornelius was either a God-fearer or else he was serving God after the Patriarchal way. We know he was yet an uncircumcised man, with whom Jews normally would not fraternize. Since the inauguration of Christ as King and the issuance of his New Covenant, Cornelius needed to come under that covenant just as the Hebrews did. He needed to hear words whereby he could be saved (Acts 11:14).

Both the Law of Moses and the Law of the Patriarchy were superceded by the New Covenant of Christ which was extended to "every creature" (Mark 16:15), of all nations (Matt. 28:19).

68.

ELECTED UNTO SALVATION

Many profound doctrines are revealed to us in God's Word. These are described as strong meat. (Heb. 5:14) and things hard to be understood (II Pet. 3::16). One of these themes, difficult but beautiful and encouraging, is the doctrine of **election**. Paul wrote that God "chose us in (Christ) before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before him...having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ..." (Eph. 1:4-5).

The word **elect** means to be chosen or selected, **ekletos**. Election is the divine selection of human objects so as to bring them into a special or a saving relationship with God.

Three Kinds of Election

We read in Scripture of the election of individuals to perform a one particular service for God which has no necessary connection with their salvation. Cyrus, King of Persia, was chosen to restore captive Israel to her homeland (Is. 45:1-4). Jesus chose the Apostles to carry his message to all the world (John 15:16), yet he said, "Did not I choose you the twelve and one of you is a devil?" (John 6:70). Paul was separated from his mother's womb to be an apostle to the Gentiles, yet many years were first spent fighting against God (Gal. 1:15-16).

God calls communities or bodies of people to special privileges in order to bless yet other people. God chose Israel to be his covenant people, that he might bless all mankind. Through Amos he said, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth" (3:2). With them alone he shared his covenant. Moses taught Israel, "Jehovah thy God hath chosen thee to be a people for his own possession, above all peoples of the earth...not....because ye were more in number....but because Jehovah loveth you, and because he would keep the oath which he sworn unto your fathers...." (Deut. 7:6-8). If we look to the original giving of that oath, God chose Abraham and his seed that in Messiah all nations of the earth would be blest (Gen.12:1-3). This election did not secure personal salvation to any one of them automatically. Each had to obey God in faith himself to be saved (Rom. 9:6-8).

The church of Christ is an elect race...." That (we) may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (I Pet. 2:9). This election of the church does not guarantee the salvation of every individual member of it. Only those who are faithful unto death will be blest eternally (Rev. 2:10).

There is the personal election of individuals to be children of God. Jesus said, "I have chosen you out of the world" (John 15:19). Peter addressed his first letter "to the **elect** ...according to the foreknowledge of God...in sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus...." (1:1-2).

Characteristics of our Election Unto Salvation

Election is Christ-centered. Isaiah described the coming Messiah as God's "chosen" (Is. 42:1-4). Christ is the **source** or the **foundation** of our election (Eph. 1:4). Also, he is the instrument or cause of our election. It was done "through Jesus Christ" (Eph. 1:5). He gave "his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

Election is realized within the Lord's church or family of obedient children, chose **us** (Eph. 1:4): that is, Christians as a body. Election unto salvation is in the kingdom and the individual enjoys the blessing only as he is identified and associated with the elect body of Christ. The church was a vital part of the eternal purpose of God (Eph. 3:8-11).

The Colossian brethren were elect (3:12) in the Son's kingdom (1:12-13). Unbelievers can be grafted into the body of the elect when in faith they obey Christ (Rom. 11:5; 20, 24).

God has a definite purpose in electing us.

- 1) "That we should be holy and without blemish before him in love..." (Eph.1:4).
- 2) We are saved "unto good works" which we should do in his name (Eph. 2:10).
- 3) That we should live righteously, teach others God's will, obey Jesus, and praise God's name (Col. 3:12-17).
- 4) That we "may show forth (his) excellencies" (I Pet. 2:9).

Election is **available to all men**. God does now wish "that any should perish but that **all** should come to repentance" (II Pet. 3:9). God "would have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (II Tim. 2:3-4). Such passages could be multiplied. Here, Calvinism obviously contradicts God by arguing that only a portion are given opportunity to be saved.

Election is **conditional**. God has ordained that a certain class or kind of people can be saved, i.e., those who believe on and obey the Son. Paul writes that "God chose you...unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and **belief of the truth**" (II Thess. 2:13). Peter tells us that we are, elect..."unto **obedience** and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus..." (I Pet. 1:1-2). In Christ God did all that needs to be done, and that could be done to reconcile men (save them), except that which men themselves, must do. That is, "Be ye reconciled unto God" (II Cor. 5:20). This occurs when we believe and are baptized (Mark 16:16). We are saved by God's grace, but grace must be accepted or received (John 1:12; Rom. 5:17-18). An elected saint must give all diligence to make his calling and election sure or he will surely fall (II Pet. 1:10-11).

Election is **never based upon our personal merit**. Paul eloquently showed the Jewish brethren, "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace" (Rom 11:5). Moses taught ancient Israel the same lesson which they subsequently forgot (Deut. 7:6-8). Election was **done in eternity**. "He chose us in (Jesus) before the foundation of the world..." (Eph. 1:4). Paul wrote Timothy that God "**called us** ...before time's eternal" (II Tim 1:9). Remember this calling was not for particular individuals but of a certain type or kind, i.e., those who would submit to Christ as Lord.

Many Blessings Are Inherent in Election

From Romans 8:28-30 we notice just a few of these rich blessing of God's elect.

- 1) All things work together for their good (vs. 28);
- 2) Justification, which means because of Christ you are to be treated just as though you had never sinned (vs. 30)
- 3) Glorification in heaven one day (vs. 30);
- 4) God's divine help and assistance (vs. 31);
- 5) All spiritual blessings (vs. 32);
- 6) Christ's intercession (vs. 34);
- 7) Ultimate victory (vs. 37-40).

With Paul we sing, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift" (II Cor. 9:15). Brethren, let us give all diligence to make our calling and election sure (II Pet. 1:10).

69.

ASPECTS OF SALVATION

With a theme as important as salvation one would think that every intelligent person would be eager to know its meaning and ramifications. Sadly such is not the case. Few folks have more than a passing knowledge of the subject. Still fewer could discuss it from the Scripture.

What Is Salvation ?

Salvation is deliverance from past sins. From that moment in adolescence when we became morally aware of and accountable for our deeds, we have been accumulating a debt of sin. Our sin alienates and separates us from God (Isa. 59:1-2). It carries the penalty of death (Rom. 6:23). It burdens us with guilt and remorse (Rom. 7:22-24). In salvation, God washes away all our past sins and guilt when in faith we obey him in baptism (Acts 22:16). Peter says when we repent and are baptized in the name of Jesus, we receive remission of sins (Acts 2:38). This means our sin debt is paid in full. Paul paints a vivid picture in Romans chapter 5: "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us...while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son..." (5:8-10). Having paid the price for our pardon, Jesus charged his disciple to "preach the gospel to the whole creation" so that he that believes and is baptized could be saved (Mark 16:15-16).

Salvation means deliverance from Satan's power. Everyone who has lived long knows the reality of Satan's power in our lives. In our foolishness we become willing servants to this evil, tyrannical master (Rom. 6:16). Realizing our miserable condition, we try to save ourselves, but to no avail. Like Paul, what we want to do we fail to do and what we despise we often do. We too cry out, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:22-24). The apostle tells us how we are saved from Satan's evil domain. It is through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 7:25). When we obey from the heart that form of doctrine (i.e., the gospel of Jesus), we are delivered and made free from sin (Rom. 6:17-18). Jesus became a man "that through death he might bring to naught him that had the power of death, that is the devil: and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:14-15). When we are in Christ, God's Holy Spirit helps us to put to death the sinful deeds in the body (Rom. 8:13). He strengthens us with power in our inward man so we may be strong to overcome Satan's power (Eph 3:16).

Salvation rescues us from God's wrath of judgment. "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through him" (Rom. 5:9). Divine justice demands that sin be punished. The wages we have earned is death (Rom. 6:23), but "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). Since he bore our penalty, God can now **justify** us. He can treat us just as if we had never sinned! Rather than impose the penalties we deserved, God can forgo our punishment because we are saved.

We are saved from this present evil world according to Paul (Gal. 1:3-4). Most folks overlook this aspect of salvation, but it is significant. Sinners may want to live on earth forever, but God's children anxiously look forward to a heavenly home (John 14:1-3). To depart and be with Christ is far better (Phil. 1:23). On earth there are continual trials and tribulations. Pain, suffering and sorrow are our common lot. In heaven all of these are done away (Rev. 21:3-4). It was a merciful act when God placed the cherubim with the flaming sword at the gate of Eden lest sin-cursed men eat of the tree of life and live forever in a world spoiled by sin (Gen. 3:22-24). Because we enjoy salvation in Christ we can pray, "Come Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20).

We are rescued from death by our Savior. Though it is the common fate of all men to experience physical death, Jesus will resurrect us from the grave. "The hour cometh and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son

of God: and they that hear shall live...they that have done good unto the resurrection of life..." (John 5:25-29). Even though our natural bodies are buried in corruption and dishonor, they will be raised in glorious incorruption (I Cor. 15:42-43). We will then be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord and shall ever be with him (I Thess. 5:17-18).

Our salvation delivers us from the second death. "This is the second death, even the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:14-15). All who die in sin will spend their eternity in damnation (John 8:21). The saved will hear Christ say "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"(Matt. 25:34). Jesus promises those who have experienced the first resurrection that the second death will have no power over them (Rev. 20:6). The first resurrection is that symbolic one every saved person experienced when he died to sin, was buried with Christ in baptism and raised (resurrected) from the baptismal waters to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:1-5).

You can enjoy this blessed salvation **now**. Hear the apostle John: "These things have I written unto you that ye may know that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God" (I John 5:13). To preserve this blessing we must **walk in the light of his word** and the blood of Jesus will keep on cleansing us from all sin (such is the meaning of the original Greek text). If we do sin, we need only confess that and "he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:7-9).

Salvation: what a thrilling thought! It is available to all men of every race (Mark 16:15-16). It is a free gift from God (Eph. 2:8-9). Its conditions are simple and easy (Acts 2:38). It will last you from now to eternity (Heb. 5:8-9). Will you not claim this marvelous gift today?

70.

THE LANGUAGE OF SALVATION

When Jehovah chose to reveal his great salvation to humanity he directed his inspired spokesmen to describe it by illustrations from their everyday life so the most humble soul could easily understand it.

The many illustrations utilized are much like the various acts of a play or verses of a song, in that they are saying essentially the same thing. In all of them we see man separated from God by an impassable barrier called sin (Isaiah 59:1-2), then we see how God saves man from his predicament through his holy Son, Jesus.

Justification

Our first illustration is drawn from the law courts. The metaphor pictures the sinner before God his judge. He is a guilty, condemned lawbreaker. Because of his guilt he can only look forward to an awful punishment in hell. But when all hope is gone, Christ the innocent one steps forward to pay the penalty of death for the sinner. "For while we were yet weak... Christ died for the ungodly... much more then being now **justified** by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God..." (Romans 5:6-9). The condemned sinner is "justified by faith" in his Savior (Romans 5:1). He is no longer condemned (Romans 8:1). He is a sinner but now God treats him as though he were innocent. Because of Christ and his trust in him, God deals with the sinner "just as if he had never left." When asked how he would reward the South for their rebellion, President Lincoln said, "I am going to treat them as though they had never left." This too is the lesson of the way the loving father received his prodigal son (Luke 15:20-24). Condemned ones are justified through faith in Christ, not by the works of the law of Moses (Galatians 2:16).

Reconciliation

Our next example is from the social realm and has to do with friendship. Here we see man pictured as an enemy of

God. "...while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son..." (Romans 5:10). Sinners are alienated and enemies in their minds and in their evil works (Colossians 1:21). In this plight, separated from God by our foolish actions, we are lost. We need to make friends with our God and thus be reconciled. But we sinners have no suitable gift to bring to our Lord against whom we have sinned. What can we do? God meets our need. "For it was the good pleasure of the Father... through Christ to reconcile all things unto himself..." (Colossians 1:19-20). Peace was effected "through the blood of the cross" (Colossians 1:20) and we were "reconciled in the body of his flesh through death" (Colossians 1:22). The reconciliation of all men is realized in the "one body" of Christ (Ephesians 2:16). But what is this one body? This favorite expression of Paul is defined in Ephesians 1:22. God gave Christ "to be head over all things **to the church, which is his body**..." So we are reconciled to God in the one true church of Christ.

Remission

From the business world we have our next illustration. Man is represented as standing before God with an impossible debt to pay, i.e., his sins. This is seen in the parable in Matthew 18:23-27. The servant owes his king over a million dollars. In a day when workers earned some 15 cents per day, this was a debt he could never pay. By right, the king could have inflicted great punishment upon him, but he forgave the debt. In Christ we have our debt of sin canceled or paid in full. God calls it **remission of sins**. No money or good works can achieve this, for "apart from shedding of blood there is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). The blood of bulls and goats could never take away sins (Hebrews 10:4). But the apostles taught, "that through his name, every one that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43). When does this occur? Hear Peter, "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto (for) the remission of sins..." (Acts 2:38). Without water baptism no one can enjoy remission of sins, i.e., have his great debt of sin marked paid in full by the Lord.

Redemption

In the Roman world, over half the population was in bondage. Slavery was a very real and everyday fact of life. Every slave longed for the day when he could be redeemed from his master and set free. It was usually through the kindness and generosity of some benefactor that a slave's price was paid and he was set free. Every man is enslaved to the tyrant Sin, with no way to free himself. "Everyone that committeth sin is the bond servant of sin" (John 8:34). God, through Christ, redeemed us. "Ye were bought with a price" (I Corinthians 6:20). "Ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life... but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish... even the blood of Christ" (I Peter 1:18-19). We have our redemption **in Christ** (Colossians 1:13-14). How then may we get **into Christ**? Paul says we are baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:27). Thus only those who are properly baptized into Christ are redeemed from the bondage of sin by his precious blood.

Conclusion

Space fails us to deal with all of God's terms that describe our glorious salvation but perhaps these will suffice to show the honest soul that his only hope of salvation is through faith in God's Son, baptism in water according to his gospel and fellowship in the church which bears his name. Will you accept the salvation God offers today?

71.

SALVATION IS BY GRACE, BUT GRACE IS NOT UNCONDITIONAL

Salvation is man's most pressing need. All have sinned and fallen short of God's glory (Rom. 3:23). The just reward for our sin is death and damnation (Rom. 6:23). We dare not ask for justice. We desperately need mercy.

Experience teaches that man is incapable of saving himself from sin's ruin. If we expect to become righteous by our own achievement we are reminded, "there is none righteous, no, not one" (Rom. 3:10). If we attempt to earn salvation by good works of morality and religion, we learn that it is "not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves..." that man is saved (Tit. 3:5). Would we justify ourselves by an attempt to keep God's law perfectly, we will learn that "by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight..." (Rom. 3:20). Should we by human wisdom set out to find right-standing before God, we are told that "the world through its wisdom knew not God" (I Cor. 1:21). Without Christ, a sinner is alienated from God's people, a stranger to the covenants of promise, without God and without hope (Eph. 2:12). In this pitiful plight, we cry out, "Wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" And the answer comes ringing across the ages, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 7:24-25a).

We Can Be Saved By Grace

The good news of the gospel can be summed up in the words of Paul to the Ephesians, "for by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God..." (Eph. 2:8). Grace means a free and unmerited gift or favor. "The New Testament writers use "*charis*" preeminently of that kindness by which God bestows favor even upon the ill-deserving and grants to sinners pardon of their offences and bids them accept of eternal salvation through Christ" (J. H. Thayer, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 666). Grace is God's part in our salvation. Faith is our response to God's grace.

"God Is Love"

God's grace springs from his loving nature (I John 4:8). The God of love sent his son to save us from punishment (John 3:16). When the grace of God appeared (i.e., Jesus) bringing salvation to all men, he instructed us as to God's will for our lives (Tit. 2:11-12). Through "the gospel of the grace of God," the inspired apostles made known to us the conditions of our forgiveness (Acts 20:24). By grace God gave us his holy church to see that each person has opportunity to be saved and to provide a proper environment for the saved on earth (Heb.12:28). The grace of our Lord has prepared for us an infallible record (the Bible) on which to base our faith and by which to order our lives. This "word of his grace...is able to build (us) up and give (us) the inheritance among all them that are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).

God's grace offers salvation to all people regardless of their race or record. The Lord is "not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Pet. 3:9). All earthlings can rejoice that "the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men" (Tit. 2:11).

Salvation By Grace Is Conditional

God saves us by grace, but we do not read of salvation by grace alone. Numerous teachers have erred at this vital point. Scripture makes it plain that **God's offer of grace is conditioned on our faithful response** to his will. Hear Paul: "For by grace have ye been saved through faith" (Eph. 2:8). If salvation were by grace alone, since grace is extended to all, literally all would be saved: even those who did not wish to be. Vile sinners and rebels would populate heaven along with God's faithful servants. Such universalism is untenable.

God has determined that we play a part in our salvation. Peter exhorted the men of Jerusalem to “save yourselves” (Acts 2:40). In the words of Paul, man’s part is to have faith or to believe on the Lord (Eph. 2:8). We are “justified freely by his grace...through faith in his blood...” (Rom. 3:25).

What Is Saving Faith?

A common mistake in the religious world is misunderstanding the Biblical meaning of faith. This does more than cause inconvenience; it can be fatal. We must look to God’s word for the proper meaning. Saving faith comes from hearing the word of Christ (Rom. 10:17). Religious convictions based on human opinions, traditions and doctrines do not qualify. Biblical faith is living and obedient. Nothing avails “but faith working through love” (Gal. 5:6). Thus, Christ is the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him (Heb. 5:9). Salvation by grace is received by obedient faith! James labels “faith only” as dead and worthless (Jas. 2:24, 26). We see a Biblical demonstration of saving faith in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. The author, by numerous examples, vividly portrays faith as a trusting heart gladly obeying God’s will. Noah and his family were saved from destruction because he, “moved with godly fear, prepared an ark...and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith” (Heb. 11:7). The same kind of faith saves us today.

Obedient faith does not attempt to earn or merit salvation. It is evident that we cannot save ourselves. God paid the price and offers us salvation freely upon the condition that we believe in his son and obey his will. Some object that to do anything beyond mental acceptance is to attempt to earn our salvation. Should I offer to send you a coupon for a wonderful gift, free upon the condition that you send me a stamped, self-addressed envelope, surely you would not claim you earned or merited the favor you received. So it is in salvation. Through Christ, God offers free salvation to all who believe and are baptized (Mark 16:16). Those whose faith leads them to do so are saved (Acts 22:16). They in no way place God under obligation. They are simply claiming his gracious offer. This helps us understand Philippians 2:12 which says, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”

We Are Not Saved By Works Done In Our Own Righteousness

Our salvation is not of ourselves, not of works, lest any one should boast (Eph. 2:8-9). In every age there have been folks who thought they could achieve salvation by their own efforts. Scripture presents two classic cases for our learning. The proud Pharisaic Jews sought to be justified by the works of the Law of Moses. While acknowledging their zeal for God, Paul wrote of them: “For being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God” (Rom. 10:3). Sophisticated Gentile philosophers thought that they could attain salvation by human reason. The same apostle comments that they, “Professing themselves to be wise...became fools” and fell into gross idolatry, “wherefore God gave them up...” (Rom. 1:22-24). The greatest minds “in their wisdom knew not God.” They became foolish in the attempt (I Cor. 1:20-21). Tragically, men are yet trying to save themselves with no better success. Every attempt of man to establish a new kind of church or to introduce a new doctrine or demand in religion is a vain attempt to do it “our way.” Such is doomed to failure. Attempts of sinners to somehow mitigate their vices by great deeds of charity or benevolence have precisely the same internal flaw. Beneficial as these deeds may be to the recipients, they have no saving power. But, they can be fatal to the man trusting in them, for they may lull him into the vain hope that God will be obligated to treat him kindly. Thus he will fail to accept God’s grace on the terms offered

The Ephesians Were Saved By Grace

Paul reminded the Ephesians Christians of their salvation by grace through faith (Eph. 2:4-8). If we do what they did, we too can enjoy the same blessing. They “heard the word of the truth, the gospel of (their) salvation, in whom, having also believed, (they) were sealed ...with the Holy Spirit...” (Eph. 1:13). They were taught the necessity of repentance toward God (Acts 20:21). “And when they heard this they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 19:5). By doing as they did we too will be saved by grace through faith. We must be faithful unto death (Rev. 2:10) else we will have received his grace in vain (II Cor. 6:1). Be assured that “God is able to make all grace abound unto you; that ye, having always all sufficiency in everything, may abound unto every good work” (II Cor. 9:8).

It is the supreme discovery of life that we need not punish ourselves in a hopeless effort to earn God’s forgiveness. It is freely offered to all. We must gladly accept his gift of love on the terms offered. A grateful heart will make the best effort to please him. No longer do we as criminals seek by our own strength to escape our chains, rather as faithful children we do our best to please our loving Father.

72.

THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL

In one of the glorious visions given to the Apostle John, while imprisoned on Patmos, he saw an “angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred and tongue, and people” (Rev. 14:6). The gospel is the good news that God has sent Christ to be our Savior (John 3:16); that the price for our sins has been paid by Christ’s death on the cross (I Cor. 15:1-3); that God wants all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (I Tim. 2:4); that salvation is the free gift of God’s grace to all who in faith obey Jesus (Eph. 2:8-9; Heb. 5:9). Note that John speaks of the “**everlasting gospel.**”

I. The first announcement of the gospel was spoken to the crest-fallen couple in Eden. They had disobeyed their God. The fear of death and separation weighed heavily upon them (Gen. 2:17). To give them hope, God said to the serpent, the seed of the woman “shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Gen. 3:15). These words, vague though they were, promised that at some future day “the seed of the woman” would crush the Evil One who had wrought their ruin. Notice, God did not say “their seed” but “the seed of the woman.” In this we see the first hint of the virgin birth of the Savior. From early times, believers have called these words, the “**proto-evangel.**”

II. Paul tells us that “the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand unto Abraham, saying in thee shall all the nations be blessed” (Gal. 3:8; Gen. 12:3). As in Eden, the details were not then revealed, but the good news was that even Gentiles would have access to the salvation God was bringing about through Abraham.

III. The gospel was preached to the Hebrews in their feasts, sacrifices and rituals. Each year they observed the Passover commemorating their salvation from death and slavery in Egypt. Paul said, “For our Passover also hath been sacrificed, even Christ...” (I Cor. 5:7). Every lamb slain on their sacred altar was a reminder that an innocent life must be given for their sins. Their Day of Atonement was an annual reminder that their forgiveness was incomplete and temporary and wholly dependent on a greater sacrifice yet to be made (Heb. 10:1, 4-7). In every the heart of every devout descendent of Abraham there was a n undying yearning for the coming Messiah.

IV. The gospel was preached by Isaiah. The great prophet predicted “a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name, Immanuel (i.e., God with us) (Is. 7:14). He told the people, “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace...The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this” (Is. 9:6-7). In his 53rd chapter, the prophet described his vicarious death. “He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrow, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised; and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows;....smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him and with his stripes we are healed...and Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Is. 53:3-6). With this prophetic portrait, the godly knew what the Savior’s role would be.

V. Jeremiah preached the gospel beforehand. He told the Hebrews “Behold the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah...I will put my law in their inward parts and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people...they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them...for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more” (Jer. 31:31-34). The good news was that a new covenant would offer complete and lasting forgiveness.

VI. Finally, after hundreds of years, Messiah at last came. So we read in Mark 1:1, “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” At his birth, angels from heaven told the shepherds, “Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy...for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:10-11). When the time came to begin his ministry, Jesus came...preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God and saying...the kingdom of God is at hand” (Mark 1:14). When asked to speak at his home synagogue in Nazareth, he read and applied to himself the words of Isaiah, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor...” (Luke 4:16-18). His holy life, his wonderful message, the miraculous things he did, his atoning death and resurrection were good news to his generation and to all since that day.

VII. When He gave his Great Commission, Jesus charged his disciples to go “preach the gospel to the whole creation” (Mark 16:15). The gospel is a gift to all of humanity. The mission of his church is to make this good news known to every creature!

VIII. Just what did the Gospel message include? Paul gave a capsule version of the gospel in his First Letter to the Corinthians. “I make known unto you...the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, wherein also ye stand, by which also ye are saved...that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day...” (I Cor. 15:1-3). It is the good news of the wonderful work of God through Christ for the salvation of sinners, from the Creation to the Consummation (Rom. 3:24-25). It is “the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24). It is the gospel of his kingdom (Matt. 4:23). The gospel teaches us to “Fear God, and give Him glory...and worship Him that made the heaven and earth” (Rev. 14:7). Remember that he who made heaven and earth is Christ the mighty creator of all that exists (Col. 1:16).

IX. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to all who believe (Rom. 1:16). We should never be ashamed of nor apologetic for the gospel of our Lord. It must be published abroad to all nations (Mark 13:10) without addition or subtraction (Rev. 22:18-19)..

X. The gospel must be believed (Mark 1:15) and obeyed (II Thess. 1:8-9). That obedience includes being baptized, buried with Christ in baptism (Mark 16:16; Rom. 6:3-4) wherein he saves us from our sins.

Conclusion: The gospel, which is our great blessing, is also our privilege and burden. In receiving its blessings we take on ourselves the responsibility to preach the everlasting gospel to every creature on the earth. Of that responsibility we cannot be excused.

73.

BLOOD AND SALVATION

It has always been true that “apart from shedding of blood there is no remission” of sins (Heb. 9:22).

THE PATRIARCHAL AND MOSAIC AGES

From the earliest times, sinful man has had to approach God with blood for his transgressions. Abel brought a slain lamb before God (Gen. 4:4-5). This he did by faith (Heb. 11:4). Since faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17), he must have been so instructed. Cain failed to bring a blood offering and was rejected. Under Moses, God said, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you” (Ex. 12:13). The first covenant itself was dedicated with blood (Heb. 9:18-20). Each year on a date near our October 1, the high priest came before God with the blood of atonement for himself and the whole congregation (Lev. 16:14). God explained to them, “The life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that maketh atonement by reason of the life” (Lev. 17:11). Yet in all of these, it was impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins (Heb. 10:4). It could only forestall the judgement.

Why then did they offer those sacrifices all those years? First, they constantly reminded them of their sins and their need for pardon. Second, it was God’s ordained plan for them that he might save them by grace through faith when Christ, the true and acceptable sacrifice, died (Heb. 9:15; Rom. 3:25). All of those innocent victims were a perpetual reminder of the coming Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world (Heb. 10:10-14).

THE NEW COVENANT

Zechariah, the prophet, predicted a day when a fountain would be open to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness (13:1). The blood of animals could never take away sins, but the offering of Christ did suffice (Heb. 10:1-4). “For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified” (Heb. 10:14). Christ was that Lamb of God that took away the sins of the world (John 1:29).

FOUR MAJOR BENEFITS FROM CHRIST’S SHED BLOOD

1. **His blood dedicated and sealed the new Covenant.** The Hebrew writer states, “Wherefore even the first covenant hath not been dedicated without blood (9:18) His inferred conclusion is that the second covenant also was dedicated with the blood of a better sacrifice, Christ himself (9:19-27). So Jesus said in instituting his memorial supper, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood” (Lk. 22:20).

2. **He paid the price for the world's sins with his blood.** In whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses..." (Eph. 1:7).

3. **The Church of Christ was purchased with his blood** (Acts 20:28).

4. **The doors of heaven were opened to fallen man by the blood of Jesus.** "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by the way which he dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh" (Heb. 10:19-20).

In reality there could be no Christianity without the blood of Christ. Pity the liberal churchman who wants to keep Christianity but rejects the doctrine of the atoning blood of Christ. Without the blood he has nothing but a yoke of empty ritual about his neck.

APPROPRIATING THE BLESSINGS

In order to benefit from the blood that was freely given for every man (Tit. 2:11), we must appropriate to ourselves its blessings by faithful obedience (Heb. 5:8-9).

* **We must study the blood sealed new covenant** of Christ (II Tim. 2:15).

* **We must become a member of the blood-bought church** to benefit from the purchase price (Acts 20:28).

* **We must be baptized** that his blood may wash away our sins. The blood of Christ cleanses our conscience (Heb. 9:14). But our conscience is cleansed when we are baptized (I Pet. 3:21). Therefore we must be baptized that our conscience be cleansed by Christ's blood.

* **We must commune weekly in memory of the blood shed** for our sins (Matt. 26:28; Acts 20:7).

* **We must live in daily contact with his blood** by walking in the light and confessing and forsaking our sins (I John 1:7).

The heavenly guests which John saw had washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 7:14). May we be privileged to stand with that blood-washed throng and sing the song of salvation unto God and the Lamb (Rev. 7:13).

74.

RECEIVING JESUS

Jesus "came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name." (John 1:11-12). Everyone must make a decision about Jesus; to receive or reject him. Too long we have left these passages in the hands of misguided teachers who have abused its meaning. They teach lost souls who believe in Jesus to simply say, "I receive Jesus" and salvation is theirs. While we oppose their interpretation, we should boldly use the concept of "receiving Jesus," showing men its true import.

I. We must **receive Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of the Living God"** (Matt. 16:18). He is the Messiah, promised to

mankind from the Garden of Eden. He fulfilled more than 300 Old Testament prophecies relating to Messiah. “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Rev. 19:10). Being the Son of the Living God, Jesus is divine, yea he is deity. He is the **Word** which was God (John 1:1). He is the “I AM” (John 8:58). He is our great God and Savior (Tit. 2:13). No man truly receives Jesus unless he believes these truths about him.

II. We must **receive him as Lord of our lives**. “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Rom. 10:9). If Jesus is the Lord of our lives, then we are but slaves. The apostles commonly referred to themselves as bond-servants of Jesus (Rom. 1:1). As slaves of Jesus, we have no “rights.” They have all been surrendered unto our Lord. His will is our law. We must continually deny ourselves (Matt. 16:24). Many have confessed that they believe Jesus to be God’s Son while never acknowledging him as the Lord of their being.

III. Christ must be **received according to truth**. Only God’s truth can make us free from sin, error and damnation (John 8:32). All acceptable worship must be in spirit and truth (John 4:24). God’s word is that exclusive source of heavenly truth (John 17:17). To receive Jesus in any way other than the Bible way is of no value. Inspired men taught sinners to receive Jesus by faith, repentance and baptism (Acts 16:31, 2:38). So today this is the only way to receive Jesus.

IV. Sinners must **receive Jesus in love**. We must love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mk. 12:29). Surely we must love His only Son as much. “He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father that sent him.” (John 5:23). This love must be more than pious words and public pronouncements. It is demonstrated by faithful obedience. “If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments” (John 14:15). This speaks not just of the great and obvious precepts but even of the small and seemingly unimportant teachings. Love for Jesus is seen in faithful obedience.

V. We must **receive him by obedience**. Since this point has been thoroughly discussed above, we only add this thought, Jesus “became unto all them that obey him, the author of eternal salvation” (Heb. 5:9). The denominational concept that “receiving Jesus” is to merely “open the heart” and say “I receive Jesus” is completely foreign to the revelation of God. No man receives Jesus by faith alone (Jas. 2:20-26). It is a false delusion if men think they have received him unto salvation in that way.

VI. He must be **received for a lifetime**. We must be faithful unto death to receive the crown of life (Rev. 2:10). Part time discipleship is not accepted. There is no retirement age. “He that endureth to the end shall be saved” (Mark 13:13). A short-term reception of Christ is worse than no reception at all (II Pet. 2:20-22). For once a man has tasted the good word of God and the blessings of salvation and then rejects them, there is nothing left to pierce his calloused heart and bring him to repentance (Heb. 5:4-6). When you receive Jesus as Lord, your should never look back to the old life (Luke 9:62). Those who do so are not fit for the kingdom of God.

Having seen what it means to receive Jesus, the only remaining question is, Have you so received him?

75.

“YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN”

John’s Gospel records a number of Jesus’ interviews and individual teaching situations. Among the most notable of them was the one with Nicodemus, a prominent Jewish religious leader. It was to this man that our Lord uttered those immortal words, “Ye must b born again” (John 3:7 KJV).

A PROFILE OF NICODEMUS

We are told that Nicodemus was a Pharisee (John 3:1); i.e., a small sect of the Jews numbering some 6,000. They were an elite group of religious leaders, providing the teachers for the synagogues, or local congregations of Israel. In the New Testament, they are portrayed as self-righteous hypocrites who were the chief enemies of Jesus (See Matt. 23:13-36). Obviously Nicodemus was of a different cut than most of his Pharisaic brothers, else he would not have approached the Lord as he did. Our subject was also a ruler of the Jews. This means he was a member of the great Sanhedrin Council that supervised the social, political and religious life of the nation. There were seventy members plus the high priest on the council. Thus, he held an important position of leadership in the life of the nation. We know that he was a wealthy man because he provided the costly burial ointments for Jesus (John 19:38-40).

THE SITUATION AND SETTING.

The Lord had just brought his ministry to Jerusalem from Galilee. He had shocked the citizens of Jerusalem by driving the corrupt money changers out of the Temple (John 2:13-22). Large numbers of people believed on him, beholding his signs (John 2:23-25). We are told that Nicodemus came to Jesus by night. Many have raised questions about his choice of time. Was he afraid of his fellow Jewish leaders? Was he just timid? Was he too proud to be seen with such a lowly man as Jesus seemed to be. The Jewish rabbis said that the best time to study the law was a night, when undisturbed. Perhaps he sought privacy for a serious talk with the Lord. Maybe he just felt that he could not wait until morning to ask his questions. Rather than fault him, we say it is to his honor that he came. This tells us he was seeking knowledge of spiritual things.

THE CONVERSATION

Nicodemus began the conversation with several concessions (John 3:2). He called the young Nazarene “Rabbi” (i.e., teacher), which was a title of distinction. He admitted that Jesus was a teacher come from God. He acknowledged the miraculous signs Jesus had performed. He recognized that God was with him. We are not told that he recognized his Messiahship at that point.

Christ’s response was quick and pointed: “Except one be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (3:5). Evidently Nicodemus felt that his race and position as a ruler would entitle him to a place in the kingdom. This was typical for a Pharisee. But Jesus was not intimidated by this powerful dignitary, nor did he adjust his message for him. It is noteworthy that our Lord by-passed all formal niceties of introduction and small talk and took his guest right to the heart of his problem. While Nicodemus would have talked of signs and wonders and traded compliments, Jesus waved these aside as unimportant and talked about a change of heart and life. Nicodemus’ real need was brought into clear focus. He needed a new birth if he hoped to enter the Lord’s kingdom (John 3:3-5). He was a man that had everything that birth and breeding could provide and yet the Galilean dared to tell him he must start all over again. No doubt it was stunning to such an aristocrat. Surely it seemed audacious for a young teacher to speak thusly to a man of his station.

In the original Greek language “born again” means “from the beginning, completely, radically.” It likewise connotes, “for a second time” and “from above, from God” (William Barclay, **Daily Study Bible, The Gospel of John**, Vol. 1, p. 113). All of these thoughts are included in Jesus’ words. To be born again means to change one’s

life radically and completely. Such a change is like a starting life all over again. Man cannot accomplish such a feat alone so he must have heavenly assistance.

Nicodemus had a problem. He did not grasp what Jesus meant. "How can a man be born when he is old?" Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb...?" (3:4). It never occurred to him that Jesus spoke of a spiritual birth; he could think only of the physical. But, even the apostles failed to comprehend the spiritual import of Christ's words on numerous occasions. Nicodemus was not being dishonest; he just had not reached a stage of knowledge and experience where he was able to grasp such truths.

THE NEW BIRTH EXPLAINED

Jesus kindly proceeded to explain his words to the perplexed leader. It was not a birth of the flesh, such as childbirth, that he spoke of, but one of "water and the Spirit" Paul had the same experience in mind it Titus 3:5. "He saved us through the washing to regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit..." Peter preached the same new birth to the Jews in Jerusalem saying, "Repent ye and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Compared together, their identical meaning is clearly seen:

- * Be born of water and the Spirit...enter the kingdom of God (John 3:3-5).
- * Receive a washing (water) of regeneration...renewal of Holy Spirit...be saved (Tit. 3:5).
- * Be baptized (water)...receive the gift of the Holy Spirit...for remission of sins...added to the church (Acts 2:38, 47).

Jesus told Nicodemus that the new birth of water and the Spirit puts one into the kingdom or church of God (Compare Mat. 16:18-19). But Christian baptism puts one into the church which is his kingdom (I Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:22). Therefore Christian baptism is the new birth.

When one is born again he becomes a new creature **in Christ** (II Cor. 5:17) But one is baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:27). Therefore, one is born again when he is baptized into Christ.

The new birth is made possible through the instruction of the Word of God (I Pet. 1:22-23). Apart from the gospel no one would have any idea what to do to be born again. It is important to note that there is but one spiritual birth and it consists of two elements; water and the Spirit.

Jesus went on to explain to this student that it is the spirit of man that needs to be reborn, not his fleshly body (John 3:6). "That which is born of the flesh (natural birth) is fleshly (body). "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit," (i.e., the inward spirit of man). This birth of the spiritual man is like the movement of the wind. "The wind bloweth where it will and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not where it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). The wind is invisible. One cannot see the wind but he can see the results of the wind's presence. So it is the invisible spirit of man that is reborn or changed by the invisible Holy Spirit of God in the new birth. Although we cannot see the Holy Spirit at work upon the human spirit, we definitely can see the results.

Nicodemus' response was one of perplexity. "How can these things be?" he asked (John 3:9). It was not that he questioned the desirability of the change, rather he doubted the possibility of it. When one is old, it is hard to make radical changes. The more prominent and powerful ones' position, the more difficult it is. Evangelism reaps its greatest harvest among the young; not because they are gullible, but because they are less hardened in their ways.

Humanly, such drastic change as Jesus spoke of is impossible, but the Spirit of God is able to effect it. "Nothing is too hard for Jehovah" (Gen. 18:14). God can make the chief of sinners equal to the chiefest apostle (I Tim. 1:15; II Cor. 11:5).

THE CONCLUSION

Jesus responded to the Pharisee's doubting comment by asking, "Art thou the teacher of Israel, and understandest not these things?" (John 3:10). How could he effectively teach others if he could not perceive such a simple point? Then the Lord rebuked the distinguished ruler, saying, "Ye receive not our witness" (John 3:11). His problem was not so much perception as rejection. "If...I told you earthly things and ye believed not, how shall ye believe if I tell you heavenly things?" (3:12). The bottom line is reached in 3:14. "...As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up (crucified) that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life" (John 3:14-15). Nicodemus would have no problem with being born of water and Spirit if he ever reached the point of saving faith in the son of God. So today, the person who refuses to concede his need for Christian baptism (Acts 2:38) is really suffering from a faulty faith. Saving faith always is eager to obey the Lord's commands (Heb. 5:8-9; Acts 10:48). Have you been born again?

76.

PARTAKING OF THE DIVINE NATURE

Many times Christians read the words of Scripture without stopping to comprehend the message they convey. For example, Peter writes. "He hath granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises; that through these ye may become partakers of the divine nature..." (II Pet. 1:3-4). Just what does it mean to partake of God's divine nature?

Remember the day when you were saved from your sins. You were "baptized into Christ (and) did put on Christ" (Gal. 3: 26-27). In doing that you became a child of God. Just as your child shares your nature, so does your spirit share the nature of God. In that same act of baptism you were united with Christ (Rom. 6:5). In addition to forgiveness of your sin debt, you received "the gift of the of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). When you surrendered your will to His and obeyed his will, the Father and the Son came to you and made their abode with you (John 15:23). As a Christian your body is a temple of God and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you (I Cor. 6:19). Christ in you is your hope of glory (Col. 1.26-27).

Since the beginning, each man and woman born on earth has been made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26). When in time we marred our lives by our sin, that image was tarnished. Our relationship with our Creator was broken. A major part of Christ's mission was to redeem us from our fallen state and reconcile us to fellowship with our Creator (II Cor.5:18). With Him as our sacrifice (I Cor. 15:3), we purified our souls through our obedience to the truth (I Pet. 1:22). In Jesus, the image of God is restored to its proper condition and kept clean by the blood of Christ (I John 1:7).

When our old nature was "crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20) and we were united with him, we were "transformed

into the same image (of Christ) from glory to glory” (II Cor. 3:18). This is facilitated by the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:2). In Christ we are a new creation (II Cor.5:17) the old life, with its loves and loyalties has passed away, replaced with a new life filled with an unreserved love for the Sacred Three. “Christ is formed in” us (Gal. 4:19). As followers of His Son we are privileged to wear the holy name, Christian (I Pet. 4:16). We have the seal of our God upon us, marking us as His (Eph. 1:13). His divine Spirit within us causes us to produce the good fruit of the Spirit and to suppress the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-22).

Now I freely confess that I cannot explain the “how” of partaking of the divine nature nor answer every question that might be raised, but I confidently believe it because the Bible plainly tells me these things. Remember, we walk by faith (II Cor. 5:7). As someone once said, “Accept by reason all that you can understand of the Bible’s teaching and the balance by faith and you will not go wrong.” Partaking of the divine nature is in the realm of faith. God says it, thus we believe it. Skeptics may scoff but we trust the sacred instructions recorded in the Bible. By them we will live. By them we will die. We have every reason to believe what they say.

Back in 1677, Henry Scougal wrote on this grand theme. He said, “True religion is a *union* of the soul with God, a real *participation of the divine nature*, the very image of God drawn upon the soul, or, in the apostle’s phrase, *it is Christ formed within us*. Briefly, I know not how the nature of religion can be more fully expressed than by calling it *a divine life*” (**The Life of God in the Soul of Man**). Amen and Amen. JHW

My thanks to Lacy Williams for the idea of this lesson and the quote.

77.

JUSTIFICATION IS BY FAITH, BUT NOT BY FAITH ALONE

Paul affirms, "We reckon therefore that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law" (Rom. 3:28). This is the dominant theme of the Christian doctrine of salvation. We should boldly preach this grand truth even as did Paul.

Protestant theologians have erred, however, by teaching justification by faith alone. **The Methodist Discipline** states, "Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort." **The Baptist Manual** declares, ". . .that justification . . .is bestowed. . .solely through faith in Christ. . ." To teach this concept, one must twist or ignore the clear declaration of the inspired author, James. The last half of the second chapter of his epistle is devoted to establishing the fact that "by works a man is justified, and not only by faith" (Jas. 2:24). He cites two examples of Old Testament worthies who were said to be blessed of God because of their faith. Abraham obeyed God even when told to sacrifice his son. Thus, his "faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect. . ." (Jas. 2:22). Bloomfield renders this passage, ". . .by works his faith was rendered complete. . ." So also was the case of Rahab. She was justified when her faith led her to obey God in the matter of assisting the Hebrew messengers (Jas. 2:25). Thus he concludes that by works a man is justified and not only by faith (Jas. 2:24).

The same truth obtains today: The faith that saves is the faith that obeys. Only a faith that works through love avails anything, said Paul (Gal. 5:6). It should be no marvel then that God placed repentance and baptism along with faith as prerequisites for justification. The Holy Spirit led Peter to tell the believing Jews to "Repent ye, and be baptized

every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins. . ." (Acts 2:38). Those who gladly received his word were baptized and their sins were forgiven (Acts 2:41). In so doing their faith wrought with their works and was rendered complete.

The principle can also be seen in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus (Acts 22:1-16). His faith, strong as it was, and great as were its effects upon his inner man, was not imputed to him for righteousness, so as to give him peace with God, until he arose and was baptized. When his faith worked by submitting to baptism, it was made perfect, and the scripture was fulfilled which says: He believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness."

Paul himself preached this truth in his ministry. To the Jews of Antioch of Pisidia he said, ". . .through this man (Jesus)] is proclaimed unto you remission of sins; and by him every one that believeth is justified" (Acts 13:38-39). Now, when does one receive remission of sins? Peter answers for us: "Repent ye, and be baptized. . .in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins" (Acts 2:38). When the sinner does so, Paul depicts him as a believer that is justified.

J.M. Furness comments the "Justification is a 'free gift' (Rom. 5:16, 18), and is not a future hope, but a present privilege: we *are* justified (Rom. 5:1, 9:NEB)." W.E. Vine tells us that "being justified freely by his grace" (Rom. 3:24) "is in the present continuous tense, indicating the constant process of justification in the succession of those who believe and are justified. " This reflects John's teaching that the blood of Christ keeps on cleansing those who keep on walking in the light and confessing their sins (I John 1:7-9).

In ancient times a person charged with a crime was arraigned before judges. When the judges heard the case, they announced their judgement by placing small stones in an urn. If they judged him innocent, they deposited a white stone, a black one if guilty. ". . . the ceremony of putting white pebbles into an urn did not *make* the accused individual either just or innocent but it *formally declared* him just and innocent. It was a judicial announcement of acquittal." So when we come to Christ on the terms of the gospel God justifies us, although we are neither just or innocent. But because Christ died in our place, he can justify the ungodly

(Rom. 4:5). The soul thus justified must never feel proud of his attainments nor boast of his righteousness. Our salvation is by grace (Eph. 2:8-9). "Let any man that ever lived, appear before the bar of God stripped of the mantle which God's mercy has thrown over him, and he must be condemned as a sinner."

"Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God. . ." (Rom. 5:1). Was there ever a grander theme? Is there any message more needed in a sin-cursed world? Can we ever exhaust its meaning? Let every disciple of Jesus shout it from the house tops and take the glad news to every soul on planet Earth. God will justify the sinner who believes in Jesus and obeys his blessed gospel! May we never, never, never abandon such a glorious theme to those who pervert its message and destroy its power.

78.

THE AWESOMENESS OF JUSTIFICATION

To communicate his will to humanity, God selected terminology from the daily vocabulary of the first century Roman world. From the business world he chose the expression "remission of your sins" (Acts 2:38). The idea being, in salvation one's sin-debt is paid in full. From the slave market came the word "redeem" and its cognate "redemption" (Colossians 1:14) which meant to pay the price for the slave and then to set him free. From the social realm was taken the expression "reconciliation" (Colossians 1:22), which describes those who have been alienated,

against restored to friendship. From the legal world he took our word **justification**.

Behind the term justification we see a courtroom scene. God the judge is sitting at the bar, man the criminal stands before him, hopelessly guilty. The law is clear and to the point: "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Punishment must be inflicted, the price must be paid. The righteous Judge has no options on that point. But then steps forward the Judge's only Son, against whom none can charge a sin (I Peter 2:22). He lays aside his robe and we see across his back the bloody stripes of the Roman scourge, a wound is in his side, his hands and feet have been likewise pierced. He says, "Father, I have already paid the price for his sins" (I Timothy 2:6). The Judge, obviously moved by the painful wounds in the body of his beloved child, looks at the confessed sinner and sees in him gratitude and love for his benefactor. He hears the wretch cry out to the Son, "I will serve you forever for what you have done." He takes up his pen and writes across the indictment, "Pardoned." The sinner has been justified!

McClintock and Strong tell us that justification designates "...the judicial act of God by which he pardons all the sins of the sinner who believes in Christ, receiving him into favor, and regarding him as relatively righteous, notwithstanding his past actual unrighteousness"(1). W. E. Vine explains, "...justification being the legal and formal acquittal from guilt by God as Judge"(2). William Barclay sums up this grand doctrine in the simple phrase, "...God treats the sinner as if he had not been a sinner at all. Instead of treating the sinner as a criminal to be obliterated God treats him as a child to be loved"(3).

The use of the word justification in Scripture demonstrates its meaning. "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the righteous, both of them alike are an abomination to Jehovah" (Proverbs 17:15). Note that "justifieth" is set in antithesis to "condemneth." "It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?" (Romans 8:33b-34a).

Man's Need For Justification

Justification will not be fully appreciated unless we understand man's predicament without it. Since that fateful day that Adam sinned in Eden, the human race has fought a losing battle with sin. Excepting those who died in infancy, those who were mentally incompetent, and our Lord Jesus, all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory (Romans 3:23). The natural consequence of transgression is death. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:20). This death is both physical and spiritual; for time and eternity.

Not only is man faced with the penalty of death, he has no means of extricating himself.

1) He cannot be good enough to save himself. Isaiah said, "For we are all become as one that is unclean, and all our righteousness are as a polluted garment..." (Isaiah 64:6). Paul reminds us that salvation is "not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves..." (Titus 3:5).

2) Personal sacrifice will not atone for sin. Paul told the Corinthians, "And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing" (I Corinthians 13:3).

3) Works of law cannot save. "Because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight..." (Romans 3:20). This is true of Moses' law, the moral law, or any human code. It is the function of law to punish the offender; it cannot, therefore, save the man it is bound to punish. Even the law of the Spirit of life that Christ has given will not save us if we separate it from vicarious death of Jesus and the mercy by which he offers to save us! "...through the law cometh the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20).

