

CHAPTER 1:

AN INTRODUCTION

Hebrews 5:12-14; 6:1-3, ¹² *For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.* ¹³ *For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.* ¹⁴ *But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.* ⁶ *Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, ² of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.* ³ *And this we will do if God permits.”*

THE PROBLEM OF IMMATURITY THEN AND NOW

The writer of the book of Hebrews — I believe it was the Apostle Paul — addresses an issue that plagued the first century church and continues to hinder Christianity even today. The early church leaders expected their disciples to become mature then begin to disciple others, but the disciples seemed to live in a state of perpetual infancy. In this passage Paul suggests that they needed to have “...one teach you again...” He was saying that they should repeat elementary school! Paul wanted to teach on the subject of perfection or “solid food” but found that the immaturity of the “milk” fed believers would not allow him to at that time. Perfection means maturity or completion. It is amazing to me that so few in Christianity are able to grow up in Christ. Why is that?

I have observed over many years of making disciples in today’s culture

that most have never been taught the elementary teachings of Christ. Instead, I find that they have a fragmented knowledge of scriptural things learned from a Sunday school lesson, a book, a sermon or worse — their own opinions. The problem is further compounded by the sterile non-relational environments of classrooms and congregations.

THE SIX DOCTRINES OF CHRIST

Quiz yourself on the following subjects. If someone were to ask you to thoroughly discuss each of the following doctrines how you would you do?

- 1) The Foundation of Repentance from Dead Works
- 2) The Foundation of Faith toward God
- 3) The Doctrine of Baptisms
- 4) The Doctrine of Laying on of Hands
- 5) The Doctrine of the Resurrection from the Dead
- 6) The Doctrine of Eternal Judgment

If you are like most people you would be overwhelmed when asked to expound on these subjects that the Bible calls “*elementary*”.

FOUNDATIONS

Notice that the first two doctrines of Christ are called “foundations”. The word “foundation” is defined as the substructure of a building. The foundation of a building is the under-girding strength that causes the building to stand.

Consider the words of Jesus in Luke 6:46-49, *“⁴⁶ But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say? ⁴⁷ Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: ⁴⁸ He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. ⁴⁹ But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great.”*

Jesus is saying that if a man obeys His words it will be like building the foundation of his house (life) on a rock. This requires him to dig down deep below the surface and remove all that could cause faults in his foundation. Old ways of thinking and acting have to be removed through repentance, if he is going to successfully be built on Christ. No matter what life throws at him he will stand because of his sure foundation. However, many who call Jesus Lord never do what He tells them to do. Those who refuse to keep His sayings are compared to a man who builds the foundation of his house or his life right on top of the soil. He is too lazy to dig down deep to get to the solid bedrock below. Eventually the trials of life cause him to be destroyed.

Years ago I worked on the construction of a nuclear plant. To build the foundation we dug a hole 40 x 50 acres across and 100 feet deep. Then we backfilled it in 4 inch lifts packed to 100% compaction. Next, we installed ton after ton of rebar. The last step before pouring a concrete slab was that men were sent in to remove every speck of debris that could possibly contaminate the foundation. Consider what this energy company did in order to build a foundation for power. Now, in comparison, consider how little we do to prepare our lives for the power of God! We need to dig deep and remove every possible thing that could cause our foundations to fracture.

As you study the Doctrines of Christ you will learn much about your own character and what type of builder you will be. Life itself will reveal if what you have built will stand or fall. I challenge you to act as though eternity depends on your foundation — because it does!

THE CHURCH'S FOUNDATION

While you are building the foundations of your personal life, you are simultaneously building the foundation for your corporate life in the body of Christ — the church.

Ephesians 2:19-22, ¹⁹ *Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,* ²⁰ *having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,* ²¹ *in whom the whole building,*

being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord,²² in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”

In this passage the Apostle Paul gives us great details of how the early church was built. He called us “members of the household of God” because we are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. The apostles and prophets are not the foundation. Jesus is the foundation. The apostles and prophets lay the foundation of Jesus in the lives of people.

Then Paul calls the household of God the “whole building”. The church is not made of bricks and mortar. The church that God is building is made up of lives that have been first built on Christ then fitted together in loving relationships. As a matter of fact, it is not necessary to have any sort of physical structure to have a church. God chooses to dwell among those who love Him and love each other in an informal, non-religious way. Not only on Sunday but every day of the week. So keep in this in mind, we are not exclusively building the foundation of our personal life, but also laying the foundation of our life as the church.