4) Acts of worship cannot atone for sins committed. Such is not the promise or purpose of worship. Worship is the adoration of the saved for their Savior.

5) Silver and gold cannot purchase forgiveness. The currency of salvation is a different kind. Truly we sing, "In my hand no price I bring, simply to thy cross I cling."

6) Human wisdom and philosophy cannot save us. Paul declares, "...the world through its wisdom knew not God" (I Corinthians 1:21). "...the way of man is not in himself, it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jeremiah

10:23).

Thus all of man's efforts to justify himself fail and leave him hopeless as a drowning man in the ocean.

How Can A Man Be Just With God?

These were the plaintive words of Job when his world collapsed about him and God did not respond to his cry (Job 9:2). The answer to this great question is the most important information in the world!

1) Justification is an act of God. Paul declares, "It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?" (Romans 8:33b-34). The initiative was on his part. He so loved the souls of lost men that he gave his only begotten Son to save them (John 3:16).

2) We are "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus..."(Romans 3:24). While we are unable to earn or merit justification, his great heart of mercy freely offers forgiveness to all. He is not willing "that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"(2 Peter 3:9). He "would have all men be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth" (I Timothy 2:4).

3) Our salvation is possible because we are "justified by his blood" (Romans 5:9). It is only because the innocent Christ died in our stead, thus paying the price for our redemption, that God "might himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:24-26).

4) Not only was it necessary for Christ to die, he had to be resurrected before justification could be realized. He "was raised for our justification" (Romans 4:25). A dead Christ could save no man. Resurrected, he ever lives to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25).

5) The Corinthians were washed, sanctified and justified "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God" (I Corinthians 6-11). By metonymy, the name of the Lord Jesus stands for the Master himself. Christ died for our justification and the Holy Spirit revealed to us the way to receive the blessing (Ephesians 3:1-6). He is given to all who obey the gospel (Acts 5:32) and is the seal and earnest of their salvation (Ephesians 1:13-18).

6) We are "justified by faith" (Romans 5:1). This is our response to God's extended mercy. "...without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him..." (Hebrews 11:6). This faith is a loving trusting, obedient faith in Christ Jesus. Paul delights in calling it the "obedience of faith"(Romans 1:5).

7) James reminds us, "Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not only by faith" (James 2:24). These are not works of law or of man's own righteousness, as they are clearly excluded (Romans 3:20; Titus 3:5). Rather, they are works such as Abraham did when he offered up Isaac. He obeyed the positive command of God. He did so not to earn or merit something from God, but because he truly loved the Lord and sought always to do his will.

A good statement of the various increments of our justification and their interrelationship is given by McClintock and Strong:

“The *originating cause* [italics mine] of justification is the free grace and the spontaneous love of God towards fallen man (Romans 1:5; 3:24; Tit. 2:11 3:4-5). Our Lord Jesus Christ is the sole meritorious cause [italics mine] of our justification inasmuch as it is the result of his atonement for us.....

Faith is the instrumental cause [italics mine] of justification, present faith in him who was able to save, faith actually existing and exercised...

The immediate results of justification are the restoration of amity and intercourse between pardoned and the pardoning God (Romans 5:1) ...the adoption of a person justified into the family of God, and the

consequent right to eternal life (Romans 8:17); and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:14; 4:6), producing tranquility of conscience (Romans 8:15-16), power over sin (Romans 8:1), and a joyous hope of heaven (Romans 15:13; Galatians 5:5).⁴

How Can God Justify Sinners ?

Justification has been called "the supreme paradox of the gospel." It means that the just God accepts the sinner as just. It seems the rational thing to say that God being just must therefore condemn a sinner as a criminal. But the paradox is that even though God is just, he somehow, in his remarkable and miraculous grace revealed in Jesus, accepts the sinner, not as a criminal, but as a beloved child.

Imputation

The explanation of how God can so justify sinners is found in the great doctrine of imputation. The prophet Isaiah foresaw the Messiah who "was wounded for our transgressions,...bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed...and Jehovah laid on him the iniquity of us all." God would see the travail of his soul and be satisfied and the righteous servant would justify many (Isaiah 53:5-6,11). Our sins were imputed or charged to Christ who paid the penalty for us. Peter writes that "Christ suffered for you...who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Peter 2:21, 24). Similarly, Christ's righteousness is imputed to us. Paul tells us, "Him who knew no sin he made *to be* sin (i.e., sin-bearer) on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Again he exalts this grand truth in Philippians 3:8-9: "...that I may gain Christ, and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith." We see a beautiful illustration of imputation in Paul's message to Philemon regarding his runaway slave, Onesimus, who was guilty of numerous offenses. The apostle was willing to assume full responsibility for his slave-friend's obligations. He writes, "But if he hath wronged thee at all, or oweth thee ought, put that to mine account; I Paul write it with mine own hand. I will repay it" (Philemon 18-19).

This, too, is the typical lesson of azazel, the scapegoat of the ritual Day of Atonement. The high priest laid his hands on the head of the living goat and confessed over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel. "...and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a solitary land; and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness" (Leviticus 16:21-22). Thus Jesus bore the sins of humanity, symbolized by his bearing his cross outside the gates to the place of death.

Our sins were imputed to Christ, but not so as to make him a sinner. Likewise, his righteousness is imputed to us, but does not make us personally and actually worthy of God's favor. Jesus assumed our legal responsibility and was treated just as if he had been the sinner. We have received his righteousness in our justification and are treated just as if we were righteous altogether.

With David, we praise God for his marvelous grace. Blessed is "the man, unto whom God reckoneth righteousness apart from works...Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not reckon sin" (Romans 4:6-8).

In the gospels we see Jesus treating sinners as if they were the men and women they had the potential to become. The Jews treated Zacchaeus as a sinner hopelessly lost. The Lord treated him as a potential saint. (6)

Justification Is By Faith, But Not By Faith Alone

Paul concluded, "We reckon therefore that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law" (Romans 3:28). This is the dominant theme of the new covenant doctrine of salvation. We should boldly preach this grand truth even as did Paul.

Protestant theologians have erred, however, by teaching justification by faith alone. The **Methodist Discipline** states, "Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort.(5) The **Baptist Manual** declares, "...that justification...is bestowed...solely through faith in Christ..."(6). To teach this concept one must twist and ignore the clear declaration of the inspired author, James. The last half of the second chapter of his epistle is devoted to establishing the fact that "by works a man is justified, and not only by faith" (James 2:24). He cites two examples of Old Testament worthies who were said to be blessed of God because of their faith. "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness"(James 2:23), yet Abraham obeyed God even when told to sacrifice his son. Thus, his "faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect..."(James 2:23). Bloomfield renders this passage, "...by works his faith was rendered complete..."(7). So also was the case of Rahab: she was justified when her faith led her to obey God in the matter of assisting the Hebrew messengers (James 2:25).

Thus he concludes that by works a man is justified and not only by faith(James 2:24). The same truth obtains today: The faith that saves is the faith that obeys. Only a faith that works through love avails anything, said Paul (Galatians 5:6). It should be no marvel then that God placed repentance and baptism along with faith as prerequisites for justification. The Holy Spirit led Peter to tell the believing Jews to "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins..."(Acts 2:38). Those who gladly received his word were baptized and their sins were forgiven (Acts 2:41). In so doing their faith wrought with their works and was rendered complete.

The principle can also be seen in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus (Acts 22:1-16). His faith, strong as it was, and great as were its effects upon his inner man, was not imputed to him for righteousness, so as to give him peace with God, until he arose and was baptized. When his faith worked (by being baptized, his) faith was made perfect, and the scripture was fulfilled which says: "He believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness."(8)

Paul himself preached this truth in his ministry. To the Jews of Antioch of Pisidia he said, "...through this man (Jesus) is proclaimed unto you remission of sins; and by him every one that believeth is justified..." (Acts 13:38-39). Now, when does one receive remission of sins? Peter answers for us: "Repent ye, and be baptized...in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins" (Acts 2:38). When the sinner does so, Paul depicts him as a believer that is justified.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

J. M. Furness comments that "Justification is a 'free gift' (Romans 5:16, 18), and is not a future hope, but a present privilege: we *are* justified (Rom. 3:28); *have been* justified (Rom. 5:1:NEB)." (9)

W.E. Vine tells us that "being justified freely by his grace" (Rom. 3:24)" "is in the present continuous tense, indicating the constant process of justification in the succession of those who believe and are justified".(10) This reflects John's teaching that the blood of Christ keeps on cleansing those who keep on walking in the light and confessing their sins (I John 1:7-9).

In ancient times when persons were charged with a crime they were arraigned before judges, who having heard the case, announced their judgement by placing small stones in an urn. If they judged him innocent, they deposited a white stone, a black one if guilty. "...the ceremony of putting white pebbles into an urn did not **make** the accused individual either just or innocent but it **formally declared** him just and innocent. It was a judicial announcement of acquittal."(11) So when we come to Christ on the terms of the gospel God justified us, although we are neither just nor innocent. But because Christ died in our place, he can justify the ungodly (Romans 4:5).

The soul thus justified must never feel proud of his attainments or boast of his righteousness. Our salvation is by grace (Ephesians 2:8-9). "Let any man that ever lived appear before the bar of God stripped of the mantle which God's mercy has thrown over him, and he must be condemned as a sinner."(12)

"Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God..." (Romans 5:1) Was there ever a grander theme? Is

there any message more needed in a sin-cursed world? Can we ever exhaust its meaning? Let every disciple of Jesus shout it from the house tops and take the glad news to every soul on planet Earth. God will justify the sinner who believes in Jesus and obeys his blessed gospel! May we never, never, never abandon such a glorious theme to those who pervert its message and destroy its power.

ENDNOTES:

- (1) McClintock and Strong's Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature, 1968-70 ed., s.v. "Justification".
- (2) Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, 1965 ed., s.v. "Justification, Justifier, Justify."
- (3) William Barclay, The Daily Study Bible Series, 17 vols. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1955-1960), vol. 8: The Letter to the Romans, p.13.
- (4) McClintock and Strong's Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature, s.v. "Justification."
- (5) Emory, Stevens Bucke et al., The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church (Nashville, Tenn.: The Methodist Publishing House, 1968, p. 39.
- (6) Edward T. Hiscox, The Standard Manual for Baptist Churches (Philadelphia: The American Baptist Publication Society, 1890), p. 62.
- (7) S. T. Bloomfield, The Greek Testament, 2 vols. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1955), vol. 2, p.684.
- (8) J. W. McGarvey, "Justification by Faith," Lard's Quarterly 2 (January 1866):127.
- (9) J.M. Furness, Vital Words of the Bible (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1966) p.39.
- (10) An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, s.v. "Justification, Justifier, Justify."
- (11) J.M. Pendleton, Christian Doctrines (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1878), p. 275.
- (12) J.M. McGarvey, "Justification by Faith," Lard's Quarterly 2 (January 1866):129.

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79.

FAITH: THE CHRISTIAN FOUNDATION

"For whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith. And who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God" (I John 5:4-5).

"(A)nd without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him" (Hebrews 11:6)

The foundation of all relationships with God is **faith**. It is the most basic and fundamental ingredient of Christianity. Faith underlies all hope and is the link that binds the saved to the Savior. Without doubt, the most commonly used religious term in the Western world is faith: yet it is also the most misunderstood term in the public's vocabulary. We must look to the Bible for light on the meaning and application of faith.

1. WHAT FAITH IS NOT

Many themes can best be understood by considering them from the negative point of view. By thus eliminating all the false notions, we arrive at the true.

Faith is not **blind, thoughtless gullibility**. There is a kind of religionist that believes that the highest degree of faith is the one that asks no questions; and never thinks or tries to understand. It is closely akin to superstition. However, the Scripture presents a much different view of faith. Paul states, "So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing of the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17). Faith is based on testimony from God. John **wrote his gospel** that we might believe (John 20:30-31). God commends those who search the Scriptures to see if the preacher is teaching God's word faithfully (Acts 17:11). Really, faith is the opposite of gullibility.

Faith is not **emotionalism**. In many Protestant churches, faith is equated with a spiritual thrill, a light feeling in the chest cavity and head. Many people have seen a man slap his hand over his heart and declare that he would not exchange what he felt for all the Bibles in the world. To another, faith is the excitement of a "Pentecostal" type of service with shouting, dancing, clapping of hands and emotions raised to a fever pitch. Yet this is totally foreign to the faith described in the Bible. Bible faith is always based on facts and knowledge (Romans 10:17). It appeals to the rational mind as well as the heart or emotional nature. Paul said, "I **know** him whom I have believed" (II Timothy 1:12). He asked the Galatians, "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the **hearing of faith**" (Galatians 3:2). Faith is always based upon testimony.

Faith is not **foolishness**. We have read of people who died after drinking poison and being bitten by deadly snakes as they proved their faith. Never does the Bible present faith in this light. Always, believers are described as sane, self-controlled, reasonable people. Jesus refused to leap off the pinnacle of the temple to prove himself (Matthew 4:5-7). It is strange how the bizarre and senseless appeals so strongly to a certain type of mind. But whatever its attraction, it is not of God.

Faith is not **rationalism**. By rationalism we mean the attitude that I will not believe a thing unless I can understand it thoroughly and explain it. God has not said that we were to understand everything we encounter in the Scriptures, but we are to believe. "...we walk by faith, not by sight" (II Corinthians 5:7). If God says a thing, faith believes it to be true whether it is understood or not.

2. WHAT FAITH IS

Having cleared away some misconceptions, we shall now note what God declares faith to be. Usually people attempt to define faith in a single sentence. Some offer, "Faith is **trusting God**," others quote Hebrews 11:1, "Faith is the assurance of things hope for, a conviction of things not seen." This attempt to describe so broad a concept in so few words has contributed to our misunderstanding of the word. The following verses will help us to see that faith is like a cut diamond with a multitude of facets.

Faith is **the belief of testimony** given by God in his words. "So belief cometh of hearing and hearing of the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17). The quantity and quality of your faith will be in direct proportion to your study and understanding of God's word.

Faith is **trusting God and his Son**; laying our all in his great hands for safekeeping. "By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; he went out, not knowing whether he went" (Hebrews 11:8). The apostle was confident that God would keep that which he had committed unto him (II Timothy 1:12). So faith trusts God ultimately whether in life or death.

Faith is **believing God's threats and promises** and acting accordingly. Sarah believed God's promise that she would have a son, even though she had been childless, near 90 years old, and long past the age of child-bearing. She had Isaac. (Hebrews 11:11). So we must believe the wonderful promises of God if we are to receive them. Noah believed God's threat to destroy the world with water. He built the ark by faith and preserved himself and his family

(Hebrews 11:7). Never had there been such a universal flood, never such an act of judgment, but Noah believed God. What a task to undertake to build the immense ark. What faith it took. What a contrast when we see many today who do not have enough faith to believe the record of Noah's experience to be true fact!

Faith is **doing what God has said**, just as he said to do it. Faith that works through love is the kind of faith God demands (Galatians 5:6). Abel illustrates the fact that careful attention to do exactly what God has ordered is expected. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he had witness born to him that he was righteous" (Hebrews 11:4). Since faith comes by hearing God's word (Romans 10:17), Abel must have heard God specify an animal sacrifice. Cain was willing to sacrifice, but he did not offer the kind of sacrifice God ordered. He may have reasoned that his was as costly; as sincerely and properly offered as Abel's, yet God rejected it. It was not of faith. He was willing to do **what** God said as long as he could do it his way. Faith does things God's way whether in worship, service or salvation.

Faith is **doing God's will even when it is extremely distasteful and dangerous**. "By faith Abraham being tried, offered up Isaac..." (Hebrews 11:17) Imagine how **distasteful** this must have been to that aged father. Think of the anguish and torment he underwent. It was his only son. It was the one link through whom God was going to fulfill his many promises to Abraham. What chance was there that he and Sarah could ever have a second son? Yet Abraham did what God commanded. So must we. It is doubtful that we will ever face such a test as that patriarch did, how much more then must we be faithful in the small matters that seem distasteful to us.

Sometimes faith leads us down dangerous trails. Consider Israel as, "By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were swallowed up" (Hebrews 11:29). In contemplating the great miracle of the dividing of the sea we sometimes overlook the situation when God commanded them to step into the canyon between the walls of water. Their wives and children, their cattle and earthly possessions were laid on the line. What faith it took to risk such an escape. Ours is not a day of persecution. But should we live to see it, we must have faith to face whatever trials Satan thrusts upon us.

"Faith is **assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen**" (Hebrews 11:1). The saint cannot see heaven, but faith enables him to firmly be convinced of its reality. So it is with a hundred other unseen things. Faith accepts them as reality, because God said it.

Faith is **doing God's will, even though you do not fully comprehend all that is involved**. "We walk by faith and not by sight" (II Corinthians 5:7). We might never fully understand why Christ had to die, but faith accepts it. Just why baptism is essential may never be completely fathomed, but faith believes it. I may never grasp all that is involved in grace or the resurrection of the body, but I believe it because God has declared himself on these matters.

Faith **trusts God and not self for salvation**. Scripture declares what all men know; that man cannot direct his own steps (Jeremiah 10:23). "For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory" (Ephesians 2:8-9). One of man's major problems has been the mistaken notion that he could save himself. This has led him to ignore God's will and seek to establish a righteousness of his own (Romans 10:1-3). Genuine faith recognizes one's **inability** to save self and drives the sinner to cast himself on the loving mercy of God, being willing to do whatever God says.

Saving faith **accepts Christ as Lord and Savior of its life**. "Because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:9). The true believer surrenders all his rights and prerogatives to King Jesus. "It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me" (Galatians 2:20). Whatever Christ says, I gladly do, if I truly believe.

Faith is **an active, energetic response of the human heart to God** (Galatians 5:6). Faith without works is dead in itself (James 2:26). The faith that saves is the faith that obeys. The entire eleventh chapter of Hebrews aptly illustrates this truth. Faith is more than understanding, or accepting as true, or feeling inclined unto a person or thing. Faith is humble submission and obedience to God's will.

Faith is a **growing thing**. Do not despair because you have not the faith of Abraham. You can grow unto it. Some of Jesus' disciples had "little faith" (Matthew 6:30). Barnabas was full of faith (Acts 11:24). Since faith comes by hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17), we can watch our faith grow as we feed upon his holy word and daily prove his promises.

Faith **protects against sin and temptation**. It is a shield (Ephesians 6:16), to block the attacks of seduction, ridicule, and provocation. It blunts false doctrines and attempts of others to destroy our faith. Faith is a **breastplate** to turn away the arrows of destruction Satan constantly hurls at us.

Christ is "the author and perfecter of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2). Faith in Christ begins he has learned God's will for his life and the trembling sinner seeks pardon and mercy from his offended Lord. Faith ends when this life ends. In eternity faith will give place to sight. The redeemed will be resurrected to spend their eternity in heavenly joy in the very presence of the Sacred Three (Revelation 22:1-5). Only in Jesus can our faith reach those earthly proportions that God intended it to have.

To the soul that truly believes in Jesus, a shower of manifold blessings comes. "Being, therefore, **justified** by faith, we have peace with God" (Romans 5:1). We are made **righteous** by faith. (Romans 3:21-25). Again, "the righteous shall **live** by faith" (Galatians 3:11).

Christians are "**sons of God**, through faith..." (Galatians 3:26). We are **saved** by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8). Christ **dwells in our hearts** through faith (Ephesians 3:16). We are **sanctified** by faith (Acts 26:18). Our hearts are **purified** by faith (Acts 15:9). We are made to **stand** by faith (II Corinthians 1:24). There is **joy** in faith. (Philippians 1:25). And the saint enjoys **boldness and access in confidence** through faith (Ephesians 3:12). But not by faith only (James 2:24).

Without faith, prayer would be a meaningless ritual. Without faith, no man could be faithful unto death. How could we ever attain that holiness that God desires without trusting faith? Satan would swamp us in temptations and trials were it not for faith in God's delivering providence. Who can face death like the believing Christian who knows that God who holds eternity and the fates of men in his hands.

FAITH

What if I say--
"The Bible is God's Holy Word,
Complete, inspired, without a flaw"--
But let its pages stay
Unread from day to day,
And fail to learn therefrom God's law;
What if I go not there to seek--
The truth of which I glibly speak,
For guidance on this earthly way--
Does it matter what I say?
What if I say--
That Jesus Christ is Lord divine;
Yet fellow-pilgrims can behold
Naught of the Master's love in me,
No grace of kindly sympathy?
If I am of the Shepherd's fold,
Then shall I know the Shepherd's voice
And gladly make his way my choice.
We are saved by faith, yet faith is one

With life, like daylight and the sun.
Unless they flower in our deeds,
Dead, empty husks are all the creeds.
To call Christ, Lord, but strive not to obey,
Belies the homage that with words I pay.

80.

THE NATURE OF SAVING FAITH

“Without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto (God); for he that cometh to Him must believe that he is...” (Heb. 11:6). Jesus said, “Except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24). No doubt about it, we must believe in Christ and God to be saved! The question is, What is the nature of saving faith? Martin Luther convinced most Protestants that man is saved by faith alone. The inspired writers of Scripture had a different view.

* Christ is the author of eternal salvation “unto all them that obey him” (Heb. 5:9).

* Jesus himself said, “If a man love me, he will keep my word” (John 14:23).

* Paul reasoned that our racial status does not save us, “But faith working through love” does (Gal. 5:6).

* In writing to the Romans, Paul twice speaks of the “obedience of faith” (Rom. 1:5; 16:26).

* To make sure we could not misunderstand the nature of saving faith, James devotes great attention to the subject. He opens by asking, “if a man say he hath faith, but have not works: can that faith save him? (2:14). In vs.17 he explains that “faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself.” He then says, “I by my works will show thee my faith” (vs. 18). He explains that “faith apart from works is barren” (vs. 20). In Abraham’s case, his “faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect ” Abraham had obedient faith “and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness” (vs. 22-23). In conclusion, he insists that “by works a man is justified, and not only by faith” (vs. 24). “Faith apart from works is dead” (vs. 26).

The Bible clearly says that saving faith is obedient faith. But from Luther (1525 A. D.) to the present Protestant preachers have insisted that we are saved by faith only. On which of these views are you willing to risk your soul? God’s Word is truth (John 17:17). Men often miss the mark and thus the proponents of faith alone have missed the nature of saving faith.

81.

OUR WORKS AND OUR SALVATION

Two great errors have deep roots in the world of Christendom. On the one hand is the idea that man, by his good works, can gain standing with God. This is seen in the teaching and practice of Catholicism. On the other is the belief that man needs only to believe in Jesus and he will be saved. Following Martin Luther, *Sola Fide* is the mantra of virtually all Protestant bodies. As is often the case, God’s truth on the subject lies between these two extremes.

Without question or doubt, faith plays an essential role in our salvation. “Without faith it is impossible well-pleasing unto him (God) for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him” (Heb. 11:6). Jesus said, “except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24). Paul affirms that we are “justified by faith” (Rom. 5:1).

The question is, what is the nature of the faith that is necessary for our salvation? In writing to the Romans, Paul twice spoke of “the obedience of faith” (Rom. 1:5; 16:26). He taught the saints in Galatia that salvation was not based on ones race but on “faith working through love” (Gal. 5:6). This then helps us appreciate James’ message on faith. Much of the second chapter of his epistle is a discussion on the nature of saving faith. “I by my works will show thee my faith.” (2:18). “Faith apart from works is barren” (2:20). “By works was faith made perfect” (2:22). “Ye see that by works a man is justified and not only by faith” (2:24). “Faith apart from works is dead” (2:26). In the face of this overwhelming declaration by James, what can an advocate of salvation by faith alone do? Martin Luther questioned the inspiration of the epistle!

One cannot be saved unless he has received the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9). But the Holy Spirit is given to those who obey God (Acts 5:32). In fact, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit when we are baptized for remission of our sins (Acts 2:38).

Why is there this determination to have salvation by faith alone, given the plain teaching of Scripture to the contrary? It is the stubborn refusal to admit that baptism plays a vital role in man’s salvation. Even though Christ said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16), they deny it. Although Paul was told to be baptized to wash away his sins (Acts 22:16), they refuse to admit it.

In their confusion, they argue that to be baptized for the remission of ones sins is to seek salvation by works. They fail to notice the different kinds of works mentioned in the Scripture. There are “works our righteousness” which we do. They cannot save us (Eph. 2:8-9). These are things that we imagine or ordain that sinners must do. They are worthless. There are works of the Law of Moses. “By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight” (Rom. 3:20). This is understandable. First we are not under the Law of Moses. That system offered a different way for man to serve God. We are under Christ. We are to observe all things whatsoever he commanded (Matt 28:20). But there are “works of God.” “This is the work of God that ye believe on him whom he hath sent”(John 6:29). The Master reminds us that “We must work the works of him that sent me...”(John 9:4). This is clarified in Hebrews 5:9. Christ is the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him! Those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus shall suffer punishment (II Thess. 1:8-9).

To affirm the importance of obedience in no way diminishes the importance of faith. It is the demonstration of ones faith. Nor does it take away from our total dependence on God’s grace and mercy. We glory in His wonderful grace (Eph. 2:8-9). To see the connection, consider Paul’s words to Titus, “not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy (i.e. His grace) he saved us, through the washing or regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit (his method of saving us. jhw)...that we might be justified by grace...”(Tit. 3:5-7). We are justified by grace when God renews us by His Holy Spirit. But we receive the Holy Spirit when we repent and are baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of our sins (Acts 2:38). Baptism is “the washing of regeneration” of which he speaks.

No man can merit or earn his salvation. In no way is God ever our debtor. No man who refuses to believe in Christ can hope to be saved! But the man whose faith leads him to gladly obey God’s will, will know the joy of salvation.

REPENTANCE MEANS TO FORSAKE YOUR SINS

Sin is a universal experience for humanity. “All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). Sin is a life-wrecking, heartbreaking, damning power. “The wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23). Because of the disastrous consequences of sin, the wise person will strive to immediately forsake any and all sin that he is aware of in his life. James exhorts us, “Draw nigh unto God, and he will draw nigh unto you. Cleanse your hands ye sinners and purify your hearts ye double-minded. Be afflicted and mourn, and weep, let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and he shall exalt you” (Jas. 3:8-10). Here we see a call to repentance that all thinking people will heed. There are numerous significant reasons why we should forsake our sins. The thoughts that follow will explore some of them.

I. Because sin in any form ruins the soul. Solomon observed that “His own iniquities shall take the wicked, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sin” (Prov. 5:22). Like cords that bind the prisoner, so sin shackles our life. Isaiah plainly declares that “your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your iniquities have hid his face from you, so that he will not hear” (59:2). Sin drives a wedge between man and God thus destroying man’s relationship with the Source of every blessing.

II. Because one sin not repented of inevitably leads to another until we are ultimately destroyed. We see this vividly illustrated in the episode of David and Bathsheba in (II Samuel chapt. 11). First, David lusted after another man’s wife. He then invited her into his home. They committed adultery and she conceived. To escape detection and shame, David sought to deceive Uriah her husband into thinking the child was his. Unable to accomplish this, he “got Uriah drunk.” But even this failed. Finally he ordered Uriah to be “set up” for death in battle. Only when David repented and forsook his sin did this malignant cycle stop. Remember that every unforgiven sin is another link in the chain which binds the sinner. Sin never gets better by being left alone. “Evil men and imposters wax (grow) worse and worse” (II Tim. 3:13).

III. Because even one sin is sufficient to enslave and damn one’s life, the Hebrew author warns us to be rid of “the sin” (singular) that so easily besets us (Heb. 12:1). In his first epistle, John tells us that “there is a sin unto death.” That is an unrepented sin. It cannot and will not be forgiven so long as it is clung to. It is useless even to pray for the man who clings to his sin unto death (1 John 5:16). Now we can understand more clearly James’ warning, “Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is become guilty of all” (Jas. 2:10). The one sin which we refuse to forsake can neutralize all the other good we may do. Mankind has not generally realized that sin is so potent a poison that even one can rob a man of heaven’s reward.

IV. Because the very sin you are clinging to may bring down the wrath of God upon you. Sin deserves punishment (Rom. 6:23). God has thus far been gracious to you, in spite of your transgressions. But the time will come when justice demands that the penalty be inflicted. God told Abraham that the Amorites had not yet filled the cup of iniquity therefore his descendants would have to wait to receive the land of Canaan (Gen. 15:16). In Moses’ day, the Amorites reached that breaking point and God ordered their destruction (Lev. 18:24-25). Luke tells us of the death of Herod Agrippa in Caesarea. Because this wicked man allowed men to acclaim him as a god, he was smitten by an angel of the Lord and perished (Acts 12:21-23). Both nations and individuals can reach the point where

judgment is inevitable and inescapable. Forsake your sins this day, lest you tempt God too far.

V. Because your sin was responsible for Christ's death. Seven hundred years before Jesus was born, Isaiah predicted that he would be wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities and that the chastisement of our peace would be upon him (Is. 53:5-6). Paul reminded the Christians in Corinthian that "Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor. 15:3). How grieved we would be if because of our carelessness we caused a traffic fatality. How much more should we grieve that our sins made it necessary for Christ to die. Realizing this awful fact should prompt us to abandon whatever sin is in our life.

VI. Because God hates sin. He loves righteousness but he hates iniquity (Heb. 1:9). In Proverbs we are told that there are six things which Jehovah hateth: yea, seven which are an abomination unto him: Haughty eyes, a lying tongue and hands that shed innocent blood..." This is only a partial listing. Other scriptures catalogue other sins of mankind. But note please that God even hates such sins as pride and lying. The soul that loves God will do nothing to grieve his Lord. And since sin pains the heart of our God, we gladly forsake it once and for all.

VII. Because sin in all its forms and degrees is hateful and despicable. The word iniquity is frequently used synonymously for sin and means warped, twisted or perverted. Sin destroys, it corrupts, it defiles every life into which it comes. Yesterday's beautiful, chaste little girl can be tomorrow's brazen prostitute by the influence of sin. Today's loving son can be tomorrow's fiendish murderer if sin is allowed full sway in his life. Even the sin of false teaching is likened unto gangrene in (II Tim. 2:17). Nothing is more repulsive than dying flesh yet that is what sin is like. Jehovah told the nation of Judah that she would bear her shame because of all she had done. (Ezek. 16:54).

VIII. Because the consequences of sin are so far-reaching, I must realize that my sins will seldom affect me alone. Isaiah wrote, "The earth also is polluted under the inhabitants thereof, because they have transgressed the laws...therefore hath the curse devoured the earth...and few men (are) left" (Is 24:5-6). Even the good people who are innocent often suffer because of the sins of others. Moses warned that the consequences of the father's sin are visited upon the children and grandchildren (Ex. 34:5-7). A parent's promiscuity may cause child complications of venereal disease. A liquor drinking mother can damage her babe in the womb. A gambling father may leave his wife and children in poverty.

One's sins may haunt him for a lifetime. After his adultery with Uriah's wife Bathsheba, David wrote, "My sin is ever before me (Ps. 51:3). Years after Stephen's death, Paul referred to himself as the chief of sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15). Unforgiven, these same sins will curse us for eternity. "Some men's sins are evident, going before unto judgment (i.e., they are forgiven, JHW) and some men also they follow after." They follow them to judgment condemning them (1 Tim 5:24). Jesus reminds us that sinners who do not seek his pardon in this life will hear him say on judgment day, "Depart from me ye that work iniquity!" (Matt. 7:2).

IX. Because sin must be renounced outwardly as well as inwardly before one can have forgiveness. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins..." (1 John 1:8-9). Peter thus called upon Simon of Samaria to "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray the Lord, if perhaps the thought of thy heart shall be forgiven thee" (Acts 8:22). It is not enough to be sorry for your sins. "Godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation" (II Cor. 7:10).

Repentance is a change of heart which results in a change of life. But even repentance must be accompanied by a confession of the wrong done (Jas. 5:16). This confession should be as public as the sin which was committed (Matt. 18:15-18).

You can cut down a tree but chances are it will sprout again with many more shoots. To be rid of it, you must dig out the roots. So it is with sin. It is not enough to quit committing a foul deed, the heart must be changed from which the sinful acts arise (Matt. 15:18). This God calls repentance and you must repent, said Jesus, or you will surely perish (Luke 13:3).

83.

THE MANY ASPECTS OF BAPTISM

To many people baptism is seen only as an initiation into the church. Others only know baptism "for the remission of sins." The truth is, baptism is much wider in its scope and blessings. It is much like the many facets of a finely cut diamond. Notice just some of the meanings of baptism.

1. Baptism is **like a birth**. Jesus said in John 3:5, "Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." A birth is a "coming forth" into a new relationship. Just as an infant comes forth from his mother into the world of light, the obedient believer comes out of the waters of baptism a new born babe in Christ (I Peter 2:2). His Christian life has just begun. This new birth puts him into the kingdom or church of Christ (Matthew 16:18-19). Just as one is born a citizen of America, so in baptism we are born into the kingdom of Jesus. Only an immersion in water and a coming forth from the water can adequately depict a birth. This sprinkling or pouring can never do. It is important to remember when interpreting metaphors and analogies that we never press more than the main point of comparison. Many foolish points have been wrung from this teaching by teachers who did not remember this rule. The water is not our mother, the Holy Spirit is not the sire, nor do you have spiritual life before baptism. The one simple point is, we must come out of the water of baptism into the kingdom, even as the baby comes out of the womb into this life.

2. Baptism is **like a burial and resurrection**. Paul writes that sinners must die to sin, then be buried with Christ through baptism into death, in order that they might be raised up to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:1-4). The conversion experience simulates the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord. Everyone who is saved demonstrates his faith in the Christ who died and rose for him, by his baptism into Christ. It is a proclamation to the world of the crucified Christ as their only hope of pardon.

When seeking to understand such figurative expressions as death, burial, and resurrection in salvation, we must never mingle or confuse other figures with these. Great confusion results when one tries to mix the illustrations of the new birth in John 3 with this of Romans 6. Each must be understood and explained separately.

3. Baptism is **like the purification and preparation of a bride** for her wedding. In Ephesians 5 Paul speaks of the loving relationship of Christ and his church under the figure of a man and his bride. He tells us Christ gave himself up for the church "that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:25-27). Among the ancient peoples, great emphasis was placed upon the cleansing and purification of a bride before being presented to her husband. (See Esther 2:12-13). So each person

who becomes a member of Christ's bride, the church, must be purified by the washing of water (baptism) and the Word. Should anyone dispute the "washing of water" being baptism, we ask, is there any other use of **water** in the gospel, regarding salvation, church membership and Christian worship?

4. Baptism is **like the ritual of circumcision**. Under the Abrahamic covenant no male could be a member of the holy nation unless he had been circumcised. The removal of that tad of flesh from the infant's body identified him as one of God's spiritual sons (Genesis 17:9-14). Today, everyone, male and female, must undergo a circumcision of the heart in order to be a child of God. This Paul explains in Colossians 2:11-13, "In whom (Christ) ye were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with him in baptism..." Baptism is similar to the act of circumcision in that God **cuts off** and removes the old sins of the heart when we are buried with Christ. God, not a physician, administers the spiritual surgery when we are baptized to wash away our sins (Acts 22:16).

5. Baptism is **like the purification rites of the Jews**. Those living under Moses' law were continually faced with the problem of ceremonial defilement and uncleanness. Touching any dead body or having any running sore or skin disease and a host of other things rendered them impure and disqualified them to enter the worship assembly. A ritual of purification was set for that included the blood of sacrifice and the washing of the body with water (Leviticus 15:13-15). So in this age the unclean sinner comes before God's great priest Jesus, having his heart sprinkled from an evil conscience and having his body washed with pure water (Hebrews 10:19-22). I am confident that this refers to Christian baptism for the only use of **water** in the New Testament in reference to salvation, church or worship is baptism (Acts 10:47). When we are washed in the waters of baptism, the blood of our sacrifice, Jesus, is applied to our conscience, giving us a clean and good conscience before God (I Peter 3:21).

6. Baptism is **like giving life to the dead**. The sinner is dead in his trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1), being separated from God by them (Isaiah 59:1-2). Only God can give new life to those dead in sin. It is "not by works done in righteousness which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he saved us through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit..." (Titus 3:5-6). To **regenerate** is to make alive again. **Renewal** has the same basic meaning. When does God do this for sinners? When they are "**washed**." But in baptism He washes away our sins (Acts 22:16). When we are baptized in water He gives us the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). So we are made alive from our death in sin, by God, when we are baptized.

7. Baptism is **the entrance initiation into the church of Christ**. "For in one Spirit were all baptized into one body" (I Corinthians 12:13). But the one body is Christ's church (Colossians 1:18). Water baptism puts us into the one true church at the same time our sins are being forgiven. This is when the Lord adds us to the church (Acts 2:47, KJV).

8. Baptism **unites us with Christ**. It puts us into Christ. In it we are clothed with Christ. "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ." "For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death..." (Romans 6:5). The context shows this to be in baptism.

9. Baptism is **like the flood of Noah's day** in that it separates the righteous and the wicked. The flood waters destroyed sinners upon the earth at the same time it floated those within the ark to safety. "Which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism..." (I Peter 3:21). The water of baptism stands as a distinct line separating the saved and lost. All the saved have experienced baptism. All who have not are yet in sin.

How beautiful are the many sides of Christian baptism. Surely every soul that loves God will eagerly desire to obey this command of King Jesus. (Mark 16:17; Acts 10:48). Of such great importance is it that we urge you to do so today. If you need assistance in fulfilling your obedience to God, please contact us and a faithful Christian will soon be in touch with you.

84.

WHO IS THE PROPER SUBJECT FOR BAPTISM?

Christ commands all who wish to be saved to be baptized. But who is a proper subject for baptism?

- * Jesus said, “Preach the gospel to every creature, He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). This tells us the candidate must first be taught the gospel and be old enough to believe its message.
- * Peter told the people of Jerusalem that they must “repent...and be baptized....” (Acts 2:38). That is, baptism follows a change of heart and a resolve to change ones life.
- * Paul tells us that to be saved one must “confess with (his) mouth Jesus as Lord” (Rom. 10:9). To make such a confession a person must be old enough to understand the meaning of “Jesus is Lord” and mature enough to make the confession for himself.
- * Scripture teaches that baptism is “for remission of sins” (Acts 2:38); to wash away sins (Acts 22:16). Thus, only sinners who have come to faith and repentance are proper subjects for baptism.
- * Every case of baptism recorded in the Scripture shows us that the candidates were adults, not infants.
- * Christ is the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him (Heb. 5:9). In baptism the sinner is obeying Christ’s command (Acts 10:48) and seeking forgiveness of his sins.
- * Taken together we can easily see that baptism is for those old enough to understand the message of salvation, to personally believe in Jesus, to repent of the sins of his life and to make his own decision to be baptized. Infants are not proper subjects for baptism. Infant baptism had its origin in the second century and is without biblical authority. Of what value is baptism when the person receiving it is totally unaware of the experience and what it means? He might actually grow up and never be aware that he was baptized in infancy.

All of the above would also apply to baptism of those who are comatose or ignorant or unwilling concerning what is being done. To conclude that baptism is for infants, the unconscious or the unwilling one must have help from sources other than God’s Word!

85.

WHAT IS THE PROPER MODE OF BAPTISM?

Without dispute baptism is a biblical subject and plays an important role in Christianity. Virtually all churches practice baptism, but there are multiple views about how baptism is to be administered. Some immerse, some sprinkle water on the face and some pour water on the head of the candidate.

Christ makes it perfectly clear in his Word how baptism is to be administered.

* John the Baptist baptized at Enon near to Salim “because there was **much water** there...” (John 3:23).

* Jesus went to the Jordan, where John baptized him. He then “**went up out of the water**” (NIV). He was “in” the water when he was baptized (Matt. 3:13-16).

* When Philip baptized the nobleman from Ethiopia,

“They **both went down into the water**...and he baptized him” (Acts 8:38).

* Paul likens our salvation to the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. He wrote We were **buried** therefore with him through baptism into death”

(Rom. 6:4). A burial involves putting the deceased into a grave and covering them.

* The very definition of the word baptism in first century conversation meant to dip, submerge or immerse (**Vines Dictionary of New Testament Words**).

* The first known case of sprinkling or pouring for baptism was in 251 A. D. A man named Novation was desperately ill and requested baptism. Being too weak to be immersed it was decided to sprinkle water upon him as he lay upon his bed. It was 1311 A. D., at the Council of Ravenna, before the practice of pouring or sprinkling gained wide acceptance.

* There is no example in the New Testament of anyone being baptized by pouring or sprinkling.

Given these facts, a person would need help to conclude that baptism is anything but an immersion in water.

86.

THE THIEF ON THE CROSS

"The Thief on the cross" is considered the classic example of death-bed salvation without baptism. Let us see if this conclusion is right. Luke 23:33-43 tells the story of the thief; "he said, Jesus, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom. And he said unto him, "Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

It is alleged the Thief was not baptized, yet was saved; so we need not be baptized. However John the Baptist, Jesus, the apostles and the seventy evangelists preached and baptized in Palestine for over three years. The Thief may have been baptized. We have no information for or against that assumption. He may have later been beguiled by Satan and led to stealing.

Is the Thief our example for salvation ? The New Testament of Christ, under which we live, did not become effective until Jesus died . "A testament is of force where there hath been death: for it doth never avail while he that made it liveth" (Heb. 9:16-17). The Thief sinned, was crucified and heard those blessed words, before Jesus died! Therefore, he are saved under a different law than we. Jesus was born under the law of Moses (Gal. 4:4). He urged his followers, in his lifetime, to observe the law (Matt. 23:1-3). The New Testament plan of forgiveness became of force when Christ died. Before his death, he could forgive sins as he chose, without a definite plan of obedience. He explained, "That ye may know that the Son of man hath authority on earth to forgive sins. . ." (Matt. 9:2-6). Since Christ died, his gift of salvation must be distributed by the terms of his will. The will stipulates, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). To have Christ's gift of forgiveness, one must be baptized. We dare not base our hope of salvation on the case of the Thief on the cross.

Death bed salvation by faith only is not taught in the Bible! Jesus specified the terms on which He will save man: faith and obedience (Heb. 5:8-9). He that willfully puts off obeying Christ in life, but hopes to "slip in" the last moment, has no assurance of being received. "Now is the day of salvation" (II Cor. 5:2). The theory of death-bed salvation is blighting. Sinners are led to believe they can live in sin till death calls; then cry, "Lord save me"; and all will be well. Jesus said, "Not everyone that saith Lord, Lord shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father (Matt. 7:21). Satan would have you put off obeying the Gospel till it is eternally too late. Be not deceived!

87

GOD'S REMNANT

A central theme of the Scriptures is that God has always had a faithful few in the earth who serve him. This small group is frequently described as the **remnant**. Paul wrote that, "If the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that shall be saved" (Rom. 9:27). The word **remnant** means, "a small fragment; an end of a roll of cloth, of good quality but small; a surviving trace." This aptly describes God's faithful people.

I. In ancient times, God always had his remnant. In Noah's generation the remnant numbered only eight souls (Gen. 6:5-10). In the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, only Lot and his family composed the remnant (II Pet. 2:6-7). Among the two-three million Hebrews who exited Egypt, only Joshua and Caleb of the men of war were faithful to God (Num. 14:29-30)

II. The Prophets hope for the future of Israel was in the remnant. Elijah was made to understand that in Israel's darkest day God yet had seven thousand faithful servants (I Kings 13:18). Isaiah thanked God for saving a very small remnant (Is. 1:9). The Lord promised Jeremiah that a remnant would be saved from Babylon and restored to the homeland (Jer. 23:3). Ezekiel consoled the refugees in captivity with word that a remnant would survive to carry the faith onward (Ezek. 6:8). Amos assured his brethren that God would "be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph" (Amos 5:15).

III. Jesus taught that only a remnant would be saved in the Day of Judgment. "Many are called, but few chosen," said he (Matt. 22:14). "For narrow is the gates, and straightened the way, that leadeth unto life, and **few** are they that find it" (Matt. 7:14). On one occasion He said to his followers, "Fear not, **little flock**: for it is the Father's good

pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke. 12:32).

IV. Paul saw the concept of the remnant as a logical explanation of why the majority of the Jews were rejecting the gospel. He argued, “But it is not as though the word of God hath come to naught for they are not all Israel that are of Israel: neither, because they are Abraham’s seed, they all children; but in Isaac shall thy need be called. That is, it is not the children of the flesh that are children of God: but the children of the promise are reckoned for a seed” (Rom. 9:6-8). Of Abraham’s 14 children only Isaac was “of the promise.” Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace” (Rom.11:15).

V. What does the doctrine of the remnant mean for us today?

A. We must not expect everyone to follow Jesus. They never have. God does not expect it. Thus we must not allow ourselves to become discouraged when folks reject the gospel. A small congregation is not proof of failure. It may well be the faithful remnant at work for the Master.

B. We should not expect everyone who makes a public confession to be wholly committed to Christ till death. There will always be backsliders and deserters. Our converts will suffer a similar attrition even as Paul’s did (II Tim. 4:10). Of course, we try to salvage all of them. Never would we push a soul away, but when the disappointment comes we must not be overwhelmed.

C. It is the faithful for who always have and always will carry the cause forward. Some preachers complain that 15% of their flock do 90% of the work and give the bulk of the contributions. Thank God for that faithful few. They are God’s remnant. They are the hope of the world.

D. No one is predestined or programmed to be a part of the remnant. It is a matter of personal conviction based on teaching and guidance. We cannot make a new convert “long for the spiritual milk...that (they) may grow thereby unto salvation” (I Pet. 2:2). We can only **teach** them to observe all things that Christ commanded (Matt.28:20). While we must try to restore those who fall (Gal. 6:1), it is they themselves who must “give the more diligence to make their calling and election sure” (II Pet. 1:10).

E. In many cases, only God knows if a brother or sister is part of the remnant. We can only look at the outward man; God looks into the heart (I Sam. 16:7). He can discern both the thoughts of intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12). A faithful sister became a serious troublemaker in her family and the congregation. To us it looked as if she had become unfaithful. A few months later she died with a brain tumor. She had not been responsible for her actions. We must not make the mistake of judging our brother (Jas.. 4:11-12). If he meets those basic requirements for fellowship we must accept him and let the all-wise Judge decide his destiny.

F. Each Christian should daily examine himself to be sure of his own standing with God (II Cor. 13:5). Never take you faithfulness for granted (I Cor. 11:28). Even a great saint like Paul knew he could be rejected if he neglected his spiritual life (I Cor. 9:27). “Unto death” is the Biblical requirement for faithfulness (Rev. 2:10).

Conclusion: The church in Sardis was woefully dead. Yet there were a few names in Sardis that did not defile their garments: and they shall walk with Jesus in white; for they are worthy (Rev. 3:4). Let it be our continual goal and

concern to be a part of God's faithful few who serve him now and who will with him in heaven.

88.

BAPTISM FOR THE DEAD

C. W. Penrose, former head of the Mormon Church says, "The living may be baptized for the dead. One who has received the ordinances of the Gospel can stand proxy for departed ancestors who will receive benefit of the earthly ordinances on obedience to the Gospel in spirit. As the Spirit of Christ preached to the spirits in prison while His body was in the sepulcher, so His servants, bearing His authority, preach to "the dead" after finishing their work on earth. Ordinances for and in behalf of the dead are administered in temples built after a pattern revealed from heaven. Thus the living become saviors to the dead under Jesus Christ the Captain of their salvation." (**What the Mormons Believe**, President Charles W. Penrose, p. 8).

This belief and practice is founded upon three fundamental errors:

1. That there is a second chance for salvation after this life;
2. That Christ preached to physically dead sinners in his death offering them a second chance;
3. That baptism on behalf of the dead is a divine doctrine taught in the Bible.

I. The idea that the dead will have a second chance for salvation contradicts the following Biblical statements. Solomon says, "When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish; and the hope of unjust men perisheth" (Prov. 11:7 KJV). Jesus warned, ye "shall die in your sin: (and) whither I go, ye cannot come" (John 8:21). Abraham told the Rich Man, "Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, that they that would pass from hence to you may not be able, and that none may cross over from thence to us" (Luke 16:26). "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement" (Heb. 9:27).

Even the **Book of Mormon** refutes this error.

"For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; yea, behold the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors. And now, as I said unto you before, as ye have had so many witnesses, therefore, I beseech of you that ye do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end; for after this day of life, which is given us to prepare for eternity, behold, if we do not improve our time while in this life, then cometh the night of darkness wherein there can be no labor performed. Ye cannot say, when ye are brought to that awful crises, that I will repent, that I will return to my God. Nay, ye cannot say this; for that a same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world. For behold, if you have procrastinated the day of your repentance even until death, behold, ye have become subjected to the spirit of the devil and he doth seal you his; therefore the Spirit of the Lord hath withdrawn from you, and hath no place in you, and the devil hath all power over you; and this is the final state of the wicked" (Alma 34:32-35, p. 283).

From this even a child can see that the Bible and the Book of Mormon teaches against a second chance after death.

II. Did Christ preach to the dead sinners in the interval between his death and resurrection? Those who affirm this,

base their teaching upon a misunderstanding of two scripture in I Peter. “For unto this end was the gospel preached even to the dead that they might be judged indeed according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit. (I Pet. 4:6). The “dead” here spoken of are described by Paul in Eph. 2:1. “And you did he make alive when ye were *dead* through your trespasses and sins.” The gospel is preached to those dead in sin that they might be “born again” and “live according to God in the spirit.”

“Christ...being put to death in the flesh, but made alive by the spirit; in which also he went and preached unto the sprits in prison” (I Pet. 3:18). In his crucifixion, Christ’s physical body was killed but the Holy Spirit of God made him alive through the resurrection as is explained by Paul in Rom. 8:11. “But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dad dwelleth in you, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you.” We will be made alive just as Christ was, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

“By which he went and preached unto the spirits in prison” (I Pet. 3:19). They are called spirits because at the time Peter wrote they were dead and their spirits lived in a disembodied state in Hades. They were in prison because they had died in disobedience; in sin and rebellion. Jude speaks of rebellious angels that are kept in everlasting bonds, in Tartarus or Torment in Hades (Jude 6; Comp. Luke 16:22-31). Jesus went and preached to these spirits. When? Not after they were dead, but “in the days of Noah.” when they lived. Jesus preached unto them in or through the Holy Spirit (vss. 18-19). It has always been the Holy Spirit that conveyed the heavenly message to man. “Men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit” (II Pet. 1:21). The Spirit never addresses sinners directly, but through men or angels. Noah was the preacher of righteousness through whom Christ preached to the sinful people of the antediluvian world (II Pet. 2:5). “It should be noted that Peter does not declare that these who were the objects of his preaching were in a disembodied state and in prison when the preaching was done; such was their condition when he wrote” (Guy N. Woods, **Commentary on the New Testament Epistles of Peter, John and Jude**, p. 101). This does not teach that Christ gave them a second chance by preaching to them after death!

III. The idea that God teaches us to baptize people on behalf of those who died unbaptized is a false teaching arising from a misunderstand of I Cor. 15:29. Paul asks, “Else what shall they do that are baptized for the dead?” Careful attention to the grammatical persons and pronouns in the context will clarify this passage.

In verse 1 we see the pronoun “I,” referring to Paul the author.

In the same verse he mentions “you,” meaning the Corinthian Christians.

In verse 19 we see the term “we,” alluding to Paul and the Corinthians.

Verse 25 speaks of “He, the Christ.

Verse 29 introduces “they” who baptize for the dead. It cannot refer to Paul, Christ or the Corinthian brethren, but to another party, i.e., religious teachers who practiced this unauthorized rite.

The meaning of verse 29 is seen by surveying the thought of the whole chapter. A group of false teachers denied the resurrection of the dead (vs. 12). In refuting their error, Paul showed:

1. If there was no resurrection, then Christ has not been raised (vs. 12).
2. If there was no resurrection, then our preaching and your faith is vain or useless (vs. 14).
3. If there was no resurrection, the apostles were all false witnesses because they preached the resurrection as a fact (vs. 15).
4. If there was no resurrection, then they that are dead have forever perished (vs. 18).
5. If the dead are not raised, what do they, they false teachers mean (who deny a resurrection and future

life) in being baptized on behalf of the dead (vs. 29).

6. If the dead are not raised at all, why are they baptized for them? (vs. 29).

7. If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die! (vs. 32).

In this passage, Paul was not teaching that Christians should be baptized on behalf of others, rather he was showing the gross inconsistency of that sect of false teachers who denied that there would be a resurrection, but at the same time baptized living persons on behalf of those who were dead, thinking it would somehow benefit them.

Now is the acceptable time, behold now is the day of salvation (II Cor. 6:2). Those accepting Christ and obeying his gospel will be saved. Those who let death overtake them without preparation must face judgment in their sins (Heb. 9:27). There is no promise of a second chance beyond the grave.

THE CHURCH

89.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Six hundred years before Christ came Daniel prophesied of a coming day when God would set up his kingdom on earth (Dan. 2:44). The Christian religion, including the Church of Christ is that heavenly kingdom (Matt. 16:18). The church is that kingdom which cannot be shaken (Heb. 12:28).

The Kingdom is variously referred to as the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 3:2), the kingdom of God (Matt. 12:38) and by inference the kingdom of Christ (Col. 1:13).

To understand the kingdom of Christ we must realize that it is a spiritual, not a temporal entity. To Pilate Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence" (John 18:36). The kingdom of Christ controls no geographic borders. Its territory is the hearts of his disciples. "The kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:20-21). This is why it is called "the kingdom of heaven." Heaven is its origin; heaven is its destiny. Its mission is to gather and prepare citizens for life in the heavenly realms (Phil. 3:20).

The kingdom of God is ruled by a divine sovereign. To Jesus God gave all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18). Thus it is the kingdom of God's dear Son (Col. 1:12-13). He is King of kings and Lord of lords" (I Tim. 6:14-16). No man or body of men have the right to rule over his church on earth for Christ alone is head of his kingdom/church (Eph. 1:22).

Citizens of Christ's spiritual kingdom are those saved by his blood and added to his church. When the heavenly Father delivers a sinner from the power of darkness he translates him into the kingdom of his Son (Col. 1:13; Acts 2:47 KJV). John reminded the Christians in Asia Minor that Jesus "made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto his

God and Father” (Rev. 1:6). We Christians are priests now and thus members of his kingdom (I Pet. 2:5,9). Those who have not yet been saved are yet in the kingdom of darkness, not in the Lord’s kingdom. To be added to the kingdom, one must be born of water and the Spirit (John 3:3-5). This occurs when a sinner repents and is baptized in the name of Jesus for remission of his sins and receives the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).

Christ’s spiritual kingdom is governed by righteous laws. David wrote that “The ordinances of Jehovah are true, and righteous altogether” (Ps. 19:9). “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made (us) free from the law of sin and death” (Rom. 8:2). The law of Christ (Gal. 6:2) is his new and better covenant (Heb. 8:6-13). It is “the perfect law of liberty” (Jas. 1:25).

Citizenship in this kingdom brings many and valuable privileges. In the kingdom we have “redemption, the forgiveness of our sins” (Col. 1:13-14). We have every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3). As citizens, Christ lives in us and is our hope of glory (Col. 1:27-28).

The kingdom of heaven has before it a destiny bright and glorious. When Christ returns to raise the dead he will deliver up his kingdom to the Father (I Cor. 15:24). “No fornicator, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God” (Eph. 5:5; I Cor. 6:9-11). In the heavenly realm kingdom citizens will have new bodies, free from the curse of sickness and old age (I Cor. 15:50-52). Eternal life will be theirs to enjoy (II Pet. 1:11). That unending life will be blessed beyond words because they will live in the presence of their Creator, Provider and Savior forever (Rev. 22:1-5).

The most important questions facing mortal men are: Have you been born of water and the Spirit so you can enter the kingdom of heaven (John 3:3-5)? Are you living for and serving the King as a faithful citizen? Only those who are faithful will receive the crown of life (Rev. 2:10).

90.

MYSTERIES OF CHRIST’S KINGDOM

Jesus said unto the apostles, “unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven...” (Matt. 13:11). The Jews to whom Jesus preached were confused about the kingdom of heaven which he proclaimed. They expected a kingdom like that of David and Solomon, a political kingdom, that would deliver them from their Roman overlords and give them a superior place in the world of nations. After some 2,000 years, the majority of the world is still mystified about Christ’s kingdom. Attention to the Bible’s message clarifies the matter for us.

Christ’s kingdom was planned and founded by God rather than men. It was a kingdom prepared for us “from the foundation of the world” (Matt. 25:34). It is truly “the kingdom of heaven” (Mark 1:14-15). The writings of the inspired authors of the New Testament help us to see what is the dispensation of the mystery which for ages hath been hid in God. That the gospel would be made known to humanity through the church according to the *eternal purpose* which he proposed in Christ Jesus...” (Eph. 3:9-11).

The Lord's kingdom is "not of this world" (John 18:36). When questioned by Pilot about the charge made by the Jews that he was a king, Jesus explained that his kingdom was not a worldly kingdom, it was "not from hence." He was no threat to Caesar or the Herodian family. His kingdom is of a different nature than any earthly kingdom, then or now.

* It has no earthly head or government. Christ alone is "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords" (I Tim. 6:14-15).

* It has no earthly territory. Baffled by Jesus' talk about his kingdom, the Jews asked when it was coming? The Lord answered, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo, here! Or, There! For lo, the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:20-21). Christ's kingdom controls no nation or land mass. Rather it rules in the hearts of people in every nation who embrace Christ as their Lord (Rom. 10:9-10).

* The kingdom of Jesus is a universal kingdom. Isaiah predicted the coming kingdom and said that "all nations shall flow into it" (Is. 2:2). Tyrants have dreamed of ruling all the nations of the world, but none have achieved it. But Jesus's kingdom exists in virtually every nation on the face of the planet.

* His kingdom is not limited to a particular ethnic group. Its gates are open to believers of all races and nations. Thus he commissioned us to "make disciples of all the nations" (Matt. 28:19). His is truly a multinational kingdom where there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female for they are all one under his reign (Gal. 3:26-28).

* Our Master's kingdom has no military or weapons of destruction. Micah predicted that in Messiah's kingdom, They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Mic. 4:3). "Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh (for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds...and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (II Cor. 10:3-5). His cause is advanced in the world by the proclamation of his gospel (Mark 16:15). Our only method is persuasion (II Cor 5:11). The Christian message spreads like leaven in meal (Matt. 13:33), not by force of arms.

* Rather than defeating and crushing people, Christians are taught to do them good (Gal. 6:10). If our enemy is hungry we feed him, if thirsty, we give him drink (Rom. 12:20). We treat all men by that Golden Rule that our Lord gave us. We treat them as we wish to be treated (Matt. 7: 12). In Christ's kingdom people are elevated spiritually, intellectually, socially, morally to the high standards of Jesus himself (II Cor. 3:18).

* The kingdom of Christ is an everlasting kingdom. Daniel foresaw it and wrote that it would "never be destroyed".. "it shall stand forever" (Dan. 2:44). Earthly kingdoms have a limited life span. Most fall within 200 years and are replaced by yet another power. Not so the kingdom of Christ. Gabriel told Mary, that her son "shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever and of his kingdom there shall be no end." (Luke 1:33). The kingdom of heaven will still be standing when Christ comes to reward his servants (Matt. 13:40-41). At that time he will deliver up his kingdom to the Father (I Cor. 15:24).

* In Christ's kingdom the volition of man is respected. Many rulers gained their power by imposing their will and rule upon an oppressed people. No one is forced into the kingdom of Christ. Jesus invites all of humanity to come unto him and he will give them rest (Matt. 11:28). The invitation is theirs but they are free to accept or reject it. Each must decide for himself if he wants to be born again (John 3:3-5), no one will force baptism upon him. Furthermore, citizens are free to walk away from the kingdom of Christ at any time. Jesus even asked the Apostles, "Will ye also go away?" (John 6:66-67). Judas did leave him. Of course in choosing to leave they forfeit the blessings he offers.

* In His kingdom, all its citizens are priests of God (Rev. 5:10), who offer up spiritual sacrifices to God (I Pet. 2:5). There is no special clergy class among his people!

* Unlike earthly kingdoms, His kingdom has an invisible head. Our king is "eternal, immortal, invisible" (I Tim. 1:17). Only when he returns will every eye see him (Rev. 1:7).

* The ultimate destiny of Christ's kingdom is to be with God in heaven. At the end of time, the Master will deliver

up the kingdom to the Father (I Cor. 15:24).

The greatest mystery to most of the Protestant world is that the kingdom of Christ is his church. At Caesarea Philippi he promised, "I will build my church...and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 16:18). The words church and kingdom he uses synonymously. To speak of the one is to speak of the other.

Today you can be translated into his kingdom (Col. 1:12-13). That will happen the moment you are born of water and the Spirit (John 3:3-5). Of course to be born of water and the Spirit is to be baptized in water and receive God's blessings, remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). Thus the mystery of the kingdom of heaven is now revealed. You have the privilege to be a citizen therein, if you so choose.

91.

PROPER ATTITUDES OF THE KINGDOM CITIZENS

Of the Sermon on the Mount, Albert Barnes said, "In all languages there is not a discourse to be found that can be compared with it for purity, and truth, and beauty, and dignity.. Were there no other evidence of the divine mission of Christ, this alone would be sufficient to prove that he was sent from God. Were these doctrines obeyed and loved, how pure and peaceful would be the world."(1)

Men have chosen various ways to describe this sermon of Jesus:

Some call it the Manifesto of the King. Others, the Moral Code of the Kingdom. Still others, the Magna Charta of the Kingdom. Some style it the Copendium of the Doctrine of Christ. Yet others have described it as the Ordination Charge of the Apostles. However, we choose to label it, the Sermon on the Mount is the core, the essence of the teaching of Christ as he delivered it to his chosen helpers.

From Luke 6:13-22, we learn that the Sermon was given immediately after the selection of the twelve. Thus, the Sermon is Christ's presentation to equip his co-workers for their work in his prospective kingdom. The contents are, therefore, prospective and contemplative of the new covenant and the new age which Christ had foretold in the simple words, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand"(Matt. 4:17). We would add here that likely the Sermon, as we have it, is a compilation or distillation of Jesus' teachings from many occasions. Luke's account seems to verify this conclusion.

The Sermon's Role in Christianity

Matthew tells us in 4:23 that Jesus "went about in all Galilee, teaching...and preaching the gospel of the kingdom..." He then gives us the Sermon. At the conclusion he writes that "The multitudes were astonished at his teaching (doctrine, KJV) for he taught them as one having authority..."(Matt. 7:28-29). We would conclude, therefore, that the Sermon on the Mount is an integral and vital part of our Lord's gospel and doctrine.

One of the great attributes of Jesus' teaching was that he dealt with ordinary problems of daily life. He spoke of earning a living, of our relationship to money and property and our fellow man. The many lessons of this Sermon present a practical method for developing the spirit and shaping our lives after God's heavenly pattern. As a moral code, none can be found which approaches the Sermon of the Mount in its depth or completeness. It is "to the other moral codes as the pure to the mixed or partially corrupt."(2)

The Sixth Chapter Analyzed

There are two grand divisions in the Sixth Chapter.

I. That which relates to spiritual activities, vss.1-18.

II. That which relates to the temporal, financial and material activities of life, vss.19-34.

Another way to divide the contents is as follows:

I. Correct attitudes toward spiritual exercises, 6:1-18.

II. Correct attitudes toward material possessions, 6:19-24.

III. Correct attitudes toward financial security, 6:25-34

Right and Wrong Ways to Worship

Jesus not only commands us to worship God, he likewise tells us **how to worship acceptably**. If anyone is qualified to tell men how to worship acceptably it is Jesus the Son of God. He is divine (John 20:28) and has all authority (Matt. 28:18). he is head over all things to the church (Eph. 1:22-23).

The thesis of the first 18 verses of Matt. 6 is laid in verse one, "...do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them else ye have no reward with your Father who is in heaven." He then proceeds to give three illustrations applying his principle. One of man's besetting sins is the desire for praise from men. Such desire kept many Pharisees from confessing the Lord (John 12:42-43). Paul warned that pleasing men was incompatible with pleasing God (Gal. 1:10). This vain desire is rooted in man's false pride and is lethal to his spiritual health (I John 2:16). Few things are more destructive to true and acceptable worship than desire for accolades.

His first illustration concerns our giving. "Alms" means "something given freely for the poor"(Webster). Here it stands, by metonymy, for all our charitable deeds of whatever kind.

"When...thou doest alms, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men" (Matt. 6:2). The rabbis declared alms-giving to be the most sacred of all religious duties. A rabbinical saying went, "Greater is he that giveth alms than he who offers gifts and sacrifices." Christ put no less emphasis on it (Matt. 25:31-46). The problem is, some folks are charitable for wrong reasons. Some are benevolent, not so much to help the recipient, but to demonstrate their own generosity and thus to bask in the adulation and praise it brings. Such would probably not give if there were no one to see it. Others might give from a sense of duty. It is not that they wish to help, but because they cannot escape the responsibility. They may give money but not themselves. Faithful Christians give for the sheer love of doing good. They view it as one of the privileges of being a child of God.

"But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth"(Matt. 6:3). It would be a mistake to interpret this literally for no man can keep one hand from knowing the other's action. Rather, it is set in antithesis to giving to be seen of man. Our only motive in giving is to please our Father. Jesus is our perfect pattern for giving. "...though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich."(II Cor. 8:9).

His second example is: "When ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites: for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets that they may be seen of men"(Matt. 6:5). It is very easy for prayer to become formal, meaningless ritual. Men can pray for different reasons. Some pray only because it is a duty expected of them. But prayer is a marvelous privilege for God's children. Prayer should be as natural and spontaneous as breathing. Others pray to be seen and heard of men. The Pharisees commonly prayed standing with hands outstretched, palm upward and heads bowed. Public prayers were offered at 9:00 A.M., 12:00 Noon and 3:00 P.M. Wherever one was he stopped and said his prayers at these times. Such prayers were addressed to men, not God. They were also given to vain repetitions in prayer. They attempted to pile up every possible title and adjective in

addressing God. Often they chanted the same phrase or verse repeatedly. They especially delighted in long prayers. A Rabbi Levi wrote, "Whoever is long in prayer is heard." When a man begins to think more of *how* he prays than of *what* he prays, his prayer becomes vain.

When praying, always remember, all prayers must be made to God alone. True worship may be offered to God anywhere, anytime (John 4:20-24). We should always be in contact with and on speaking terms with God (I Thess. 5:22). God cannot be flattered, bribed or cajoled with long, wordy, repetitious prayers. He freely gives his gifts to his children (Matt. 7:7-11).

His third example is: "...when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrite, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may seen of men to fast..." (Matt. 6:11). Only one fast was specifically appointed by God for the Hebrews; the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16: 29-31). In Jesus' day, devout Jews fasted twice weekly, on Monday and Thursday (Lk. 18:11-12). There were ideals behind fasting. It was to draw the attention of God to the supplicant's need and prayer. It was to prove that one's penitence was genuine. It was intended to move God to bless the nation in its distress.

There were some dangers, however, in fasting. One might fast to demonstrate his superior godliness. He could show his neighbors how devoted and disciplined he was. A Pharisee would not comb his hair or wash his face while fasting. Some even powdered their faces to look haggard and pale, and wore soiled garments. They wanted everyone to note how devoted they were. Such pretending was a deliberate act of spiritual pride and deceit. There was no value in fasting undertaken for its own sake or to impress others.

The failures of ostentatious religion are many and obvious. (1) It is worthless, for God rejects all such. (2) It is pure wickedness because a) It is false, pretending to be what is not; b) It is selfish. True worship surrenders self unto God, but this is all *for self*. c) It is worldly since it is done for the reward of the present world. (3) It is insulting to God to take a high and holy thing like prayer and prostitute it for self-glorification.

The Model Prayer (Matt. 6:9-15)

In contrast to the vain prayers of the Pharisees our Lord gave us what is conceded by all to be the most beautiful and effectual prayer known.

"Our Father." This is a prayer for children of God (Rom. 8:14-15). **Father** implies love, tender care, wisdom and power. To us it suggests affection, trust, obedience and unswerving faith. He is *our Father*. We may not have God selfishly as a spoiled, only child. We always approach God as a member of a family of children, all with equal access. One has no special entree with God because of race, nationality or social status.

"Which art in Heaven." We must hush our hearts in solemn reverence when we approach God in prayer. Solomon warns, "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter anything before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth, therefore let thy words be few" (Eccle. 5:2).

"Hallowed by thy name." In prayer we should adore the Father before asking for self. True prayer will lift us out of self and selfish thoughts into communion with God. Like a seraphim in heaven we should cry "holy, holy, holy is our God" (Isaiah 6:3). We must never take God's name in vain (Ex. 20:7), even in our prayers. May his name be hallowed not only in our prayers but in our lives as well.

"Thy kingdom come". The word *basileia* from which we get "kingdom" denotes "sovereignty, royal power, dominion."(3) "The kingdom of God means primarily the rule of God..."(4) The word kingdom is used in at least 30 ways in the New Testament.

1) The kingdom is the church (Matt. 16:18-19). There we see both words used interchangeably. Kingdom describes the church from its governmental point of view. Christ is King over his Kingdom (I Tim. 6:15).

2) The kingdom is also God's reign in men's hearts. Jesus said in Luke 17:20-21, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo, here! or there! for lo, the kingdom of God is within you." The church as a body of saved people can be seen, but the rule of God is in the heart. In Matthew 12:28 Jesus said, "But if I by the Spirit of God cast out demons, then it is the kingdom of God come upon you." The church had not yet been established when Jesus spoke these words, but the kingdom or rule of God was come upon them, evidenced by Christ's miraculous power over demons.

3) The word kingdom may refer to the heavenly kingdom. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God..." (I Cor. 15:50). Flesh and blood people can be members of the church, but they cannot go to heaven unless they receive a spiritual body suited for the eternal realms. Peter urges us to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure that we may enter "the eternal kingdom" (II Peter 1:11).

We do not pray for the church-kingdom to be established. That was accomplished long ago. We can pray that God may reign in our hearts and lives and those of our fellow men. We may pray that the church may spread through all the world and that the heavenly kingdom will soon be ours.

"Thy will be done." This simple phrase makes this prayer difficult for most folks to sincerely pray. It is easy to pray for his will to be done in others' lives. It is easy to pray that his will be done when things go our way. But it is hard to say "Thy will be done" when pain and suffering, death or loss is our lot. Jesus only asks of us that which he did himself (Matt. 26:42). God's will is always better than our will for he knows better than we what is good for us. To pray these words we must have first been crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20).

"In earth as it is in heaven." How is God's will done in heaven? There the holy angels ever do God's will perfectly, cheerfully, unquestionably and zealously. Since our citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20), since our treasures are laid up there (Matt. 6:21), and since we look for the heavenly city for our eternal home (Heb. 11:14-16), we must try to live on earth as we would in heaven.

"Give us this day our daily bread." This is the first mention of our personal wants in this model prayer. It reflects faith, trust and contentment in the Lord of the harvest (Matt. 9:38). Bread stands as a synecdoche for all our physical needs. Again we note that it is *our* bread we pray for. We pray not just for our own personal needs but for others also. Remembering the poor is an essential part of our faith (Gal. 2:10). We are reminded that man does not live by bread alone (Matt. 4:4). We need the life-giving bread which came down from heaven (John 6:41) and the words which he gave us.

"Forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors." Each of us owes an immense sin debt to God which we could never pay (Matt. 18:23-25). As we have been forgiven so must we forgive others. Unwillingness to forgive is proof of our own condemnation. We must learn to forgive as Christ did on the cross (Lk. 23:34). This is the only part of the prayer to which Jesus gave a special added emphasis (Matt. 6:15).

"Lead us not into temptation." The term "temptation" must be defined lest it confuse us. God *tempts* no man to do evil (Jas. 1:13). Satan does that. God does test and try us to prove, strengthen and confirm our faith (Gen. 22:1). So we are praying that God will not test us more than we are able to bear, even as he has promised (I Cor. 10:13). Having prayed this prayer, we should never expose ourselves to temptation unnecessarily. We defeat our own prayer, if we run in danger's way.

"Deliver us from the evil one." Satan is like a roaring lion, stalking us daily (I Peter 5:8). The whole world lieth under his control (I John 5:19). In his craftiness he seeks to corrupt us from the simplicity and purity that is toward Christ (II Cor. 11:3). Martin Luther wrote of Satan:

"His craft and power are great

And armed with cruel hate,

On earth is not his equal."

Surely every child of heaven needs daily divine help in resisting and overcoming the ancient enemy of all righteousness.

Could there be a more complete or perfect prayer than that which fell from the lips of God's own Son? May God give us the grace to pray it as Christ intended.

Developing Right Attitudes Toward Material Possessions (Matt. 6:19-24)

The central thought of this section is Matthew 6:19-20. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal; for where thy treasure is there will thy heart be also." Is there any passage in all of God's book that speaks more directly to Americans than this? Affluence and the mad rush for material goods and pleasure are the hallmarks of our age. One can understand blinded sinners so doing, but it is inexplicable that so many Christians have joined the gold-rush craze. Since we are children of eternity, rather than time, it is the height of folly to devote our strength to gathering treasures which cannot be converted into the currency of the heavenly land.

Matthew 6:22-23 are obscure and pose a problem for most students. The context however, helps us to grasp the meaning. **The Amplified Bible** renders it: "The eye is the lamp of the body. So if your eye is sound, your entire body will be full of light; but if your eye is unsound, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the very light in you (your conscience) is darkened, how dense is that darkness."(5) **The Expositor's Greek Testament** offers this explanation. "The eye is the lamp of the body: when it is healthy we see to do our daily work, when it is diseased we are in darkness. So with the eye of the soul, the heart, seat of desires. When it is free from covetousness, not anxious to hoard, all goes well with our spiritual functions, we choose and act wisely. When sordid passions possess it there is darkness within deeper than that which afflicts the blind man. We mistake our relative value of things, neglect the better, or flatter ourselves that we can have both."(6) Jesus sums up the point of this section with the proverb, "No man can serve two masters for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else will hold to one and despise the other." His application is obvious: "Ye cannot serve God and Mannon, (the common Aramaic word for material riches). The reasons are many.

- 1) Earthly treasure are ephemeral, while heavenly treasures are eternal.
- 2) They steal the heart and dwarf the personality, while heavenly treasures help us be more God-like.
- 3) They blind our vision while heavenly treasures help to keep our moral and spiritual vision healthy.
- 4) They lead men to forget the value of human beings while heavenly treasures help us to love and do good to all.

How sad to see people investing their all into temporal material things which can be snatched away by fire, theft or financial disaster. Even if they keep every penny, in judgement they will stand before God whom they neglected, with nought but their naked soul.

Attitudes Toward Financial Security--Faith, not Fear (Matt. 6:25-34)

This last section is epitomized in these words, "Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on...(Matt 6:25). "But seek ye first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). One of our most common problems is worry and anxiety. Millions fret, fuss and fume their lives away, robbing themselves of the joys God intended. Many make themselves sick with worry and paralyze their lives.

Just what does Jesus forbid? "Take no thought for the morrow" of the King James Version is somewhat misleading. Christ does not advocate a shiftless, thriftless, thoughtless, reckless attitude about life and the future. "Be not anxious" of the American Standard is much clearer. The word **merimnan** means to worry anxiously. So he forbid a

care-worn and worried fear that takes all the joy out of life. Jesus posits five reasons why Christians should not worry.

"Is not the life more than the food, and the body than the raiment" (Matt. 6:25). If God has given us the greater gift of life, surely he will supply the lesser necessities to sustain the life. The Creator of the marvelous body of man would not overlook food and clothing for his creation. Therefore, we should not worry about these things.

"Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not neither do they reap...and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not of much more value than they?(Matt. 6:26). If God provides for these tiny creatures surely he will supply one made in his image. If the creatures that were made for my use are nourished without worry, how much more will I, who am made to serve the Creator, be nourished.

Worry is totally useless! "Which of you being anxious can add one cubit unto the measure of his life?"(Matt 6:27). A lifetime of fretting and worry will not extend your life even 18 inches. It may very well shorten it by inducing such serious disorders as hypertension, ulcers, coronary attacks, depression or suicide.

"Why are you anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin, yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you? O ye of little faith?"(Matt. 6:28-30).

The scarlet poppies and anemones he spoke of had a life span of but one day. Dried grass, including wild flowers therein, was used to start fires in their cooking ovens. If God adorned them more beautifully than Israel's grandest king. Would he not provide covering for his own children? Of course He will!

Worry is characteristic of a heathen but not of a child of God. "Be not therefore anxious, saying, what shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things"(Matt. 6:31-32). Gentile pagans had only gods of wood and stone. These could not provide or help in any way at all. It was proper that the poor pagans worry about their needs. We are children of the living God. He is creator of all things (Col. 1:17-18). "He giveth to all life, and breath and all things"(Acts 17:25). As Paul put it, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things (Rom. 8:32).

He closes his great lesson with two recommendations for defeating worry. First, Seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you"(Matt. 6:33). We must get our priorities in order. First things must come first. The things of God are of far greater importance than material things. Second, Learn to live one day at a time. "Be not therefore anxious for the morrow. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof (Matt. 6:34). Each day will have enough problems to wrestle without taking on the unknown fears of tomorrow.

Strangely, many of those future things we worry about have a way of resolving themselves so that our worry was needless and in vain. Think how many folks have died since 1945 who ruined their lives worrying about a nuclear war. They are gone. It never happened. If it does happen at some future date they will not be affected. O, the futility of needless anxiety!

Conclusion: The fundamental difference between the children of God and others is that our goal and ambition is altered. What we seek in life is different. We practice our faith to please God not for the praise of men. We are laying up our treasures in heaven. Rather than worry and fret about the material needs of life we seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and our great God provides our daily needs.

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92.

THE KINGDOMS OF DARKNESS AND LIGHT

In revealing his will to us, God chose words and concepts that set truth and error in sharp contrast. Among the contrasts most commonly used are light and darkness. John writes, "God is light and in him is no darkness at all" (I John 1:5). In salvation we are delivered out of the power of darkness, i.e., Satan's domain, and translated into the kingdom of God's son (Col. 1:13). Throughout the New Testament darkness stands symbolically for the antithesis of God's way.

The Christless life is one of darkness. Before becoming Christians we "were...darkness, but are now light in the Lord" (Eph. 5:8). Christ made the darkness of sin, ignorance, error and superstition to vanish away (I John 2:8). Christians "are all sons of light, and sons of the day: we are not of the night nor of darkness" (I Thess. 5:5).

Darkness is hostile to the light. This is true in the material realm and more so in the spiritual. Christ was "the light of men. And the light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness apprehended (or overcame) it not" (John 1:4-5). Jesus said, "everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his works should be reprov'd.

But he that doeth the truth cometh to the light..." (John 3:20). As Christians, our "wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the world-rulers of this darkness..." (Eph. 6:12). This mortal conflict between truth and error will never cease till the victorious Christ banishes darkness (Rev. 22:5).

Darkness symbolizes the ignorance of a life apart from Christ. Without light one is soon confused and lost in the darkness of a literal night. So it is in the spiritual realm. Jesus said, "Yet a little while is the light among you. Walk while ye have the light, that darkness overtake you not: and he that walketh in the darkness knoweth not whither he goeth" (John 12:35). Jesus is the guiding light by which by following leads us safely to our eternal home (John 8:12). Even as Israel was provided the glorious light of God to lead them from bondage to Canaan, so Christ leads us (Ex. 13:21). Whoever believes on Jesus does not abide in darkness. Those who reject him are like blind men groping along in the darkness.

Darkness describes the chaos of life without God. Paul writes, "it is God that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (II Cor. 4:6). He alludes to God's first act upon the dark chaos of the unfinished creation (Gen. 1:23). Only after God brought forth light could make the earth suitable for living things and man. As the physical world would be chaotic without the sun so without the moral light of his Son the world would be in moral, spiritual chaos.

The immorality of the Christless life is depicted as darkness. Romans 13:12-14 reads, "The night is far spent and the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk becomingly, as in the day; not in revelling and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and jealousy. But put ye n the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lust thereof. " Works of darkness are most often pursued in the darkness of night; such as crime, wild partying, drunkenness, adultery and abandonment. People whose deeds are evil love the darkness, like the doleful creatures of the nocturnal realm. They frolic in the shadows and then hide themselves when the light appears (John 3:19).

Darkness is always unfruitful. Paul speaks of "the unfruitful works of darkness" in Ephesians 5:11. Without light, growing things soon wither and die. So there can be no fruit of the Spirit in a life lived in the darkness of spiritual ignorance and sin. (Gal. 5:22-23).

Hatefulness and the absence of love always accompany darkness. John warns, "He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother, is in the darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light...but he that hateth his brother is in the darkness, and walketh in the darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because the darkness hath blinded his eyes" (I John 2:9-11). Love is like the warm, life-giving sunshine, hatred like the cold dark night. How sad to see some professing Christians harboring hatred towards a brother. Such actions are contradictory and mutually exclusive.

Darkness is the abode of Christ's enemies and the final destiny of the wicked. Satan's domain is that of darkness (Col. 1:13). Apostate disciples are like "wandering stars for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved forever." Wicked angel are "kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgement..." (Jude 6). The Lord will consign the wicked to "outer darkness" where they will be forever punished (Matt. 22:13).

Jesus gave his life to deliver us from the power of darkness (Col. 1:13). Today God is calling us out of darkness into his marvelous light (I Pet. 2:9). Faithful Christians must continually walk in the light of Jesus' blessed gospel (I John 1:6-7). We must also have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather even reprove them (Eph. 5:11-12). As Israel followed their guiding light to their land of freedom and rest, so may we follow Jesus the

light of the world to our eternal home.

(The author is indebted to William Barclay for the heart of this lesson).

93.

THE GREATNESS OF THE CHURCH

The Church of Christ is the greatest institution the world has ever known. It is a divine institution and we should never think of it in terms of an ordinary worldly thing, nor should we treat it as such. The church is Christ's kingdom on earth over which he reigns (Matthew 16:16-18). One cannot be loyal to Christ without being loyal also to his kingdom, the church. Christians and the world need to appreciate the church more. Consider some characteristics of its greatness.

I. The Church is Great Because of Its Founder. The founder is a most important factor in the merit of any organization. He sets it in order as to its functions. He gives it a code or standard of operation. His wealth and mentality furnish the life-blood of the institution. An organization will usually reflect the spirit and ideals of its founder. Jesus founded the church (Matthew 16:18). He did all of these things for his church. It is our obligation to reflect his divine spirit and ideals in the life and conduct of the church. Paul exhorts us to "have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus..." (Philippians 2:5). Again, he writes, "Be ye imitators of me, even as I am of Christ" (I Corinthians 11:1).

II. The Church is Great Because of the Price Paid For It. Most worldly concerns were founded to enrich their founders. Even many churches began for this purpose. The Lord's church was not established for financial gain. What could the Creator want to extract from the work of his own hands? (See John 1:3). His purpose for the church was to benefit lost mankind. He purchased the church with his own blood when he died the accursed death on Calvary (Acts 20:28). To give us the church he humbled and emptied himself of his equality with the Father and became a servant of men, willing even to die for humanity (Philippians 2:5-9). He taught mankind that "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

III. The Church is Great Because of Its Relation to Christ. There are several ways of comparing or describing the church. It is the spiritual body of which Christ is head (Ephesians 1:22). It is the bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:22, 32). The church is the kingdom of Christ and he reigns as its only king and lawgiver (Matthew 16:18-19). It is his army and he is our captain and leader (Hebrews 2:10; II Timothy 2:3-4). The church is his family, for they do the will of his Father in heaven (Matthew 12:50). There is a certain honor that comes from intimate association with great people. How much more honor is there to the church to be so wonderfully associated with King Jesus. While we ponder this point, as yourself, "Can I be saved out of Christ's kingdom; out of his army; out of his family?" The obvious answer is no. But since to be in his church is to be in all of these. The saved He adds to his church (Acts 2:47).

IV. The Church is Great Because of Its Mission. The great purpose of the church is to save lost men from sin and damnation by winning them to Jesus. It is charged with preaching the gospel to the whole creation (Mark 16:15). It helps sinners reform their lives and be translated into God's kingdom on earth (Colossians 1:13). It prepares men for heaven (Ephesians 4:11-15; II Peter 1:10-11).

Christ's church is not a political power or economic power. It is not war-like as is Islam. Rather, the church evangelizes, telling all men the good news about Christ and salvation. It serves the unfortunate and keeps Christians

in faithful service (Ephesians 4:11-12) As a great beacon light, it holds forth the word of life to a world lost in the darkness of sin and error (I Timothy 3:15; Philippians 2:15-16).

V. The Church is Great Because of Its Blessings. James tells us that every good and perfect gift comes down from God (James 1:17). These blessings are available to humanity within the church. There are certain privileges and blessings available to men in America. You may read of these blessings in a book or hear of them from others, but you will not receive them until you enter in. So with the church. You must become a member to enjoy the benefits. Salvation in heaven awaits faithful members of the church (Ephesians 5:23). Every spiritual blessing is available in Christ, i.e., in his church (Ephesians 1:3-7). There are such wonderful privileges as sonship to God, fellowship and brotherhood with all other Christians, communion, prayer and providential care from God. They are yours within the church. There are great opportunities to serve God and your fellow man in the greatest institution on planet Earth, as we work to make the world a better place in which to live. Really, there is no way to adequately measure these rich blessings.

VI. The Church is Great Because of the People Who Compose It. They are called Christians because they strive to be like Christ (Acts 11:26). They are called saints because they are dedicated to God's service (I Corinthians 1:2). They are in the world, yet they do not live like the sinful world (John 17:14). True Christians are honorable, humble, generous, pure, well-informed, truthful, faithful, benevolent, devoted, diligent, and loyal. No, they are not perfect, nor are they angels. But with God's help they are daily growing into the image of Christ by the renewing of their minds (Romans 12:1-2). What great joy it is to be a part of God's family on earth.

VII. The Church is Great Because of Its Ultimate Goal. Paul taught the Ephesian Christians that Christ is the savior of the body (the church) and that he will one day present the church to himself in glory (Ephesians 5:23, 27). In I Corinthians 15:24, the same writer says, "Then cometh the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God..." John in a glorious vision saw the new Jerusalem, the church, in the presence of God in the heavenly paradise (Revelation 21:1-4; Hebrews 12:22-23). Throughout eternity the church of Jesus Christ will reign in holy triumph with the loving Father, the victorious Son and the Holy Spirit.

We should realize that it is a matchless privilege to be member of the greatest organization the world has ever known. Prophets predicted its coming. Kings and holy men desired to see the day. The rich and the poor, every devout God-fearing soul, even publicans and harlots, have eagerly sought to enter into the church of our Lord. We who are so privileged should constantly watch lest we by our conduct or speech shame or stain its holy reputation.

All men are invited to seek refuge within its sacred precincts. If you let God wash away your sins (Acts 22:16), He will add you to His church (Acts 2:47; I Cor. 12:13).

94.

IDENTIFYING MARKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

I. She recognizes Jesus as her founder and only head. Myriads of churches cover North America. The overwhelming majority of them were founded by mortal men and men rule over them. The church revealed in the pages of the New Testament was founded by the Son of God (Matt. 16:18). God appointed him alone to be head over all things to the church (Eph. 1:22). Any church founded by a man or over which a man rules cannot be the church of the New Testament.

II. She is a kingdom not of this world (John 18:36). The church is a spiritual kingdom, not political or material. In

the long history of Christianity churches have emerged whose leaders aspired to political, social and economic power. Most notable of these is the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Christ's kingdom seeks no such power. She is God's servant to humanity, teaching them of his offer to save them (Mark 16:15-16) and extending a helping hand to those who suffer the misfortunes of life (Jas. 1:27). Members of Christ's church are sojourners in this world (I Pet. 2:11). Their citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20).

III. Her essential oneness. Scripture speaks of only one church. Paul notes seven cardinal things of Christianity, among them is "one body" (Eph. 4:4). In the same book he tells us the church is that one body of Christ (Eph. 1:22). The concept of denominationalism, which emerged as part of the Protestant reformation, was unknown to the sacred writers. Since it is based on the idea of making religious division respectable, it is condemned by Paul's message to the Corinthians. "I beseech you brethren...that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (I Cor. 1:10). It also demands that we constantly labor to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace (Eph. 4:3).

IV. Her unqualified faith in the Bible as God's inspired word. The church of the New Testament was a church fed and nurtured on the teachings of Christ and his chosen apostles. "They continued stedfastly in the apostle's teaching" (Acts 2:42). That which the apostles taught was given them by the Holy Spirit, thus insuring its truthfulness (John 16:12-13). The things they taught were the commandments of the Lord (I Cor. 14:37). Any teacher who expresses doubts about the inspiration and authority of the Bible, or who presumes to challenge its message cannot be a true and faithful disciple of Christ. Any school or congregation that allows such to be taught in her midst forfeits her claim to be part of Christ's church.

V. Her total respect for and adherence to the Bible for her authority in all matters. Christ's church is described as his body, his kingdom and his bride. In each of these illustrations Christ is head with all authority to establish the faith and to lead his church. He was invested with all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18). He has instructed us to teach converts to obey all things whatsoever he commanded (Matt. 28:20). She recognizes no other teaching, as equal to that sacred book. Neither changing culture, worldly scholars, nor the demands of people are allowed to displace the Word of God. If the Bible says it, that settles it for Christ's church.

VI. Her faithful observance of the sacred ordinances instituted by Christ. The Church of Christ is distinguished by her faithfulness in assembling on the first day of the week to observe the Lord's Supper. Christ ordained it as his memorial until his return (Matt. 26:26-29). The apostolic record reveals the day of its observance (Acts 20:7). Other churches may relegate it to monthly, quarterly or annual observance, but not the New Testament Church. Her purpose for assembling on the first day is to break the bread of communion.

VII. Her worship is prescribed by the Lord. The church of the Bible is content to worship as the Lord instructed. She is satisfied with praise to God in songs, prayers offered through Christ her mediator, the Lord's Supper in memory of his death, offerings presented unto God and a lesson from his Word. She needs no performers or entertainment to stimulate her members. She does not search for something new and different in her worship. She approaches God with reverence and awe (Heb. 12:28) as she offers up her spiritual sacrifices through Jesus Christ (I Pet. 2:5).

VIII. Her membership is open only to those who have been born or water and Spirit (John 3:3-5). That of course is Christian baptism by immersion (Rom. 6:3-4) and for the ordained purpose of forgiveness, etc. (Acts 2:38). When folks come who have not yet received the instruction and the baptism ordained by her Master, she kindly invites them to consider the Lord's instruction and urges them to yield their hearts to it. She cannot make exceptions for those too proud to submit to the head of the church.

IX. Her dedication to her assigned mission of evangelism, edification and benevolence. Christ did not leave his church guessing as to what her mission would be. She was to go preach the gospel to every creature on earth (Mark 16:15). She is to make disciples of them, baptizing them into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matt.

28:19). She is to assist all who come to her in growing up in all things unto Christ (Eph.4:15). She is to be the benevolent hands of Christ to the poor and suffering of the world (Gal. 6:10). This is the essence of Christianity (Jas. 1:27).

These are the most important identifying marks of the Lord's true church. May they be prominent in the congregations where each of us serve.

95.

ATTRIBUTES OF CHRIST'S CHURCH

Near the city of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus promised his Apostles: "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). Even his death at the hands of Jews and Romans did not deter him from keeping his word. On the third day he arose triumphant from the tomb and some 47 days later his glorious church came into existence. The birth date of Christ's church was Pentecost Sunday in the 33rd year of his life. The place was Jerusalem. The event is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 2.

The Apostles were gathered together. The Holy Spirit which Christ had promised them (Acts 1:5, 8) came with a sound of a rushing mighty wind and filled all the house where they were sitting. "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:1-4).

Guided by God's Spirit, the Apostles preached the good news of the resurrected Christ. They showed Jesus to be the fulfillment of the ancient messianic prophecies. Three-thousand Jews were convicted of their sins and driven to cry out, "what shall we do?" Peter answered them, "Repent ye, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins..." (Acts 2:38). As many as gladly received his word were baptized and the Lord added unto them about three-thousand souls (Acts 2:41). From that day forth the church is spoken of as an existing reality (See Acts 2:47 KJV, 5:11, etc.).

This was no denomination or sect founded by a sinful man, it was the kingdom of God upon the earth. It was not just another great religion that would take its place beside Buddhism, Hinduism and others. This was the straight and narrow way that leads to life (Matthew 7:14). This was God's family of saved children destined to live with him in eternity (Ephesians 5:23-28).

The Church of Christ is Divine in Origin

It was God's plan from eternity to make his will known to men through the church (Ephesians 2:10-11). It was predicted by the Hebrew prophets that his church would be established in the last days of the Jewish state, in Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2-4).

Daniel foresaw a kingdom not made with human hands (i.e. divine in origin) that would become great and fill the whole earth (Daniel 2:34-35, 44-45). Christ made preparation for his church while on the earth. In his death on the cross, he purchased the church with his blood (Acts 20:28). Through his chosen apostles he established it. God appointed his Son "to be head over all things to the church..." (Ephesians 1:22). Today he reigns as both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36) over his church kingdom. He has all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18).

Christ's Church is Universal in its Outreach

In Daniel's vision the kingdom of heaven, which began as a little stone, became a great mountain that filled the

whole earth (Daniel 2:34-35). God did not ordain different churches for different nations such as the Church of England and Church of Scotland. Rather he planned a church that all nations would flow into (Isaiah 2:2).

On the cross, the Savior "abolished the enmity... that he might create in himself of the two (races: Jews and Gentile) one new man, so making peace and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross..." (Ephesians 2:15-16). Now, in Christ's church there must be no social, racial or national distinctions. "There can be neither Jew nor Greek... bond nor free... no male and female; for ye are all one man in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). In his great commission Jesus sent the apostles into "all the world" to "preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). It is the mission of God's people to tear down the walls of separation, and never to be guilty of building them.

The Lord's Church is Eternal in Duration

Daniel wrote that "the God of heaven (shall) set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed..." (Daniel 2:44). Earthly kingdoms founded by men bear the seeds of their own demise. They live a few hundred years at best, and then fall. The kingdom of heaven will stand till Jesus comes and delivers it up to God his Father (I Corinthians 15:24). The church revealed in the New Testament is as relevant, vibrant and valid today as in its infancy. Its meaning, message and ministry are as needed today as in that first century. The world is yet lost and in need of salvation. It is her task to take the message of salvation to every creature (Mark 16:15-16). The poor are still with us in great numbers and it's ministry is "to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction" (James 1:27). The world today languishes in ignorance, error and superstition as it did two-thousand years ago. The church is God's beacon light in the world, holding forth the word of life and hope (Philippians 2:15-16). As long as sin-cursed men inhabit planet earth, so long will there be a need for the church of Christ to enlighten their minds, soften their hearts, refine their conduct, bring them salvation and prepare them for eternity.

The Church is Two-Dimensional

Many folks have been turned off towards the church because of a bad experience with some of her members. This reminds us that the church has two distinctly different sides; the divine and the human. The former is all perfection, without spot or blemish, being the product of the Divine mind. The latter is as weak and fallible as the material of which it is made. A local group of Christians is no better than the sum of its members. While on earth's side of eternity, none of us reach perfection. Even of God's people it is true that all sin and fall short of his glory (Romans 3:23). We are but sinners saved by his grace (Ephesians 2:8-9). It is, therefore, impossible to find a perfect congregation. If we should, we would surely spoil it by our imperfect presence.

The church planned by God and established by Christ is perfect in its structure, doctrine and duties. We dare not lift a hand to change one practice or precept (Revelation 22:18-19). We must, like Moses, "make all things according to the pattern that was showed" us (Hebrews 8:5). Thus, while we are militant to follow exactly that divinely given blueprint for the church, we will be patient with brethren who are struggling to live up to the Christian ideal in their lives and worship.

What a marvelous privilege it is to be invited to be members of "the church of the first born who are enrolled in heaven" (Hebrews 12:23). May we never cause offence to the church of God (I Corinthians 10:32) but rather give Him "the glory in the church: unto all generations" (Ephesians 3:20).

96.

HOW MANY CHURCHES DOES CHRIST HAVE?

More than two thousand religious bodies claim to be the Lord's church. We do not question the sincerity of the adherents of these churches, but we ask did Christ build many Churches? Does he claim all that exist?

* Jesus promised that he "would build his church" on the great truth that Peter had confessed, that he was the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matt 16:16-18). Notice that he said "church" not "churches."

* Christ prayed that his disciples would be one as He and the Father are one (John 17:20-23).

* Reading through the New Testament we find only one kind of church. Paul called them "all the churches of Christ" (Rom. 16:16).

* Throughout the New Testament, the church is described as the spiritual body of Christ. It is plainly stated that Christ has "but one body" (I Cor. 12:20). Paul lists seven things vital to Christianity of which there is only one. One body, one Holy Spirit, one hope, one Lord Jesus, one faith, one baptism one Father (Eph. 4:4-5). Note there is "one body!" He also tells us, church is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:23).

* Christ views division among Christians as sinful! Paul reminds us, "that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind...and judgment" He then asks, "Is Christ divided?" The obvious answer is no! (I Cor. 1:10-13).