BUILDING ON THE FOUNDATION

Another passage that teaches us how to build on the foundation of Christ is found in I Corinthians 3:1-17,

¹ And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. ² I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; ³ for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? ⁴ For when one says, ‘I am of Paul,’ and another, ‘I am of Apollos,’ are you not carnal? ⁵ Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? ⁶ I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. ⁷ So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. ⁸ Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. ⁹ For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s

*building.*¹⁰ According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it.¹¹ For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.¹² Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,¹³ each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.¹⁴ If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.¹⁶ Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?¹⁷ If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are."

Notice the Apostle Paul's use of the terms "milk" and "solid food". These are the same terms he used in Hebrews 5:12-14 and 6:1-3 where we get the doctrines of Christ from. It seems to fit here as we discuss the foundations.

The context of I Corinthians 3 is four chapters long beginning in chapter one and extending through to chapter four. This passage deals primarily with the error of sectarianism. Divisions were being created in the Corinthian church by some saying that they were of Paul or Apollos or Cephas (Peter). These personality cults were causing the people to be identified with the minister instead of with Christ. Paul called this "carnal" and was doing all that he could to put a stop to it. When he wrote chapter three, he was actually telling other ministers to be careful as to how they built on another man's foundation. Paul started the church in Corinth and now he was warning those who were leading the Corinthians to be careful about how they were building on what he started.

In verse nine he says, "you are God's building". This is exactly what he said in Ephesians 2:19-22. The structure that God is building is made of people.

In verse ten of I Corinthians 3 Paul said that "I have laid the foundation..." then defines the foundation in verse eleven as Jesus Christ being the only foundation that we can lay. Verses 12-15 go on

to say that we are to build on this foundation with extreme care. We should roll up our sleeves and dig deep for the gold, silver, and precious stones that are so hard to come by. At all cost we should avoid the temptation to lazily build with the wood, hay, and straw that so easily deteriorates and could never endure the fiery trials life throws at us. Much less would these sub-standard materials withstand the Day of Judgment by Almighty God!

Finally, Paul ends the passage with the warning that we are building the temple of God, and if any defile the temple, God will destroy them! We are building the temple of our own bodies and of the body of Christ. We are laying a foundation and seeking to use the best materials that God's Word has to offer in order to build a glorious temple for the Lord. Be a "wise master builder" as you build on the principles of the doctrines of Christ.

CHAPTER 2:

THE FOUNDATION OF REPENTANCE FROM DEAD WORKS

Hebrews 6:1-3, ¹ *Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, ² of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. ³ And this we will do if God permits.*

You may want to memorize this passage because we will refer to it often throughout this study.

TWO FOUNDATIONAL DOCTRINES

There are six doctrines of Christ: repentance from dead works, faith toward God, baptisms, laying on of hands, the resurrection from the dead and eternal judgment. Of the six, only two are referred to as “foundations” — repentance from dead works and faith toward God.

Whenever you build a building or add on to it, the first thing that you have to do in the building process is to lay the foundation. When you apply this to your walk with God it is exactly the same. Each time God begins to build something new in you He will lay the foundations of repentance and faith. Remember from chapter one, in order to lay a foundation, you must first dig out the substandard materials that would cause faults in the foundation and eventually ruin your building.

REPENTANCE DEFINED

The Greek word for repentance is “*metanoeo*”. It is a compound word combining two Greek words; “*meta*” implying a supernatural change, and “*noieo*” which means to exercise the mind. “*Metanoeo*” means to **change the way we think!** Not only will we come to different conclusions, even the way we process thought will undergo a supernatural change of the mind.

REPENTANCE IS THE MESSAGE FOR ALL THE AGES

Matthew 3:1-10; ⁴¹ *In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea,* ² *and saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!’* ³ *For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying:*

‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.”’

⁴ *Now John himself was clothed in camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey.* ⁵ *Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him* ⁶ *and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.* ⁷ *But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, ‘Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?’* ⁸ *Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance,* ⁹ *and do not think to say to yourselves, “We have Abraham as our father.” For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.* ¹⁰ *And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”*

Matthew 4:17; ⁴⁷ *From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”*

Acts 2:36-38, ³⁶ *Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.’* ³⁷ *Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’* ³⁸ *Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name*

of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

In these three passages we have three different preachers: John the Baptist, Jesus, and the Apostle Peter. They were all preaching the same message — “Repent!”