* If Christ founded but one church; if He wants all of his disciples to be united as are He and the Father, how can anyone justify denominationalism?

* We know that Christ did in fact found his church. He is the head of his church (Eph. 1:22). Where then did all of these other religious bodies originate? They are the creations of men. They stand in competition with the Lord's church. They often make war on His church. They are like tares (weeds) sown in the hearts of people who desire to serve God (Matt 13:36-42). Jesus said, "Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up" (Matt. 15:13).

* Each denomination was founded by some person or group of people at a time and place different from the church that Christ founded in Jerusalem in the year of his death and resurrection.

It is easy to conclude that God would bless the church found by his Son. But one would need outside help to think that God would be pleased with the many different churches found by men.

97.

UNITY IN CHRIST

All about us we see chaos, confusion and division, the result of sin. In response to this evil, God planned to unite all men in his church, abolishing all division and separation. Only in Christ will true unity be realized. In Ephesians 4:1-6 Paul gives us the necessary ingredients for unity.

To have unity you need **a Certain Kind of People**. They must "walk worthily of the calling wherewith (they) were called" (4:1). They strive to live up to the standard set by Jesus, walking in the light as he is in he light (I John 1:7). When we enter an organization we accept the obligation to live by the required standards of that group. To do otherwise is to embarrass or hinder the body.

Paul says we must **walk with lowliness or humility** if we would promote unity (4:2). Lowliness is the opposite of pride and ambition. The ancient Greeks viewed humility as a servile, cowardly thing, but Christ made it a virtue.

Humility is the result of three ingredients. We are made humble when we realize our own unworthiness. We need to daily examine and prove ourselves (II Cor. 13:5). When we compare our lives with that of Christ and the law of God we are forced to see how we sin and fall short of God's glory (Rom. 3:23). When we contemplate our total dependence upon God, we see his great power and our "creatureliness" (Acts 17:25, 28). Without lowliness there will be no unity.

Meekness or gentleness is a prerequisite of unity. Aristotle described meekness as "the mean between being too angry and not angry enough." A meek soul is angry at the right time but never at the wrong time. He, like Jesus, will be angry at the wrongs others suffer, but not at those imposed upon him. He will have every instinct, passion and word under control. He will not allow anger to cause him to sin (Eph. 4:26). Meekness is strength under control. It is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23).

Longsuffering or patience is necessary for unity. Longsuffering is the spirit which does not give in. The Romans of Paul's day knew this concept. Their persistency would never accept peace under defeat. They might lose a battle but not a war. We must have that same determination to maintain unity with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Patience will bear with insult and injury without bitterness or complaint. It will tolerate foolish and unpleasant folks without frustration. Without patience a group will never have unity. Satan will see to that.

Love is an essential ingredient of unity. Roman society knew of erotic love and family love but a new level of love was needed. Christ taught men to love their neighbor as themselves (Matt. 22:39); to treat them as they wished to be treated (Matt. 7:12); to do good to all men (Gal. 6:10); to feed a hungry enemy (Rom. 12:20). With this attitude of goodwill flowing from each heart, unity will be ours. When we speak the truth in love the church will be built up in love (Eph. 4:15-16).

We are admonished to **maintain unity** (4:3). We must do so with "diligence." Diligence is effort, so concentrated, as to bring forth perspiration such as is seen on the brow of a surgeon in the midst of a long and tedious operation. Maintaining unity is never easy. It requires the hard work of every member of the body. Maintaining unity suggests that we do not create or originate it. The church as founded by Christ was "essentially, intentionally and constitutionally one" (Thomas Campbell). He has but one church (Eph. 1:22; 4:4). When one disciple wins another they are united in their faith and loyalty. Our task is to maintain and conserve that sacred oneness.

It will help us do our job if we are often reminded of God's will in this matter. Paul wrote, "Now I beseech you brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you..." (I Cor. 1:10). God hates and counts as abominable him that soweth discord among brethren (Prov. 6:17-19). Jesus prayed that we all be one as are he and the Father are one (John 17:20-21). To successfully maintain peace, selfishness must be obliterated. Selfishness and peace are mortal enemies. Observation and experience suggest that ninety per cent of our conflicts, whether congregational or brotherhood wide are personality centered. When the proud, dominate personality is removed, the conflict vanishes.

The Nature of the Unity God Expects of Us is "unity of the Spirit" (4:3). It originates with the Holy Spirit. It results from the fact that by one Spirit we all are baptized into one body and all drink of one Spirit (I Cor. 12:12-13). Such being the case, we should remain in fellowship with one another. This unity is bound together in peace. Thus Jesus blesses the peace-makers as the true children of God (Matt. 5:9). This implies that the agitator and church splitter has a different father from hellish realms. This unity flows from the heart of the individual Christian and modifies every attitude, action and relationship in a way that makes for peace.

The Basis for Unity is presented in (4:4-5). "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as you were called in one hope

of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father...” It is interesting to note that this unity is based on the Holy Spirit, the Lord Jesus and the Holy Father. Since each believer was baptized into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19), we should all strive to stay on cordial terms with each other.

There being only one body, which is the church (Eph. 4:4; 1:22), it is only reasonable that we all be on brotherly terms. One hope of heaven awaits all. Since we all serve the Lord Jesus, believe the one faith or doctrine of Christ (Jude 3) and have received the one baptism, it is to be expected that we serve the Lord in harmony. That one God and Father rules over, in and through all of us, demands that all his children live together in loving peace. Since God has but one family, there cannot be a half dozen different kinds of churches of Christ, each alienated against the other and all still properly related to the other!

Christian Leaders Must Guide the Church toward this Unity. “He gave... apostles...prophets...evangelist...and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints...till we call attain unto the unity of the faith...” (Eph. 4:11-13). Nothing is more important than the quest for unity. Sadly such ranks low in priority with too many preachers and elders in our day. A wounded, divided church is the unfortunate result.

Unity is Not Uniformity. While we must be united in the fundamentals of the faith, there are hundreds of lesser matters where great diversity is allowed. For example, when we commune, God has designated that we use bread and fruit of the vine to commemorate his death (I Cor. 11:23-27), but how we will dispense the emblems and their place in the worship hour is ours to decide. So with Thomas Campbell we practice unity in matters of faith, liberty in matters of opinions and in all things charity. True unity grows from a Christ-like attitude, while uniformity is imposed from without.

William Barclay wisely notes, “the church will only realize her unity, when she realizes that she does not exist to propagate the point of view of any one (man, jhw) or body of men, but to give a home and a dwelling-place where the Spirit of Christ can dwell and where all men who love Christ can meet in the Spirit.” Such also is the thought of Paul in Ephesians 2:19-22. When each living stone is fitly framed together, we grow into a holy temple, a habitation of God in the Spirit. Let us all give diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace.

98.

THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH

While everyone is familiar with the word “church,” relatively few know its various connotations.

The most common misuse of the word is “church” when referring to a building in which a church meets. Jesus promised to build his church (Matt. 16:18), but he said nothing about church buildings.

The second common misuse of the term is “church,” when referring to the many and varied denominations men have created. Scripture knows nothing of denominations, save to condemn the idea of religious division (I Cor. 1:10-14; 3:1-5).

In Biblical usage the word church refers to the universal kingdom of Christ which he established upon the earth (Matt. 16:18). Christ built only one church, is head over only one church (Eph.1:22) and saves that one church (Eph. 5:23). Every person saved by the Lord is added to that one church (Acts 2:41,47). Thus it is God family of saved children (I Tim. 3:15). Every faithful Christian is always a member of and always *in* the universal church of Christ.

Scripture also uses “church” to describe the local congregation of Christians. Paul wrote to “the church of God which is at Corinth” (I Cor. 1:1). When Christians in a particular community band together to worship and serve God in an organized way, they are a congregation of Christ’s church. They have appointed times to assemble for worship. They carry on the work of God in their community. Their membership consists of those members of the universal church who have chosen to worship and serve with them. There are often several congregations in one city and in large metropolitan areas, scores, even hundreds of them. As a member of the “Morningside ” congregation of Midtown, USA, I am also a member of the universal church wherever I might chance to be. I am not however a member of the “Eastside” or “Westside” congregations even though they might meet close to my home.

Paul describes the assembly of Christians for worship as “the church.” “When...ye assemble yourselves together in the church” (I Cor. 11:18). It is in this sense that we hear folks speak of “going to church” by which they mean going to worship. It is this connotation we have in mind when we speak of “dismissing church.” While I am always a member of universal and the Midtown church, I am not always in the church assembly; only when I gather with others for worship.

The smallest or beginning increment of the church is the individual Christian. If in a community where no church of Christ exists, a woman comes to believe in Christ and is baptized according to his will, the Lord adds her to the church (Acts 2:47 KJV). Like Stephanas and his family, she is the “first fruits” of the gospel in his community (I Cor. 16:15). If he is truly converted he will share with others the good news she has learned and soon more will be added to the Lord, baptized into the one body (I Cor. 12:13). Drawn together by a common faith, baptism, Spirit and Lord (Eph. 4:4-5), they will meet together on Lord’s Days to remember Christ’s death (I Cor. 11:23-26). They are the beginning of a congregation of the church of Christ in their place of residence.

If I would be saved, I have no option but to be a member of the universal church of Christ (Eph. 5:23). If I wish to please the founder and savior of the church I will refuse to be a part of any denomination founded by men (I Cor. 3:1-5). While I must be a member of a congregation of the church in which I will worship and serve the Savior, I have the option of choosing one congregation out of several with which to associate. While I am to assemble with the church for Lord’s Day worship, that does not necessarily equal going to a sacred building. A fully functional and flourishing church may never have a “church building,” yet they will have an appointed time and place for worship on the first day.

To fully appreciate the church we must remember it was purchased with the blood of Jesus on Calvary (Acts 20:28). He loves the church as his bride (Eph. 5:25,32). The church is God’s family on earth (I Tim. 3:15). May we ever love, support and defend the church. May we faithfully serve in her ranks till Jesus calls us home.

CHRIST'S CHURCH IS GOD'S HOLY TEMPLE

Gospel preachers make it a point to teach their congregation that the building in which they meet is not the Lord's church. The church is Christ's disciples who faithfully worship and serve according to his will. Paul often likened the church to the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22). To the Corinthians Christians he wrote, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and severally members thereof" (I Cor. 12:28). We often remind our members that in the early years of Christianity, the disciples owned no church buildings. They met in homes (Rom. 16:3-5), in schools (Acts 19:9-10) and other similar places. Buildings such as we know emerged in the 4th century.

Given all the above, it is interesting that the Holy Spirit used the metaphor of a temple to describe the church of Christ. Paul writes that we are "being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone; in whom each several building, being fitly framed together groweth into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit." In this beautiful passage he likens the church to the Temple of Solomon in which the glory of Jehovah dwelt (II Chron. 5:13). That temple was built of wood and stone. Christ's temple is built of saved people. Its foundation is the apostles and prophets with Jesus himself the chief cornerstone (Eph. 2:19-22). The Holy Spirit dwells in Christ's temple, his church (I Cor. 3:16). He does so by dwelling in the heart of each child of God (I Cor. 6:19-20). Peter describes Christians as, "as living stones... built up a spiritual house...to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 2:5).

Paul warned that those who defile or destroy the temple of God will pay a fearful price. God will destroy them (I Cor. 3:16). This warning should strike fear in the hearts of those who harm the church by their teaching and actions. Whether they be legalists or liberals, factious or infamous; be they preachers or laymen, they risk destruction if they do harm to the sacred temple of Jehovah.

In view of these grand truths, how grand and wonderful is the church of Jesus Christ. What a marvelous privilege it is to be a member of his church. Remember that each soul we teach and bring to Christ is yet another living stone set into the sacred walls of His temple. Let us always live in a way that appropriate for one in whom the Spirit of God dwells.

100.

THE PECULIAR CHURCH

It is human nature to desire to be like one's neighbor. We tend to shun the distinctive and individualistic, whether in dress, conduct or habits. Most religious organizations hurry to conform to the culture and customs of their society. God demands, however, that his church be different from other religions. In fact, her distinction from human organizations is what entitles the church to exist. It is the key to her success. The Hebrews were chosen to be God's peculiar people. "For thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar

people unto himself...." (Deuteronomy 14:2 KJV). Their desire to "be like all the nations" around them was sinful (I Samuel 8:19-20). The true church today must also be a peculiar people. Peter quotes those very words from Moses in I Peter 2:9, "But ye are a peculiar people." (KJV) Peculiar means that "which is characteristic of one only; whether person or class...." It means to be "exclusive, different from the normal or average." While we hold many things in common with other churches, of necessity we will be peculiar and different in many other areas. This is nothing to be ashamed of. Really it is "our glory" for being Biblically distinctive marks a congregation as part of the Lord's true family. Paul warned the Roman saints, "And be not conformed to this world" (Romans 12:2 KJV). J. B. Phillips translation renders this, "Do not let the world squeeze you into its own mold."

1. The church of Christ is peculiar in its **names**. Its members are called Christians (I Peter 4:16). It has no sectarian names such as Lutheran or Baptist, to distinguish its members from others. We are not "Church of Christians." In the collective sense are we called the church of Christ (Romans 16:16) or the Church of God (I Corinthians 1:1-2). As individual followers of Jesus we are disciples (Matthew 28:19), saints (I Corinthians 1:2), Christians (Acts 11:26). We reject the human terminology of the religious world and seek to call Bible things by Bible names (I Peter 4:11).

2. The church is peculiar in its creed and rule of faith. In fact, we have no rule save the new covenant of Jesus. There is but "one faith" or system of doctrine (Ephesians 4:5). Since the Bible is a guide that makes us complete and furnishes us completely unto every good work, we have no need for any other creed (II Timothy 3:16-17). This creed, being divine, never needs revision or correction since it was given once for all times (Jude 3). We reject all human, man-made creeds because they are totally unneeded and they are a chief cause of religious confusion and strife. We are not divided over what the Bible actually says. Rather, it is what *men* have said about the Bible and religion that has created our problems!

3. The organization of Christ's church is peculiar. Paul, the preacher, wrote a letter to "all the saints in Christ Jesus that are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons...." (Philippians 1:1). Here we see the ideal make up of every New Testament church. Bishops who oversee the flock, deacons who serve, preachers who proclaim the gospel, and the saints who follow. Each congregation is self governing with its own local leadership. The bishops are also termed elders (older) and shepherds (pastors) (Acts 20:17, 28-29). A congregation's bishops have authority only in that congregation of which they are members (I Peter 5:1-2). The members of a local congregation choose their own leadership from among their own group (Acts 6:3). Through their chosen leadership they select their own preacher, supervise the dispersal of their contributions, and settle their disputes. There is no ecclesiasticism or centralized authority. Christ is the head of all things to his church (Ephesians 1:22-23). No man or group of men have the right to govern his kingdom. He has ordained the simple government we have discussed. When godly bishops (elders) follow Christ's inspired instructions (the Bible) and thus lead their congregation, it will prosper with Heaven's blessings.

4. The worship of the Lord's Church is distinctive. It is here more than anywhere else that the church's peculiarity is seen. We commune differently. Early Christians took the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). When God told Israel to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy (Exodus 20:8) he did not have to specify every seventh day. All Hebrews understood it to mean each sabbath of every week. Likewise early Christians all broke the bread every Lord's day. So do we. I am impressed that those who feel communion should be observed only monthly or quarterly have no difficulty in understanding I Corinthians 16:1-2 to teach a weekly collection for the church treasury yet it says, "Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store...." Could it be that the preacher's salary and due bills have something to do with the exegesis?

We commune with both bread and fruit of the vine as Jesus ordained (Matthew 26:26-27). The common people receive the wine just as those who administer the Supper. We would not think of substituting water as do our Mormon neighbors. A righteous man dares not to tamper with God's sacred things. We do our very best to "make all things according to the pattern that was showed...." by the Lord (Hebrews 8:5).

We give our free-will offerings, weekly as we have been prospered (I Corinthians 16:1-2). We have no taxing, or rental of pews. We reject as unworthy those money raising schemes such as raffles, pie sales, car washes and

carnivals. We give our gifts as an act of worship to God because we love Him. We teach a person to give "as he hath prospered in his heart: not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (II Corinthians 9:7).

We sing praises to God without the accompaniment of musical instruments. God tells us to sing in New Testament worship (Ephesians 5:19). Nowhere does he tell us to play physical instruments in worship. Jesus tells us to teach disciples to "observe all things whatsoever he commanded...." (Matthew 28:18). Since he only commanded singing, that is all we can instruct men to do with divine authority. Paul warns us "not to go beyond the things that are written" (I Corinthians 4:6). Thus the true church of Christ will abide by the instruction to sing in worship, going no further (Colossians 3:16-17). Although our acappella singing does distinguish us today, there was a day in the past when such religious leaders as John Wesley, founder of Methodism, John Calvin, father of the Presbyterian churches, Charles Spurgeon, greatest of the 19th Century Baptist preachers, openly condemned instrumental music in worship. The first instrument introduced into any known church was in 670 AD by Pope Vitalian. Its presence caused such a stir that it was withdrawn and another 500 years passed before instrumental music was widely accepted among the Catholic churches.

5. The church that Jesus built is unique in its doctrine in that it rejects the doctrine and commandments of men as vain, useless and dangerous (Matthew 15:9). We hold and teach only those things that are the doctrine of Christ (II John 9-11). The apostle John warns that any who transgress and abide not within Christ's teaching have not the Father's blessing (ibid.). Furthermore we recognize that only the New Testament of Jesus is binding on men today. As disciples of Christ we are "dead to the law" of Moses (Romans 7:4). The Old Testament law was taken away when nailed to the cross of Christ (Colossians 2:14-17). Every Christian and every congregation looks to the New Testament of Jesus as their sole authority for faith and conduct. We recognize no man's right to make laws or to discount what is already given. Christ is Lord (Romans 10:9-10), his word is our creed by which we will be judged in the last day. (John 12:48).

6. The church of the Lord is peculiar in its plea for unity. We seriously plead for all believers to be "one body" in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:27-28). We recognize the fact that denominational division is sinful and wrong (I Corinthians 3:1-5). Christ's will is that we all be one as he and the Father are one (John 17:20-21). There should be no divisions among us. Rather we should be perfectly joined together in the same mind and judgment (I Corinthians 1:10). Men must all build their religious faith upon Christ the one foundation (I Corinthians 3:11). All teaching must be in complete harmony with the revealed will of Christ (II John 9-11). Teaching that varies from the Scriptures must be rejected as heresy and dangerous (Galatians 1:8-9). While we call all men to join hands in restoring the original simplicity and purity of Christianity, we reject those human plans and schemes such as the World Council of Churches and the Ecumenical Movement which are based on compromise rather than Scripture.

7. The church of Christ is different in its teaching on salvation. We reject both the Protestant tradition of salvation by faith only and the Catholic concept of salvation by works of human effort. James tells us, "Ye see then how that by faith a man is justified and **not by faith only**" (James 2:24 KJV). He further adds that "faith without works is dead..." (James 2:26). The doctrine that men are saved by faith apart from obedience then is obviously in error.

Just as clearly, Scripture teaches us that man cannot merit or earn his salvation. Paul says it is "Not by works done in righteousness which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5).

Salvation then is a free gift of God's grace that is received when man obeys the instruction of God concerning it. By simply reading the book of Acts of the Apostles, we can soon learn how people were saved under their ministry. They preached the gospel to lost sinners (Acts 2:14-36). Those with good and honest hearts heard and believed the good news (Acts 2:37). The inspired preachers commanded all who believed and desired to be saved to "Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..." (Acts 2:38). Those who did so were forgiven, received the gift of God's Holy Spirit and were added to the church (Acts 2:38, 47). This is salvation "by grace through faith" (Ephesians 2:8-9). This unique message of good news we preach to every creature (Mark 16:15-16).

Being different from the other religious groups is no shame. Let all of God's children gladly pay the price to be His peculiar people. May all of you who read these lines join hands with us in serving the Lord as "The Church of God...even them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus..." (I Corinthians 1:2).

101.

IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF CHRIST'S CHURCH

Christianity is the religion of an "open mind" and "the open book". To be noble in God's sight we must receive the word with all readiness of mind, and then search the Scriptures daily to see if it is so (Acts 17:11). A faithful disciple will always "be ready...to give answer to every man asketh...a reason concerning the hope that is in" him (I Peter 3:15).

Churches of Christ exist in approximately 165 nations of the world. Here in America, we number some 1.5 million members in 13,500 separate congregations. To understand our approach to our faith, there are some things you must know.

I. Our Standard of Authority. We recognize the absolute lordship and headship of Jesus. He has "all authority" in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18). He is head over all things to the church (Eph.1:22). Whatever we do in word or in deed must be done in his name, i.e., by his authority. We recognize the complete and binding authority of the New Testament of Jesus. The words that Jesus spoke "will judge us in the last day" (John 12:48). Those who abide not in the teaching of Christ have not God. Only those who abide in his teaching have the blessing of the Father and the Son (II John 9). Paul warns us "not to go beyond the things that are written" (I Cor. 4:6). The Scriptures are given by inspiration of God and are "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete; furnished completely unto every good work" (II Tim 3:16-17).

The truths of the New Covenant were revealed by the Holy Spirit to the apostles and prophets who taught them to the first Christians. Guided by that same Spirit, they later wrote them in permanent form in the books of our New Testament. Christ promised that the Spirit would guide them into all the truth (John 16:13). Paul calls upon all to acknowledge that the things he wrote were the commandments of the Lord (I Cor. 14:37).

The New Testament they wrote is complete and allows no additions. It holds for us all essential religious truth (John 16:13). "All scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (II Tim. 3:16 RSV). Since the Scripture alone will make us complete and furnish us completely to every good work, what else could we need? Solomon warns us "add thou not to his words, lest he reprove thee and thou be found a liar" (Prov. 30:6). John closes the New Testament with a similar warning (Rev. 22:18-19).

We are not under the regulations of the Old Covenant. On the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter would have equally honored Moses, the lawgiver, Elijah, the prophet and Christ the Son. But God spoke from heaven saying "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Matt.17:5). The Old Covenant was taken out of the way, nailed to the cross of Christ, (Col. 2:14-17). We teach men to observe all things that Christ commanded (Matt. 28:20).

Human traditions are not allowed to supercede or displace Biblical authority. Christ condemned those Jews who made void the word of God by their tradition (Matt. 15:6). He further said, "in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men" (Matt 15:9). Because God's thoughts are not our thoughts and his way are

superior to our ways, our human ideas and opinions are valueless in religion (Isa. 55:8-9). "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23).

Thus we are a church totally loyal to the authority of Christ, guided, regulated and circumscribed by the word of God. To be otherwise is to forfeit God's fellowship (II John 9).

II. Some Facts about Christ's Church.

*The church was **founded by Jesus**. He promised the apostles, "upon this rock I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). It was founded **upon Christ**. "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus" (I Cor. 3:11). The church began in Jerusalem fifty days following the Lord's death on the day of Pentecost. Its beginning is recorded in Acts chapter.

* The Holy Spirit came upon the apostles, empowering them. They preached the good news of Christ's death, resurrection and lordship. Sinners were convicted and asked what they must do? They were told to "repent ye and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). "And the Lord added to the church daily, such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47 KJV). Prior to this point in time all references to the church are future tense. From this point onward the church is presented as a present reality. (See Acts 5:11; 8:1; 11:26). The church is always the product of the word of God being taught. Jesus said the seed of the kingdom "is the word of God being taught. Jesus said the seed of the kingdom "is the word of God" (Luke 8:11). Without the seed there can be no church in new soil. The church in Corinth illustrates this point. Paul testified to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. "And Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptized. "...and he dwelt there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them" (Acts 18:5-11). The result was "the church of God which is at Corinth" (I Cor. 1:2).

III. The Role of the Church in Man's Salvation. Christ is "our great God and our Savior" (Titus 2:13). The blood of Jesus "cleanseth us from all sin (I John 1:7). The church is the family of the saved. God adds the saved to the church (Acts 2:4). Christ himself is "the Savior of the body" (Eph. 5:23). The church then is not our savior - rather it is composed of those who are saved.

IV. The Oneness of the Church. Jesus promised he would build his church (Matt.16:18). He did not say churches. His prayer was that all who believe on him through the apostles' teaching would be one, even as he and his Father are one (John 17:20-21). Paul besought the Ephesian Christians to give "diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace". For "there is one body and one Spirit even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism. one God..." (Eph. 4:3-6). That same apostle wrote "Now I beseech you, brethren, thought the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same things, and that there be no divisions among you.." (I Cor. 1:10). Surely the scandal of a divided Christendom is displeasing to our God.

V. The Structure of the Church. Two different aspects of the church are revealed in Scripture; the church universal and the local congregation. Christ is head over all things to the church which is his body

(Eph 1:22). This contemplates all the saved in the universal kingdom of Christ. Paul wrote "to the church of God at Corinth", i.e., a local congregation of saints (I Cor. 1:1-2). This is the significance of Romans 16:16 "All the churches of Christ salute you".

In Bible times each local congregation was self-governing. Elders (also called bishops Acts 20:17-28) were appointed in every church (Acts 14:23). These elders were authorized by God to "tend the flock of God which is among you, exercising the oversight...according to the will of God" (I Peter 5:2). Ministers and deacons serve under the supervision of their own local elders or bishops as members of the congregation. We have no extra-congregational organization that has authority over the local group. The church in Jerusalem chose their own deacons (Acts 1:6). So today each congregation selects its own

elders and deacons according to the divine instructions given (I Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9). It likewise chooses its own ministers and disburses its own funds. A given congregation can thus remain loyal to Christ if all the rest should go astray.

The church has no creedal standard except the New Testament of Christ.

VI. The Ministry of the Church. We believe in the priesthood of all believers. Peter writes "ye also...are built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God, through Jesus Christ" (I Peter 2:5). Every Christian is charged to present his body as a living sacrifice holy, acceptable to God, (Romans 12:2). Thus any Christian man in good standing may officiate in any aspect of public or private worship including the administration of baptism and presiding over the Lord's Supper. In the Great Commission Jesus commanded that we go make disciples and baptize them, and then teach them to do that very thing themselves (Matthew 28:19-20).

Elders of a congregation may select a man to work with them as a minister. Timothy served with the elders of the Ephesian church doing the work of an evangelist (II Tim. 4:5).

Following Jesus' instruction, no religious titles of distinction are given to ministers. "Be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your teacher and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father on the earth: for one is your father, even he who is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your master, even the Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled..." (Matt. 23:8-12).

Following the New Testament practice, ministers are allowed to marry. Paul asked "Have we no right to lead about a wife that is a believer, even as the rest of the apostles, and the brethren of the Lord and Cephas?" (Peter) (I Cor. 9:5). Jesus healed the mother-in-law of Peter (Matt. 8:14). The Hebrew writer says "Let marriage be had in honor among all..." (Heb. 13:4).

VII. The Worship of the Church. The hallmark of New Testament worship was its simplicity. There was no ritual, liturgy or pageantry. "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42).

Those who preach must proclaim the word of God (II Tim. 4:2). Christ is exalted in the pulpit (I Cor. 2:2). Preachers are expected to declare the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27).

We worship with a cappella singing because this was the universal practice of the early Christians. The first instruments were introduced in 670 A.D. and the practice was not widely accepted until the 11th century. Paul exhorts us to sing and make melody in our hearts unto the Lord (Eph. 5:19). That we do.

In the Lord's Supper, we commemorate the suffering and death of our Lord. "Jesus...took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, This is my body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of me. In like manner also the cup...saying...this do as often as ye drink it in remembrance of me" (I Cor. 11:23-25). We do not view the emblems as transubstantiated. It is a simple memorial. All worshipers partake of both elements and are answerable only to God. "Let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup" (I Cor. 11:28).

Prayers are offered to God through Jesus as our only Mediator (II Tim. 2:5). Our prayers are spontaneous rather than memorized or read. Repetitions are avoided (Matt. 6:7).

We present our gifts unto God as an act of worship on the first day of the week, (I Cor. 16:2). Each worshiper does according as he hath purposed in his heart: not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver" (II Cor. 9:7). We have no taxing or assessments. There are no other fund-raising projects for the church and her work.

VIII. The Work and Mission of the Church. The central purpose for the church's existence is to evangelize the world for Christ. Jesus said "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation..." (Mark 16:15-16). Having made a convert we must bring him to maturity in the faith. Christ gave us evangelists, pastors and

teachers for the perfecting of the saints" (Eph. 4:11-12). Caring for the poor and needy is another divine obligation laid upon her (James 1:27). She is to reprove the unfruitful works of darkness (Eph. 5:11). Opposing the great moral evils of society is within her scope of duties. The church of the New Testament is not pictures as a political force, or business enterprise. It is not a social action organization. Rather her mission and work are spiritual in nature.

IX. How Are Members Received Into the Church? Since God adds the saved to the church, we really need to ask how are men saved, so they can be added? It is a cardinal theme of Christianity that sinners are saved "by grace through faith; and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works..."

(Eph. 2:8-9). It is not by works done in righteousness which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy that we are saved (Titus 3:5). His gracious gift is received upon the terms which Christ laid down. Faith in him is essential (Rom. 5:11). Repentance is commanded (Acts 17:30) as is baptism (Acts 10:48). Thus "he believeth and is baptized shall be saved..." (Mark 16:16).

We baptize by immersion since that is the first century definition of the term baptizo. Paul writes that we have been "buried with him in baptism" (Col. 2:12). This explains why John needed "much water" to baptize in (John 3:23). Also it explains why Phillip and the Ethiopian both went down into the water" when Philip baptized him (Acts 8:38).

Only those old enough to make a personal decision and commitment are baptized. Jesus' commissioned us to teach and baptize those who believed (Mark 16: 15-16). Peter charged the people who asked "what shall we do? to repent and be baptized (Acts 2:38). Since infants and small children can neither believe or repent, they are not proper subjects for baptism. This does not mean that we leave them without salvation, for children are free from guilt until they know to do good and do it not (James 4:17).

Our Plea: We have committed ourselves to restore the original faith and practice of the first Christians. We look to the New Testament to discover what that faith should be. We are convinced that if we: Believe as they believed, Teach as they taught, Worship as they worshiped and Serve as they served, then we shall be what they were. They were called "Christians" (Acts 11:26). Their congregations were "the churches of Christ" (Rom. 16:16). That is our goal.

102.

A CHURCH FOR ALL PEOPLE OF ALL RACES

Racial prejudice is a universal sin of mankind. Its blighting influence sows hatred and oppression in every nation. Not only aliens but some who confess Christ are afflicted with this baneful disease of the soul. For a racial bigot to hide neath the cloak of Christianity is a wicked thing. Peter warned against using one's religion as a cloak of wickedness (I Pet. 2:16).

The Word of God condemns racial prejudice. James writes, "If ye have respect of persons ye commit sin being convicted by the law as transgressors" (Jas. 2:9). This principle is reiterated more than ten times throughout out the Scripture.

All racial groups stem from a common progenitor, Adam (I Cor. 15:45). Eve is "the mother of all the living" (Gen.

3:20). Also, when the flood destroyed the race, Noah and his three sons were the beginnings of the new population of earth (Gen. 9:19). All of us then have a single family origin.

Paul affirms that God made of one (blood, KJV) every nation of men to dwell upon the earth (Acts 17:25). Modern science has long since established that all races of men are of one general family. Looking back to the days of slavery we gasp as we read the belabored attempts of misguided religious souls to convince themselves that Africans were not of the human race. Some argued that Cain's descendants were cursed with black skin. But all of Cain's descendants perished in the Flood. If the curse of Canaan, the son of Noah's son Ham was blackness, then Jesus bore the curse for the blood of Rahab, a Canaanite, flowed in his veins (Matt. 1:1-11).

While the Mosaic code made a distinction between Jews and Gentiles on the basis of race as well as religion, that is changed under Christ. He broke down the middle wall of partition that separated the two races (Eph. 2:14). He now reconciles them both in one body, i.e., the church (Eph. 1:22; 2:16). As many as are "baptized into Christ" put on Christ. "There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free...for ye are all one man in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:27-28). It seems strange, reading history, to see people attempting to practice Christianity while denying this fundamental principle of the faith. Today, few would make such foolish arguments, but some still cling to the practice of separation.

The Biblical concept of one church forbids racial separations among Christians. "For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free..." (I Cor. 12:13). Since God has only one church to which He adds saved men (Acts 2:47), how could there be separate churches for men according to race?

The first group of disciples whom God honored with the name "Christian" was the church in Antioch. They overcame racial barriers and integrated both Jews and Gentiles into one fellowship (Acts 11:19-21, 26). Among the teachers and prophets of that faithful congregation was Symeon called Niger. Niger is the great river that flows through northwestern Africa and some Bible scholars understand Symeon to be an African (Acts 13:1).

Jesus demonstrated the attitude his disciples must have toward other racial groups. When he taught the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well and requested to drink from her container, he did what no prejudiced Jew would think of doing (John 4:7-9). The woman was surprised at his broad mindedness. He saved her soul. His famous lesson on the Good Samaritan plainly teaches that racial hostilities should never hinder us from doing good to any man. The Lord's disciples must live above such low, carnal attitudes (Luke 10:25-37).

One of the first serious problems that plagued the early church was that of Jewish prejudice toward our Gentile ancestors. Paul branded those Jewish disciples as "false brethren" and refused to allow them to impose their limitations on his Gentile converts (Gal. 2:3-5). When, because of Jewish pressure, Peter refused to share full fellowship with Gentile brethren, Paul rebuked him publically to his face. Peter was wrong as so are we if we allow the same thing in our lives (Gal. 2:11-17).

Racial prejudice is a universal problem found in virtually every society of mankind. It is not the peculiar problem of White America toward Blacks. Jews and Arabs have their problems, as do the Germans and the French. The English and Irish clash as do Asians and Africans. Some of the worst racial prejudice is seen between different tribal groups in Africa. Wherever sinful men are found, you men puffed up with false pride and felling superior to his fellows. This false "pride of life" is not of the Father, but of the world which is passing away (I John 2:15). One of the best cures for racism is to travel outside of one's own province. As we witness the flaws or virtues of other cultures we can see our own problems more distinctly. What may have seemed perfectly normal at home is hideous

and ugly abroad. Things never looks quite the same when we return.

Most of us are unaware how the culture in which we live affects our religious thinking for good or bad. Most White Christians in the century following the Civil War allowed themselves to absorb their community's attitudes toward their black neighbors. In most cases their Christianity mitigated and somewhat softened their thinking and conduct. Few Christians were violent or cruelly aggressive toward Blacks. They did, however generally go along with the public policy and tolerate the abuses others heaped on Black people. In this we failed to do our duty. The great tragedy was our slowness to open our hearts and doors to Black brethren. We cautiously waited in most cases until others had paved the way and endured the wrath of the community. Then when all was safe, we ventured forth. Thank God we finally did what was right, but it is to our shame that we were so tardy in doing so. Had it not been for the firm hand of the Federal Government many brethren would still be respecting persons.

May God hasten the day when the last vestiges of racism are erased from our midst. Teaching is the primary tool for correcting any wrong. Elders and preachers are urged to address themselves to this issue. Words alone will never suffice. Our faith must be demonstrated by our actions (Jas. 2:14-18). The psalmist wrote, "How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Ps. 133:1). May God help us to see ourselves as his pure eyes do. May he help us to do our duty toward all our brethren here on earth so we can share heaven with them.

103.

THE DIVINE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

Great confusion prevails in the religious world as to the mission of the church. Even many Christians have limited or fuzzy notions about the church's mission. Only by looking to the New Testament of Christ can we ascertain God's will in this matter.

The word **mission** means "That with which a messenger or agent is charged: errand; commission" (Webster). So then, we are considering the purposes for which the Lord left the church on the earth. In general we can say that the church exists to continue the work that Christ began. His "work (was) to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work" (John 4:34). He taught us to pray, "Thy will be done, as it is in heaven, so on earth" (Matt. 6:10). Any work that Christ did while here is surely an appropriate work for his body, the church. We will notice six categories of responsibility laid upon the church. All of these are corollaries, equally important. We cannot choose some and neglect others.

I. Surely the fundamental, primary purpose for the church's existence is **spreading the gospel by evangelism** (Mark 16:15). This was the mission of Jesus (Luke 19:10). No congregation can please God that neglects this vital area of service. It is likewise our duty to support those who devote themselves to preaching the gospel. Those who **preach the gospel** are authorized to **"live of the gospel"** (I Cor. 9:14). Those who are taught in the word are enjoined to "communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things" (Gal. 6:6).

II. The church is charged with the responsibility of **bringing disciples to maturity and the heavenly reward**. She is to teach them to observe all things that Christ has commanded (Matt. 28:20). Evangelists, pastors and teachers are given "for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of ministering unto the building up of the body of Christ. . . That we may. . . grow up in all things unto him. . . even Christ (Eph. 4:11-15).

III. From Paul we learn that it is the church's responsibility to **help Christians fulfill their domestic duties and obligations**. He writes to wives, and husbands; parents and children; masters and slaves in Ephesians 5 and 6.

IV. Brethren must even be taught certain principles about **civic responsibility** (Rom. 13:1-7). They must be reminded that God expects them to be peaceful, law-abiding citizens who respect their civic leaders and pay their taxes.

V. A most important area of our duty is to **salvage disciples who have strayed** from the Savior's way (Gal. 6:1). Lost sheep must be sought out and brought home to safety. Rebellious and stubborn children must be helped to correct their ways and conform to the Father's will (I Cor. 5:1-13).

VI. God commissioned the church to **minister to the unfortunate**. "Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction. . ." (Jas. 1:27). This benevolent assistance is to be extended to "all men", saints and sinners alike (Gal. 6:10). Paul specifically says that the church is to relieve certain needy widows (I Tim. 5:16). So important is this phase of our work that those who fulfill it are said to so minister to Christ (Matt. 25:40). Those who fail in this area will be consigned to the eternal fire (vs. 41). Pity those poor brethren who have dedicated their lives to hindering the church from meeting its obligation to the unfortunate.

VII. The church exists to **glorify God**. Whatsoever we do must be done to his glory (I Cor. 10:31). At this point it is appropriate to note that that which is the duty of every saint is the duty of the church, for the church is but the sum of the saints. The Ephesians were reminded that "unto him (was to) be the glory in the church" (3:21). We must glorify God in our worship (Acts 2:47) and in our service (I Cor. 10:31). Our lives and teaching should exalt the Christ (I Cor. 2:1-5). God has ordained that every knee will bow to his Son (Phil. 2:9). He likewise ordained that Christ should be magnified in our bodies, whether by life or by death (Phil. 1:20). This applies to every saint, hence to the Church.

VIII. It is the purpose of the church to **uphold divine truth in a sinful world**. "The church of the living God (is) the pillar and ground of the truth" (I Tim. 3:15). Every Christian is to shine as a light in the world. . . holding forth the word of life in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation (Phil. 2:15-16). No congregation is adequately doing its work that fails to salt its community with Christian standards of conduct (Matt. 5:13). The church is at work for God when she defends the gospel against its critics and opponents (Phil. 1:16). It is a stated duty of the elders of the church to "convict the gainsayers, whose mouths must be stopped" (Titus 1:9-11).

IX. The church is expected to **oppose sin and error** that threaten the souls of men. Resisting the devil is divinely ordered (Jas. 4:7). As the army of God we must fight the good fight of faith (I Tim. 6:12). Not only are we to abstain from the unfruitful works of darkness, we are to reprove them (Eph. 5:11). This charge includes much more than being against smoking and drinking. Great evils such as abortion, pornography and homosexuality must be opposed. An occasional sermon or bulletin article will not suffice. God's people should actively work to stop the spread of these common evils. It is strange how most have been hesitant if not afraid to be involved in a public way in fighting such evils except in the case of liquor. Somehow it seemed different. If it is right to so oppose the liquor traffic so it is with these others.

X. God wants his church to work to **maintain the unity of the spirit** (Eph. 4:1-3). Her various officers are given to help her attain and preserve the unity of the faith (Eph. 4:13). The tragedy of the church in America continues to be our lack of unity. While most of the factions stirred the issue over some particular aspect of the work of the church, few seemed to recognize their responsibility to preserve unity. Even within the mainstream of the church there are folks who will fight over opinions, traditions and non-essentials. They do all of this in the name of defending the faith, while seldom exerting themselves in the area of unity, fellowship and brotherhood. Satan has created a blind spot for many in this vital area.

Jesus, while yet a boy, reminded his folks, "I must be about my Father's business" (Luke 2:49). So should every Christian, individually and collectively as the church of the Lord. May we not divert the church into unauthorized activities nor fail to meet the responsibilities laid upon us by God. The fate of a dying world hangs upon our

response to the Lord's commission.

104.

EVANGELISM, OUR SACRED OBLIGATION

Everyone and every institution has a list of needs. Probably you could write a long one. Each congregation has its list of special needs. Evangelism is the need of every church of Christ and every Christian.

Evangelism Defined. The Greek term *evangelizo* means to proclaim glad tidings. *Evangelion* is the good news we proclaim. *Evangelistes* is the messenger who delivers good news. *Evangelism* is the act of teaching men the gospel and bringing them to Christ.

Reasons for Involvement in Evangelism

Being **grateful** for what God has done for us, we want to tell others of Christ. Like Paul, we are debtors, both to Greeks and to Barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. Paul was ready to preach the gospel to those in distant Rome (Rom. 1:14). We should be ready to teach the man next door. To Timothy, the apostle wrote, "I thank him that enabled me, even Christ Jesus our Lord, for that he counted me faithful. . . though I was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious..." (I Tim. 1:13). If we but think of where we were and where we were headed when Christ saved us, then we gladly would give ourselves to spreading his gospel.

We evangelize in **obedience** to God's commands. Jesus laid the responsibility on every Christian when he said, "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them..." (Matt. 28:19). Our obedience to Christ's commandments is the proof of our love (John 14:15). Failure to share Christ with others reflects a lack of love and dedication.

Out of our **pity** for those who are lost we strive to teach them God's word. Paul had "great sorrow and unceasing pain in (his) heart" for his fellow Hebrews who were yet in sin (Rom. 9:2). His "heart's desire and supplication to God... (was) that they may be saved" (Rom. 10:1). Even as our compassions are stirred when we see little children cold and hungry, so should we be stirred to snatch the souls of lost men from the fire of hell (Jude 23).

We evangelize **lest we displease our God**. Only those who do the will of the father will enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 7:21). The Lord is "not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9). To please the Father we seek to save his lost sheep.

The **world is made a better place** in which to live as a result of our evangelism. Salvation in Christ washes, sanctifies and justifies extortioners, revilers, drunkards, thieves, and the immoral (I Cor. 6:9-11). Enmities, strife, jealousies, wraiths, factions, divisions and parties are works of the flesh which the child of God repudiates (Gal. 5:20). No law is needed to restrain those who bear the fruit of the Spirit in their lives (Gal. 5:22-23). The peace and

happiness of a community is in direct proportion to the influence of the gospel in the lives of its citizens.

Each day we procrastinate, the **task of world evangelism grows bigger**. The population is mushrooming in third world nations. A nation with 25 million souls in 1950 will likely have over 60 million now. We dare not wait longer.

We evangelize because there is **great joy** in bringing souls to Christ. Paul preached the gospel in Philippi and planted the church in their midst. He later addressed the disciples as "my brethren beloved and longed for, my joy and crown..."(Phil. 4:1). To lead a friend or loved one to salvation is a joy comparable to parenting a child (I Cor. 4:15).

A world of **eager people are anxiously waiting** for us to knock on their doors and teach them about the Savior. Men of Macedonia are still pleading "come over...and help us" (Acts 16:9). Fields white unto harvest are waiting for gospel reapers to gather them unto Christ's garners (John 4:35). Even here at home our buildings would soon overflow is the saved would accept their responsibility to the lost. In Africa, Asia and India, South America and the island nations, people are storming the gates of the kingdom seeking admission. We cannot leave them to perish at the gate.

105

A PROFILE OF ELDERS OF THE CHURCH

To select elders, we must understand just what kind of men they must be and what they are to do. The names God chose to describe the leaders of his church, give us that information.

Leaders of God's church are called **elders** (Acts 20:17). This word tells us that our leaders are to be selected from those who are older in years and in the faith. This assures us that they will be men of maturity. They will be likely be wiser, more settled, more disciplined in behavior and more rooted in the faith.

Those who lead are called **bishops** (I Tim. 3:1). Bishop means "overseer" and tells us that elders are expected to supervise or superintend the church and its activities. An overseer does not do all the work himself, rather he sees that the work is properly done by those under his guidance. This tells us that elders are vested with authority to make decisions for the flock. We are expected to obey their leadership (Heb. 13:17).

God's leaders are called **pastors** (Eph. 4:11). A pastor is a shepherd. They lead, feed, care for and protect God's flock. Sheep must submit to and follow the leadership of their shepherd or they will suffer harm, even perish. God's shepherds, "feed the church." (Acts 20:28), i.e., they are expected to be capable teachers of his word. It is their responsibility to keep a close watch on the members of their flock and rescue any that might go astray. It is their duty to discipline members who become unruly in their conduct.

Leaders of Christ's church are described as **watchmen** (Acts 20:31). This imagery is borrowed from the Old Testament (Ezek. 3:17) . Like God's prophets, elders must constantly be on watch lest any harm befall their flock. They must watch for false teachers, doctrines and practices that would harm the church, or would turn members away from Christ.

Blessed is that church that has godly elders to lead it in God's service.

106.

WHAT ARE ELDERS LIKE?

In foreign fields, many young Christians have never seen an elder of God's church. When an elder visits our churches in Africa, great crowds of people will gather from far and wide just to see what an elder looks like. You might wonder, just what do elders look like? What would I expect if I saw one?

An elder is a **mature Christian man**, not a young man or novice (I Tim. 3:6).

You should expect to see the following **moral qualities** in an elder. He should be without reproach, and no lover of money (I Tim. 3:2-3). He should be "just, holy, and self-controlled" (Tit. 1:8).

An elder will have definite **domestic qualities**. He will be "the husband of one wife...(and) given to hospitality. He will rule well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity" (I Tim. 3:2-4). He will have raised his children to be Christians and they will not be unruly in behavior (Tit.1:6).

He who serves as an elder will demonstrate specific **personal qualities**. He will be temperate, sober-minded, orderly, gentle; not contentious(I Tim. 3:3), and not "soon angry" (Tit. 3:7). He will be a lover of that and those who are "good" (Tit. 1:8).

An elder will have the following **social qualities**. He will be "no brawler, no striker (i.e., hitter), and given to hospitality (Tit. 1:7-8). He will have a good testimony from them that are without" (I Tim. 3:7).

The man who is an elder will be definite **spiritual qualities**. He will hold to the faithful word which is according to the teaching, and be able both to exhort in the sound doctrine and to convict gainsayers (Tit. 1:9). He will be apt to teach (I Tim. 3: 2).

Come to think of it this profile of an elder looks remarkably like any mature Christian brother. The only qualifications not expected of all brethren is that he be married and a father and a capable teacher of God's word..

107.

WHAT PREACHERS ARE AND ARE NOT

Confusion reigns in the religious world about most things relating to Christianity. At the top of the list is confusion about the role of preachers.

* **Preachers are men.** Scripture says, "As in all the churches of the saints, let the women keep silence in the churches: for it not permitted unto them to speak..." (I Cor. 14:33-34). Most churches either don't know, or refuse to accept this fact.

* **Preachers may or may not marry.** Peter was married (I Cor. 9:5), Paul was not. Enforced celibacy is a "doctrine of demons" (I Tim. 4:1-3).

* **Preachers are proclaimers or teachers of God's Word.** Paul wrote to the young preacher Timothy, "preach the word" (II Tim. 4:2). **Evangelist** and **preacher** both convey the thought of one sent forth with a message to proclaim.

* **Preachers are ministers (I Cor. 3:5).** This term describes their role as servants of the congregation and its members. They serve; they do not "run" the church.

* **Preachers are not elders, pastors or bishops of the congregation.** These terms all describe the leaders chosen by the members to oversee them. A man may spend his life as a preacher and never serve in that office. The congregation may ask him to serve as an elder, and he may accept, but it is a different task and in addition to his role and work as a preacher.

* **Preachers should not be called "Father."** Christ says, "Call no man your father on the earth: for one is your Father, even he who is in heaven" (Matt. 23:8-9). Nowhere in Scripture are preachers called "**Reverend.**" Neither Christ nor the apostles were so called. Preachers should be addressed just as other brothers in Christ. Peter wrote of "brother Paul." (II Pet. 3:15).

* **Preachers are not clergymen,** superior to other Christians who are called laymen. In Scripture, all Christians are described as God's kleros or clergy (Eph. 1:11) and all are called laos, the lay-people of God (Tit. 2:14).

* **Preachers do not wear special garments** to distinguish them from other Christians. Jesus condemned the Jewish scribes “who desired to walk in long robes” and sought special recognition (Luke 20:46).