John the Baptist is the last prophet of the Old Testament. He led the revival that would transition us into the New Testament preaching “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” Another way to say this is “Change the way you think because the kingdom of heaven is within your reach!” John’s preaching of repentance prepared the way of the Lord to come to Israel.

After Jesus was baptized by John, He too began to preach repentance for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Jesus, The King of the Kingdom, preached that it was necessary to change your mind in order to prepare the way before Himself.

The third preacher, The Apostle Peter — one of the first apostles of the church age — also preached repentance. Even now the message of repentance prepares the way for the Lord to come into our lives. Repentance is the first step to becoming a Christian. That is why it is a foundational doctrine.

PREACHING REPENTANCE PREPARES THE WAY FOR THE LORD

God has chosen to use men in His plan to reach other men for His kingdom. Preaching repentance confronts the minds of unconverted people with the truths of God’s word. This prepares the minds of men to receive or reject Christ.

In the gospel of John 6:44-45 Jesus says, ⁴⁴ *No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.* ⁴⁵ *It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.”* Those who hear and learn from God are miraculously drawn to Jesus.

In John 12:32, Jesus says, ⁶² *And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will*

draw all peoples to Myself.” We know that Jesus was lifted up from the earth on the day that He was crucified. Now He is lifted up from the earth every time that the cross is preached. As we lift up Jesus by preaching, men are drawn to Him.

Romans 10:13-15 says, ^{a13}For “*whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.*”^{a14} *How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?* ¹⁵ *And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!’”*

God sends anointed men and women to preach the gospel. As they preach the Word of God the Holy Spirit then draws souls to Jesus! I believe that all who preach should follow in the pattern of preaching that John, Jesus, and Peter used. They all preached repentance and without repentance there can be no forgiveness of sins.

PUTTING ON THE MIND OF CHRIST

Take your time and read the following passages carefully, remembering that you are laying the foundations for your own life.

RENEWING THE MIND

Romans 12:1-2, ^{a1} *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.* ² *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”*

As we present ourselves as “living sacrifices”, something in us is put to death (sacrificed) so that Christ can live there instead. This is how our minds are transformed and renewed. Our old ways of thinking die and our minds are renewed to think like Christ.

THE MIND OF CHRIST

I Corinthians 2:9-16, ^{a9} *But as it is written: ‘Eye has not seen, nor*

ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.’¹⁰ But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.¹¹ For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.¹² Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.¹³ These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.¹⁴ But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.¹⁵ But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one.¹⁶ For ‘who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?’ But we have the mind of Christ.”

This is one of the most revealing passages concerning our relationship with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit knows the heart of God and He makes God’s heart known to those who are earnestly seeking Him. He reveals things to Christians that have been kept secret since the world began. Then He shows us the things that God is freely giving us. As we begin to comprehend these Divine things our minds begin to be changed, we become spiritually minded. We get the mind of Christ.

RENEWED IN THE SPIRIT OF THE MIND

Ephesians 4:17-24, ¹⁷ This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, ¹⁸ having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; ¹⁹ who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. ²⁰ But you have not so learned Christ, ²¹ if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: ²² that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, ²³ and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴ and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.”

This passage reveals the powerful evidence of the new birth, where we put off the old man and put on the new man. Before we are born again our minds are futile (spiritually empty/void) because our understandings are darkened and our hearts are blinded. This condition is actually a judgment from God due to sin. Romans 1:21 says it this way, ²¹ *because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.*” The futility of spiritual blindness in the mind is due to knowing God and not bringing Him glory in our lives. II Corinthians 4:3-4 says that God uses the devil to do this, ³ *But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, ⁴ whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.*” The new birth begins with us being “renewed in the spirit of our mind”. This is more than simply getting new information in our heads. It is a miraculous transformation of the mind. When we hear the Word of God, the judgments of spiritual darkness are repealed and Christ is revealed in our hearts and minds.

RENEWED IN KNOWLEDGE

Colossians 3:8-10, ⁸ *But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, ¹⁰ and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him. . .”*

If you were to read Colossians 3 in context, beginning in verse one, you would see that there is an initial work of righteousness in the life of every Christian where the “big” things are dealt with. Then there is a continuing work where the seemingly “smaller” things are dealt with. This is what our text is showing us. The work of the new birth goes much deeper than the surface things of our lives. The Spirit of God digs down into us where the roots of anger, wrath, malice, etc. dwell. This is done as we are renewed in the knowledge of Him who is re-creating us in Christ. We get that knowledge from the Word of God (the Bible), from the Holy Spirit, and from fellow believers as we walk with them.