How simple and plain is the religion of Jesus. Christians gladly accept the simplicity of the gospel and practice it. To experience undenominational Christianity, visit the **Church of Christ** near you.

THE KINGDOM OF SATAN

108.

THE KINGDOM OF DARKNESS*

In revealing his will to us, God chose words and concepts that vividly contrast truth and error. Among the descriptions most commonly used are **light and darkness**. John writes “God is light and in him is no darkness at all” (I John 1:5). In salvation we are “delivered out of the power of darkness, Satan’s domain, and translated into the kingdom of God’s son (Col. 1:13). Throughout our New Testament **darkness** stands symbolically for the opposite of God’s way.

The Christless life is one of darkness. Before becoming Christians we “were....darkness, but are now light in the Lord” (Eph. 5:8). Christ made the darkness of sin, ignorance, error and superstition to vanish away (I John 2:8). Christians “are all sons of light, and sons of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness” (I Thess. 5:5).

Darkness is hostile to the light. This is true in the material realm and more so in the spiritual. Christ “was the light of men. And the light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness apprehended (or overcame) it not” (John 1:4-5). Jesus said “everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his works should be reproved. But he that doeth the truth cometh to the light...” (John 3:20). As Christians, our “wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the world-rulers of this darkness...” (Eph. 6:12). This mortal conflict between truth and life will never cease till the victorious Christ banishes darkness (Revelation 22:5).

Darkness symbolizes the ignorance of a life apart from Christ. Without light, one is soon confused and lost in the darkness of a literal night. So is the spiritual realm. Jesus said “yet a little while is the light among you. Walk while ye have the light, that darkness overtake you not; and he that walketh in the darkness knoweth not whither he goeth”(John 12:35). Jesus is the guiding light by which we make our journey successfully to our eternal home (John 8:12). Even as Israel was provided the glorious light to lead them from bondage to Canaan, so Christ leads us (Ex.

13:21). Whoever believes on Jesus does not abide in darkness. Those who reject him are like a blind man groping along in the darkness.

Darkness describes the chaos of life without God. Paul writes “it is God that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (II Cor. 4:6). He alludes to God’s first act upon the dark chaos of the unfinished creation (Gen. 1:23). Only after God brought forth light was he able to make the earth suitable for living things and man. As the physical world would be chaotic without the **sun** so without the moral light of his **Son** the world would be in moral, spiritual chaos.

The immorality of the Christless life is depicted as darkness. (Rom. 13:12-14) reads “The **night** is far spent and the **day** is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of **darkness**, and let us put on the armor of **light**. Let us walk becomingly, as in the day” not in reveling and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and jealousy. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof. “Works of darkness are most often pursued in the darkness of night; such as wild partying, drunkenness, adultery and abandonment. People whose deeds are evil love the darkness, like the doleful creatures of the nocturnal realm. They frolic in the shadows and then hide themselves when the light appears (John 3:19). So also doest the criminal element.

Darkness is always unfruitful. In Ephesians 5:11, Paul speaks of “the unfruitful works of darkness.” Without light, growing things soon wither and die. So there can be no fruit of the spirit in a life lived in the darkness of spiritual ignorance and sin (Gal. 5:22-23).

Lack of love and hatefulness always accompany darkness. John warn “he that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother, is in the darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light....but he that hateth his brother is in the darkness, and walketh in the darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because the darkness hath blinded his eyes” (I John 2:9-11). Love is like the warm, life-giving sunshine, hatred like the cold dark night. How sad to see a person professing Christ and yet harboring hatred towards a brother. Such actions are contradictory and mutually exclusive.

Darkness is the abode of Christ’s enemies and the final destiny of the wicked. Satan’s domain is that of darkness (Col. 1:13). Apostate disciples are like “wandering stars, for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved forever.” Wicked angels are “kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment...” (Jude 6). The Lord will consign the wicked to “outer darkness” where they will be punished forever (Matt. 22:13).

Conclusion: Jesus gave his life to deliver us from the power of darkness (Col. 1:13). Today, God is calling us out of darkness into his marvelous light (I Pet. 2:9). Faithful Christians must continually walk in the light of Jesus’ blessed gospel (I John 1:6-7). We must have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather even reprove them (Eph. 5:11-12). As Israel followed their guiding light to their land of freedom and rest, so may we follow Jesus the light of the world.

*The author is indebted to William Barclay for the heart of this lesson.

109.

PAGANISM

Christianity, in the widest sense of that term, is professed by only some 20% of the earth's population. The rest of the people worship in various forms of paganism. Excluding Islam, these people worship gods made by man's hands.

The consequences of paganism are appalling. All of these religions leave their followers in the depths of moral degradation. Every kind of immorality, deceit and dishonesty prevails. Socially, the strong dominate the weak, women are degraded before men. The poor are treated as the dirt of the ground. Financially the nations that are addicted to idolatry are generally poor with a very few men holding most of the money. Domestically, the home is the throne of the tyrant father, women are little more than slaves. Children are sired with little thought of moral or spiritual training. Politically, these nations are generally oppressed or they are oppressive. The rights of men mean little to pagan rulers. The welfare of a society is of no serious concern. Those in power enrich themselves at the expense of their poor subjects.

The only effective weapon against idolatry is the gospel of Jesus. It will tear down the strongholds of ignorance. (II Cor. 10:3-5). While the major Protestant churches have done much in the past to combat paganism it is sad to see a willingness to accept the pagan religious as equal partners by the liberal leaders of today's Protestantism.

Idolatry is wrong on numerous counts. We will notice four areas in which it is condemned of God.

Idol worship dishonors God the Creator of man. Paul writes: "Because that, knowing God, they glorified Him not as God neither gave thanks...professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts and creeping things." (Rom. 1:21-23). Even as Jehovah strictly charged ancient Israel, so it is today, "I am Jehovah thy God...thou shalt have no other gods before me, Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image...Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve, them for I Jehovah, thy God, am a jealous God..." (Deut.5:5-9). It is hard for Americans to visualize human beings prostrating themselves before images of beasts or men, debasing themselves in the most abject manner before the creation of human hands. Yet one has only to board a jet air liner and in a matter of hours he can be in Asia or Africa where such is the rule of life, not the exception. While unbelieving religious liberals and altruistic anthropologists speak of the splendor and beauty of heathen worship, Christians are shocked, disgusted and appalled by it. It is gross and sensual, far from beautiful. It dishonors the God, in whose image man is made, to offer such vile worship.

Idolatry is wrong because it is vain and foolish. Isaiah ridicules the idol worshipers of his day in chapter 44:12-20 of his book. "The (black) smith maketh an axe, and worked in the coals and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with his strong arm;...the carpenter sketcheth out a line; he marketh it out with a pencil; he shapeth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and shapeth it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man, to dwell in a house. He heweth him down cedars,...and strengtheneth for himself one among the trees of the forest: he planteth a fir-tree, and the rain doth nourish it. Then shall it be for a man to burn; and he taketh thereof, and warmeth himself: yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread: yea, he maketh a god, and worshipeth it; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied; yea he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire. And the residue thereof he maketh a god even his graven image; he falleth down unto it and worshipeth, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou are my god. They know not, neither do they consider: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see and their hearts that they cannot understand. (Behold how Satan blinds them! II Cor. 4:4). And none calleth to mind, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire: yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination(idol)? Shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? He feedeth on ashes; a deceived heart hath turned him aside; and he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie inn my right-hand?" Again in 46:1-2, Isaiah cuts sarcastically at Bel and Nebo, the gods of Babylon, as he foresees the people fleeing their city with their idols strapped to the backs of their beasts. Not only can they not save their worshipers, the gods themselves must be saved from capture or destruction by their devotees. Man, the crowning jewel of all creation, made in God's likeness with intelligence, superior to all other creatures, should perceive the folly of such senseless worship. Paul argues in Rom. 1:20 that all idolaters are "without excuse" since with their native intelligence and basic sense they could realize the one God's everlasting power and divinity. He further charges that such idolatrous worship is the result of man becoming vain in his reasoning and professing himself to be wise. Man seeks a god like himself so that he can do the desires of his flesh with the approval of his conscience and his society.

Idolatry is wrong because it is cruel and degrading. Idolatrous rites have included human sacrifice, ritual fornication, sensual dancing, torture of devotees, and sacrificial victims. Idolatry has cruelly crushed the masses of people under foot as the Hindu Brahmins have the harijans (the low caste) people of India, treating them far worse than they treated their beasts and even vermin and insects. Multiplied millions yet cringe in fear of demons, evil spirits and shaman (witch doctors) who claim to hold supernatural powers. People let rats and cows eat the grain with impunity while millions fight to cling to the threads of life as they battle starvation. In Thailand, Buddhist women are told they cannot enter Nirvana (the highest state) as women, they must be reincarnated as men. Polygamy is basically a product of corrupt religion that teaches that man's future happiness depends upon the number of spirits he can generate to take into eternity with him.

Idolatry is wrong because it leads away men from the true God and farther and farther into rebellion. Paul vividly portrays this downward path in Romans 1: "Professing themselves to be wise, they become fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness, that their bodies should be dishonored among themselves... God gave them up unto vile passions (homosexual perversion)... And even as they refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up unto a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, strife, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, hateful to God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, unmerciful..."(vs. 22-31). The author used to think that this sordid, morbid picture was only of the first century Romans. A trip to any pagan nation in Africa or Asia will be a living commentary on Paul's words. The road of idolatry is away from Jehovah and in the opposite direction of righteousness, justice, and truth. From Paul we learn that men first reject God in their heart, then they are rejected by Him. Man becomes like the God or god which he worships. The faithful Christian grows to be like the righteous Jehovah. The heathen is like the devil gods he worships.

As these words were being written I looked out of my window in New Delhi, India and saw the situation described above. What can we do to help these poor benighted souls who languish under the yoke of Satan's false religions? The answer is simple and plain. "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved..."(Mk. 16:15-16). This is not simplistic for the Scripture tells us that the gospel of His Son Jesus is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth. (Rom. 1:16).

Christians in America, look around you and be grateful, look up and be thankful, and send the blessed light of the gospel into all the world.

CHRISTIANS

110.

A CHOSEN PEOPLE

For some 1500 years the Hebrews were God's chosen nation (Deut. 7:6). They were chosen for a purpose, i.e., that through them God might bring his Son into the world for the salvation thereof (Gen. 12:3). Though their father Abraham was chosen because of his unswerving faith in God (Jas. 2:23), his descendants did not prove themselves more noble or more righteous than other societies of people. True, there was always a righteous remnant among

them (Rom. 9:27), but time and again, the majority proved themselves unworthy of being God's chosen people. When at last Messiah came and they rejected him and the salvation he offered them, they forfeited their status as the chosen of God (Acts 13:46). Paul explains this in great detail in Romans 11. God did not cast off the people which he foreknew, i.e., the righteous remnant, but he did reject and cut off the nation, political Israel and all of its citizens who refused His Son (Rom. 11:2-5;20).

Today, it is Christians, of whatever race and nation, who are the chosen people of God. Jesus speaks of his disciples as the elect "whom he chose" (Mark 13:20). Christ said, "I chose you out of the world" (John 15:13). Paul writes that "God chose you from the beginning unto salvation..whereunto he called you through our gospel..." (II Thess. 2:13-14). We were chosen "in him" i.e., in Christ "before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4). Peter says that Christians are "chosen by God and precious" (I Pet. 2:4). We are "a chosen generation, a holy nation, His own special people" (I Pet. 2:9 NKJV).

Christians are Abraham's seed. Thus Paul writes, "And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise" (Gal. 3:29). The apostle addressed the question of who were the true children of Abraham in his letter to the Romans. "For they are not all Israel, that are of Israel (i.e. the nation). Neither, because they are Abraham's seed, are they all children: but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, it is not the children of the flesh that are children of God; but the children of the promise are reckoned for a seed." (Rom. 9:6b-8). The Hebrew nation was Abraham's fleshly offspring, just as were Ishmael and the sons of Keturah (I Chron. 1:32). But we Christians are the spiritual children of Abraham, the children of promise, as was Isaac. It is our obedient faith in God that makes us his children. Thus he reasons that although both Ishmael and Isaac were sons of Abraham, it was Isaac that was chosen, and of Isaac's twin sons, Jacob was chosen over Esau. The righteous ones of the Hebrews God called the remnant (Rom. 9:28). When Jesus came, those who believed on him and sought salvation by trusting Him as God's appointed Savior, found acceptance. Those who sought to please God by pursuing the works of the law of Moses found themselves rejected (Rom. 10:9-17). "Because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Gal. 2:16). In his analogy of the good olive tree, Paul describes the root and trunk as God's covenant people through the ages. The Hebrews had the privilege of being a natural part of that tree but because of their unbelief they were broken off and rejected. Gentiles who chose to believe in Christ were likened to the branches of a wild olive tree that were carefully grafted into the good tree so that they might bear fruit and be acceptable to God in Christ. He hastens to add that any Jew who came to believe could also be grafted back into Christ. (Rom. 11:16-24).

Being God's chosen is not just a privilege to be proud of. It demands that we do our best to live up to God's expectations of us. He expected the Hebrews to believe in and accept Jesus as their Savior. He expects his chosen people to be obedient to him today (Heb. 5:8-9). Those who make the same mistake as did the Jews will suffer the same fate they did.

111.

THE TRUE ISRAEL OF GOD

The bulk of the Protestant world mistakenly thinks that all Jews are still God's special people, that they will be restored to Palestine as a nation and the ancient Hebrew ritual resumed. All of this is supposed to happen when Christ comes back to reign on earth for a thousand years, as they erroneously suppose. What is commonly overlooked is the fact that all of those prophecies and promises that were spoken of **Israel**, to be realized in the messianic age, were not spoken of **fleshly Israel**, but of **spiritual Israel**, Christ's church. The five points that follow

will prove this point conclusively.

1. Christians are now **Abraham's seed**. Paul declares this in Galatians 3:29. "If ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise." Again in Romans he reasons that Abraham is "father of all them that believe" (4:11). Although we are not literally fleshly descendants of Abraham, we are his descendants spiritually for we have the same faith he had. Today, God does not reckon sonship by the flesh, rather it is by the spirit.

2. Under Christ, Christians are the True Israel of God. "For neither is circumcision (being a Jew) anything, nor uncircumcision (being a Gentile), but a new creature. And as many as shall walk by this rule, peace be upon them and mercy, and upon the Israel of God." (Gal 6:15-16). Thus Hebrews are no longer God's special people. Today, God's people are reckoned by grace, not by race. Paul stresses this point in Rom. 9:8, "It is not the children of the flesh that are the Children of God, but the children of the promise are reckoned for a seed." He reasons that Abraham "is the father of us all" (Rom. 4:16).

3. The Church of Christ is now the Commonwealth of Israel. As Gentiles we were once alienated from the Commonwealth of Israel, but now in Christ we are made nigh by his blood. "So that ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow citizens of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. . . ." (Eph. 2:12-13, 19-20). God cast off the fleshy Jewish nation (Rom. 11:15). Yet He continues to save all who believe in Jesus, irrespective of nationally, adding them to Christ's church, Acts 2:47.

4. The church is the heavenly Jerusalem. The writer to the Hebrews said, "But ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly of church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven. . ." (Heb. 12:22-23). So we see that it is not ancient Jerusalem in Palestine, but the Lord's Church that is the heavenly, spiritual Jerusalem and Mount Zion. Those many promises of old concerning Zion in Messiah's day, find their fulfillment in the Church and not in Palestinian Jerusalem.

5. Christians are the true "circumcision" of God in this age. Thus Paul reminds the saints at Philippi, "For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." (3:3). He also tells the Colossians that in Christ "ye were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of flesh, in the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism. . ." (Col. 2:11-12). No literal fleshly circumcision is required today. But there is a likeness to circumcision in baptism. For as in the actual circumcision, the flesh was removed that kept a man from being identified with the covenant people, so in baptism the old life of sin is cut off and removed that the recipient might be numbered with God's people. Again Paul declares, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith working through love" (Gal. 5:6).

When the Jewish nation rejected Christ and murdered him, they forever forfeited their role as His special people. They cried, "His blood be upon us and our children" (Matt. 27:25). They made their choice. Not only the Palestinian Jews, but the Dispersion as well generally thrust the gospel from themselves and judged themselves unworthy of eternal life (Acts 13:46). Because of this rejection, God turned his attention to we Gentiles (Acts 28:28). We stress again that it was national Israel that rejected the Savior and national Israel was rejected by God. "By their unbelief they were broken off" (Rom. 11:20). Today each individual Jew stands before God on precisely the same footing as we Gentiles. They are either saved or lost, solely on the basis of their belief or disbelief in Christ. "And they (Jews) also, if they continue not in their unbelief, shall be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again" (Rom. 11:23). Today as always there are a few of Abraham's fleshly descendants who believe in Jesus. They are saved and a part of the true Israel of God, not because of the blood in their veins, but because of the faith in their hearts. What a great privilege it is to we Gentile Christians to be joint partakers in the commonwealth of spiritual Israel and to share the rich blessings which God promises to all of Abraham's seed according to the promise (Col. 3:29).

* I am indebted to James Bales' book, **New Testament Interpretation of Old Testament Prophecies**, for the heart of this lesson.

112.

INGREDIENTS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Jesus made it plain that just claiming to be God's person is not sufficient (Matt. 7:21). Nominal Christians will be disappointed in the day of judgement. To be saved, we must *truly* be his disciple (John 8:31). The Christian life consists of a number of ingredients, all of which are important.

* The Christian life is a life of faith. "Without faith it is impossible to be well pleasing unto God" (Heb. 11:6). Unless we have genuine faith in Christ we will die in our sins (John 8:24). Christians "walk by faith, not by sight" (II Cor. 5:7).

* It is a life surrendered to Christ. No man becomes a Christian until he confesses that Jesus is Lord (Rom. 10:9). That he is our Lord implies that we are his servants. We live so that "Christ shall be magnified in (our bodies), whether by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:20-21). Paul declared that "Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20).

* It is a life spent following Christ. Jesus said, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt. 16:24). Christ left us an example that we should "follow his steps" (I Pet. 2:21).

* It is a life devoted to the worship and service of God. We "offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe" (Heb. 12:28). Paul said, "I serve (God) in my spirit in the gospel of his Son" (Rom. 1:9).

* It is a life lived as a member of Christ's church, his spiritual kingdom. God adds to His church all that he saves (Acts 2:47). Paul reminded Timothy of proper behavior in the house of God which is the church of the living God (I Tim. 3:15). The one Lord has but one church (Eph. 4:4). We are expected to "grow up in all things into him, who is the head, even Christ; from whom all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love" (Eph. 4:15-16). In the church, we worship and serve God. We love his church and support her with our time, our energy and our resources.

* The Christian life is one of self-denial. Remember the Lord said that to be his disciples we must first deny ourselves (Matt. 16:24). We are to have the mind of Christ who gladly emptied himself of his exalted position in heaven to become man and a servant of humanity (Phil. 2:5-8). Like Paul, we should view the loss of worldly honor and position as nothing, if we can gain Christ (Phil. 3:7-8). We are assured that if we lose our lives for the sake of Christ and his gospel, we will find it with our Father in heaven (Mark. 8:35). If for Christ, we leave our home, our family, our brethren we shall receive a hundredfold now in this time...with persecutions and in the world to come eternal life" (Mark 10:29-30).

* Our life in Christ is one of service to humanity. Christianity is the religion of the Good Samaritan

(Luke 10:30-37). We are to work that which is good toward all men, especially those of the household of faith (Gal. 6:10). We are to help bear the burdens of those who are struggling in life and thus fulfill the law of Christ (Gal. 6:1-2). This service extends beyond those with material problems. There are orphans and the aged, those with disabilities and emotional problems. By our good works we demonstrate our faith (James 2:18).

* Christianity is a life of sharing the faith with others. The Master's parting command was that we preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15-16). The Judean disciples went every where preaching the word (Acts 8:4). Like leaven in meal, the gospel spreads from the Christian to his neighbor (Matt. 13:33).

* It is a life spent growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ (II Pet. 3:18). Every Christian should have as his or her goal to grow in the faith so he can teach the gospel to others (Heb. 5:12-14). To do this requires serious reading and study in the Book of God.

* A Christian spends his or her life striving to keep himself morally pure and ethically upright. When the grace of God...appeared, bringing salvation to all men, (he) instructed us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously and godly lives (Tit. 2:11-12). God has not left us to do this on our own strength. In his mercy He has given us the gift of the Holy Spirit which strengthens with power us in the inner man (Eph. 3:16).

* As followers of Christ we also oppose the evil that seeks to corrupt and destroy mankind and to defeat the will of God. We have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, we reprove them (Eph. 5:11). As good soldiers, we fight the good fight of the faith as we lay hold on eternal life (I Tim. 6:12). The enemies we face are both moral and spiritual.

* The Christian life is lived in hope of an eternity spent in heaven with the Father, Son and Spirit. If this life were the sum total of things, it would be easy for some to grow discouraged. Evil abounds. Sickness, suffering and death are before us all. But in our darkest moments, we know that Jesus has gone to prepare a place for us and that he is coming again to take us to his Father's house (John 14:1-3). Paul writes, "For in hope were we saved... But if we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it" (Rom. 8:24). Every day we are "looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ" (Tit. 2:13).

Such are the primary ingredients of living the Christian life. They are good for self-examination.

113.

SOME THINGS WE KNOW

There is much uncertainty in our world. Even though we live in the most literate age since the beginning of the race, there is great ignorance about God, Christ, Salvation and Christ's Church. In this age of confusion it is important that we have dependable information.

In I John 5:13-20, the Apostles assures us that there are some important things that we can know and be sure of.

* Christians can know that they have eternal life (I John 5:13).

* They know that He hears their prayers and answers them according to his will (I John 5:15).

* They know that "whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not but...keepeth himself" (I John 5:18). This means, "We know that the anyone born of God does not continue to sin" (New International Version).

* They can know that they "are of God," i.e., that they belong to Him, they are made in His image (Gen. 1:26) and are his children in his kingdom (John 3:3-5).

* They know that the whole world lieth in the evil one (I John 5:19). Hence they seek to keep themselves from the wicked things of this world. Their citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20) and it is there that they want to go (Heb. 11:13-16).

* They know that the Son of God is come (I John 5:20). That Christ actually became man and lived on this earth is fact and reality (John 1:14). To them it is no myth or legend. Knowing that he came once, they trust his promise that he will return again to claim them (John 14:1-3).

These truths are founded on God's infallible word. They cannot be shaken. If you are a Christian you too can know them.

114.

THE CHRISTIAN'S ASSURANCE OF HIS SALVATION

Scripture makes it abundantly clear that God's children can have assurance and confidence regarding their faith. Denominational preachers talk about assurance but often base it on personal feelings. In reality that is no assurance at all. The assurance God wants us to enjoy is based on his unchangeable word. The author of the 119th Psalm wrote, "For ever, O Jehovah, Thy word is settled in heaven" (vs. 89).

It is tragic when dedicated Christians are not confident in their faith. Such should never be the case.

* Paul wrote, "I am not ashamed; for I know him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day" (II Tim. 1:12). Like Paul, we can have absolute trust and confidence in Jesus as our savior. He came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). "He is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him..." (Heb. 7:25).

* We can be confident that the Lord will protect and provide for us as we make the dangerous journey of life. "For himself hath said, I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee. So that with good courage we say, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear: What shall man do unto me?'" (Heb. 13:5-6).

* In writing his first epistle, John said, "These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God" (I John 4:15). No disciple who is faithfully striving to please the Master should despair of his salvation.

* We can have full assurance in the truthfulness and integrity of the Word of God. We need never doubt it. Paul was not ashamed of the gospel (Rom. 1:16), nor should we ever be.

* We can have assurance and confidence regarding the Church of Christ. This is true because we can verify the faith, worship and polity of the church by comparing them with the scriptural pattern revealed in the New Testament of Christ (II Tim. 1:13). We need not skip over nor twist verses to prove our points. If the Bible says it, we believe it and that settles it for us. If we are asked, "Why do you believe or practice such and such?" we responded by pointing the inquirer to the precise scripture that authorizes it.

* We need not have any doubts about our worship. Each item of our worship is set forth in the pages of the New Testament. To doubt the clear statements of scripture is to doubt the God who gave it to us.

It is remarkable that when we finally convinced our timid brethren that they could be sure of their salvation, we now have a group of young intellectuals who have lost their confidence in the Church of Christ, her faith and worship. Some of them even doubt that the New Testament of Christ is the standard by which we should judge these matters. To their bleary eyes, it is only a love letter, not at standard by which we should live.

Each of us should exude this confidence in our daily walk and our profession of faith. Those whose faith and religious practices are based on human wisdom and tradition are the ones who should be uncertain and afraid of their standing. For us, "the firm foundation of God standeth, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his..." (II

Tim. 3:19). With confidence abounding we serve our Master looking forward to that day when he shall appear in the clouds.

115.

THE CHRISTIAN'S PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE

Every intelligent being has a philosophy by which he lives and interprets the world about him. This is true even if he has not consciously thought out the matter. Webster's fourth definition of philosophy is "the beliefs, concepts and attitudes of an individual or group." Every Christian has beliefs, concepts and attitudes built upon the teachings of Christ.

* Fundamental to our philosophy is a firm belief in a Supreme Being, Jehovah, the one God of the universe (Deut. 6:4).

* The heavens and earth and all things therein were created by God through Jesus (Gen. 1:1; John 1:1-2; 14).

* Of all the living creatures on earth, man is the highest, being alone made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26).

* This image of God in man means that his life is sacred. We are forbidden to kill our fellow-man since he is made in God's image (Gen. 9:6) and those guilty of murder should forfeit their lives.

* As the highest of God's creatures, He has made us stewards of his creation (I Pet. 4:10). All the lesser creatures He placed under our hands, not to recklessly destroy, but to use for food and other purposes (Gen. 9:2-3).

* God is the source of all our blessings, both spiritual and material (Jas. 1:17; Eph.1:3). Thus we are indebted to Him as our provider and should always express our thankfulness (Eph. 5:20).

* Even though we are made in God's image we are now flawed because of sin (Rom. 3:23). None of us fully measure up to God's expectations. Being flawed ourselves, we cannot expect perfection of others.

* Fortunately for us, God still loves us in spite of our failures and has devised a plan whereby his sinless Son would bear the penalties due to us and thereby we could be saved (John 3:16).

* The only way and place wherein fallen humanity can find salvation is in Christ and his way (John 14:6).

* Those who are not faithful disciples of Christ are lost and in need of salvation (II Thess. 1:8). It is our responsibility to make every effort to preach the gospel to lost humanity that they might be saved (Mark 16:15-16).

* All people who are saved in Christ are added to his one church which is God's spiritual family (Acts 2:47). In the church we are expected to worship and serve God all our earthly days.

* Christ's church (his kingdom) is not of this world (John18:36). It is a heavenly or spiritual kingdom. Thus the church is not to conduct itself as a worldly political or economic kingdom.

* Our God not only created the world, he maintains the rulership of it. Thus, throughout history he has intervened in human affairs. He rules in the kingdoms of men (Dan. 4:25).

* While the Creator has designed innumerable natural laws by which the creation normally functions, He still acts to protect his people, to punish the wicked and to provide the needs of all (Matt. 5:45). He hears and answers the prayers of his people (Matt. 7:11). This we call Divine Providence.

* Beyond His providence, we believe that God has wrought miracles on earth to deliver his people from their enemies, provide their needs and confirm his messengers. He still has that power and can exercise it should he choose to do so.

* As Christians, we serve God through Jesus Christ according to his New Testament (Matt. 28:20; Heb. 5:9). We are not amenable to the Mosaic code which was taken out of the way in Jesus's death (Col. 2:14-15).

* Our moral obligations are summarized by Jesus in his Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:1-7:29).

* We are to love God with all our heart, soul and mind, and our neighbor as our self (Matt. 22:37-29).

* We are to treat others as we would have them treat us (Matt. 7:12).

* We are to be a gentle people, doing our best to live at peace with all men (Rom. 12:18).

- * In our personal lives, we are to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and live soberly, righteously and godly (Tit. 2:12).
- * We are to honor Christ's code of purity, whether we be single or married (I Thess. 4:3-5). Marriage is to be held in highest honor (Heb. 13:4).
- * Christ demands truth and honesty of his disciples in every aspect of life (Eph. 4:25-28).
- * Christian employees are to be honest and diligent in serving their employers, working as unto God (Eph.6:6-7).
- * God expect his people to be a compassionate, charitable people (Gal. 6:10; Jas.1:27).
- * We live on earth as pilgrims in transit to God's country (I Pet. 2:11). Our citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20).
- * We are to be good citizens of our nation. Obeying every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake (I Pet. 2:13).
- * Whatever we do in word or in deed we are to the glory our God (Col. 3:17).
- * We live knowing that for every deed of this life we will give account to God in the day of judgement (II Cor. 5:10).
- * We view this life as a prelude to eternal life with God in heaven. Hardships of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glories of that to come (Rom. 8:18). We accept death as a reality of life (Heb. 9:27) but face it in full hope that Christ will raise us from the dead (I Thess. 4:16-17) and transport us to the home he has prepared for us (John 14:3).

This is our philosophy, our world view, the code by which we live and die. We commend it to all as the way of truth and righteousness that provides joy in this realm and leads ultimately to eternal life.

116.

THE CHRISTIAN'S WORLD VIEW

Everyone has a view of the world in which he lives. It is shaped by his family, his society and culture, his education and the media. Christians also have a world view. While it is affected by all the above it is based first of all on the teaching of the Scripture. Today, we who follow Christ find ourselves very much on the defensive. Our world view is under attack by those whose world view is antagonistic to ours. It is called Secularism. It sees the world existing without God, without Christ and without the Bible. To them the church is a nuisance and must therefore be contained lest it interfere with their goal of imposing their world view on all.

The Christian view of the world says:

- * There is an infinite, eternal, all powerful Supreme Being, God, who created and governs all that exists (Acts 17:24). * The material cosmos and all therein was created by the living Word of God, later revealed to us as Jesus of Nazareth (John 1:1-3,14).
- * It was made from nothing by the spoken word of His divine power (Heb. 11:3; Ps. 33:6, 9).
- * The cosmos was first created, including the earth (Gen. 1:1). The earth was then prepared for the habitation of the myriads of plants and creatures God had made. This included man (Gen. 1:2-26). This all transpired within six days of morning and evening (Ex. 31:17).
- * The creation is not eternal. It had a definite moment of origin (Gen. 1:1) and it will have definite time of demise (II Pet. 3:10-11). It exists only as the Creator allows.
- * Man was created, fully developed, by the hand of God. He was made in his image and likeness (Gen. 1:26). He did not evolve from lower life forms

* Man was made in God's image, which speaks of his having intelligence, volition and is accountable for his conduct. He consists of body, soul and spirit (I Thess. 5:23). Soul refers to his physical life. His spirit is immortal (Eccle 12:7). With his volition or will, each man chooses to serve God or disobey Him. For his choice, he will be blessed or punished (II Thess. 1:7-10; Matt. 25:46).

* Man was created to worship and serve the Creator and Him alone (Ex. 20:3). Therein is man's true happiness found.

* Mankind was created male and female, heterosexual (Gen. 1:27). In the heterosexual union of marriage they would be able to produce children (Gen. 2:21-25). Homosexual relations are God says are abominable (Lev. 18:22) as are sexual contact with beasts (Lev. 18:22-27).

* Man was given dominion over the earth and all therein (Gen. 1:28). In a responsible way, man is authorized to use the treasures of the earth, its plants and animal life for his provision. While the earth and the various living things therein were all made by God, they are not in any sense divine nor should they be worshiped. They are not the body of God. He existed before them. He exists independent of them. He will exist when they are all consumed with fire.

* God made man innocent and designed him to live forever (Gen. 3:22). However, he was free to choose the good or evil (Gen. 2:17). Man is not inherently evil as some say. Each child is born innocent. That innocence is lost when we know to do good and do it not (Jas. 4:17).

* Evil exists in the world (Prov. 15:3). By its very nature, evil is contrary to the will of God. It is perpetrated by sinful people who, to satisfy their own wicked desires, prey on others, raining misery, death and destruction on human society. Those who maliciously shed the blood of their innocent neighbors are to punished with death (Gen. 9:6). Thus evil is discouraged.

* Satan, the source of all evil, appeared in the Garden of Eden to tempt the man and woman (Gen. 3:1-6). He is the archenemy of God and man and everything good and holy. He is a liar and a murderer (John 8:44). He actively recruits sinful men and women to serve him in promoting every vile and harmful thing.

* The origin of Satan can be deduced from certain passages of Scripture. Christ created everything in heaven and on earth (Col. 1:16). All was originally very good (Gen. 1:31). Some of the angels rebelled against God and were cast down from heaven (II Pet. 2:4). Satan was evidently the leader of these rebellious spirits (Matt. 25:41). Satan and his crew are the personification of evil. Since the day of their ejection they have made war on God, his people and his Cause.

* Adam and Eve, the first of our race, chose to believe and obey Satan rather than God. Their rebellion introduced sin into the world with all of its dire and destructive consequences. At that time they constituted the entire human race. The curse of their sin fell not only upon them, but all of their posterity (Rom. 5:12). The earth and all things therein likewise suffer the consequences of man's fall and the resulting curse (Rom. 8:22).

* The human race as a whole has lived in rebellion to God from that day to this. Only a remnant has chosen to serve Him (Rom. 9:27; Matt. 7:14). Hence only a remnant of mankind will live with God in eternity.

* The love of God toward man could not be defeated. In his words of judgement on Satan and the offending pair, God promised that a day would come when the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head, himself suffering in the deed (Gen. 3:15). Thus began a rescue plan designed to eventually save fallen man from his ruined state.

* When the wickedness of humanity became overwhelming, God issued the judgement of death upon them. Only Noah and his family were faithful and thus were saved. The judgement consisted of a universal flood that covered the highest mountains by fifteen cubits (Gen. 7:19-20). Noah and his family were saved in a great ark or ship which God instructed them to build. With them, He also saved a remnant of animal life (Gen. 7:1-3). The flood covered the entire planet. Evidences of its destruction are found on every continent. The vast deposits of water-laid rock, limestone and sandstone are found everywhere. Fossil remains of the millions of animals that perished are found in those strata of rock. Fossils of ocean shell fish are found in the mountainous regions, thousands of feet above sea level. The flood also accounts for the vast deposits of coal and oil beneath the surface of the earth.

* To bring to pass the redemption of man, God chose Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3). From his offspring, he created the Hebrew nation. Working with them through many vicissitudes, God developed a people and environment suitable for the coming of the Savior. When the time was right, He sent forth his only begotten Son, born of a virgin, born a Jew (Gal. 4:4; Matt. 1:23). In his manhood, He was proven to be the Son of God by the mighty works and wonders which he did (John 20:30-31). He was rejected by the Jewish leaders who secured his death at the hands of the Roman rulers. In this vile deed they thought they had destroyed him, but God overrode their evil and made his death

to be the sacrifice for our sins that we might be saved. On the third day, God raised him from the dead. A multitude of witnesses verified the truth of this (I Cor. 15:4-7). Jesus is the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but by him (John 14:6). He is the savior of all who in faith obey him (John 8:24; Heb. 5:9).

* Christ established his church on earth, which is God's kingdom (Matt. 16:18). The price paid was his life, given on Calvary (Acts 20:28). He rules over the church as its only head (Eph. 1:22). There has been and will always be unceasing conflict between Satan and his kingdom of Satan and that of Christ (Col. 1:13; Rev. 12:10-17).

* Across the ages God has spoken to humanity in various ways. Today, He speaks to us through His Son Jesus and His Written Word (Heb. 1:1-2). The Bible is inspired by the Holy Spirit (II Tim. 3:16-17) and is thus inerrant and authoritative in all things pertaining to life and godliness (II Pet. 1:3). It is the only standard for the church.

* God rules in the kingdoms of men and puts over them whom he wills. Sometimes he gives the power to base and worthless men as punishment to their ungrateful and rebellious citizens (Dan. 4:25). His judgements upon men and nations are exercised both now and in eternity.

* God has ordained that the gospel of His Son be preached to every person on the earth (Mark 16:15). All of humanity are invited to partake of the salvation offered by Christ (Matt. 11:28). It is God's will that all be saved (I Tim. 2:4), but He will not force salvation on anyone. They must choose that for themselves and accept the consequences of their choice.

* God has appointed a day, unknown to us (Matt. 24:36), when Christ will return to the earth and raise the dead (John 5:28-29). Those yet living will be changed and together all will be caught up to stand before Christ in judgment (I Cor. 15:51-52; II Cor. 5:10). At that time, our reward or punishment will be given.

* The reward of the faithful Christian is to live with the Father and Son in a blissful eternity (John 14:1-3; Rev. 21:3-5). The punishment of the wicked will be eternal separation from God in a place of unending painful punishment (II Thess. 1:9; Rev. 21:8).

By these sacred truths we live.

117.

THE MORAL CODE OF JESUS

The word *moral* relates "to principles of right and wrong in behavior." "*Morality* means a doctrine or system of morals...particular moral principles or rules of conduct" (Webster).

In this study we will be considering the system of morality that Jesus gave to the human family. Our generation has heard of "the new morality" advocated by hedonists and godless pleasure seekers. The perceptive soul recognizes their code to be neither new nor moral. Rather, it is the old immorality parading under the fictitious name of morality. This is done to wrap a cloak of respectability around its vile and ugly body. The code of moral conduct introduced by Jesus was new in two senses. It was a system never before known by man and it was a system quite

different than any previous one.

The World To Which Jesus Came

To appreciate Christ's morality, we must first acquaint ourselves with the world of his day. Among the Jews, a cold, heartless legalism prevailed. In his letter to the Romans, Paul chastised his Jewish brethren for their hypocrisy: "Wherefore thou art without excuse...for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself, for thou that judgest doest practice the same things" (Rom. 2:1). Again he writes, "thou who gloriest in the law, through thy transgression of the law dishonorest thou God?" (Rom. 2:23). The entire twenty-third chapter of Matthew is devoted to our Lord's scathing rebuke of Pharisaic Judaism. Woe after woe is heaped upon those religious leaders who were like "whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear beautiful, but inwardly are full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness" (Matt. 23:27). To such pretenders the Lord said, "Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers, how shall ye escape the judgement of hell?" (Matt. 23:33).

Outside of the Hebrew community, the morals of Gentile Rome prevailed. The degrading influence of idolatry and perverted human wisdom drew men farther and farther away from God's standard of righteousness.

"Wherefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness... For this cause God gave them up unto vile passions...God gave them up unto a reprobate mind... being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, hateful to God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, unmerciful..." (Rom. 1:22-31).

The Romans themselves agreed with Paul's assessment. Virgil wrote, "Right and wrong are confounded..." Tacitus said, "All was one delirium of hate and terror... He who had no foe was destroyed by his friend." "The greater the infamy, the wilder the delight." According to Suetonius, "It was an age of sheer, utter terror." "Juvenal said, "The earth no longer brings forth any but bad men and cowards." "No guilt or deed of lust is wanting, since Roman poverty disappeared."

Paul "laid to the charge of both Jews and Greeks, that they (were) all under sin... There (was) none righteous, no not one" (Rom 3:9-10).

God had granted men long generations to demonstrate by their own failure, the fact that they could not save themselves from the clutches and stain of sin. They could not improve their moral situation by wisdom or effort.. In that dreadful plight, the world was prepared to receive Messiah and his new morality.

Jesus and the Law

The Son of God did what no man before or since has done. He kept the Law of God without a single infraction. The apostle reminded his contemporaries that "he did not sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (I Pet. 2:22). Early on in his ministry he announced, "Think not that I came to destroy the law and the prophets; I came not to destroy, but to fulfill" (Matt. 5:17). Having fulfilled every aspect of the Law, he took "it out of the way, nailing it to the cross" (Col. 2:14).

“But now hath he obtained a ministry the more excellent, by so much as he is also the mediator of a better covenant, which hath been enacted upon better promises” (Heb. 8:6). His new covenant covers the entire spectrum of human conduct, whether it be public or private, between God and man, worship or conduct.

Christ Has A Law

Contrary to the thinking of some, Jesus has given us a law of righteousness. To James it is “the perfect law, the law of liberty” of which we must be doers to be blessed (Jas. 1:25). To Paul it is “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” after which we must walk (Rom. 8:2-4).

We Are Not Under a Law System

However, Christ does not save us by a legal system such as Moses’ Law. “By the works of law shall no flesh be justified in his sight” (Rom. 3:20). Along with Paul we know, “that a man is not justified by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ” (Gal. 2:16). Having demonstrated man’s inability to save himself by any system or means of human achievement, Paul concludes, “we reckon therefore that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law” (Rom. 3:28). Thus the great theme of the gospel is, “by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works that no man should glory” (Eph. 2:8-9).

Having saved us by grace, the Lord expects us to deny “ungodliness and worldly lusts, (and that) we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world...” (Tit. 2:12). Our motivation is not just a fear of punishment or a hope of physical reward. Jesus said, “If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

Principles and Precepts

Rather than a great number of prohibitions and specific commandments, Jesus gave us a few basic principles by which to measure each option and deed. That which is commonly called the Golden Rule regulates thousands of hard decisions relative to human relations. “All thing therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them: for this is the law and the prophets” (Matt.7:12). When weighing any action we are reminded “whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (I Cor. 10:31). When contemplating any question of worship or religious practice, we must “not...go beyond the things which are written” (I Cor. 4:6). In the realm of dress and public manner Christians are to “adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefastness and sobriety...professing godliness through good works” (I Tim. 2:9-10).

A Heavier Responsibility

Such a system of principles places a much heavier responsibility upon the individual and his own conscience than did the old law. One was born a Jew. He had no choice in the matter. Everyone who becomes a Christian does so by personal decision. Under Moses, every detail of conduct was spelled out, much as we parents do for our younger children. In Christ we are granted the privilege to weigh many points in our own minds and draw our own conclusions in light of those God-given principles. How much should I give to God? To the Jew Moses prescribe a tenth (Lev. 27:30). To us Jesus says, “give as you have prospered” (I Cor. 16:2), and as you have purposed in your heart (II Cor. 9:7), “for God loveth a cheerful giver.”

There are Moral Absolutes

Lest we be misunderstood, we clearly affirm that there are moral absolutes in Christ's system. Paul reminds us "thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal..." (Rom. 13:9). But we must recognize those relatives that leave us to determine when, where, and to what degree we are obligated. How often shall we pray? How much shall we give? What shall be the style of our hair, our beard, our dress and many other similar matters?

A More Demanding System

Christ's morality is more demanding than that of the Old Covenant. While Moses proscribed specific sinful acts, Christ sought to eliminate the very root of the problem from the human heart. Moses said, "Thou shalt not kill" but Jesus forbade being angry with one's brother for anger always precedes violence and murder. If there is aught between us and our neighbor, it must be resolved at once. Even worship must wait for the reconciliation (Matt. 5:21-24). The Old Law forbade adultery. Jesus forbids the lustful look that prepares the mind for the sinful act (Matt. 5:27-28). Moses warned against breaking one's oath. Jesus said, "Swear not at all" (Matt. 5:33-34). The Law said, "love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. Christ said, "Love your enemies and pray for them...that ye may be sons of your Father who is in heaven..." (Matt. 5:43-45).

Let us daily give thanks for the wonderful moral code given us by Jesus. May we honor him as Lord by obeying its precepts and subscribing to its principles in every activity of our lives.

118.

THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF SEPARATION

The wisdom of man seeks to unite all things under one blanket, making no distinction between good and bad, right or wrong. But God calls for separation in many areas of life.

* **God the Creator is separate from his creation.** Pantheism teaches that the creation is the body of God, that they are inseparable. Following Hinduism, New Age cults espouse this view. But God existed before the cosmos. Moses wrote, "Before...thou hast formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God" (Ps. 90:2). The creation will eventually be destroyed (II Pet. 3:7) and God will continue to exist. When the first heavens and earth are passed away, the saints will dwell with God in his eternal home (Rev. 21:1-3).

* **When God chose Abraham to be the father of the Hebrew race, he separated him** from his pagan surroundings in Ur of the Chaldees (Gen. 12:1). Later, when he brought the Hebrews into Canaan he told them, "I am Jehovah...who hath separated you from the peoples" (Lev. 20:22-24). Most of their national troubles resulted from their forgetting this fact!

* When **Jesus came into the world, he was "separate from sinners"** (Heb. 7:26). He did not align himself with the any of the religious sects of Judaism. Apart from all others, He set about to establish his kingdom on this earth.

* **Christianity is separate from all other religions.** Christ made it clear that he alone is "the way, the truth and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by (him)" (John 14:6). Liberal scholars pretend that all the great religions are of equal value. The **atheistic type** pronounce them all equally worthless, the **religious type** see all leading to

God. But such “pluralism” is unknown to the Lord. Paul wrote that it was God’s plan to reconcile both Jew and Gentile to himself “in one body” (Eph. 2:16). The same could be said for the Buddhist, Hindoo, Muslim and Taoist.

* **Jesus is separate from and superior to all other founders and leaders of the various world religions.** He was God’s only begotten son (John 3:16). He is God incarnate (John 1:1-3,14). The others are all sinners like us. They died and are unable to escape death’s grip. His way is that of truth and righteousness theirs are waya of confusion and error.

* **Christ’s church is separate from all churches founded by men.** It is heavenly in origin and design (Eph. 3:9-10). It was founded by the Son of God (Matt. 16:18). It is prior to and superior to all other churches created by men. Christ will save *his* church (Eph. 5:23). The difference is that of the genuine and the counterfeit. The church of Christ is not part of the ecumenical movement. We cannot be, for it seeks to unite Christ’s church with those founded by men. We do not unite our efforts to evangelize the world with other religious organizations. They have neither part nor lot in what we are commission to do (Mk. 16:15).

* **Christians must be separate from the sinful world.** Paul instructed the Corinthian saints, “Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers: for what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity?...Wherefore come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord” (II Cor. 6:14-18). Jesus reminds us that while we live in the world, we “are not of the world” (John 17:14,16). Followers of Christ are to separate themselves from sinful thoughts and deeds of the world (Jas. 1:21).

* **Truth is separate from error.** Only truth can set us free (John 8:32). Error enslaves. Enemies of Christ will separate (isolate) us from their society. Jesus predicted, “...men shall hate you, and ... they shall separate you from their company...” (Luke 6:22). There are times when we ourselves have to do the separating. When the Jews became hardened and disobedient, Paul “departed from them, and separated the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus” (Acts 19:9).

* **The church must separate herself from those who are unfaithful disciples.** When men depart from the teaching of Christ we are not to receive them or encourage them (II John 9-11). We must turn away from those who cause divisions in the church (Rom. 16:17-18). Impenitent sinners are to be separated from the church (I Cor. 5:13) as are those who are disorderly in conduct (II Thess. 3:6).

* **There are some areas in which Christ brings us together.** All Christians are united with him when baptized (Rom.6:5). In Christ we are not longer alienated from God, but reconciled (Col. 1:21-22). All faithful disciples are united with each other in Christ (Gal. 3:26-27). Paul assures us that nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ (Rom. 8:35, 39).

* **There is yet to be one great and final separation.** One the day of judgement, Jesus will separate humanity as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats and those who are righteous will go away into eternal life, but the wicked into eternal punishment (Matt. 25:32, 46).

119.

ASPECTS OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS

Ethics is the part of Christianity that teaches us how we ought to behave. Paul wrote to Timothy that he might know

"how men ought to behave themselves" as Christians. (I Timothy 3:15). The study of Christian ethics teaches us how to conform our human wills to the will of the Lord Jesus. The noted Scotch scholar, William Barclay, has a very helpful book on this subject entitled **Ethics in a Permissive Society**. Barclay notes many different facets of the Christian ethical system. We will notice nine of them.

1. Christians have a **community ethic**. The Christian is always contemplated as a member of society, never as a recluse withdrawn from the world. He has responsibilities that grow out of his membership in the church. Paul wrote, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and severally members thereof" (I Corinthians 12:27). To meet with God's approval I must fulfill my duties and responsibilities to my fellow Christians. Also, the follower of Jesus is a member of society in general. As such he must honor his God-given duties to society. The Corinthian brethren were reminded that they could not escape association with sinners of the world (I Corinthians 5:9-10). Under those circumstances, the saint is to live a blameless and harmless life before his neighbors and let the light of Christ shine through him (Philippians 2:15-16). He must teach all men the good news about Jesus and actively seek to win them to the Savior's cause (Mark 16:15-16). Furthermore he must love all men in the world and seek to do them good at every opportunity (Galatians 6:10). As a member of the community the Christian is taught to "be subject to every ordinance of men for the Lord's sake, whether to the king, as supreme; or unto governors... for so is the will of God" (I Peter 2:15-16). The introverted brother who shuns his fellow man for perpetual spiritual solitude and contemplation fails to meet his obligations to his fellow citizens of planet Earth.

2. The Christian ethic demands that we be **different**. Though we live in the world we must be different than the world (John 17:14-16). The very term "saints" so often applied to Christians means "holy, separated unto God." Collectively the saints make up the church, the *ekklesia*, which simply means "the called out body of people." Although we share this planet with the children of darkness, we do not partake of their evil deeds. Paul reminds the Ephesian brethren, "...that ye no longer walk as the Gentiles also walk, in the vanity of their mind" (Ephesians 4:17). The Christian that is afraid to be different from his worldly contemporaries is of no value to the Master. Nor can we be secretive about our differentness. We must let the unique light of Christianity be seen by all. Richard Glover writes, "There is no such thing as secret discipleship, for either the secrecy kills the discipleship or the discipleship kills the secrecy..."

3. Our ethic is one of **body, soul and spirit**, that is, it invokes the whole of man's being (I Thessalonians 5:23). God rejects both asceticism (which condemns the body and its desires as all bad) and hedonism (which gratifies every desire of the body). God made the human body and it is good (Genesis 1:31). He gave his own Son a physical body like ours. The Holy Spirit dwells in the bodies of Christians (I Corinthians 6:19-20). God demands that our bodies be used in His holy service (Romans 12:1-3). When Paul talks about sinful flesh, he speaks not of the body literally, rather he describes human nature apart from God (See Galatians 5:19-20). Thus while some religions or philosophies indulge the body and deny the spirit, and others abuse the body and extol the spirit, we Christians serve God with all the body, soul and spirit, despising neither.

4. The Christian standard goes **beyond the world and time**. It teaches us that we will be responsible for our deeds both now and in eternity. The truth of the gospel hinges upon the resurrection of Christ and ultimately of our bodies as well (I Corinthians 15:3-4; John 5:28-29). The life beyond the grave offers two choices, a blissful eternity with God, or an eternity of punishment with Satan (Matthew 25:46). The gospel promises us a coming judgment in which we will give an account to God for all the deeds done in this life (II Corinthians 5:10). Thus the Christian makes the choices of today in the light of eternity. The fleeting pleasures of the hour give way to the enduring rewards of eternity.

5. **Imitation** is an essential ingredient of our ethical system. We are exhorted to imitate God as his beloved children (Ephesians 5:1). We are to walk in the footsteps of Jesus (I Peter 2:21). We learn by imitating the great disciples of the past and present as they follow Jesus (I Corinthians 11:1; Hebrews 6:12). Christian leaders are to offer their godly example for the congregation to follow (Hebrews 13:7). In fact, all Christians are to be good examples of their religion. Thus can wives win their unbelieving husbands (I Peter 3:1). All are charged to "be ... an example" (I Timothy 4:12).

6. The Christian code demands that we be **at peace** with fellow Christians and all men. The apostle condemns jealousy and strife among Christians as carnal and childish (I Corinthians 3:1-4). We are obligated to give diligence to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:1-3). As much as in us lieth, we are to be at peace with all men even the heathen of the world (Romans 12:18). If our enemy is hungry we must feed him and by thus doing him good, make him ashamed enough to agree to peace (Romans 12:20-21). Even when we are harassed by sinners, we Christians should look to the government, God's appointed minister of wrath, to punish the evil doer. We are not to personally avenge ourselves (Romans 12:1-19). Jesus' ethic was truly new and revolutionary when he said, "Blesses are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God" (Matthew 5:9).

7. Christian ethics calls for **humility**. Jesus said, "Ye know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Not so shall it be among you, but whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant" (Matthew 20:25-28). Christ's apostles taught this concept to all their converts. For example, Paul urges the Philippians, "Do(ing) nothing through faction or through vain glory, but in lowliness of mind each counting others better than himself: not looking each of you also to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others" (Philippians 2:3-4) Peter wrote, "All of you gird yourselves with humility, to serve one another for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble" (I Peter 5:5). This was a shocking, revolting concept for the proud Greek mind. They considered humility an undesirable weakness. Yet the demand of Christ won out and all now see its virtue, even if they do not practice it.

8. Christ's ethical teaching calls for **agape love for all men**. We must learn to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:39). This is not romantic love, nor is it an easy going, emotional or sentimental thing. It is not subject to impulse or passion. **Agape** love is active goodwill that cannot be quenched. This love will govern our attitudes and actions toward our enemies. It will make us always act in their best interest and seek their good, even when they do us wrong (Matthew 5:44). This Christian love will make us tolerant in dealing with others (Romans 14:1, 15:1-2). We will always labor to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Some disciples handle truth as a bludgeon against their foes. This Christ forbids. This new way of unselfish love has done more to civilize and refine the manners of mankind than any other gift of God.

9. **Family responsibility** is central in the Christian ethic. Most of the heathen religions were male-centered. Women and children were of value chiefly as the property of the man. Man had limited responsibilities to his family. But Christ painted an entirely new practice of domestic life. Wives were to love their husbands and be in subjection to them as is fitting in the Lord (Colossians 1:18). Husbands were to love their wives as Christ loved the church, being willing even to die for them (Ephesians 5:25). Children were to be properly trained and nourished in God's way (Ephesians 6:4). They were to be obedient to their parents (Ephesians 6:1). Aged parents and grandparents were to be given haven in their children's homes. To fail in these family duties was to be worse than an infidel (I Timothy 5:4, 8).

Of course there are yet other areas we have not touched upon, yet these nine areas give us a reasonable view of what is surely the grandest system of human conduct ever set forth for men to live by. May all of God's children remember as they sojourn in this earth, to "abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." And may our behavior always be "seemly among the Gentiles; that, wherein they speak against you as evil doers, they may by your good works, which they behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." (I Peter 2:11-12).

THE CHRISTIAN'S PRAYER LIFE

The book of James has much to say about the Christ's prayer life. To James, prayer is vital to the Christian's life. It is the food for his soul. Without prayer he will surely die spiritually.

I. "If any of you lacketh...let him ask of God" (1:5). Verse 5 connects in thought with vs. 2-4 where James had pointed out that temptations were intended to prove one's faith and develop patience. One might wonder, "How can I have the wisdom to understand and deal with such temptations? I am not that wise." James responds, "If any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God". To further encourage the Christian to ask God for this, as well as all other needs in life, he hurriedly adds, that God gives "generously to all men without making them feel foolish or guilty" (J. B. Phillips).

Experience in teaches us that many gifts are made undesirable by the way they are given. "There is a kind of giver who gives only with a view to getting more than he has given, who gives only to gratify his vanity and his sense of power by putting the recipient under an obligation which he will never be allowed to forget; who gives and who then continuously casts up the gift that he has given. But God gives the generosity" (Wm. Barclay, **The Letters of James and Peter**, pp. 53-54). All would agree that the Christian is free to ask for all things he lacks, if they are pleasing to God, and not just wisdom (I John 5:14).

Something of the character of God is seen in verse 5b, "let him ask of God who giveth." Literally from the Greek it reads, "**The giving God.**" This declares the fact that such is a characteristic of our God. Every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father of lights (Jas. 1:17).

Verse five teaches:

- 1) We are to look to God and ask Him for our needs both spiritual and material;
- 2) That giving is a trait of God's personality;
- 3) He gives to all His children, regardless of their station in life;
- 4) He gives generously;
- 5) He gives without reproaching or making us feel foolish or guilty.

II. We are to "ask in faith, nothing doubting" (1:6) Thomas Manton writes, "We must put up no prayer but what we can put up in faith;...and faith must not wander out of the limits of the word. If you have a promise, you may be confident that your requests will be heard, though in God's season. You cannot put up a carnal desire in faith...where we have a certain promise, we must no way doubt of His will; for the doubt must either proceed from suspicion that this is not the word or will of God, and that is blasphemy; or a fear that He is not able to accomplish his will and that is down-right distrust and unbelief. Therefore, where we have a clear sight of His will in the promise, we may have a confidence towards Him" (Commentary on James, p. 48). Again Manton says, "...A;; doubts are but disputes against a promise..."

Verse 6 teaches us that God gives rich blessings to those who:

- 1) Ask in prayer;
- 2) Ask of God;
- 3) Pray in faith and confidence;
- 4) Do not doubt that God can and will answer according to His holy will.

III. James warns against "asking amiss." In 4:1-4 "James is ...setting before his people a basic question...whether your aim in life, is to submit to the will of God or to gratify your own desires for the pleasures of this world? And his warning is that, if pleasure is the policy of life, then nothing but strife and hatred and division can possibly follow." "To obey the will of God is to be essentially selfless."

IV. "Ye lust and have not." "The craving for pleasure in the end shuts the door of prayer. If a man's prayers are simply for the things which will gratify his desires, then his prayers are essentially selfish and therefore, it is not possible for God to answer them, for to answer them would be to do nothing other than to provide the man with ways of sinning. The true end of prayer is to say to God, Thy will be done. The prayer of the man who is pleasure dominated is: my desires be satisfied..." (Barclay, **op. cit.** 118).

Some people fail to reach their desires and goals in life, because they ignore God and proudly try to succeed alone. Other fail because they have sinful goals that God forbids. Still others fall short because they pray wrongfully. James stresses the failure of all selfish prayer.

V. There are several other impediments to effectual prayer.

1. God will not do wrong in answer to prayer. We need not ask it.
2. Neither will He change His revealed will to please man.
3. He cannot be expected to violate the laws of nature He has long since established.
4. Doubts in the pray-er's heart impedes prayer (Jas. 1:6).
5. To neglect to work for the fulfillment of your needs will disappoint your prayers. God has ordained that man first do his best before Heaven supplies the rest (Phil. 2:12; II Thess. 3:10).
6. Lack of persistence robs many of heaven's blessings. Jesus says we "ought always to pray and faint not" (Lk. 18:1-8).
7. Wrong doing limits our prayers. "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination" (Prov. 28:0).
8. Mistreatment of one's family causes prayer to be hindered (I Pet. 3:7).
9. Self-righteousness will leave even a religious man with an unanswered prayer (Lk. 18:9-12).
10. Selfishness blocks God from supplying our requests (Jas. 4:3).
11. Insincerity neutralizes prayers. Jesus rebuked the prayer practice of the hypocritical Pharisees (Matt. 6:5-7).
12. Failure to forgive a brother forces God to deny our petitions for forgiveness (Matt. 6:12-15).
13. Factiousness hinders our prayers before God (Matt. 5:23-24).

VI. Our prayers must be conditioned on "if the Lord will" (4:13--15). This section deals with the sin of presumption, i.e., acting without taking God into account. "...Note that James does not say there is anything wrong about making plans for the future, nor does he denounce business or merchants or even the desire to make money. What he does reprove is such absorption in worldly affairs that one leaves God out." ..."They lived as if time were absolutely theirs, as if destiny were in their hands. Yet James underscores the truth that man proposes but God disposes" (H.P. Colson, **The Practical Message of James**, p.72).

The Christian's entire life with all its intentions and activities is to be under the guiding principle, "If the Lord wills," how much more so, his prayer request. The saintly apostle John writes, "This is the boldness which we have toward him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us" (I John 5:14). The will of God is made known to man today through the inspired writings of our Bible (I Cor. 14:37.) We are not to seek God's will in the fantasies of emotionalism, mysticism or seances, nor as those who falsely claim to be baptized in the Holy Spirit and speak in

tongues. Like the Bereans, we still need to search the scriptures daily to see if these things are so (Acts 17:11). We should never make plans and then ask God to bless them. What we should do is to consult God before making our plans and thus let him in on the planning. If we allow him to guide us, we may with confidence ask his blessing on our actions" (Colson p.73).

In every prayer there are three parts: (1). the wish, a desire for something; (2). the word, the wish expressed in prayer; (3). the work, which helps to bring the desired results.

God's children should pray without ceasing (I Thess. 5:17). "Daily prayers are the daily visits which change belief that God exists, into belief in God as a loved and trusted friend" (D.J. Campbell). "Prayer is not merely an occasional impulse to which we respond when we are in trouble; prayer is a life attitude" (W.A. Bueller, **The Ency. of Rel. Quotations**, p. 344).

121.

PERFECTING HOLINESS

In view of the many wonderful promises we have received. Paul urges, "let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord" (II Cor. 7:11). Without holiness no man will see God in eternity (Heb. 12:14). To be holy means to be set apart or sanctified for God's use. It suggests purity and freedom from sin. Our life of holiness begins at conversion when we are washed, sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus (I Cor. 6:11). To grow into God's likeness is our goal (I Pet. 1:15). Holiness of heart and life cannot be attained instantly, rather it is reached by years of diligent, patient effort (II Pet. 3:18).

1. We must begin with **Holiness in Mind and Heart**. When sin is cast out, righteous thoughts and ambitions must take its place. Otherwise, different bad things will simply fill the void (Matt. 12:43-45). We call this the "law of displacement;" good things within, keep the evil things without. Solomon warns "keep thy heart with all diligence: for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23). Jesus observed that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matt. 12:34). With this in mind Jesus said "everyone that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already **in his heart**" (Matt. 5:28). "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:9). The formula for a pure heart is given in (Phil. 4:8). Whatsoever things are true, honorable, just, pure, lovely and of good report: if there be any virtue....any praise, think on these things.

2. We must be **Holy in our Speech**. "Let **no corrupt speech** proceed out of your mouth, but such as is good for edifying....that it may give grace to them that hear" (Eph. 4:29). "Putting away **falsehood**, speak ye truth each one with his neighbor...." (Eph. 4:25). The cursing, swearing and hateful talk of the world should find no place in the mouths of saints. Rather "let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer each one" (Col. 4:6). On every Christian's lips should be this daily prayer: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Jehovah...." (Ps. 19:14).

3. Christians must be **Holy in Their Dress**. Paul instructs ladies to "adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefastness and sobriety.... (which becometh women professing godliness)" (I Tim. 2:9). Modest means much more than just to cover the erogenous parts of the body. It is the opposite of lavish, gaudy clothes, hairstyles and jewelry that attract worldly attention to the wearer. She must dress in a way that reflects her femininity; not in masculine styles. Moses warned, "a woman shall not wear that which pertained to a man...for whosoever doeth these things is an abomination unto Jehovah...." (Deut. 22:5). He speaks here of those who were not content with their God given sexual status; i.e. transvestites. A Christian's emphasis in dress must be upon "the hidden man of the

heart, in the incorruptible apparel of a meek and quiet spirit.....” (I Pet. 3:4). In our worldly, affluent age when a powerful advertising industry barrages us daily and peer pressure seeks to force conformity, God’s people must manfully resist their efforts to mold us with their patterns of dress. The point is equally applicable to men as to women.

4. God expects us to be **Holy in Our Recreation**. Paul writes “whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (I Cor. 10:31). This verse surely covers our recreational choices. It is right to exercise the body, but we must not neglect the spirit (I Tim. 4:7-8). Recreation must not supplant the worship of God, the study of his word nor our duties to the church. It is never right to sin in the name of resting a tired mind or body. We cannot allow recreational needs to encroach upon God’s part of our material wealth. We should always be on guard lest worldly friends turn our hearts away from God (I Cor.15:33).

5. Christians want to be **Holy in Their Habits**. Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit which is in us. We are thus expected to glorify God in our bodies (I Cor. 6:19-20). All that we do must be to God’s glory (I Cor. 10:31). We should carefully watch our eating habits for gluttony is to be avoided (Prov. 23:21), tobacco, alcoholic beverages and illicit drugs fail in this respect. In this connection it is appropriate to mention habits of promptness, diligence, courtesy, cleanliness and a multitude of daily deeds. The way we behave ourselves will either cause men to glorify the Father or to reject him (Matt. 5:16).

6. We must be **Holy in Moral Conduct**. “Be not deceived, neither fornicators nor idolaters, nor adulteress, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men (homosexuals), nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God” (I Cor. 6:9-10). We are expected to keep ourselves pure (I Tim. 5:22). We are to abstain from ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world” (Tit. 3:12).

7. There must be **Holiness in Faith**. Christ has revealed God’s will for us in the New Covenant. It will be our standard of judgment in all things (John 12:48). If we “hold the pattern of sound words which was delivered by the apostles we shall be blest” (I Tim. 1:13). If we abide not in the teaching of Christ, we forfeit God’s approval and blessing (II John 9). It does really matter that we correctly understand and subscribe to the true doctrine of Christ!

8. We must be **Holy in Our Worship**. Worship must be in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). It must be sincere and approved by God. “Will-worship” that we originate, or that pleases us, is not accepted by God. (Col. 2:23). He prefers that worship that He himself ordained! We walk by faith, in worship and all spiritual matters (II Cor. 5:7). Since faith comes by hearing the word of Christ (Rom. 10:17), we must worship as the New Testament instructs. We use God’s divine measuring reed to measure the temple (church) the altar (worship) and the worshipers (Rev. 11:1). It is our duty to conform to His desires.

9. We need **Holiness in Christian Service**. “God expects us to do good “and “ be rich in good works,” “ready to distribute willing to communicate.” In so doing we “lay up in store.....a good foundation against the time to come.....” (I Tim. 6:17-18). Christians, by their very nature, should be “zealous of good works” (Tit. 3:14). Faithful disciples understand that faith apart from works is dead (Jas. 2:26).

May every soul that claims Christ as Lord cleanse himself of all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God (II Cor. 7:1).

TO BE A SPIRITUAL PERSON

Christ is set before every Christian as the goal toward which we strive. The more we grow to be like Christ, the more "spiritual" we become. One can be a Christian and yet not be "spiritual." Such was the plight of the Corinthians (I Cor. 3:1). Hopefully the thoughts of this lesson will help us all grow to be more like Jesus, hence more spiritual men and women.

I. Spirituality is greatly concerned about true values, right attitudes and correct motives. Unfortunately some people engage in religious activities from wrong motives. Pharisees did their righteous deeds to be seen of men (Matt. 6:1). Whatever we do, it must be "to the glory of God," not self (I Cor. 10:31). Even those who preach and teach Christ must be careful lest they do so of envy and strife or other faulty motives (Phil. 1:15-17). The spiritual person follows the path of maximum service and minimal selfishness. He desires "right for the sake of right, truth for the sake of truth, love for love's own sake, honor for honor's sake, humility for the virtue in humility."

II. Spirituality is tested by its comparative interest in temporal and eternal rewards. Temporal rewards are those positions in life which feed pride, give prominence, afford great financial remuneration or otherwise bestow rewards that belong only to the present life. Eternal rewards, on the other hand, look to God and eternity for their fulfillment. Moses gave up temporal rewards of a high station in Egypt and cast his lot with God's people because "he looked to the recompense of reward" which God offered (Heb. 11:24-26). Paul said that he held not his life of any account as dear to himself so that he could accomplish his course and the ministry he had received from Christ (Acts 20:24). His spiritual value system was properly ordered.

III. Spiritual power comes when we weep over our sins and those of others. The greatness of Paul's spiritual strength is seen in the fact that despite all his notable attainments he still felt himself to be "the chief of sinners" (I Tim 1:15). His great heart ached for his fellow Hebrews who were yet in unbelief (Rom. 9:1). He wept for enemies of the cross, rather than despise or hate them (Phil. 3:17-19). May God give us a tender heart and sensitive conscience.

IV. A spiritual soul is able to judge properly between the most important and less important things. He will then have the courage and strength to choose the right, no matter the difficulties involved or the consequences thereof. He knows that one soul is more precious than the whole world (Mark 8:36-37). To be spiritual, one's education, career, profession, and hobbies must be kept in proper perspective.

V. A spiritual person is faithful to a trust. Along with Paul, the gospel of God is committed to our trust (I Tim. 1:11). Jesus said that he that is faithful in little is faithful in much (Luke 16:10). If you would be spiritual, whether you teach a nursery class or the adults, whether you clean the building or serve as treasurer, you must be faithful to that

trust.

VI. Spirituality is measured by the readiness with which we judge others and the manner in which those judgments are expressed. This includes our attitude toward teachers, elders, preachers and fellow Christians. A carnal mind judges all men to be untrustworthy until they prove themselves worthy. Those who are spiritual count all men honorable until they prove themselves otherwise. A spiritual heart expresses its criticisms like a gentle nurse (I Thess. 2:7). The worldly heart is harsh and thoughtless. The spiritual heart "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things" (I Cor. 13:7). The spiritual man dispenses judgement to others in the way he would want to be judged (Matt. 7:12). He always seeks to "judge righteous judgement" (John 7:24). A spiritual soul is careful in the use of "loaded words" such as "liberal," "heretic," "extremist," "soft," "narrow." Such words have no precise meaning. They convey a different message to every hearer. In a mixed group, most any Christian could be called by all of these terms. The spiritual person prefers to use Biblical terminology in order to express himself in a non-prejudicial way. He measures his words so that they "may give grace to them that hear" (Eph. 4:29).

VII. Some things that will help us grow spiritually. We grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ by reading spiritual literature (II Pet. 3:18). First in priority is the reading of God's Word. Read it daily, systematically and purposefully. Read good devotional books. Among those volumes that have been helpful to spiritual growth over the years are: John Bunyan's **Pilgrim's Progress**, **The Imitation of Christ** by Thomas A Kempis; **Holy Living** by Jeremy Taylor, and **The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul** by Philip Doddridge. We will grow by taking time to mediate upon God's word (Ps. 1:2; 4:4). Like Paul we need to set spiritual goals and work towards attaining them. A good goal is to be more like Christ in word, thought and deed (Phil. 3:16). Honest self-examination is a vital necessity if we are to develop spiritually. The Corinthians needed this and so do we (II Cor. 13:5). Self examination will help us be more patient with the shortcomings of others (Matt. 7:3-5). We need to confess our sins (Jas. 5:16). Those who would instruct others especially need to purge their hearts regularly lest their sins neutralize their message. A proud impenitent heart can not lead students in the paths of righteousness. Frequent prayer should adorn the life of every Christian (I Thess 5:17). If the Son of God needed lengthy seasons of prayer with his Father, how much more do we frail sinners need such? (Luke 6:17). Spiritual souls will associate with those of like precious faith. They will be drawn together by common interests and desires. They will seek the strength other righteous souls can supply. They will want to reciprocate (Heb. 10:24-25). Let every Christian ponder this question: "If Paul wrote me today, would he address me as a spiritual disciple or as carnal?" Should your answer be the latter, will you not take active steps to correct your status.

"O to be like thee, blessed Redeemer, This is my constant longing and prayer."

123.

CHRISTIANS AND THE WICKED WORLD

God's people live by a different standard than sinners of the world. We meet and solve our problems in a different way. Scripture provides guidance in every area of life, including how to get along with hostile people. In Romans 12:17-13:14, Paul discusses this very problem. In our text we see:

I. **The Divine Plea:** "If it be possible, as much as in you lieth, be at peace with all men" (Rom. 12:18). We must love all men with *agape* love that wishes them only good and treats them as we would be treated. Jesus taught, "Love your enemies and pray for them that persecute you..." (Matt. 5:44). We must be willing to go the second mile with

those who are difficult to deal with (Matt. 5:41-42). We must learn to respond to their hatefulness by turning the other cheek (Matt. 5:38-39). The love of Christ within us will cover a multitude of sins and aggravations for which others might feel constrained to retaliate (I Peter 4:8). In all things we must show ourselves an example of good works...that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed (Tit. 2:7-8). If our enemy is hungry, we feed him: if he thirst, we give him drink...for in doing so (we) shall heap coals of fire upon his head. Rather than be overcome with evil, we "overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:20-21).

II. The Divine Prohibition: "Render to no man evil for evil" (Rom. 12:17). We are not allowed to avenge ourselves, rather we allow God to take care of rewarding our adversaries, for it is written "vengeance belongeth unto me: I will recompense, saith the Lord (Rom. 13:19). We are to pray for our enemies (Matt. 5:44). We must do them good (Rom. 12:20-21). While unbelievers scoff at this code, seasoned Christians know it works. An old brother told of a debate he attended many years ago between Bro. A G Freed and a Methodist minister named Pigg. Seeing Freed obviously winning the contest and stinging from his polemical blows, Mr. Pigg challenged Freed to step outside the tent and fight him. Bro. Freed, distinguished for his genteel manners and pious spirit, responded, "no, elder Pigg, I will not fight you, but I will pray for you." The audience was repulsed at Pigg's boorish attitude and applauded Bro. Freed. Most of us have experienced or seen similar demonstrations of this principle.

III. The Divine Promise: "I will recompense saith the Lord" (Rom. 12:9). Moses taught Israel, "For he (God) will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries" (Deut. 32:43). The writer of Hebrews reminds us of God's promise, "I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee." He then exults, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear: What shall man do unto me?" (Heb. 13:5b-6). He gives us grace and strength to endure every hardship. When this is understood we can say with Paul, "Wherefore I take pleasure in weakness, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distress, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (II Cor. 12:10). We see this great lesson set forth and amplified in the Revelation where martyred saints are asking God, "How long, O Master...dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (Rev. 6:9-10). In chapters 19 and 20 we see all those persecuting enemies destroyed and those martyrs reigning with Christ a thousand years (20:4-5). Their question reminds us of the lines of the poet, "Though the wheels of God's justice turn exceedingly slow, they grind exceedingly small."

IV. The Divine Procedure: "Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers: for there is no power but of God; and the powers that be are ordained of God...For rulers are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil...for he is a minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do which is evil, be afraid...for he is a minister of God, and avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil" (Rom. 13:1-4). Thus the Christian allows God to avenge his enemies, which is done by means of civil government with its law enforcement and courts. God ordained civil government for the stability of society and the protection of his people.

It is a religious duty of Christians to be respectful, law-abiding citizens. We do so for practical reasons. Rulers have the right and power to punish the lawless and rebellious (Rom. 13:3-4). Beyond that, we submit "for conscience sake" (Rom. 13:5). To refuse to do so would be sin against God! Scripture charges us to "be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake" (I Peter 2:13-14). Such silences the criticism raised against us by our enemies. We gladly pay our taxes for the support of God's "avenger" and give "honor to whom honor is due" (Rom. 13:6-7).

We are not, however, obligated to obey government without reservation. Whenever their laws conflict, we way with the apostles that, "we must obey God rather than man" (Acts 5:29).

Christians should not hesitate to call upon the law-enforcement arm of government when evil people become a serious problem to them. Paul did this when the Roman captain would have scourged him (Acts 22:25-29). He did the same when governor Festus would have turned him over to the Jews for certain death (Acts 25:10-11).

We should daily offer supplications, prayers, intercessions (and) thanksgivings...for kings and all that are in high places; that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity (I Tim. 2:1-2). With Divine help we can live at peace in a wicked world. Through Christ we will be more than conquers with every hostile foe (Rom. 8:37).

* The central ideas of this lesson came from V P Black.

124.

THE SPIRIT OF GOD AND THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD

Two antagonistic spirits or forces are at work in the human race. There is the spirit of God and the spirit of the world. The former of these spirits reflects the will of God for humanity and is set forth for us in the Bible. The latter reflects the will of Satan, the great arch-enemy of the Creator. It is set forth in the various philosophies of men that have arisen through the ages, all of which were antagonistic to the will of the Father. This great conflict is seen in the early chapters of Genesis. God had provided for his children a paradisaical home where they might live in peace and happiness and serve him. Satan immediately set about to seduce the first couple and lead them to disobey their benevolent Creator. He succeeded and brought death and destruction upon them and their offspring (Gen. 3:1-24). We suffer the consequences thereof to this day.

Every person born on earth and reaching accountability has experienced this conflict as the Spirit of God has sought to induce him to faithful obedience and the spirit of the world has pulled him in the opposite direction (Rom. 7:18-23). The importance of this study is seen in the fact that the world-view we hold will of necessity be reflected in our view of life, our values, ethics and behavior. If the spirit of the world dominates our thinking then we will in all these areas be at odds with God. If the spirit that guides us is God's, then we will be found doing our best to please him in all things.

* **The world view of Christianity** begins with a personal God who is omniscient, omnipotent and omnibenevolent (Gen. 1:1).

*It insists that God created the cosmos with a purpose in mind.

*That man is created in God's image and therefore of infinite value. Hence all human life is sacred and must be honored, respected and protected (Gen. 1:27, 9:6).

* It says that God established a moral order, determining for us that which is right and that which is wrong (Ex, 20:1-17).

* It affirms that basic moral principles are absolute and unchanging just as is their Author (Mal. 3:6). This view acknowledges that man has freedom of will and is accountable for his decisions and conduct (Josh. 24:15).

* It understands that God has communicated his will to humanity in an objective, written form. That book, the Bible is divinely inspired and inerrant and reflects the perfection of its Author (Deut. 4:1-2; II Tim. 3:16).

* The Christian world view says man is responsible to live by that book (the Bible) and every failure to do so is sin (Jas. 4:17; I John 3:4; John 12:48).

* Because of his great love for humanity, God sent his only Son to rescue us from our sins (John 3:16). Only those who put their faith and trust in Jesus and obey his will can be saved (John 8:24; Heb. 5:9).

* God has prepared an eternal abode as a reward for those who faithfully serve him and a place of eternal punishment for those who live and die in disobedience (Matt. 25:46).

The Spirit of the World excludes God. It sees no purpose in life and history. It tends to deny the reality of sin and evil, viewing them as illusions or superstitious taboos. The spirit of the world acknowledges no absolute right or wrong. All is relative, depending on the person, the society, the age in which he lives, the circumstances and the event. Those led by the spirit of the world always subscribe to some variety of evolution to explain the origin and diversity of life and the progress evident in the world. They clamor for personal autonomy and freedom to do as they wish without restraint.

*The Spirit of the World is in rebellion to God. It denies His existence, His authority over them and His book (Ps. 14:1).

* The Spirit of the World is the spirit of Satan. He is the god of this world (II Cor. 4:4) and the prince of this world (John 12:31). He blinds humanity to the will of God (II Cor. 4:3-4). The population of the whole world now belongs to him, save for that remnant that have given their lives to Christ.

* The Spirit of the World is anti-God, anti-Christ, anti-Scripture and anti-Christian. The world does not know God (John 17:25), nor does it understand or appreciate His way (I Cor. 1:21).

* The World hated Christ (John 7:7) and still does because Jesus opposed the world, its beliefs, its lifestyle and its agenda. It hated his purity and goodness. It hated his claims to divinity.

* The Spirit of the World hates the Bible and makes continual war on it. It denies its truthfulness, corrupts its message, rejects its authority and seeks to limit its circulation.

* The World hates Christ's church. It can tolerate a church that subscribes to its worldly spirit, but not one that is loyal to Christ. It can tolerate any religion other than Christianity, since by definition they are at odds with the Creator and founder of the church of Christ.

* The World hates Christ's people (John 17:14). It hates us because we are different from the world (I Pet. 4:4). We remind them of their wickedness, God's Law which they spurn and the coming judgement of the world. For this the world despises us (I Cor. 4:12b-13). The spirit of the World often persecutes Christians (John 15:20).

The world spirit that dominates our age is called **Postmodernism**. It is a human philosophy that competes with the Spirit of Christ for the hearts and minds of humanity. It is doubly dangerous because it has gained dominance in the world of academia and is exerting its baleful influence on one children from college to elementary school. It enters our homes by means of television, books, journals and newspapers. It has found its way into the church and is corrupting the faith of many. It is the taproot of the change movement. Its adherents claim to be friends of Jesus and champions of His church, but the spirit that drives them is malevolent and can only do harm to the Cause for which the Savior died. To this world spirit we must say, No!

Christians and the World.

Having saved us, our Lord chose to leave us in the world for the duration of our lives. While here, we have a mission: to be salt, leaven and light to the world (Matt. 5:13-16), to preach the saving gospel to the world (Mk. 16:15), snatching its victims from the fire (Jude 23). We are to live in such a way that the world will see Christ at work in our lives (Col.1:27). We must resist the pull of the world and work to defeat the spirit of the world (Eph. 6:10-13). In its place we must labor to expand the borders of Christ's kingdom (Matt. 6:10). Although we endure much hostility and even persecution from the world, we take comfort in the fact that the saints shall judge the world

(I Cor. 6:2). When this world is dust and ashes, we will be living in a new heavens and new earth with our Savior (Rev. 2:1-4). The world will pass away and the lusts thereof, but he that doth the will of the Father shall live forever (I John 2:15).

125.

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Throughout the epistles of Paul and in John's Revelation we find metaphors depicting the followers of Christ as soldiers locked in a titan struggle with the Devil and his agents. Too many contemporary Christians have failed to understand this aspect of their discipleship. They imagine themselves to be civilians in a neutral nation with no interest in anything resembling a conflict. This misconception has weakened the church and rendered such members virtually useless. It is time to look again at who and what we are and what is it we are about!

* Christ is a conquering king, at the head of a great army (Rev. 10:11-16). Our king's powerful weapon is the sword of truth which proceeds from his mouth (19:15). This symbolizes the message he has given us (Heb. 4:12). His troops are arrayed in white robes, symbolic of their purity. His message of truth will conquer and subdue the nations of the world (19:15).

* Every Christian is expected to serve in the army of our king. We must engage in the good fight of the faith if we want to receive eternal life (I Tim. 6:12)

* We have a cruel and oppressive enemy, Satan, who must be resisted and driven back (I Pet. 5:8).

* Satan has in his service a vast army, committed to his cause and hostile to our Lord. His dominion is vast. The whole world lieth in the evil one (I John 5:19). Hosts of wicked spirits serve at his command (Eph. 6:12).

* Our warfare is not carnal as are the wars of nations. Our weapons do not include, guns, bombs and missiles, planes, tanks nor ships. "The weapons on our warfare are not of the flesh, but (they are) mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds (fortresses)...and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (II Cor. 10:3-5).

* Ours is a war of ideas and doctrines. It is a struggle for the minds and hearts of humanity.

* Paul clearly states that our "wrestling is not against flesh and blood" (Eph. 6:12). Rather than harm our enemies, we are taught to pray for them (Matt. 5:43-44) and do them good (Rom. 12:19-20).

* For our battle, our king provides us with suitable armor, both defensive and offensive. There is the belt of truth and the breastplate of righteousness. For our shoes we have the gospel of peace. The shield of faith and the helmet of salvation complete our body armor. To strengthen all of the above we have prayer (Eph. 6:13-18). For our weapon, we have the mighty sword of the Spirit which is the word of God (6:17).

* Our mission is to set the captives free (Luke 4:18) by preaching the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15). It is to deliver them from Satan's dominion (Rom. 6:17) and see them safely translated into the kingdom of Christ (Col. 1:13). We labor to see God's will done on earth as it is in heaven (Matt. 6:10).

* Our Lord's kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). It is a spiritual kingdom made up of men and women whose hearts and minds are devoted to Christ (Luke 17:21). We seek no political, territorial or commercial control or power; only the hearts of those made in the image of God (II Cor. 10:3-6).

* The victory of Christ's army brings no destruction, suffering or ruin. Those liberated by him are inspired and encouraged to do that which is good to all men (Gal. 6:10). Where His truth prevails men embrace peace and learn

the ways of war no more (Mic. 4:3). Those subject to Jesus neither kill, steal or oppress their neighbors. Personal peace that passes understanding is the consequence of his rule in their lives (Phil. 4:7).

* The consequences of our conflict are eternal in nature. Yes, there are blessings here, but "in the world to come we will receive a crown of life (Mark 10:30; Rev. 2:10) and everlasting citizenship in the homeland of our king (Phil. 3:20). There, all of his faithful soldiers will live with their King and celebrate with him throughout eternity (Rev. 19:9; 21:3-4).

Are you ready to volunteer for the army of the King of Kings and participate in this great struggle for truth and righteousness? An honorable place of service in his ranks awaits you.

126.

MATERIALISM

Jesus taught us that "the care of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful" (Matt. 13:22). One of man's greatest challenges is to be master of his material things, to use them to God's glory rather than to allow them to master his life and turn him away from God. "If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him"(I John 2:15). All who have tried, know that we cannot serve God and Mammon (Matt. 6:24).

POSSESSIONS ARE NOT INHERENTLY EVIL

Material possessions are innocent and of themselves. It is only when they usurp God's place in our lives that they become sinful. God reminds us that "the cattle on a thousand hills" are his (Ps. 50:10-12). Surely it is not sinful for us to own such. It is God who sends us every good and perfect gift (Jas. 1:17). It is not the money but the inordinate desire (love) for it that is the root of all kinds of evil (I Tim. 6:10).

THE LOVE OF MONEY IS DESTRUCTIVE

We need to be reminded what the obsessive love of material things can do to our souls. Paul warns that it will lead us astray from God and pierce us through with many sorrows (I Tim. 6:8-10). Furthermore, he adds, that it is a root of all kinds of evil. In Matthew 13:22, Jesus warned that materialism chokes the word of God out of our lives, leaving us unfruitful to God. The love of this world made Demas forsake the Lord (II Tim. 4:10). The same thing led Israel to forsake Jehovah once they had settled in Palestine (Deut. 32:15). Materialistic Christians in Laodicea were wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked in the Lord's eyes (Rev. 3:17). Their trust in material possessions made them feel self-sufficient, and gendered a false security in their hearts. It was materialism that caused Balaam, the prophet, to sell his soul to Balak, king of Moab (Num. 22:6). The Hebrew pilgrims, just recently escaped from Egyptian slavery, were willing to give up their freedom and return to captivity for material comforts (Num. 11:4-6).

SOME SINS OF MATERIALISM

There are many sins that flow directly from the well of materialism. There are sins against God. When men pursue riches and earthly pleasures they often neglect the study of God's word and prayer. This in itself further weakens them spiritually. Working more and longer hours for gain, they begin to neglect the church, its services and activities (Heb.10:25-26). Ere long this neglect of God and his kingdom inevitably leads them to desert God altogether. All of us have seen this deadly pattern at work.

Materialism makes one sin against his family. Some couples are so busy making money with which to acquire things that they do not have time or energy to devote to their mates. In some cases wives work days, husbands work nights and hired help raises the kids. How tragic. Many dads are too busy making money to enjoy their kids much less train them in God's ways (Eph. 6:4). Youngsters from such homes are often maladjusted, or unruly. Some are resentful and rebellious. At best they are deprived and suffer. What has a man profited if he brings in \$800.00 per week but loses his wife or children? What would he give in exchange for his family?

One of the more obvious examples of materialism is neglect of aged parents. Their children are too busy, enjoying the good life which money buys, to open their homes to mom or dad. There just isn't time to visit the folks after they have gone boating on the weekend. Only when death has solved the problem does the guilt set in.

Some folks shame their family, their Christian brethren and Christ by dishonesty in their mad search for wealth.

Then there are sins against self caused by materialism. Many a man has ruined his health while grasping for wealth. The Creator plainly tells us that all need a weekly day of rest from labor (Deut. 5:12-15). How tragic to see a man drive himself till he is rich enough to eat steak but by then his stomach is so affected with ulcers so that he cannot stand to eat it. We sin against self when we violate God's code of honesty and truthfulness thus robbing ourselves of peace with God and eternal life (I Cor. 6:9-10).

The materialist sins against his fellow man if he is driven to cheat his customers, employers or employees in his quest for money. Some have even been known to be dishonest with relatives and friends for money's sake. May God have mercy on such souls.

SUGGESTIONS FOR OVERCOMING MATERIALISM

To deal with any problem we must understand the true nature of it. Materialism is not being a hard worker. This God commands and commends (II Thess. 3:10-12). It is not having a conscientious attitude toward our job or career. We are instructed to work "as unto the Lord" (Col. 3:23). Making money, even lots of it, is not materialism. Paul urges us to work so we can have abundance enough to help others (Eph. 4:28). It is not wrong to own property and have nice possessions. Job and Abraham were wealthy, propertied men, yet well pleasing to God.

What then is the sin of materialism? It is a sinful attitude toward the things of this world that God condemns. It is the attitude of getting wealth and things at any cost. It is selfishness rather than sharing the wealth we have. It is indulging self in material things and pleasures while neglecting more important spiritual matters. Materialism is allowing Mammon, the god of riches, to usurp God's place in our lives (Matt. 16:24). It means trusting wealth rather than God to solve life's problems and make us secure.

We must recognize the danger and folly of materialism. Material wealth and possessions can never satisfy the deeper inner needs of man. Solomon learned this in a painful way (Eccle. 2:4-11). We should learn by his experience.

We must learn to view all material things as a stewardship from God. Christians use their material things to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31). We should generously support his kingdom, the church (1 I Cor. 16:1-2). We must be eager to contribute to the spread of the gospel in mission fields (Phil. 1:5). We should want to help the poor (Jas. 1:27). To sum it up we should always be ready unto every good work (Tit. 3:14). It is said that the late Brother A. M. Burton, founder of the Life and Casualty Insurance Company of Tennessee, gave away 90% of his earnings and kept 10% for himself. Let us daily pray that God will help us to possess our possessions.

WE MUST BE FRUITFUL FOR CHRIST

In the parable of the barren fig tree, the owner was determined to cut it down because it bore no fruit for three years (Luke 13:6-9). He had planted that tree for a purpose- he wanted figs and expected the tree to produce them. The tree was not there for ornamental purposes. It had no natural rights or claim to a place on the man's property. Being fruitless it forfeited its right to be there.

In like manner Christ has appointed us, that we should go and bear fruit, and that our fruit should abide (John 15:16). In the allegory of the true vine Jesus taught that "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh it away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he cleanseth it, that it may bear more fruit" (John 15:2).

Without dispute every Christian must bear fruit for Jesus. The question is, just what is the nature of that fruit? Some among us teach that the fruit which God demands is bringing souls to Christ. While no one would question that to be a part of our fruit, it is certainly not all.

We are expected to bear "**the fruits of righteousness** which are through Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." (Phil. 1:11). Righteousness means "right-doing." James reminds us that "the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace, for them that make peace" (Jas. 3:18). A hostile, factious person can never bear the fruit of righteousness. That fruit comes from the blessed peace makers (Matthew 5:9). When we live faithfully as Christians, walking in the light of God's word and doing right, we are bearing a desired fruit for our Master!

We must yield the fruit of a sanctified and holy life for Christ. Paul writes. "But now being made free from sin and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end eternal life" (Rom. 6:22).

Without sanctification or holiness, no man will see God (Hebrews 12:14). Since we have promise of heaven before us, we must "cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." (II Cor. 7:1). That humble disciple whose only achievement is a pure and godly life is not without fruit for God. Without this fruit all the other accomplishments would not matter.

Every true Christian will bear the fruit of the Spirit in his Life: "love, joy, peace, long suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control..." (Gal. 5:22-23). A careful look indicates that these fruits are all aspects of one's personality. They are attitudes that are expected of us as Christians that will affect every level of conduct whether public or private. To successfully and consistently yield these fruits one must have the Spirit of God in his heart. Paul argues "they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you" (Rom. 8:8-9). The indwelling Holy Spirit will also help us to mortify the sinful deed of the body (Rom. 8:13). In fact if one does not have the Spirit of Christ within, he does not even belong to Christ! (Romans 8:9). As the rising spring sap causes the sleepy tree of winter to burst forth in bloom and later to bear its fruit, so God's Spirit causes us to be fruitful for the Father.

We offer up the fruit of our lips in our worship to God. The Hebrew writer exhorts us "through him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to his name" (Heb. 13:15). In our songs and prayers of public and private worship we are being fruitful Christians. Conversely, a prayer less, praise-less Christian is like a barren tree.

Paul prayed that brethren would bear "fruit in every good work and increase in the knowledge of God" (Colossians 1:1). We must be zealous of good works done for God (Tit. 2:14) and maintain them with our involvement and

financial support (Tit. 3:14). A man may not have the capacity to bear all these fruits in the same degree. One man's greatest talent may be to support good works done by other. Yet he is bearing fruit for Christ.

Teaching the lost and bringing them to the Lord is a fruit we should bear. Paul longed to travel to Rome "that (he) might have some fruit in (them) even as in the rest of the Gentiles." Later he wrote reminding the saints that they were married or "joined to another, even to him who was raised from the dead (Jesus) that (they) might bring forth fruit unto God" (Rom. 7:4). Like Legion, from whom the Lord cast out the demon, we need to go and tell family and friends "how great things the Lord hath done for (us) and how he had mercy on (us)" (Mark 5:19).

Some in their zeal for training soul-winners have mistakenly taught that converting the lost is the only fruit acceptable to God. While it is important, it is not the only fruit expected of us. It is wrong to lay a burden of guilt on a brother or sister who is not successful as a soul-winner. Talents, training and opportunities differ for all. What is needed is exhortation that urges each disciple to bear all the fruit of whatever kind he is capable of. We do not rebuke a vine for yielding no apples. If it yields no grapes that is a different matter.

Nature teaches us that vines and trees must be pruned regularly if they are to be fruitful. All hindrances to fruit-bearing must be removed (John 15:2). So must we purge from our lives any and all thing that hinder our service to Christ; be they bad habits, desires, actions or companions. Sometimes a favorite recreation, past-time or job must be renounced if they interfere with our purpose for being. The fig tree in the parable was planted in order to bear fruit for husbandman. So Christ has saved us to glorify his name in the fruit we bear (John 15:8).

The reward of fruit-bearing are eternal and glorious-a home with God in heaven (John 14:2-3).

128.

RELIGIOUS LIBERALISM IS NOT THE RELIGION OF JESUS

The word "liberalism" is often used to describe the teaching of those who trouble the Lord's church. Some are confused as to just what the term means. The word takes on different shades of meaning when used by different religious bodies. For example a liberal among us would probably be a conservative among Episcopalians or Methodists. A conservative Catholic would be a liberal among us. Even among our own brethren the word is used with different shades of meaning. It would mean something quite different to a change agent who teaches in a Christian University than to the preacher who is struggling to build a local congregation. This article will seek to clarify the meaning of liberalism as used among our brethren in this present generation.

What Liberalism Is Not:

* It is not the use of newer or different translations of the Bible. All translations are the products of uninspired men. They vary in quality. Each has strengths and weaknesses. One can use a different translation and still be faithful to Christ.

* It is not just a different interpretation or understanding of a verse or section of Scripture. Every student of the Bible will occasionally find a new understanding of some portion of Scripture.

* It is not just a new or different idea we have not previously heard or held. None of us have fully mastered every thing in God's Word. All will on occasion find that he had misunderstood something of God's message.

* It is not just the questioning of some fondly held view. God wants us to prove all things and hold fast that which is good (I Thess. 5:21). Like the Bereans we should always be ready to search the Scriptures to see if a teaching is true (Acts 17:11).

* It is not just trying to honestly understand our past history. Much of what is repeated by word of mouth becomes distorted or embellished. To seek out the facts of what our forefathers did and believed is a noble endeavor.

* It is not just using words or expressions unfamiliar to us. Anyone who has traveled among our churches in other nations knows there are dozens of ways to express a commonly held truth. The same is true here at home, although we don't always understand that.

* It is not just doing the things relating to our faith and worship in a different manor or way than we are use to. For example when we pray we might kneel, or sit or stand, bow with our face to the ground or lift up holy hands and be praying in an acceptable manner so long as we petition the Father through Christ the one mediator (I Tim. 2:5). There are numerous ways to participate in the Lord's Supper; but so long as we gather on the first day of the week and partake of the bread and fruit of the vine in memory of the Savior's death, we have properly obeyed God.

Rather, Liberalism is:

* A lack of respect for the complete and final authority of the Word of God which Jesus said will judge us in the last day (John 12:48).

* It is a rejection of what the Bible claims for itself. God calls his book, a "pattern of sound words" (II Tim. 1:13). Liberals vehemently deny this truth.

* It is a willingness to take liberties with the sacred things of God. It is a lack of love and respect for the church as the sacred body and bride of Christ (Eph. 1:21-22; 5:23-25). It holds no honor for the doctrines with which Christ adorned his bride.

* It is a spirit that despises its brethren and that disparages great Christian leaders of the past. It treats with contempt those disciples who do not share their elitist views.

* It is a desire to be something other than a simple New Testament Christians.

* It is a longing to be like the world, to find acceptance with denominational scholars, schools and leaders. It embarrassed by the exclusiveness of the Master's teaching.

* It is a willingness to exalt ones own opinions, ideas and feelings above the sacred Word of Christ.

* It is a spirit of deception; pretending to be faithful members of the church of Christ, when in the secret recesses of their hearts they know such is not the case.

* Rather than strengthening Christians and building up the church, liberalism erodes faith and undermines the kingdom of Christ.

This brief portraiture of a liberal is also an apt description of the change agents at work among us. They espouse and practice all the points mentioned above. For this reason they should be rejected even as all other liberals are rejected.

129.

LEGALISM IS A DISTORTION OF CHRISTIANITY

The liberal mind tries to equate a conservative approach to serving Christ with legalism. This is a false equation and is intended to discredit that large body of Christians who are not legalistic nor are they willing to accept the faulty leadership of liberal teachers. Conservative Christians desire to follow Christ, worshiping and serving him as the Scripture directs. Both liberalism and legalism are distortions of true Christianity. The one ignores the boundaries and

truths given in Scripture. The other feels they are inadequate and thus they must make additional rules and strictly enforce them. Much has been written about the dangerous error of liberalism, less has been said about the equal dangers of legalism. Yet the church has suffered much at the hands of each of these extremes.

Fearing liberalism, some are tempted to run to the opposite extreme. They reason that the further away from liberalism they station themselves, the safer they are. The flaw in this thinking can be seen if you imagine a driver who is fearful of running off the road on his right, so he drives in the opposite lane and either runs into the opposite ditch or crashes into another vehicle. The safe path is the middle of his assigned traffic lane.

* Legalism fails to appreciate and respect our freedom in Christ (Gal. 5:1). No man has the right to rob another of his freedom. Each is free to serve God according to the revealed Word of God without harassment from his neighbor.

* It fails to respect Christ as the only law-giver and judge for his church (Jas. 4:12). Thus Paul asks, "Who art thou that judges the servant of another? To his own lord he standeth or falleth" (Rom. 14:4).

* Legalism is generally void of the brotherly spirit Christ expects of his disciples (I Pet. 2:17). Bitterness toward non-conforming Christians is a common trait among legalists.

* Many legalists are arrogant toward brethren who do not accept their conclusions (Prov. 8:12-13). They view and treat them with contempt and declare them unworthy disciples.

* Legalism tends to be heartless toward those not within its circle of friends. The kindness and helpfulness of many legalists are limited to their tribe. Christ's way is to do good to all men (Gal. 6:10).

* Legalism is often divisive. The trail of congregations shattered by legalistic preachers and elders is legion.

* Legalists tend to be myopic, concentrating on minutia rather than the larger program of Christ.

* They tend to spend much time examining the faith and practice of others rather than tending the flock of God that is among them (I Pet. 5:2).

* Legalists are commonly found to be negative, more concerned with "thou shalt not's" than with "thou shalt's."

* They are often found to be pessimistic rather than optimistic and triumphal.

* Legalism commonly results in paralyzed faith. They are like the unfaithful steward who was afraid to act decisively and hid his Master's possession in the ground. Remember the fearful steward was condemned (Matt. 25:25-26).

* Many legalists see their mission to be to keep sinners out of the kingdom and to purge out imperfect disciples who are not compliant with their standards. They think by so doing they are doing a service to Christ who said preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15) and in the Parable of the Tares told over zealous workers that he would see to the weeding out of the tares (Matt. 13:25-41).

A wise man knows that neither an individual, a congregation nor the brotherhood will prosper as they should if the spirit of legalism prevails in them.

WORSHIP

130.

MAN, THE WORSHIPING CREATURE

Of the several characteristics and traits that distinguish man from the other creatures, worship is one of the most pronounced. In every culture in every age, most men have worshiped something. In their ignorance, the proud Athenians worshiped the unknown God (Acts 17:23). Even the atheistic humanist Auguste Comte proposed a Religion of Humanity complete with his own suggestion for sacraments, saints and rituals... "Another unbeliever wrote, "Religion of some sort is probably necessary... Instead of worshiping supernatural rulers, it will sanctify the higher manifestations of human nature in art and love..." (Julian Huxley ed. **The Humanist Frame**, London, George Allen and Urwin Ltd. 1961, p. 44). A few years ago I read of a government newspaper editorial in Russia exhorting the masses not to adore the statues of Lenin.

Why is man incurably religious? Solomon writes that God "hath set eternity in their hearts" (Ecclesiastes 3:11a). The Creator made man to worship and serve him. Although most men are living in rebellion to Jehovah, they cannot escape their need to adore something or someone greater and more powerful than themselves.

REVEALED WORSHIP

The God who made man as he is did not leave his need for worship unfulfilled. He revealed himself to the human family. In Eden he came down and talked with them (Genesis 3:8-21). The created universe helps man to perceive God's power and divinity (Romans 1:20). While nature can inspire us to worship, it can never tell us how to worship. God revealed his will for worship through divinely guided prophets who spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (II Peter 1:21). The ancient Hebrews were taught to worship by the Law of Moses (Deuteronomy 6:4, 13). The details of acceptable worship were spelled out for them in the Old Testament. Christians are under the New Testament of Jesus (John 12:47). Their worship is based on the commands of Christ and his apostles (Matthew 28:18-20). The reader should note that Christian worship is not the same as the Hebrew's worship. In both cases worshipers were warned against adding to or taking from God's directions (Deuteronomy 4:2; Revelation 22:18-20).

Our worship is not optional. Jesus commands that we **must** worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). If we would please God and hope to live in eternal bliss, we will worship as he directs.

While most everyone has worshiped at some time, not all have thought out a definition for the term. Our English word "worship" means **worthship** and suggests the worthiness of the person who receives special honor (**Baker's Dictionary of Theology**, p. 560). In the Hebrew and Greek tongues in which the Scriptures were first written, two thoughts are reflected in worship: 1. to serve, to render religious service; 2. to adore, to show reverence to (**Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words** p. 235-236). Under the Old Law, worship consisted of elaborate rituals, tied to a magnificent temple and professional priesthood. Such a system made its primary appeal to the physical senses.

Under Christ, our worship is "in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). Christian worship is simple and unpretentious and may be offered to God anywhere. It's entire appeal is to the heart. Paul the apostle argues that the old system was taken away at the cross and we Christians should not feel bound to follow it (Colossians 2:14-18). In our public worship we are to adore the Father and his Holy Son in our songs, prayers, gifts and communion. In our daily life we serve him joyfully.

DIFFERENT KINDS OF WORSHIP

All worship is not acceptable to the great Jehovah. He speaks of **vain worship** (Matthew 15:9). **Vain** suggests, emptiness, worthlessness. Some **worship in ignorance** (Acts 17:23). Such are exhorted to know and serve the true God through Jesus. There is an acceptable worship that is offered "**in spirit and in truth**" (John 3:24). God actively seeks for men to worship in this fashion (John 4:23). Christ put it plainly in Matthew 7:21 "Not everyone that saith

unto me, Lord, Lord shall enter in the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven." Surely this is true of our worship. Good intentions, a heavenly feeling and general approval of one's fellows is not enough. Worship must be **scriptural**, i.e., according to scripture, to be acceptable.

THE CHURCH AND WORSHIP

The church is God's family of saved people upon the earth. Her primary reason for existence is to worship the Lord. In public assemblies she adores God. In daily activities she serves. We reflect true discipleship and true worship when we "preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15); when we remember the fatherless and the widows in their affliction (James 1:27); and when we work to strength our fellow Christian (Ephesians 4:12).

The God who made man, planted deep within him many powerful urges or drives such as the need for food, shelter, sex, companionship and worship. In all of these cases there is a right and wrong way to fulfill them. May all who love the Lord seek his will for worship in the pages of the New Covenant of Jesus and may we be true worshipers who adore and serve him in spirit and in truth.

131.

THREE DIFFERENT KINDS OF WORSHIP

All men everywhere worship something. Since the beginning, God has appointed three kinds of worship, each with its own peculiar characteristics. First there was what has been called **patriarchal worship**. In that, the family worshiped together with the patriarch or father of the clan leading them. It involved animal sacrifice and prayers and the fathers instructed their families in the ways of Jehovah (Gen. 12:8; 18:19). They had no priesthood, no written revelation or central place to assemble for their worship. This system prevailed from Adam to Moses.

When God delivered the Hebrews from Egyptian bondage he constituted them a nation with their own laws and land. With that he also commissioned a new kind of worship. It has been styled the **Mosaic system** since it was through Moses that God revealed it. This was a national system for the Hebrew people (Deut. 5:1-6). It had a central house of worship for the nation which at first was a portable tabernacle that was carried with them from place to place and eventually was settled in Jerusalem. The tribe of Levi was appointed for the priestly tribe and the family of Aaron the Levite was given the responsibility of all public ministrations. The five books of Moses (the Torah) were its written code of law and these had as their primary basis the Ten Commandments. Their designated day of worship of the Sabbath or seventh day of the week. This system had an elaborate ritual of worship and had at its heart a never-

ending procession of animal sacrifices. The forgiveness and righteousness it offered its adherents was temporary and based upon their keeping God's law in an acceptable fashion. This system separated the Hebrews from their Gentile neighbors and their idolatrous practices. It ended when Christ was crucified (Col. 2:14-16).

When God sent his Son to redeem humanity and to usher in the kingdom of heaven, he ordained a new form of religion and worship suitable for the citizens of that kingdom. This **Christian system** was designed to be universal, for all nations (Matt. 28:19-20). It was to be ruled over by the exalted Son (Eph. 1:20-22). It had but one sacrifice, the life of Jesus given on Calvary, which God accepted as the propitiation for the sins of humanity (I John 2:1-2). In Christ's system all Christians are members of the royal priesthood (I Pet. 2:5,9) and thus qualified to offer up their own sacrifices and offerings to God. Its public worship is centered in the assemblies of Christians (churches) on the Lord's Day (I Cor. 11:20-33; Acts 20:7). It is regulated by the New Testament of Jesus which provides all things that pertain to life and godliness" (II Pet.1:3). Its day of worship is "the Lord's day" or the first day of the week (I Cor. 16:1-2). This system is age lasting, designed to last until time is no more (I Cor. 15:25-27).

There are fundamental differences in Christian worship and that of the Mosaic system. This fact is often overlooked by those of our religious neighbors. That system was based on animal sacrifice, ours on the death of Christ. That system was based on Moses' law, ours on the Law of Christ. That was a system of law-keeping, ours is a system of grace. That system was temporary, but ours is permanent. That was based on race, ours is based on spiritual relations. That was a system of material ritual, while ours is that of spiritual worship (John 4:24). That promised physical, temporal blessings, while ours promises salvation from sin, spiritual blessings and eternal life. That system was inferior to ours in every way (Heb. 8:6-9).

The marvel is that most of the Christian world prefers to go to the Old system for much of their worship and practice, feeling that the New Testament of Christ is too oppressive in its demands. True followers of Christ honor him as the only head of the church (Eph. 1:22) and his New Covenant as the perfect law of liberty (Jas. 1:25). Paul describes those who try to cling to elements of the Old Testament as reverting to the weak and beggarly elements of the world. (Gal. 4:9-11). Christians should rejoice and give thanks daily for the wonderful system we have in Christ.

132.

WORSHIP GOD WITH REVERENCE AND AWE

God has ordained that we worship him (Rev. 22:9). The church exists to praise God and honor his name (Acts 2:47). Our challenge is to worship God in an acceptable manner. Acceptable worship is conditioned on worshipping according to His revealed will (Matt. 7:21), doing what God expects of us in the way he said to do it.

It is just as important that we worship with appropriate reverence and awe (Heb. 12:28). It is always expected that God's creatures show appropriate reverence toward the Creator (Eccl. 12:13). "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified" (Lev. 10:3). This is especially the case when we assemble as his church to worship Him and study his Word.

When we worship, we stand on holy ground in the presence of the great I AM. Remember the story of Moses before the burning bush, when he stood in the presence of God. Jehovah spoke to his servant and reminded him that in His presence, he stood on holy ground. Moses was filled with awe. He hid his face and was afraid to look upon God (Ex. 3:3-5). Similarly it behooves all of us to keep this foremost in our hearts when the time arrives to approach God in

worship. We all should :

* Show respect by our silence. "Be still and know that I am God" (PS. 46:10). "The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him" (Hab. 2:20). Let all chit-chat cease when worship begins.

* Show respect by clearing our minds of all thoughts save those of adoration and praise for God (James 4:8).

* Show respect by listening to and accept the instruction from God's Word (Josh. 3:9; Ps. 119:117).

* Show respect by appropriate solemnity and gravity (Heb. 12:28; Is. 17:7). Worship is no time for cuteness, for flippancy, casualness or comedy. This is important for both those who lead and those who follow in worship and service. This sacred reverence should be reflected in our sermons, our singing, our prayers and communion. It should be evident in our classes as well as our worship hour. We who are adults must teach this truth to our children by instruction and by our godly example.

The reason we must worship God with reverence and awe is because he "is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:28). He is our Creator and Lord. He has the power to kill and make alive, to wound and to heal (Deut. 32:39). He alone has the power to destroy both body and soul in hell (Matt. 10:28). Because Jesus is in our midst when we assemble, we must show proper deference to his majesty (Matt. 18:20). May reverence and awe always and on every occasion be conspicuous in our assemblies for worship and study.

133.

WHEN DISCIPLES GATHER TOGETHER

A congregation is alive and well only when its members care enough to assemble and actively participate in worship, Bible study and its activities. It is strange that some disciples find it difficult to see the value of church attendance. There are good and solid reasons for attending all the services of one's home congregation.

What God's Word Says About the Assembly

The writer of Hebrews says "and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works; not forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another..." (Heb. 10:24-25). Although expressed in hortatory form, this shows us the attitude and purpose of those who were faithful and God's disapproval of those who were forsaking the assemblies. Luke tells us that the newly won disciples in Jerusalem "continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching, and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and prayers" (Acts 2:42). If we would be the kind of Christians they were, we will follow their example of steadfastness.

Christ would have each of us "seek...first his kingdom and his righteousness..." (Matt. 6:33). God demands first place

in our lives and our time. This suggests that we should give priority to God's worship and study occasions. Paul reminds us that Christ died for people who would be "zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14). Would any child of God dare say that worship and Bible study are not good works?

Some may object that attending services is not all there is to being a Christian. This we fully concede. But without faithful participation in the regular gatherings of the church, rarely will a person do other good things for God.

We Attend Service Because of Those Who Are Present

The Lord himself promises to be with us when two or more are gathered together in his name (Matt. 18:20). If he were to be literally present in the flesh we could not keep folks away. The fact that he is present in spirit should also inspire us to want to be there.

Faithful Christians who are our brothers and sisters in the Lord will be present. Because we love the brethren we will be present (I Pet. 2:17). Even as we love to attend family get-togethers and school reunions, so will we eagerly make our way to the place of worship to be with those we love.

Each member present imparts a blessing to all others. Each of the several members of the spiritual body working together in due measure make "the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love" (Eph. 4:16). Granted some bad people may be at the assembly, but they are weak in spite of the church, Bible study and worship, not because of it. Wicked hypocrisy will gain little from the fervent prayers, spiritual singing and inspiring sermons. Really such exercises only add to their misery. But souls who go hungering and thirsting for righteousness shall be filled (Matt. 5:6).

Purposes of Our Assemblies

First of all we worship God our Father, creator, provider and sustainer. We praise Jehovah "in the assembly of the saints" (Ps. 149:1-2). We give him "the glory in the church..."(Eph 3:21). Our hymns are "a sacrifice of praise to God" (Heb. 13:15). We honor Jehovah with our substance and increase as we give (Prov. 3:9).

In our communion, we remember that Jesus died for our salvation (I Cor. 11:23-24). We express to him our love and appreciation for so great a sacrifice.

We assemble to edify our fellow-Christians and to be edified ourselves (I Cor. 14:26). We exhort and are exhorted to be faithful and zealous for our Master (Heb. 10:24-25). We admonish each other in our psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Col. 3:16).

We participate in public worship and study both to teach and be taught. When the saints at Troas assembled they heard a gospel discourse by the apostle Paul (Acts 20:7). The Jerusalem brethren continued steadfastly in the apostle's teaching (Acts 2:42). In our songs we teach and admonish each other (Col. 3:16). Even those who are elders, preachers and teachers thus receive a blessing in worship.

Our attendance at worship prepares and equips us for additional service. Those who teach are to "charge them that are rich in this present world...that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate..."(I Tim. 6:17-18). Our public teachers will instruct us to observe all things whatsoever Christ commanded the apostles to do (Matt. 28:19-20). At worship and Bible study we will learn how "to give answer to every man that asketh (us) a reason concerning the hope that is in (us)..." (I Pet. 3:15).

Our Loyalty In Attendance Is A Lesson To Others

Like Paul we say to others "Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ" i.e. follow my example (I Cor. 11:1). In so doing our light is shining before men and some will be led to glorify the Father (Matt. 5:13-16). More importantly, our families will be led in righteous paths by following us to the Lord's house. Fellow Christians will be

encouraged to be faithful to the Lord's cause. Sinners will note our love and loyalty to God and some will go with us to the house of worship.

People are heard to say, "I would attend worship services if my mate would attend." Do not allow yourself to be someone else's excuse to stay away. Be present! Only then can they follow your example.

When we are present at the assembly we proclaim to all our estimate of the church's worth. That which is important to us gets top attention and priority in our lives. Conversely, we tend to neglect those things which we value little. What does your behavior toward the assemblies of the church suggest?

Personal Benefits From Public Worship

At the services of our congregation we are taught the word of God, whether in Bible classes or by preaching. The knowledge received helps us to grow in grace and knowledge of Jesus (II Pet. 3:18) and unto salvation (I Pet. 2:2). Our senses are excited to discern both good and evil (Heb. 5:14). When we draw nigh unto God in worship he will draw nigh unto us (Jas. 4:8). As we contemplate the suffering Savior and count God's blessings bestowed upon us we learn not to look to our own needs and wishes, but to those of others (Phil. 2:4). Waiting upon Jehovah, our strength is renewed, our weariness fades and we mount up on eagle wings (Is. 40:31).

May we all resolve to live our lives for the Master and never willingly forsake even one gathering of his blessed church. When the doors are open, let us be there with joyful anticipation. With David, let us sing "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go unto the house of Jehovah" (Ps. 122:1).

134.

CHRISTIAN MEMORIALS

All men in every age have built their memorials to commemorate great people and great events in their history. Because we are short of memory and tend to forget what God has done for us, he has instituted memorials to help us remember.

The ancient Hebrews observed the annual Passover feast to remember that God passed over their firstborn when he punished Egypt (Ex. 12:14-17). Their weekly Sabbath observance memorialized their deliverance from servitude (Deut. 5:12,15). A stone monument was set up to commemorate their crossing the Jordan River by the power of God (Jos. 4:1-3,6-7).

We Christians have our memorials.

* **The Lord's Supper** commemorates Christ's death on the cross (I Cor. 11:23-25). It reminds us to **look back** to what He did for us; **forward** to his return; **inward** as we examine ourselves; **outward** as we proclaim his death to the world and **upward** as we lift our hearts to heaven in worship.

* **The Lord's Day** commemorates his resurrection. The disciples found his tomb empty on the first day (John 20:1-9). On the first day of the week they gathered to worship by breaking the bread of communion (Acts 20:7). It was also on the first day of the week that the church had its beginning in Jerusalem, following his resurrection (Acts 2). The feast of Pentecost always occurred on a first day (Lev. 23:15-21).

* **Baptism** memorializes Christ's sacrifice for our salvation. As he died, was buried and resurrected, so every one who becomes a Christian must die to sin, be buried with Christ in baptism and raised to walk a new life (Rom. 6:2-5). Only immersion properly symbolizes the burial of Christ.

Never forget the day of your immersion into Christ. Never neglect the day of his resurrection, and his memorial feast. We invite you to observe these memorials with us.

135.

THE SABBATH DAY AND THE LORD'S DAY

There was a time when gospel preachers contended with Sabbatarian teachers about the appointed day for Christian worship. Now we hear some who are untaught and unsound in the faith, saying we could as well worship and commune on Saturday as on the first day of the week. They have no doubt observed their Catholic and Protestant neighbors doing so and thought, "I want to try that."

For the following reasons we assemble for worship on the first day of the week.

* The Lord Jesus arose from the dead on the first day (John 20:1).

* On the first day he appeared to his disciples following his resurrection (John 20:19; 26).

* The church began on the Day of Pentecost which always fell on a first day of the week (Acts 2:1-47; Lev. 23:15-16).

* The church in Troas observed the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week and Paul preached for them (Acts 20:7).

* The church in Corinth was instructed to give their gifts for God's work on the first day (I Cor. 16:2).

* John the Apostle "was in the Spirit on the Lord's day" (Rev. 1:10).

* History declares that the early Christians uniformly worshiped on the first day to commemorate Christ's death and his resurrection.

The Lord's Day is not the "Christian Sabbath." The Sabbath was an institution of the Old Covenant and was given exclusively to the Hebrews. Nowhere in the Old Testament were Gentiles rebuked for not observing the seventh day Sabbath. Deuteronomy 5:1-22 makes it clear that the Sabbath law was given to the Hebrews.

During his earthly ministry Jesus and his disciples kept the Sabbath.” We must remember Jesus was a Jew, living under the law of Moses (Gal. 4:4). Thus he would keep the Sabbath as every devout Jew was expected to do. It is true that Paul went into synagogues and preached on the Sabbath, but no verse that tells us that he "kept the Sabbath" in the fashion of the Hebrews prior to Christ's death. Paul did say, that the old law was nailed to the cross of Christ, therefore we should let no man judge us regarding a Sabbath day (Col. 2:14-17). He also said if man "receives circumcision, he is a debtor to do the whole law" (Gal. 5:3). We could fairly say that if a man receives the Sabbath, he is a debtor to do the whole law. The apostle goes on to say that those who try to be justified by the law (of Moses) are fallen away from grace...are severed from Christ (Gal. 5:4)

Sabbath advocates cannot cite a single New Testament verse that tells us how Christians should keep the Sabbath today. They do not understand that we are in a different kingdom than were those Jews. Christ said to his apostles, "Go make disciples of all nations, baptizing them...teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20). Christ is the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him (Heb. 5:9). Christ is head over all things to the church which is his body (Eph. 1:22). Sabbath advocates do not understand this. They think they are still under Moses's law at least in respect to the Sabbath.

It is true that Jews counted their days from sundown to sundown. Thus the first day of the week actually began for them on our Saturday evening at sundown. We however are not Jews nor do we live in first century times. In Western Civilization our first day is counted from 12:01 Sunday a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Within that time frame we should assemble to break the sacred bread.

Paul teaches us in II Timothy 2:15 to "rightly divide the word of truth" (KJV) or "handle aright the word" (ASV). One aspect of that is to make the proper distinction between the Old and New Covenants. It is the words of Christ, not Moses, that will judge us in the last day (John 12:48) In the New Testament of Christ, the weekly assembly of Christians for worship and communion is observed on the first day, not the seventh day Sabbath.

136.

WHAT THE LORD'S SUPPER IS AND IS NOT

Jesus, "took bread, and when he had given thanks he brake it, and said, This is my body, which is for you; this do in remembrance of me. ...also the cup, after supper, saying this cup is the new covenant in my blood; this do as often as ye drink it in remembrance of me" (I Cor. 11:23-26).

Men have not been content to observe the Communion as Jesus gave it. It has been perverted almost beyond recognition.

* We are taught to commune on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). “From the beginning Christians assembled on the first day of the week....and to celebrate Lord’s Supper” (**Eusebius Ecclesiastical History**). They did not commune on any other day.

* **They communed every first day.** “Communion every Lord’s day was universal” (Masons’ Letters on Frequent Communion p. 34-38).

* **Stipends, i.e., charges, for Communion are not authorized.** Those who think godliness is a way of gain are condemned (I Tim 6:5).

* There was **no closed Communion.** “Let a man examine himself and so let him eat of that bread....” (I Cor. 11:29).

* **It was a memorial** in remembrance of Christ’s suffering and death (I Cor. 11:25).

* It was a **communion (I Cor. 10:16), a sharing with Christ and Christians.**

* It is **not a Mass or sacrifice.** “Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many” (Heb. 9:28).

* Bread and fruit of the vine were the elements of the supper (Matt. 26:26-29). Water was never used.

* Each Christian partook of both bread and fruit of the vine. “Drink ye all of it” (Matt. 26:27). In the 15th Century the Catholic Council of Constance decreed that laymen needed only the bread.

* The communion is symbolic of Christ’s body and blood. It is not changed into the real body and blood of Jesus. The “real presence” became a church dogma at the council of Lateran in 1215 a.d.

* Jesus gave the supper in words one can understand. “I had rather speak five words with my understanding that I might instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue” (I Cor. 14:19).

* Communion was not observed for the dead.

* The Bible does not teach that a clergyman must administer the supper.

* We cannot read where fasting was imposed before one could partake of communion.

* Scripture does not authorize auricular confession before communion.

* It was called “communion” (I Cor. 10:16), “the Lord’s table” (I Cor. 10:21), “breaking the bread” (Acts 2:42), but never sacrament or mass.

How far will men depart from the simple teachings of God’s word?

137.

THE FREQUENCY OF COMMUNION

When Paul explained the memorial supper that commemorates Jesus’ death for our salvation, he said, “For as **often** as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord’s death till he come” (I Cor. 11:26).

The Apostle John informs us that it was on the first day of the week that our Lord arose from the grave (John 20:1). The risen Christ appeared to the Apostles on the first day (John 20:19, 26). The Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles on the Day of Pentecost which always occurred on a first day of the week (Compare Acts 2:1-4 & Lev. 23:15-21). On that first day, the first gospel sermon of the Great Commission was preached and some 3,000 souls confessed their faith and were baptized (Acts 2:38), according to the command of the Master (Mark 16:15-16). On that day, the Church of Christ was born for the saved were added to it (Acts 2:47).

From that day to this, congregations of the true Church of Christ have assembled to worship God through Christ on the first day of the week. From the New Testament record we know what they did when they worshiped. Their central purpose is seen in Acts 20:7. "And on the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul preached to the people.." Their purpose was to break the bread of communion. In addition, they received instruction from God's Word. We know that Paul instructed the Corinthian church, "Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper..." (I Cor. 16:2). This, of course, refers to their offerings for God's work. Other verses inform us that they sang hymns to God as part of their worship (Eph. 5:19), and of course they offered up prayers to God (Heb. 13:15).

Historically, we know that the early Christians communed each first day of the week. The **Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church**, in its article on Communion, states, "...from such passages as Acts 20:7, and various 2nd century writers, it seems that the members of the local churches all communicated at the Sunday Eucharist (Communion)" (p. 319). Only later did some disciples change the observance, some to monthly, some to quarterly, semi-annually or annually.

Looking at the information God has provided us in the New Testament we can draw the following conclusions:

- * The Lord's Supper is the central purpose for weekly worship (Acts 20:7).
- * The disciples met on the first day of the week, our Sunday to worship and remember Christ (Acts 20:7).
- * In Apostolic times it was an observance "often" observed (I Cor. 11:26).
- * The earliest Christians "continued stedfastly in the...the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42).

Consider the following thoughts:

- * A Lord's Day worship without "breaking the bread" of communion is an incomplete day of worship. The purpose for the assembly has been overlooked.
- * Paul instructed the Corinthians, "Upon the first day of the week to lay by in store" (I Cor. 16:2). Every preacher and every church in the world understands this to mean that a collection should be taken as a part of the Lord's Day worship. The operating expenses of the congregation, plus the preacher's support, depends on this weekly observance of gift-giving. Yet the it was on the first day of the week that the disciples in Troas met to break the bread. If the Corinthians passage teaches weekly giving, why does not the passage in Acts 20:7 teach weekly communion?
- * Some argue that frequent communion makes it common-place and thus robs it of its mystical nature. But the same could be said of weekly worship and weekly giving. In communion we are remembering Jesus, the lord and love of our lives, and all he did on our behalf. Never a week should pass without his loving sacrifice being brought to our minds.
- * Paul says as often as we partake of the sacred supper, we proclaim the Lord's death till he comes (I Cor. 11:26). If the church can fulfilled her obligation by communing monthly or annually, could she fulfill her duty to proclaim Christ's death once a month or once a year? If not why?

Had you lived in the first Christian century what would you have done when on the first day of the week you assembled with the church for worship? You would have communed in memory of Christ! To worship just as they did should be our goal in the 21st century.

138.

WHEN WE WORSHIP GOD WITH OUR GIFTS

Involved in our worship to God is the giving our gifts and offerings to God (I Cor. 16:1-2). God wants us to give liberally and cheerfully (II Cor.9:7, 11). The funds we give are used for the purposes God has designated in his word.

* Our gifts support those who preach the gospel among us. "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him who teacheth in all things" (Gal. 6:6). The Lord proclaimed "that they the proclaim the gospel should live of the gospel" (I Cor. 9:14). We provide support for our local preacher and for those guest speakers who come our way.

* With our gifts, the church supports missionaries who take the gospel to distant places. Paul "robbed other churches, taking wages of them that (he) might minister unto (the Corinthians)" (II Cor. 11:8-9). Millions of souls languish in sin, in ignorance and error. They desperately need the gospel. God raises the question, "How shall they believe in him whom they have not herd? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?" (Rom. 10:14-15).

* The church uses its income to care for the poor and unfortunate (Jas. 2:14-17). Widows and orphans are assisted by the church (Jas. 1:27). We do good to all men as we are able, but especially to those who are fellow-Christians (Gal. 6:10).

* We use our resources to assist other congregations in good works. The church in Jerusalem assisted the church in Antioch by sending them a preacher to help them (Acts 11:22-24). We sometimes help sister congregations care for the poor when the need is greater than they can supply (Acts 11:27-30).

* With our contributions, we provide for the daily operation of the church. We provide a place for us to meet. We pay or our utilities, etc. We provide such things as hymnals, communion ware and supplies and literature. We purchase the supplies necessary for our Bible classes to help our people grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ (II Pet. 3:18).

* With out gifts we support good works done in the name of Christ (Tit. 2:14; I Tim. 6:18).

* We provide the tools that help us evangelize our community and in other places where needed. This includes newspaper lessons and advertisements, printing and mailing of our material to newcomers.

As we worship, let us be generous in our giving to God so that his work can be carried on successfully here and abroad; that his will may be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matt. 6:10).

God has given his church the honor and privilege of assisting him in these various ways. The duty rests upon the church and the honor should be hers for fulfilling it. Our generous gifts make it possible for us to do good things for the Master.

139.

PROPER WORSHIP INCLUDES GIFTS AND OFFERINGS TO GOD

Some have mistakenly concluded that the worship of God does not include the giving of our gifts to Him. They reason that giving is only an occasional practice to meet a temporary need that might arise. To them it is an act of charity rather than worship. To see the fallacy of this thinking consider the following facts from which we draw a reasonable conclusion.

- * Early Christians assembled for worship on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7).
- * When they assembled on the first day they were expected to “lay by in store” as God had prospered them (I Cor. 16:1-2).
- * Jesus and his Apostles had a common bag or purse for their funds which was kept by Judas, their treasurer (John 13:29).
- * Christians were taught by Paul to give weekly; as God had prospered them (I Cor. 16:2); purposefully (II Cor.9:7); voluntarily and cheerfully (II Cor. 9:7); proportionally (II Cor. 8:14).
- * The gifts they gave to God were used to meet benevolent needs, both at home and in distant places (Acts 6:1-2; Rom. 15:26).
- * They were used to support the preaching of the gospel (I Cor. 9:11-14).
- * They were used to assist the work of missionaries (Phil. 4:15).

When Christians worship God by presenting unto Him their gifts, it is an outward expression of their love and appreciation to God for his many wonderful gifts to them (James 1:17). It is a thank offering to Christ for his magnanimous gift (I John 3:16). It is an act of the will and an expression of generosity and thanksgiving to God from the heart. Christians do not accidently give to God, they purpose to do so. They, like the Macedonian saints, give their gifts to God, not to their preacher or their church (II Cor. 8:5). Giving in worship is one of those sacrifices with which God is well pleased (Heb. 13:16).

Rather than diminish the importance of our giving, let us see it as one more opportunity to express our love and gratitude to the God of all mercy when we are assembled for worship.

140.

HOW TO GIVE YOUR GIFTS TO GOD

Modern man has so much material wealth that he has difficulty knowing what to do with it. Especially does he have difficulty in giving his money to the Lord's Cause. The gifts we give reflect the measure and extent of our love and concern for the most important and strategic influence in the world! The Lord's kingdom stands between us and the destruction of all that we hold dear. The church is in the forefront of the conflict against immorality which threatens to swallow us up. She is our chief defense against unbelief, Islam and paganism. She is the conscience of the nation and the cornerstone of free government. If the church fails, all else is lost.

God ordained that the church be supported by the free-will offerings of its members. He has provided us guidelines as to how we should give.

1. We must learn to give **joyfully**. "God loveth a cheerful giver" (II Corinthians 9:7). We should never begrudge giving unto God. Some say give until it hurts, but Paul teaches us to give until it makes you happy. The word translated "cheerful" could as well be rendered hilariously. This principle needs more emphasis today.

2. Christians must give **purposefully**. "Let each man do according as he hath purposed in his heart" (II Corinthians 9:7). We must, with wisdom and deliberation, plan to make the best use of our gifts. Our stewardship should be planned as all other items in our budget. Henry Luce, late publisher of Time-Life magazines said, "It is my conviction that the only money which has any significant chance to turn the tide of the present crisis throughout the world, the only money which can turn this crisis into another triumph of the human spirit, is money which is given in Christ's name, administered by his ministers and his services." We should plan our giving to support our home congregation, world missions, preacher training, Christian education and benevolence. Every family should likewise plan their will so that their support can continue even after they are gone.

3. Our giving must be **systematic**. "Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store" (I Corinthians 16:2). Having planned our giving we must then work our plan (II Corinthians 9:7). As often as we are prospered we should give. Even when absent from the home service we must give for we have prospered. When sick or away the faithful disciple will still lay by for his Lord.

4. Christians must give **proportionally**. The poor widow gave all that she could and her two mites were sufficient (Mark 12:41-44). The size of the gift is not as important as the proportion of income it represents. The widow's gift was more proportionally than the larger gifts of the wealthy. A story is related of two men who destroyed themselves in despair. The poor man had won \$5,000 and wasted it all in a one day spending spree. The other, a rich man, had lost all but \$5,000 on the stock market. One man's treasure was another man's poverty. Every Christian should begin his giving with a tenth of his income as the saints of old did, and then grow in the grace of giving (II Corinthians 8:7).

5. Christian giving must be done **religiously and prayerfully**. Our brethren need to be taught that laying by in store on the Lord's day is an act of worship. It is not paying dues or buying services, it is not a matter of taxation. David exhorted Israel, "Ascribe unto Jehovah the glory due unto his name: Bring an offering, and come into his courts, O worship Jehovah in holy array..." (Psalms 96:8-9). When we worship through giving, we must give God the first and best of our prosperity. He will accept no less (Malachi 1:13b-14). For such faithful stewardship, God promises to open the windows of heaven and pour out such blessings that there shall not be room enough to receive it (Malachi 3:10). Benjamin Franklin, the patriot, wrote, "The use of money is all the advantage there is in having money. Wealth is not his who has it but his who enjoys it."

An unknown poet once wrote:

A vain man's motto is: Win gold and wear it.

A generous man's: Win gold and share it.
A miser's: Win gold and hoard it.
A prodigal's: Win gold and spend it.
A broker's: Win gold and lend it.
A gambler's: Win gold and lose it.
A Christian's: Win gold and use it.

How would God describe your attitude toward material wealth? May it be our daily prayer that God will strengthen us to resist Satan's temptation to be greedy and help us grow in the grace of giving. (II Corinthians 8:7).

* The author is indebted to Charles M. Crowe, **Stewardship Sermons**, for the heart of this lesson.

141.

FOOT WASHING AND WORSHIP

The night of his betrayal Jesus washed his disciples' feet. Some churches teach that foot-washing is an act of worship. Does the Bible teach us to practice this as worship?

From earliest times people in oriental lands practiced foot-washing. It was a dry, dusty land. Most travelers walked on dirt roads. Sandals with no hose were the usual foot attire. The accepted rule of hospitality was to provide water and towels to your guests that they might wash their feet. To show a higher degree of hospitality one would have his servant wash the feet of the guest. Examples of this can be seen in the case of Abraham giving his guests water for their feet (Gen. 18:4) and Abigail washing David's feet (I Sam. 25:41).

In John 13:1-11, we read of Jesus washing the disciples' feet. When finished, he posed a question. "Know ye what I have done?" (vs. 12). Of course they knew he had washed their feet. But what had he really done? He continued, "If I, the Lord, and the Teacher have washed your feet (a servant's job) ye ought to wash one another's feet"(vs. 14).

Shortly before this incident there had been words of friction between the apostles as to who would be first in the kingdom (Luke 22:24-26). Jesus gave them an object lesson, "Whosoever would be first among you, shall be your servant (Matt. 20:27). Jesus washing the disciples feet was a lesson in humility. To be his disciple we must be humble, willing to serve our fellow man.

The same lesson is repeated over again in many verses. We are to do nothing through vain glory "but in lowliness of mind...each counting other better than himself; not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others" (Phil. 2:3-4). Christianity is a life of service to God and our fellow-man. Our destiny will depend on how we helped our neighbors (Matt. 25:31-41).

Washing hands for cleanliness is fine. When imposed as an act of worship, Jesus marked it as sin (Matt.. 15:1-9). The same is true of foot-washing.

FASTING AND THE CHRISTIAN

Fasting was a common practice among the people of the ancient people of the Middle East. The Hebrews were no exception. Thus our Old Testament has numerous references to the practice.

Fasting was voluntary abstention from food for a set period of time. It was not a matter of weight control or for improved health. Nor do we speak of fasting that resulted from lack of availability of food. Contrary to the modern practice of some denominational bodies, the fasting mention in the Bible involved abstinence from all food, not just selected items of one's diet. Fasting was an act of devotion by the creature as he approached his Creator. Scripture writers used different terms to describe fasting. David writes, "When I wept, and chastened my soul with fasting" (Ps. 69:10); "I afflicted my soul with fasting" (Ps. 35:13). With few exceptions fasting was associated with sadness, sorrow and penitence..

God only ordered one annual fast for the Hebrews. On the tenth day of the seventh month, they were to fast in observance of the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:29-30). Of their own initiative, the people created other annual fast days. Zechariah mentions fasts of the fourth, the fifth and the seventh months (Zech. 8:19). They also observed a fast in commemoration of Esther's efforts to save her people (Esth.4:16; 9:31). God made it clear that such ordinances of human origin would always be human and of no special spiritual value to those who engaged in them. The thing that would bring them blessings was obedience to the word of God given through the prophets (Zech. 7:3-7).

Normally fasting was of reasonably short duration. It might last for a day (I Sam. 14:24) or sometimes three or even seven days (Esth. 4:16, I Sam. 31:13). In rare circumstances some fasted as long as forty days (Ex. 34:28). Fasting was often accompanied with wearing of sackcloth, sprinkling ashes or dust on the head and shaving the head (Is. 58:5). Fasts were proclaimed as a response to some national emergency or calamity, or as acts of penitence. Individuals might fast along with their fervent prayers or when mourning some personal loss. Fasting was often abused by those who assumed that a public display such as fasting would atone for, or at least hide their wickedness and irreligion (Is. 58:1-6).

When Christ came among the Jews, fasting was a part of every day life. The Pharisees had multiplied the days of fasting to twice each week (Luke 18:12; Matt. 9:14) and made great display of their participation (Matt. 6:16-18). The disciples of John the Baptist fasted often (Luke 5:33). However Jesus' disciples did not participate in those common fasts (Matt. 9:14). When questioned about it the Master replied that it was not the time to mourn with fasting.

Neither Christ nor his apostles appointed for the church or Christians any special occasion for fasting. The practice is neither condemned nor commanded in the New Testament. There are no regulations about how, when or where to fast except that public display should be avoided (Matt. 6:16-18). We do find mention that elders were appointed with prayer and fasting (Acts 14:23) and missionaries were sent forth with fasting, prayer and laying on of hands (Acts 13:3). Paul conceded that a couple might wish to deny themselves the pleasures of marriage in periods of fasting and praying (I Cor. 7:5). These were occasions of devotion and fervent prayer.

It seems to this author that fasting is in the same category as foot washing and the holy kiss of greeting. All are legitimate and may be engaged in but they are not obligatory. When done voluntarily it is acceptable and commendable, when pressed as a spiritual obligation it is offensive and wrong.

Paul condemned as will-worship the practice of early heretics who sought to make “severity to the body,” which he defined as “handle not, nor taste...,” a part of the faith (Col. 3:21-23). He predicted a coming apostasy in which false teachers would “command to abstain from meats...” (I Tim. 4:1-3). As predicted, the apostate church of the Second Council of Orleans (541 A. D.) made fasting obligatory on their followers.

While the New Testament provides no command for organized fasting, or a church ordered observation, we do have some guidelines and warnings. Fasting must never be done to be seen of men. It should be done quietly and privately with no display or effort to gain attention or recognition of men (Matt. 6:16-18). Fasting must be to the glory of God rather than of self. Fasting is never an acceptable substitute for humility and sincere penitence (Luke 18:10-14). Fasting cannot take the place of faithful obedience to God’s commands, nor can it satisfy the obligation to be charitable to those who are poor and oppressed (Is. 58:3-7). We must never seek to bind our desire to fast on our fellow-Christian. To do so usurps the authority of Christ our king.

143.

RITUALISM

Mankind has always found it easier to offer a ritualistic worship to God instead of living a godly, consecrated life. **Ritual** is defined in the positive sense as “the external body of words and actions by which worship is expressed and exhibited before God and man” **McClintock and Strong**. In a derogatory sense, it means excessive devotion to prescribed ritual forms in worship.

Four Kinds of Ritualism

God ordained a ritual of worship for the **Mosaic System**. It was designed for that primitive age when men were not privileged to the sunlight of Christianity. That God gave it, is proof they needed those extensive mechanical forms of worship for the spiritual maturity of their age.

There is the **pomp and pageantry of denominational ritualism**, the most spectacular being that of Roman Catholicism and the Eastern Orthodox Church. Their elaborate systems of ritual are a synthesis of Jewish and pagan practices blended with corrupted forms of Christianity. Though ancient, their human origin is indisputable. The popularity of ritual is based upon its appeal to man’s sensual nature; i.e., the esthetic forms of beauty rather than upon God’s word.

Another form of ritualism is **a cold, lifeless participation in proper New Testament worship**. There is a kind of worshiper who is very careful for details, loyal to the outer forms of worship and highly critical of any variation. Such folks go through the motions of worship with little or no “heart-involvement” or spiritual zeal. They frequently neglect to implement the intent and message of worship in their daily life.

Yet another variation of ritualism is **that addiction to a traditional form of proper worship** that does not understand the freedom we have in Christ. This is not the result of meanness, but of lack of teaching. If they have

grown up with three songs and a prayer and communion after the sermon, they sincerely think that is the only right way of proceeding. They are easily offended at any variation from their traditional way of doing things.

The first of these four was ordained by God for days past and is no longer suitable for his people (John 4:19-26). The second is the problem of our religious neighbors. Being the tradition of men, it is condemned by Christ (Matt. 15:8-9). The third and fourth are in our midst and surely demand our attention.

Attributes of True New Testament Worship

Acceptable worship must be both **in spirit** and **in truth** (John 4:24). We must obey God from the heart, in worship as well as in salvation (Rom. 6:17). We are commanded to be “filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18); to be “fervent in spirit” (Rom. 12:11) and to “rejoice in the Lord” (Phil. 4:4). We must love and serve the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind and strength (Matt. 22:37). While it is proper to so plan our worship that it is done decently and orderly (I Cor. 14:40), this must never be allowed to choke out the spontaneity and enthusiasm of heartfelt participation.

God’s Attitude Towards Heartless Ritualism

To offer worship, no matter how stately and profuse, without an **accompanying holiness of life and concern for the poor** makes God sick! In Isaiah’s day, God said to Judah, “I have had enough of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; And I delight not in the blood of bullocks....when ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to trample my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; new moon and Sabbath, the calling of assemblies, -- I cannot (stand, j.w.) away with iniquity and the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me: I am weary of bearing them” (Is. 1:11-14). God rejected their worship because they were violent and had failed to properly care for the widows and orphans (Is. 1:15-17). James expresses this same thought in his letter (Jas. 1:27).

God desires “goodness and not sacrifice: and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings” (Hos. 6:6). Sacrifice without common goodness in life and conduct is worthless! Without Justice and righteousness, God actually hates our worship. “I hate, I despise your feasts and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies.... But let justice roll down as water, and righteousness as a mighty stream” (Amos 5:21-24). While carnal men tend to think that God is impressed with large volumes of worship, it is justice, kindness and humility that he wants most of all (Mic. 6:6-8). It would shock some brethren to know that their worship is so vain and meaningless that God wishes: “Oh that there were one among you that would shut the doors, that ye might not kindle fire on mine altar in vain!” (Mal. 1:10-11).

Some Signs of Ritualism

In the worship of the denominational world, a few professionals or semi-pros do most of the actual worship, almost as a performance. The audience is relegated to a spectator role. The author once worked with a man who was an erstwhile member of the Episcopal church, but sang for the Presbyterian choir for \$5 per week. He was a good bass singer, but a worldly, sinful fellow in his personal habits, yet he “worshiped” God for those that hired him.

Ritualism substitutes lifeless outer forms of public worship for inner devotion and godly living.

It is sometimes the case that people participate in elaborate religious ritual as a cover for a godless life.

Commonly, ritualism reflects an attempt to earn ones righteousness by works of human merit. Such worshipers tend to think God is impressed with the beauty or elaborateness of their production. Such thinking is flawed at the heart (Tit. 3:5; Is. 64:6).

To Avoid the Stagnation of Ritualism

It is a continuing challenge for a congregation to avoid the stagnation of ritualism. The subject must be frequently addressed in classes and sermons lest we unwittingly fall into the trap. We need to vary the program of worship often.

While the items of worship are stipulated, the arrangement is not. Not only is there liberty to have a varied format, there is a real need. We can vary the number of songs in a service, the number of verses sung and the titles selected. The time slot for the Lord's Supper can be changed on occasion, as can the comments prefacing the observance. We should vary the place of prayer in the program, the number and the varieties of prayers offered. The time and place for the collection in the service can be occasionally be changed. Especially, we could separate the collection from the Lord's Supper. Our speakers and the types of lessons presented should be occasionally varied. Let the elders speak more often. Use the young men or other "non-preachers. Have guest preachers in. Let there be sermons in song or visualized lessons. Especially should we use more Scripture readings.

It is important to prepare the congregation beforehand by proper teaching and explanation, lest the sudden change create chaos and confusion. This would undo any good sought. Be careful not to fall into the trap of change just for the sake of change.

May God grant us wisdom and grace to avoid the stagnation and sin of ritualism. May we worship the Master according to his will with a sincere heart and fervent zeal (Heb. 12:28).

144.

CRITERIA OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

Christian fellowship is a lovely thing, blest of God and blessing its participants. Every disciple wants it but it is elusive to possess and enjoy. All Christians talk about fellowship, but not all sincerely work to implement it. Our old Adversary has convinced multitudes that Christian fellowship must be on their terms. Two egregious errors about fellowship are commonly observed. There are the liberals who are eager to fellowship everyone, including those who are not in the body of Christ. There are legalists whose circle of fellowship is reduced to the few who are of their party, excluding multitudes of the brothers in Christ.

Christ prayed that all of his disciples would be one even as he and the Father were one (John 17:20-21). He expects us to give diligence to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace (Eph. 4:3). The early Christians continued steadfastly in the apostles teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread and prayers (Acts 2:42). They were of one accord (Acts 5:12). If they could do that surely we can as well.

We the church expanded from the Jewish community into the many different nations and races of the world, the challenges to maintaining unity multiplied. National, racial, ethnic, cultural, social and economic differences present challenges to the unity of the church. Ideally we are ignore these differences and rise above them in Christ. But often the flesh is weak and they are allowed to hinder fellowship. The faithful teaching of God's Word and strong, consistent leadership are essential to overcoming these differences.

Beyond these external challenges to fellowship there are internal, spiritual challenges. It is in this area that we have confronted our greatest obstacles.

I. To have unity with others, there must be **some criteria** to determine who we can fellowship. By the teaching of the New Testament and the fruits of a man's life we can determine if he is in fellowship with the Lord. If he enjoys

the fellowship of the Father we dare not reject him.

A. Is he a child of God? Has he in faith been baptized into Christ? (Gal. 3:26-27).

B. Is he loyal to the true faith of Jesus? If he brings a different doctrine we are not to receive him into our homes, nor give him encouragement in his work (II John 10-11).

C. Does his conduct reflect the Christian way? John tells us that a man who claims to know God but keeps not his commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him (I John 2:3-4).

The congregation in Jerusalem was hesitant to accept Saul of Tarsus into its fellowship, until Barnabas was able to convince them of his sincerity (Acts 9:26-27). Paul wrote of “epistles of commendation” for individuals to congregations (II Cor. 3:1-2). He sent such a letter to the saints in Rome for sister Phoebe (Rom. 16:2-3). A congregation is not obliged to fellowship any and every man who presents himself. They have the right and duty to ascertain that he is in fact a faithful brother before accepting him.

II. The **extent of our fellowship**. Christian fellowship is both inclusive and exclusive. Our fellowship must be broad enough to encompass all men of every race and culture as our brethren without Americanizing them (Matt. 28:18). Our fellowship can not be denied a brother just because he holds strange or different opinions about matters of indifference. We must receive him (Rom. 4:1). Brethren in all stages of spiritual growth must be accepted. The Corinthians brethren were still spiritual babes, yet Paul regarded them as his brethren (I Cor. 3:1). While we must fellowship brethren with their immature views and faulty opinions, we cannot allow them to impose their views upon us as though they were God’s laws (Gal. 2:4-5).

There are God-ordained limits to our Christian fellowship. Obviously we cannot fellowship the non-Christian. “If a man hath not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his” (Rom. 16:17), nor is he my brother. The disorderly brother cannot be fellowshipped (II Thess. 3:6). False teachers are to be marked and rejected (Rom. 16:17). Immoral Christians must not be encouraged in their sin by my acceptance (I Cor. 5:1-5). Those who are stubborn and impenitent are to be refused fellowship after proper attempts at correction have been made (Matt. 18:15-18).

III. Things that frequently hinder Christian fellowship. Observation of brotherhood problems suggests that fellowship is often spoiled by things not necessarily doctrinal or moral. We have frequently had fellowship disturbed by preachers or over preachers. I do not have in mind great issues of the faith; rather whether to retain or dismiss a given preacher; power moves by preachers or personality clashes between preachers and others. Many of our fellowship problems have related to gospel papers and peculiar points of view advocated therein. Fellowship for some was restricted to those who were loyal to the views of the given editor. Another common problem area of fellowship had to do with social, cultural differences. We have seen tensions between the wealthy uptown congregation and their poorer rural brethren. Racial differences have played their role in our fellowship problems. Political sympathies played a larger role in the division at the turn of the century than most of us realize. Changing social customs and traditions often have a way of alienating brethren. Many tend to equate the long held practice with the exclusive Scriptural way. Any new thing that varies from that, to them is an unscriptural, sinful innovation which they cannot fellowship. Of course some items are permanent and cannot be modified, such as baptism by immersion. On the other hand the facility for baptism can and has varied considerably. I recently read of an African brother who withdrew fellowship from all brethren in Kenya because they occasionally used a place other than running water for baptizing.

IV. Some marks of Christian fellowship. In Romans 15:1-6, the apostle sets forth some distinguishing marks of Christian fellowship.

A. The strong in faith should bear with the infirmities of the weak (vs. 1).

B. Rather than seeking to please self we should seek to please our brother in ways that will strengthen him (vs. 1b-2).

C. Mutual study of the Scriptures will strengthen fellowship (vs. 4).

D. We must strive to be of the same mind one with another (vs. 5).

E. We must pattern our fellowship after the example of Christ who accepted us when we were far from perfect (vs. 7).

F. We will glorify God with one voice rather than quarrel over our differences (vs. 6).

When our fellowship is threatened by the eccentricities of a weak brother, we must strive to avoid irritation and impatient annoyance. We must never ridicule those who hold peculiar views. It insults a man to laugh at what he holds sacred. We must not be contemptuous toward a brother because his views are old-fashioned or immature. Paul says we must receive him that is weak in faith, “yet not for decisions of scruples” (Rom. 14:1). While he may be bound by his opinions, he has no right to bind his opinions on others.

Since we are children of a common father and thus brothers in a common family, and since we are heirs of a common hope in heaven, it behooves us to give diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). Nothing should be made a test of our fellowship which is not likewise a condition of fellowship with God. Our fellowship must be as broad and yet as exclusive as God’s. May He grant us divine wisdom to apply his heavenly principles to the difficult question of whom shall we fellowship.

145.

SOME OBLIGATIONS OF FELLOWSHIP

One of the blessed privileges of being in Christ is the fellowship we share and enjoy with other disciples of the Lord. Scripture likens us to God’s household or family (Gal. 3:26-27; I Tim. 3:15). We are brothers and sisters in the holy family. Fellowship, by definition means “communion, sharing in common, partnership” (**Vine’s Dictionary of N. T. Words**). Fellowship is an aspect of Christianity more talked about than practiced. Consider the following obligations that accompany fellowship.

- * We must “love the brotherhood” (I Pet. 2:17). We must love one another from the heart fervently (I Pet. 1:22).
- * We must rejoice with them that rejoice and weep with them that weep (Rom. 12:15)
- * We are to bear one another’s burdens (Gal. 6:2), whether they be temporal or spiritual.
- * We must help each other remain faithful (Gal. 6:1).
- * Sometimes we must teach a fellow Christian the way of the Lord more perfectly (Acts 18:25-26).
- * Some will need to be exhorted to stay the course (Heb. 10:25).
- * Others will need our assistance when they are weak, discouraged or feeble with sickness or age (Heb. 12:12-13).
- * Some will occasionally need to be admonished or warned of dangerous people, views or practices with which they might be flirting.
- * At times some will need to be reproved or even rebuked when their conduct or their teaching falls short of the Master’s expressed will, or when they are harmful to the church (II Tim. 4:2; Eph. 5:11).
- * We must pray for our brothers and sisters. When they seek to correct their mistakes, we must beseech God’s mercy for their forgiveness (Acts 8:22-24).
- * We must be willing to forgive those who might have fallen into sin, but are trying to right their wrongs. We must be willing to “forgive and comfort” them lest they be swallowed up in sorrow (II Cor. 2:6-7).
- * Sadly, there will be occasions when we must withhold our fellowship from brothers or sisters whose sinful conduct

is harmful to the Lord's family. With such a one we must not eat (I Cor. 5:11).

Let every child of the King appreciate the fellowship He has made possible, cherish it, practice it and never neglect or abuse the blessed gift.

MILLENNIALISM

146.

MILLENNIALISM WHY ARE SO MANY PEOPLE DRAWN TO IT?

I marvel at the eagerness with which so many people pursue and embrace the endless millennial speculations that abound in our day. Most of Protestant America is caught up in this wild speculation. Below are a few of the reasons for the popularity of this strange phenomena.

* There is in the human heart a burning desire to know the future. This desire leads people to consult fortune-tellers and read horoscopes. Among "Christians" they are attracted to the prophets of premillennialism. The speculative nature of the premillennial writers excites that desire. The preachers and authors spin stories about future happenings and tack on bit and pieces of scriptures that taken out of context seem to support their ideas. In ancient times God's people were tempted to consult sooth-sayers, diviners and those with familiar spirits to learn what the future held (Deut. 18:10-12). Today to turn to millennial speculators.

* The sinful heart finds great pride in knowing something others do not know. You might not know when Christ is returning but the avid millennialist proudly claims he does. You might not know what events will occur as the end nears, but he is sure that he does know!

* Fallen man is greatly tempted to go where he is forbidden to trespass and to sample that which is prohibited. This was seen in the fall of Adam and Eve. Jesus said, "Of that day and that hour (of his return) knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only" (Matt. 24:36). The very fact that Jesus said "you cannot know the day of my return" drives such sinners to madly search for that information. Satan then provides a smooth talking preacher who confidently assures them that he has discovered the forbidden information (Rom. 16:18). They rush to take the forbidden fruit.

* False teachers have found in millennialism the perfect bait to attract and snag followers who will gladly provide them fawning admiration and financial support. Such unscrupulous men send endless days concocting the kinds of stories their star-struck followers want to hear. They spin their exciting yarns and their followers love to have it so (Jer. 5:31).

* There are people who care little about the ordinary, simple truths of Christianity. They are not excited about such things as godly living, congregation worship, service to humanity and obedience to God's commands. Their jaded souls lust for spectacular and titillating stories about some mysterious future. Paul says, "Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved,...God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be judged who believed not the truth..." (II Thess. 2:10-11).

* Of course we can not afford to overlook the influential role that Satan plays in promoting false religion. He is a liar and an enemy of God's truth (John 8:44). He loves to lead people astray. He uses and rewards every false teacher. His very name, Satan, means the adversary. He is the adversary of God, Christ, the church and humanity. By sowing his tares of confusion he keeps multitudes from finding and understanding those simple truths that will save their souls in eternity (John 8:32).

147.

THE RAPTURE

It is amazing how humanity rushes to embrace palpable error while despising and rejecting obvious truth. Nowhere is this more evident than in the wild speculations of those preachers who make their living promoting speculative theories about events connected with end of the world. Hal Lindsey's books, **The Late Great Planet Earth**, **Countdown to Armageddon**, etc. and the "**Left Behind**" series of books by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins (later made into movies) have sold millions of copies and are eagerly read by multitudes of people who are ignorant of the Bible's true message.

One chapter of their imagined story they call "**The Rapture.**" According to their scenario, as the time of the end draws near, Christ will suddenly cause all deceased righteous inhabitants of earth to be resurrected. These saints of ages past and all living Christians will be transformed and taken away to heaven for seven years. All sinners will be left behind to suffer through seven years of great tribulation and the war of Armageddon (H. P. Lindsey, **There's A New World Coming**, p. 77; 275). Following Armageddon, Christ and his saints will return to earth to reign a thousand years (**Ibid**, p. 263).

The word "rapture" is not found in the Bible but the concept is found in I Thessalonians 4:16-17. There, Paul says that when Christ descends from heaven and the dead are raised, "then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Thus we do not deny that God's children will be caught up to heaven to be with the Lord. It is all the other speculative points they have tacked on to this truth to which we object.

* The Bible knows only one resurrection, a general resurrection of all, both good and evil (John 5:28-29). It will occur on the last day (John 6:39,40, 44, 54).

* The Bible says nothing of the righteous leaving heaven and returning to the earth to reign with Christ a thousands years. When caught up we will ever be with the Lord!

* Paul sets forth in clear, non-symbolic, terms the sequence of events that will occur at the end.

"...in Christ all shall be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ, the first fruits, afterward those who are Christ's at his coming. Then comes the end when he shall deliver the kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall have put an end to all rule and authority and power" (I Cor. 15:22-24). The sequence is clear. Christ will return.

His people shall be raised. At that time his reign will be concluded and he will deliver his kingdom up to the Father.

There is no mention in scripture of additional resurrections. No mention is made of a seven year rapture and tribulation. Remember that just finding a word, does not constitute a doctrine. Nothing is said of a literal battle to be fought at Megiddo. No mention is made of Christ then establishing his kingdom. We do not read of a literal thousand year reign of Christ on earth. In fact, when he returns it will be the end his reign, not the beginning. This is the case because in the resurrection of the dead, his last enemy, i.e., death will be destroyed and he will deliver the kingdom up to the Father!

The Bible knows only one future resurrection which will include all of humanity, both good and bad (John 5:28-29). Millennialists predict up to three resurrections. The Bible presents Christ's church as his kingdom (Matt. 16:18). It has existed from the first century and all Christians were translated into it when they were saved (Col. 1:12-13). John, the author of the Revelation, was in the kingdom (Rev. 1:6). It is not something yet to be established.

When Christ returns, humanity will be judged and given their appropriate reward or punishment (John 5:28-29; Rev. 20:11-12). The planet earth will melt with fervent heat and the earth and the works that are in it will all be burned up (II Pet. 3:10). The righteous will spend eternity in the presence of the Father in heaven (Matt. 25:23; Rev. 21:1-6).

Like a thousand other myths and legends, the premillennial doctrine of "The Rapture" is nought but a curious speculation and a worthless fabrication.

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WHO IS ANTI-CHRIST?

A major character in the premillennial scenario is an evil and ominous super being they identify as "The Anti-Christ." The false prophets of the millennial systems speculate wildly as they spin their uninspired tale of "The Anti-Christ."

Hal Lindsey, the most vocal of these false prophets, sees two Anti-Christ. One will emerge as ruler of the European Union and become dictator of the world. He then sees a Jewish Anti-Christ who will ally with the European Anti-Christ. Claiming to be Messiah, he will foment a world-wide persecution against all Christians who will not submit to him (**New World**, p. 186-190); **Late Great Planet Earth**, p. 141). He assures us the Jewish temple will be rebuilt during seven years of tribulation (**New World**, p. 160). The European Anti-Christ will move his headquarters from Rome to Jerusalem. He will turn on the Jews placing his image in their new temple and demanding that all worship him (**Ibid.** p. 178). He will persecute Jewish and all other believers. This will terminate in what Lindsay calls the Battle of Armageddon. The leaders of Egypt with Arab allies will attack Israel. Russia and other Arab nations will respond against him. China and the Anti-Christ of Europe will invade and attack the Western forces. Three hundred million troops will meet in Northern Palestine for the Battle of Armageddon (**Late Great Planet Earth**, pp. 142-152). The awesome conflict will spread throughout the world (**Ibid.** p. 154-156). Christ will intervene and the conflict will end in total victory for Him (**Ibid** p. 156-157). (All quotes from Stafford North's **Like a Thief in the Night**, pp. 77-78).

It makes for interesting study to contrast the fanciful story described above with what the Bible actually says about anti-christ. One might think there are scores of passages on this mysterious person but in reality there are but four verses in all the Scripture that mention anti-christ.

* "...it is the last hour: and as ye have heard that anti-christ cometh, even now have there arisen many anti-christs; whereby we know that it is the last hour" (I John 2:18)

* "Who is the liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? This is th anti-christ, even he that denieth the Father and the Son" (I John 2:22).

* "Every spirit that confesseth not Jesus is not of God: and this is the spirit of the anti-christ, whereof ye have heard that it cometh; and now it is in the world already" (I John 4:3).

* "For many deceivers are gone forth in to the world, even they that confess not that Jesus Christ cometh in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the anti-christ." (II John 7).

Just what does John have in mind when writing of anti-christ?

* "Anti" means against and thus describes an enemy or opponent of Christ.

* Note that he mentions "many anti-christs" (I John 2:18). He referred not to just one particular false teacher.

* Those who were anti-christs denied that Jesus of Nazareth was the messiah (Christ). They denied the divine relationship of the Father and the Son" (I John 2:22).

* There was then and still is a "spirit of anti-christ" (I John 4:3). This tells us it was a belief or teaching which any person may or may not hold.

* Anti-christs are deceivers who pretend to be true disciples of Jesus but in reality they are his enemies. They deny his divine nature (II John 7).

* Antichrists were active in John later years (80-96 A.D.) (I John 2:18).

* Notice that nothing in these verses describes one great anti-christ coming in our lifetime.

* Nothing in them indicates that an evil political ruler will be "The Anti-Christ" the speculators write so much about.

* Nothing ties the anti-christs mentioned by John to modern Israel, Russia, China or the European Union.

* Nothing in these verses indicates that these anti-christs will foment a great world war, an Armageddon.

These lines from the aged apostle do tell us that any man, any church, any school or philosophical system that denies the Jesus is the incarnation of deity is anti-christian and should be rejected. Thus every liberal preacher and professor who denies that Jesus of Nazareth was Immanuel, (God with us) (Matt. 1:18-23), is anti-christ. So is every seminary that promotes such a denial of Christ's deity and every religious journal that publishes such views. Every religion such as Judaism and Islam is anti-christian because they deny that Jesus is God's divine Son who came down from heaven. Every cult that claims to be Christian but denies the deity of Jesus is in reality anti-christian. With this information in hand we can view all of the wild, unfounded speculations of the millennial spokesmen as worthless trash to be rejected. It would be comical if not part of a deceptive system that denies the omnipotence and invincibility of Christ and the existence of his kingdom. It denigrates his church as a substitute created when wicked men thwarted Christ's mission.

WILL ONLY 144,000 SEE HEAVEN?

A favorite theory of those who claim to be witnesses of Jehovah is that only 144,000 will see heaven (**Let God Be True**, p. 113). This idea is based on an erroneous interpretation of Rev. 7 and 14:1-5. Here we see a group of 144,000 souls standing with Christ the Lamb on Mt. Zion.

A **literal interpretation** of the passage forces one to an absurd position. A careful reading reveals the following: (1). All of them are Jews (7:4); (2). All are men (124:4); (3). All are male virgins not defiled with women (14:4); (4). The number excludes Jews of the tribes of Dan and Ephraim (7:5-8); (5). The number is very small compared to the billions who will stand before God in the judgment; (6). They stand with a lamb (14:1); (7). They stand on Mt. Zion in Palestine (14:1); (8). They have the seal of God stamped on their forehead (7:3-4). If we interpret this passage literally, then the following would be the conclusion: Only 144,000 branded, unmarried, male Jews with no sexual experience could stand with a lamb in Mt. Zion in Jerusalem. Sound ridiculous? It is because it is a false conclusion forced by an erroneous interpretation.

The **true interpretation** is found when we realize that much of our Bible is presented in a **figurative language**, designed to teach spiritual truths. In this light we see a limited number of Jews who believed in Christ. They are cleansed from their sins and followers of Jesus the lamb who gave His life as a sacrifice to God for us. We see a tremendously large group of Gentiles also saved. The lesson contrasts the limited number of Hebrews who would follow Christ with the innumerable number of Gentiles who would do so. All, of whatever race, who followed him in this life will be with him in eternity. There is **One Hope** for all Christians (Eph. 4:4). That is eternal life with God in heaven (Rev. 21:1-4). The true church will thus represent the Scripture to all men. False witnesses offer a false hope of heaven for only 144,000.

THE END OF THE AGE

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JESUS IS COMING

The words of our title will affect different people different ways. If you are a faithful Christian they will bring joy and gladness to your heart. Your pulse will quicken as you contemplate the thrill of seeing your Savior face to face, to hear him say "well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." If on the other hand you are among those millions who, though knowing the Lord's will, have not done it, such words will likely strike terror in your heart. The man who knew his Lord's will and did it not shall be beaten with many stripes, said Jesus (Luke 12:47). A third class of people will experience no emotion because they are ignorant of Jesus, his promises and the consequences there of. Their tragedy is double because they cannot enter into life if they "know not God and....obey not the gospel of our Lord" (II Thess. 1:8), and yet they do not realize their jeopardy.

I. **The divine promise.** Jesus said "...I go to prepare a place for you...I come again, and will receive you unto myself: that where I am there ye may be also" (John 14:2-3). If we believe that Jesus is God's Son who cannot lie, we must accept the fact of his return.

II. How shall he come? It will be in majesty. “At the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire...” (II Thess. 1:7-8). We look for the “glorious appearing of ...our Savior Jesus Christ.” (Tit. 2:13 KJV). His coming will be **visible**. “Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him...” (Rev. 1:7). It will be **audible**. “The Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God...” (I Thess. 4:16). He will come when least expected, and **unannounced**. The day of the Lord will come “therefore be ye also ready; for an hour that ye think not the Son of Man cometh.” (Matt. 24:44).

III. What events will accompany his coming? At his coming **the dead will** be raised. “For the Lord himself shall descent from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise” (I Thess. 4:16). “For the hour cometh in which **all that are in the tombs** shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment” (John 5:28-29). When the dead have been raised, “then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be **caught up in the clouds**, to meet the Lord in the air...” (I Thess. 4:17). If we are yet alive when he comes, “**we shall all be changed**, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, for this...mortal must put on immortality (I Cor. 15:51-53).

The material **universe will be destroyed** at his return. At that day of the Lord. “The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up...dissolved...” (II Pet. 3:10-11). This being the case there will be neither time nor place for a thousand year reign of Christ on earth as many teach.

At that time the **final judgment will occur**. “When the Son of Man shall comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all the nations and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separated the sheep from the goats.... And these shall go away into eternal punishment; but the righteous into eternal life” (Matt. 25:31-33, 46). All “the dead, the great and the small” shall stand before the throne and be judged by the things written in books according to their works (Rev. 20:12). Then will he say to the righteous, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” And the wicked will hear their awful sentence, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels.” (Matt. 25:34, 41).

Satan will be finally and forever subjugated when Jesus comes. When the Lord comes as a mighty conquering king he will cause “the devil that deceived them (to be) cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where are also the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night forever and ever: (Rev. 20:10)

The Lord Jesus will deliver up the authority of his kingdom to the heavenly Father when he has raised the dead. (I Cor. 15:24). Christ is reigning over his kingdom now and all Christians are members of it (Col. 1:13). The kingdom of Christ is his church (Matt. 16:18-19). Christ’s kingdom has been on earth since it was established in the life-time of the apostles (Mark 9:1). Christians in the first century were in the kingdom and we can be also (Rev. 1:9). Since the Lord rules his kingdom now and since he will surrender his reign upon his return, there is obviously no time, place or need for a future thousand year reign on earth.

Jesus is coming. There will be no signs of warning other than those already recorded in God’s word. When that eventful hour comes, all earthly pursuits will cease and each one will stand before the Creator and Judge to receive his eternal reward (Heb. 9:27). It will **not be a trial in which we argue our case**; it will be to hear the court’s decision. “Now is the day of salvation” (II Cor. 6:2). We will then receive the things done in this body, according to what (we) have done, whether it be good or bad” (II Cor.5:10). There will be no second chance for those who died in sin. (Luke 16:26). Purgatory is a concept completely foreign to Scripture. The consequences of that judgment will be eternal and irrevocable. It will be “eternal punishment” for the wicked and “eternal life” for the righteous. (Matt. 25:46). The saved will live forever in heavenly bliss, as for the lost “the smoke of their torment goeth up for ever and ever, and they have no rest day and night...” (Rev. 14:11). The lost will not be annihilated as some fondly hope. To escape into a Nirvana of non-existence is a vain wish.

Jesus is Coming! The most important question in the world is “**Are You Ready?**” Our plea to you our reader is

“Prepare to meet thy God” (Amos 4:12).

151.

THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF JUDGMENT

The most sobering thought in all of God’s word is that Christ will come again to destroy the material world and judge the race of men. It will surely be the most awesome scene ever beheld by mankind.

From the Greek work *krino* we derive our words judge and judgment. *Krino* means to separate, to select, choose, to determine and thus “to judge or come to a decision.” (1)

A recurring theme throughout scripture is that God always judges sin and sinners. Numerous examples are given by the sacred writers. Adam and Eve were punished for their disobedience (Gen. 3:16-19). The antediluvian sinners tasted the bitter cup of God’s judgment (Gen. 6:7, 7:23). Sodom and Gomorrah perished in a fiery judgment because of their ungodliness (Gen. 19:24-25). Ancient empires and cities were judged in what the prophets described as a day of Jehovah (Joel 1:15, 2:31). In this lesson we concern ourselves with that **day** in which God will judge the whole world in righteousness by the man whom he raised from the dead (Acts 17:31).

PROOF OF A GENERAL JUDGMENT

There is no truth more clearly taught in the Bible, no principle of the government of the Lord more firmly established and no declaration of his will more emphatic than that all sin must be adequately punished in the person of the sinner. Enoch the seventh from Adam prophesied saying, “Behold, the Lord came with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their works of ungodliness which they have ungodly wrought...” (Jude 14-15). Solomon warned his students, “...but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.” (Eccle. 11:9). He then adds, “For God will bring every work into judgment...whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Eccle. 12:14).

“... The injustices of history, the unjudged cases of all sin, the inequalities of life, the unpunished blasphemies of men, the silence of God throughout most of the centuries---a holy righteous God--**demand** a day of judgment.” (2)

The existence of a moral government in the universe demands a judgment. “There can exist no law or authoritative rule of conduct for voluntary and accountable agents to which a penal sanction is not attached; and the reason of the penalty is just as intrinsic and immutable as the reason of precept.” (3)

The moral nature of man demands a judgment. The sentence that God will judge every man is written on everyone’s heart. The conscience of man declares that God will sit in judgment upon the soul. Conscience is the “law written in the heart” of (Rom. 2:15). The creation furnishes such a plain revelation of God, that those who worship idols are without excuse (Rom. 1:19-20). He concludes his discussion of these sinners by saying, “Who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which practice such things are worthy of death...” (Rom. 1:32 KJV). Man, without immortality and accountability, would only be an animal.

The moral nature of God demands a judgment. A God who could not judge the world would not be God. A God who will not judge a sinful world is not worthy of our allegiance.

Charles Wolfe wrote; “The judgments of God fall often enough to let us know that God judges, but seldom enough to let us know that his judgments are not confined to this world.”

“The history of the world is the judgment of the world” (Schelling). If God has consistently judged the men and nations of the world, will he not render that final judgment which will forever settle the inequities of human history? Those who accept the New Testament as their rule of faith have no doubt about a coming day of judgment. Christ announced it in Matthew 25:31. The apostles proclaimed it throughout the Roman empire (Acts 24:25; II Thess. 1:6-9; Rom. 14:10-12; II Cor. 5:10).

Although all ancient peoples believed in some sort of future judgment, the concept of a specific day of judgment was not universally held. “...that there would be one great day, or one definite future period in the history of mankind, when all the souls of men would come before a divine tribunal for final judgment, and the determination of their eternal destiny was a truth utterly foreign to the religion of ancient Greece.” (4)

THE JUDGE

The greatest judge ever to preside at a tribunal will mount the bench on that day. “For neither doth the Father judge any man, but he hath given all judgment unto the Son” (John 5:22). “...and he gave him authority to execute judgment” (John 5:27). Christ’s credentials have been certified. God “hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead” (Acts 17:31). His qualifications are complete. He has walked in our shoes. His 33 years among men gives him a sympathy and identity with those who stand before him. Precisely for this cause “God gave him authority to execute judgment, **because he is a son of man**” (John 5:27). He has in all points been tempted like as we are (Heb. 4:15). His authority is all encompassing (Matt. 28:18), and thus no creature in heaven or earth is beyond his realm of authority. Even angels and demons he will judge (II Pet. 2:4; Mat. 8:28-29). His wisdom is infinite (Heb. 4:13). “There is no creature that is not manifest in his sight.” His righteousness and integrity are impeccable. He is “the Lord, the righteous judge” (II Tim. 4:8). “Righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne” (Ps. 89:14 KJV). The whiteness of his judgment throne symbolizes its purity (Rev. 20:11).

Whenever we deal with human judges there is the possibility that human frailties might mar their ability to judge equitably. All men are fallible, some are corrupt. Some are prejudiced toward a race or cause, others may be incompetent by reason of age or illness, but not so our Judge. “...with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth...” (Is. 11:4). He will “render to each man according as his work is” (Rev. 22:12). Our king will be accompanied by his mighty angels (Matt. 25:1-32), and all his saints will observe and approve of his decision (I Cor. 6:2-3).

WHO WILL BE JUDGED?

John tells us that “the dead, the great and the small” will stand before his throne and be judged” (Rev. 20:12). In the resurrection, which immediately proceeds the judgment, every grave will be emptied, including all of those buried at sea. Hades itself will surrender all of its occupants that they might appear before the judge in their resurrected bodies (20:13-14). As already noted, fallen angels and evil spirits will give account to the Son (II Pet. 2:4; Matt. 8:28-29). The judgment scene of Matthew 25 shows us that even the saints will stand before the judge in that day. For it is then that they shall receive their eternal reward of initiation into the Father’s presence (Mat. 25:24). It is not that they will be in jeopardy of losing the salvation they enjoyed in this life. If they die in the faith, like Lazarus they will immediately go into a state of Paradise (Lk. 16:22). Only when the soul has been re clothed with a resurrected body, suited for eternal existence, will they go unto the Father’s presence (I Cor. 15:50-54).

One reason why some recoil from the idea of a judgment for the righteous is that they misapprehend what the judgment will be. They think in terms of worldly court with lawyers to argue the case and a judge who is unsure of the outcome until the evidence has all been presented and the case argued. A chief hermeneutical rule for analogies is

that they not be pressed for too many points of likeness. While we all will stand before the judge, it will not be to have our fate decided. At death every human leaves this life either saved or lost (Lk. 16:22-23). No adjustment will be made in our case in the after life (Lk. 16:26). After death cometh judgment (Heb. 9:27). At the judgment day we will receive our sentence from the judge. The verdict of guilt or innocence was decided at our last breath. The standard of judgment being the deeds done this body (II Cor. 5:10). When this body breathes its last breath our destiny is set. What could be more appropriate than that He who died for the saved should appoint for them their eternal reward of glory before the face of all men who refused his gracious offer of salvation.

It appears from Matthew 25:31-46 that the righteous will be judged first and declared to be justified by Christ's blood. Having been acquitted and pronounced heirs of the Kingdom they will sit with Christ as the judgment of the wicked is completed (Cor. 6:2--3; Rev. 2:25-27). When it is said that men are judged by Christ, more is meant than that Christ will personally preside in judgment and announce their destiny. It also suggests that Christ is the standard of comparison by which character is estimated and destiny to proceed.

THE RULE OF JUDGMENT

To be judged there must of necessity be standard by which to measure men's conduct. When John saw the resurrected dead standing before Christ's throne, he saw "books opened.... And the dead judged out of the thing written in the books" (Rev. 20:12). Of course we have here figurative language, for the Judge of the world, who infallibly knows all things, has no need for literal books to be opened to prevent mistakes or assist memory. For our benefit, God shows that the proceedings of judgment will be accurate, just and well founded in every way.

He speaks of books being opened, several books come to mind that will be used that day:

A. **The book of God's remembrance.** Malachi mentions such a volume in 3:16 of his prophecy. This is simply the record of all our words, thoughts and deeds which God will bring to light in that day. Nothing will be forgotten or overlooked. For the wicked, it will be an indictment, but for the saved a memorial.

B. **The books of Scripture.** Paul wrote, "As many as have sinned under the law shall be judged by the law" (Rom 2:12). Thus all those Hebrews who lived and died under Moses' Law will be judged by it. Jesus said, "The word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). This is the standard by which those living in the Christian age will be judged.

C. But what of those who lived under neither of these written laws of God; i.e., the Gentiles who lived before Christ's coming? It would surely be unjust to measure them by a law they knew nothing of and with which they were not provided. Paul deals with this situation in (Rom. 2:14-16): "When Gentiles that have not the law do by nature the things of the law, these having the law, are the law unto themselves; in that they show the work of the law written in the hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith and their thoughts one with another accusing or excusing them; in the day when God shall judge the secrets of man...." Thus we see that the **book of human conscience** will be opened. This book all men have always had in their personal possession.

D. Yet one other book is mentioned in scripture, **the book of life.** Paul spoke of Christian workers "whose names are in the book of life" (Phil. 4:3). Any man or woman whose name is not recorded in this God's record of the saved will be "cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:15).

FOR WHAT SHALL WE BE JUDGED?

A. **Our deeds.** Paul says, "For we must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (II Cor. 5:10). John says we will be judged according to our **works** (Rev. 20:12).

B. Our words. Jesus warns “Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment” (Matt. 12:36).

C. Our thoughts. Solomon declared that “God will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Eccle. 12:14). “God shall judge the secrets of men... by Jesus Christ” (Rom. 2:16). The Hebrew writer tells us that Christ discerns even the thoughts and intents of the heart” (4:12). Such solemn warnings should prompt us to guard our every word, thought and deed, lest it bring us eternal sorrow in that great day.

WHEN WILL THE JUDGMENT BE?

Scripture plainly declares that God “hath appointed **a day** in which he will judge the world...”(Acts 17:31). Revelation 20:13 shows us that the day of judgment will follow the resurrection. Both the resurrection and the judgment are said to occur at “the last day” (John 11:24; 12:48). The resurrection will occur at Jesus’ second coming (I Thess. 4:16-18), at which time he will destroy the material world with fire (II Thess. 1:7-9; II Pet. 3:7). This last verse says that “The heavens that now are, and the earth by the same word have been stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment and the destruction of ungodly men.” The Lord himself tells us that “of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only” (Matt. 24:36). He further adds that there will be no signs or omens of that great day. Rather it will come as a thief comes, unannounced and when least expected (Matt. 24:44). Faithful saints are content to believe the facts set forth in God’s Word, even though the specific time will remain a mystery until its occurrence. To go beyond this, as many have, is the height of folly and can only be dangerous speculation.

THE PLACE OF JUDGMENT

We all must stand before the judgment seat of Christ (II Cor. 5:10). When John saw a vision of the judgment, he saw the material heavens and earth having fled away (Rev. 20:11). We notice in II Peter 3:7 that the natural universe will be destroyed by fire when Christ comes in judgment. This leads us to conclude that judgment will be in the eternal realms. First Thessalonians 4:17 says that when resurrected we will be “caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

THE CONSEQUENCES OF JUDGMENT

An awesome and indisputable judgment will be handed down at that day. “Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.... Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt. 25:34,41). Since our judge is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, there will be no higher court to which appeal may be made. Since he is omniscient, no errors in his judgment will be detected, no extenuating evidence will be brought forward. The decision will stand for the eternal ages.

Will there be degrees of punishment in Judgment? Scriptures seem to indicate that to be the case. No less an authority than the Lord himself said, “And that servant, who knew his Lord’s will, and made not ready, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with **many stripes**; but he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with **few stripes**. And to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required: and to whom they commit much, of him will they ask the more” (Lk. 12:47-48). This demonstrates the fairness and equity of God’s justice. Not all sinners are equally depraved. In our own judicial system heinous crimes receive much more severe punishment than petty crimes. This should not, however, be taken as a reason for the sinner to gamble with his soul, that he might cling to a favorite sin hoping to get only minimal punishment. To miss heaven in itself will be a catastrophe of immeasurable consequences. Even the choicest spot in hell is a punishment no sane person would want to risk. No evidence is found, no hint is given of degrees of reward in heaven. To be forever in the Father’s presence is of such

magnitude that nothing more could be added to it. The greatest degree of guilt and punishment will be for those who abuse and neglect their gospel privileges. So Jesus taught when he scathingly condemned Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum. I will be more tolerable for the people of Tyre and Sidon (pagans who never had Jesus in their midst) than for his Jewish contemporaries who rejected his gracious offer (Matt 11:20-24). (See also Heb. 2:1-3, 10:28-29).

CONCLUSION

God is righteous, his law is righteous, He demands righteousness of His creatures. He sent his righteous Son to save us and soon we will stand before that righteous Son to be judged. This final, public act of judgment is the complete vindication of God's justice both to those who are judged and to all the moral universe. We have seen that the judgment described in the Scripture is consistent with mercy, consistent with love and necessary to spur the human conscience to faithfulness. In his earthly ministry Christ did not appear as a judge (John 3:17). His role as judge belongs to the future (Acts 17:30-31). He who stood condemned at Pilate's judgment seat will then judge the world. He who once extended mercy and grace will then judge those who rejected it. To judge the world will be the last act of Jesus' administration, for then he will deliver up the kingdom to God the Father (I Cor. 15:24). Rather than being a mystery among the doctrines of one faith, Judgment Day is a doctrine, which more than any other, solves the riddle of the problem of evil in the world.

In his **Notes on Virginia**, Thomas Jefferson wrote, "I tremble for my country when I remember that God is just." So should we tremble when we contemplate the judgment of our just God. May each reader so order his life that when the trumpet sounds we may rise to meet the Lord with gladness.

FOOTNOTES

- (1.) W. E. Vine, **An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words**, (Westwood, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1965) p. 280.
- (2.) Wilbur Smith, **Therefore Stand**, (Boston: W. A. Wilde Co., 1945). p.455
- (3.) A. A. Hodge, **The Atonement**, (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1967,) p. 62, 63.
- (4.) Wilbur Smith, **op. cit.** p. 438.

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152.

OUR FATHER'S HOUSE

The Christian "looks for a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness" (I Peter 3:13) Many pictures of heaven are painted in God's Word.

* **Heaven is like a garden** (Revelation 22:1-5). This implies that it is the most beautiful spot in all of God's Creation, a place of rest and recreation.

* **It is like a city**, walled and safe, yet with gates open to all men (Revelation 21:12). In a city we have a gathering of many people. In heaven all are brothers and sisters sharing a common interest. It is a beautiful city (Revelation 21:10-26). In a great city one can secure all his comforts and needs.

* **Heaven is like a royal palace** with God upon the throne (Revelation 4:1-11). It is filled with the splendor and grandeur of the august king of heaven and earth and his splendid court and attendants. The whole atmosphere is one of holiness.

* **It is a place of overwhelming glory** and grandeur, beauty and majesty, "having the glory of God"(Revelation 21:11-27).

* **It is like "an inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled** and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (I Peter 1:4). It will be ours. None can rob us of it. Only we can keep ourselves from enjoying it.

* **Heaven is home**. Our heavenly Father and all our loved ones in the flesh and in Christ, that faithfully served Him here, will be there (John 14:1-3). It is our "Father's house."

* **It is a place of vast room** (Revelation 21:16). It is symbolically described as 1,500 miles square. It is a land of many mansions (John 14:2). This may not be so meaningful to the affluent suburban dweller, but to the poor, in cramped, crowded tenements, it is a great joy to anticipate.

* **It is a place of undoubted reality.** "If it were not so, I would have told you" (John 14:2).

Our Father's house can be your house too. You must be born into His family. This is a birth of water and Spirit (John 3:5). This occurs when you believe and are baptized (Mark 16:16). Why do you wait?

153.

THE NEW HEAVENS AND NEW EARTH

Some folks are perplexed about the "new heavens and new earth" of II Peter 3:13. They wonder if eternal life will be spent in heaven or here on the earth?

As to where the saved will spend their eternity, Scripture reveals the following things:

- * Heaven is the abode of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matt. 6:9).
- * To come to earth, Jesus **came down** (John 6:51) and to go to the Father **he went back up to heaven** (Acts 1:9-11).
- * To have eternal life means that we will live with Christ and the Father in eternity (John 14:11-3).
- * As saved people, "our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20).
- * At God's appointed time Christ will return and raise all the dead, both good and bad (John 5:28-29). The living will be changed (i.e., their mortal bodies will become immortal) (I Cor. 15:51-52) and **all will be caught up in the clouds** to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (I Thess. 4:17).
- * At that same time the "heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (II Pet. 3:10). This means that the cosmos, the material creation will be utterly consumed.
- * All of humanity will stand before Christ for judgement (Acts 17:30; Matt. 25:31-33).
- * Eternal rewards and punishments will be assigned (Matt. 25:34; 41; 46).
- * Since this material realm will be consumed, the new heavens and new earth will be the place that God has prepared wherein his children will spend eternity. "There are two words translated 'new' in the New Testament; one is prospective and indicates that which is young as opposed to old; the other is retrospective and points to that which is fresh in contrast to that which is worn out. It is the second of these (*kainos*) which is used here. The heavens and the earth which the apostle describes in this passage will be fresh and new, and not worn and old, as are the heavens and the earth which now exist" (G. N. Woods, **Commentary on The Epistles of Peter, John and Jude**, p. 188).
- * The new heavens and earth will be the place where God is and where his saved children will dwell in his presence for eternity (Rev. 21:1-3).
- * Given these passages, most Bible believing scholars have concluded that the new heavens and the new earth speak of our future home with the Father, in heaven. It was to be the new place of abode for God's faithful children when their place of abode (earth) has been consumed with fire.

The source of this confusion is often the tainted religious literature or teaching the uninformed have been ingesting. The most common source of this particular error is the Jehovah's Witnesses cult. Those who desire to know more about end times will be much better rewarded if they devote their time to reading the Bible. Even the **New World Translation of the Bible** prepared by the Jehovah's Witnesses has been doctored to promote their views. Get a good Bible translation such as the New International Version, or the New American Standard Version. Begin with the Gospel of John, then one of the other gospels, then the Book of Acts. Read and believe the wonderful message therein. Pray to God for help in rightly understanding his wonderful Word (II Tim. 2:15).

154.

HELL, THE REWARD OF THE WICKED

A cardinal doctrine of our faith is that a hell of fearful punishment awaits every lost soul in eternity. Modern man fondly hopes that there is no such thing. Satan gladly encourages this vain and foolish dreaming. Even many apostate preachers and denominations such as Jehovah's Witnesses and Unitarians boldly deny this divine teaching. Jesus warned, "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt.25:41).

Does Hell Really Exist?

Man is universally conscious of sin. Every tribe has its totem, its altar, its sacrifice. The guilty conscience is experienced by every responsible soul. All sin and know the condemnation of their own heart (Rom. 3:23). The universal cry of every lost person is, "Wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death? (Rom. 7:24). The reality of sin cannot be denied. Every war fought is a demonstration of it. Every crime committed perpetually proclaims it. Every liquor store and beer parlor testifies to the fact of sin.

But there can be no sin without law. The great English doctor of jurisprudence, Blackstone, wrote, "Where there is no law there can be no wrong, or violation" (**Commentary**). Paul said the same: "Where there is no law, neither is there transgression" (Rom. 4:15). If there be no law to break then no one can commit sin.

Law is of any consequence only when there is a penalty for disobedience. Again Blackstone said, "Where there is no penalty, the law is null and void." If the state has a law against speeding while driving a car, yet when one is found guilty, no penalty is imposed, then that law becomes null and void. No one will feel obligated to obey it. A law without a penalty attached for violation is inconceivable and absurd.

Now if there is no hell or punishment for wickedness, then there is no meaningful law, for "law without penalty is null and void." If there is no law, then there is no sin, for where there is no law there can be no violation thereof. If there is no sin, then there is no moral or spiritual responsibility upon us. If that be so, why then do we find all over the earth churches, courts and prisons? Even Christianity itself is a useless joke if there is no punishment for disobedience. To deny hell is ridiculous, for to do so is to deny that which is every day demonstrated before our eyes, i.e., sin and law.

Jesus declared the existence of hell: "I will warn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, who after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell..." (Luke 12:5). Our Lord makes no idle threats. He uses no vain repetitions, yet this theme is mentioned continuously in his teaching.

Hell Is A Future Punishment.

Some claim that the pangs of a **guilty conscience** constitute all the hell there is. A little thought will show the folly of this assertion. It is well known that the more one commits sin the easier it is to do so. The conscience grows calloused with repeated sin (I Tim. 4:2). If this theory were true then the worse a man is the less hell he would suffer. On the contrary, the more devout a person is the more sensitive will be his conscience about sin. Per this theory, the more spiritual a man becomes, the more desirous he is of pleasing God, the more hell he will experience. To escape hell, one would simply harden his heart and plunge into unrestrained sin. The theory is absurd. Believe it, who will?

If conscience is our hell, it would also be our heaven! As a rule, however, all those who deny hell want to cling to a literal heaven. The same verse proclaims the reality of both heaven and hell (Matthew 25:46).

Others claim that we get our **hell here on earth** through pain, suffering and misfortune. But often the wicked prosper in this life while the righteous suffer. The psalmist was envious when he saw the "prosperity of the wicked." He wondered if it really paid for him to be righteous because of the apparent inequities of his life (Ps. 73:2-5, 12-14). Consider righteous Job and his suffering. Absolute justice is rarely seen here on earth. There must be a future judgment to right these wrongs. Martyrs for Christ are seen reigning in glory (Rev. 20:4a, 6). The wicked who escaped justice in this life will pay their price in hell (Is. 14:9-11). If this foolish theory were true, then the godly mother who because of her saintly life deserves heaven, receives hell on earth because of the thoughtless follies of her wicked son. Our lives are so interwoven here on earth that it would be impossible for a wicked husband to suffer hell while his wife enjoyed heaven in the same house. To properly be rewarded and punished, they must be separated so far that one can have no influence on the other. The truth is, hell will be experienced only after Jesus raises the dead and judges them (Rev. 20:11-15).

What Is Hell Like?

The Lord used numerous comparisons to teach us the reality and nature of hell.

* Hell is like the valley of Hinnom, later called Gehenna (Matt. 5:22). This was the refuse dump of Jerusalem. It was no modern, sanitary landfill. Sewage, carcasses of dead animals, even the bodies of executed criminals were cast there and left to decay. Perpetual fires smoldered throughout the valley. Hell is like that.

* Hell is like a lake of fire and brimstone into which sinners will be cast (Rev. 20:10).

* It is like unto a bottomless pit such as we often dream of in our nightmares (Rev. 20:3).

* It is like an oriental death house with weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 8:12).

* Hell is like outer darkness (Matt. 8:12). Seldom do we experience utter darkness, but the horrors of hell will be like that. Such conveys an idea of lostness and hopelessness.

* Hell is a place of immeasurable loss. Those who end up in hell will have lost all the pleasures of this life. All things they were fond of will be lost. Their place with Abraham and the righteous in Paradise will be forfeited (Luke 16:19ff). They will lose heaven and the eternal fellowship of the Father and the Son (Rev. 22:14-15). All hope will be lost, even the hope of dying. In hell "their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:47). "The smoke of their torment goeth up forever and ever; and they have no rest day and night..." (Rev. 14:11). There is no annihilation of the wicked as so many fondly wish.

* Hell is a place of repulsive, horrible people. Look around you at the most abandoned wretches on earth; they will be there. Here, there is hope for any person. There is a little good in the worst of men. There, they will be completely abandoned in their wickedness and you in their midst. There will be no more restraints upon them for God will have given them up forever.

* It will be a place of painful remorse. Sorrow, shame and self condemnation will be in every heart. The hopelessness and despair will be overwhelming.

* The duration of hell will be eternal. "And these shall go away into eternal punishment" (Matt. 25:46). Every link of the chains of hell will be stamped "forever." Hell is no reform school from which you will graduate. Purgatory is but a wistful dream. Hell is not a preparation for heaven. No missionaries will ever be sent there.

We leave this dreadful scene with good news. No man or woman has to go to hell. You may choose heaven if you so desire. The cross of Christ stands as a flaming beacon squarely in the path of every hell-bound soul. Every sinner who

goes to hell must walk over the crucified body of Jesus and trample the blood of the covenant under foot.

Only the tender mercy of God has spared us thus far from the hell we justly deserve. Will you not turn away from that dreadful cliff on whose edge you have stood so long, and with a thankful heart accept the salvation he so graciously offers?

* Author is indebted to Jesse R. Kellems for the heart of this lesson.

155.

HOW LONG IS ETERNAL?

When Jesus spoke of the judgment and life to come he said, “And these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life” (Matt. 25:46). Across the ages the great majority of Christ’s followers have understood and taught that the punishment of the wicked will last just as long as the salvation of the righteous. Early in the fourth century, Arnobius of North Africa was the first to set forth the idea that God would annihilate the wicked. Since that time there have been scattered individuals and groups who advocated some form of the annihilation doctrine. Faustus Socinus, a Polish theologian, held this view as do the Seventh Day Adventists and Jehovah’s Witnesses of our day. Originally all the major Protestant reformers and their disciples accepted the principle of everlasting punishment for the wicked. In the last century, as liberalism exalted human wisdom and eroded their faith in Scripture, many of their theologians have denied that a literal hell exists. Some have embraced the idea of universal salvation while others have concluded that the wicked will be spared by being annihilated.

In the early days of our Restoration Movement Dr. John Thomas, a brother in Virginia, held that the wicked would cease to exist. He separated himself and started his own Christadelphian denomination. In recent years, a small handful of men have come forth with a replay of this old, discredited doctrine. Most notable was Edward Fudge who set forth his views in **The Fire That Consumes**.

Consider these random observations regarding how long the wicked will suffer for their sins.

* Although the Bible mentions everlasting or eternal punishment seven times, not once does it mention annihilation of the wicked.

* Eternal life is often contrasted with eternal punishment, but never with annihilation.

* The thought of annihilation is dreadful to those who are happily enjoying life, but to the condemned sinner, facing endless painful punishment, it would be a blessed relief.

* Is it possible that Jesus meant to impress the impenitent wicked by threatening to put them out of all their misery?

* The punishment of wicked men will be the same as that of wicked angels; not in annihilation, but in torment (I Pet. 2:4, 9; Jude 6).

* In speaking of the future punishment of the wicked Jesus says, it is a place where the fire is not quenched and where *their worm dieth* not (Mark 9:48). If they are annihilated how could this be?

* In hell, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 25:30), but this could not be the case of those annihilated.

* If God had wished to tell us that hell is of limited duration he did a poor job of it, for the overwhelming majority of people have concluded He meant unending punishment!

* If God had desired to convince us that hell was truly everlasting in nature, how else could he have stated the case to make it clear to humanity?

* If the words “eternal” and “everlasting” when used in relation to hell are not to be taken in their usual, literal sense, on what basis can we conclude that heaven is eternal in duration?

* Annihilationists argue eternal punishment is inconsistent with God’s loving nature. Jesus was the epitome of love, grace and mercy, yet he repeatedly mentioned eternal punishment as the destiny of the wicked.

The concept of everlasting punishment in hell does not fit well with the fuzzy philosophy of Postmodernism which rejects judgmentalism, personal responsibility and all things absolute. The doctrine of annihilation is appealing to a certain class of people. It provides hope to the wicked and their loved ones, that they will escape the reality of eternal punishment. They prefer this to the Bible’s depiction of hell as eternal punishment which the wicked cannot escape! To teach annihilation is a warped, misguided compassion that is actually deceptive and extremely dangerous to those who base their hope on it. Silence about “weeping and gnashing of teeth” in the pulpits of churches will contribute greatly to the tragic population of hell.

It is our responsibility is to remind men to “fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt. 10:28). Because we know “the fear of the Lord, we persuade men” (II Cor. 5:11). Rather than question the reality of hell, we need to teach people that the only time they can escape hell is now while this side of death (II Cor. 6:2). To promote this unfounded, speculative doctrine it to inflict another wound on the spiritual body of the Lord Jesus.

END