THINKING LIKE JESUS

Philippians 2:5-11, ⁶ *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,* ⁶ *who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,* ⁷ *but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.* ⁸ *And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.* ⁹ *Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,* ¹⁰ *that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,* ¹¹ *and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*

This powerful passage actually tells us to think the same way that Jesus thought while He was on the earth. The Jews accused Jesus of making Himself “equal with God” because He called God His Father (John 5:18). As Christians, we call God our Father as well. Does that make us equal with God? Paul said the way Jesus thinks is that it is not robbery to be equal with God. I am not saying that we are God but I am saying that we are sons and daughters of God and that we should think accordingly. Jesus humbled Himself, and so should we. He became obedient to God even when it killed Him, and so should we. That’s the mind of Christ!

REPENT TO THINK LIKE JESUS

All of these passages tell us one thing, “*Put on the mind of Christ*”. This is just another way of saying repent. The Christian life is the continual renewing of the mind to make you think like Christ. Now you should understand why this is called a foundational doctrine. Throughout your walk with God, He will reveal things to you about Himself, or about yourself, and with each revelation it will require repentance in order to obey. Your old ways of thinking will constantly be challenged by the mind of Christ, and we will have to repeatedly undergo the miraculous transformation of our minds in order to think like Jesus.

CHAPTER 3:

DEAD WORKS

We should keep in mind that the proper term for the foundational doctrine of repentance is repentance from “dead works”. We must change the way we think concerning dead works. So what are dead works?

DEAD WORKS DEFINITION #1

I find at least two ways to define this term. First, the Bible says that “*the wages of sin is death*” (Romans 6:23). We are paid wages for our work. In this case the wages for the work of sin is death. We could conclude then that sin is a dead work.

Again in Romans 7:5, “*For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.*” The work of sinful passions in our members bears the fruit of death. Once again we can conclude that sin is a dead work. So what is sin?

In I John 3:4-6, “*Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. ⁵ And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. ⁶ Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.*” Sin means that we have broken God’s Law and God’s law requires death to the sinner — not only physical death, but eternal death.

The Bible determines that all men sin, Romans 3:23, “*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*” The first definition of repentance from dead works is that we must repent of our sins. Change the way we think concerning the sinful works that lead to death.

DEAD WORKS DEFINITION #2

The second definition for dead works seems to apply to those who are religiously affiliated or devoted. When Jesus spoke of the church in Sardis in the Book of Revelation 3:1-6, He said,

“¹ And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, ‘These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: ‘I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. ² Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. ³ Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. ⁴ You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. ⁵ He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. ⁶ ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’”

The church at Sardis had a reputation as a church that was alive, but Jesus said it was dead because their works were not perfect! I wonder how the trendy churches of our day will fare under this same scrutiny when, according to this passage, what we do is the criteria for approval. *Not what we say.*

Another point to highlight is that a few had not *“defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.”* The garments of the saints are white robes of righteousness but only a few in Sardis had not defiled their garments. Notice that Jesus’ judgment on those who defiled their garments was to be blotted out of the Book of Life. We will discuss this further in the doctrine of “Eternal Judgment”.

The church of Sardis was not Old Testament or a cult or some other brand of religion — it was a *church*. They believed in Jesus but their works were dead. We should take heed that we are not in dead religious works that defile our garments or God will surely blot us out of The Book of Life.

To sum up, we must first repent (change the way we think) concerning sin (breaking God's laws). Second, we must repent of dead religious works, even in the New Testament church!

CONFESSION OF SINS

John the Baptist addressed both of the definitions given above. John's call to repentance dealt first with repentance from sins.

In Matthew 3:5-6 we read, *"⁶ Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him ⁶ and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins."*

Again in Mark 1:4-5, *"⁴ John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. ⁵ Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins."*

These two passages clearly demonstrate that one element of repentance was the public confession of sins. Public confession of sins is the first step in changing the way you think about that sin. The humiliation of confessing that you are identified with a certain sin will make you think twice about doing it again.

FRUITS WORTHY OF REPENTANCE

In the Book of Luke 3:7-14 we get our clearest example of John's hard hitting message against dead religious works.

Luke 3:7-14, *"⁷ Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, 'Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?' ⁸ Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.'" For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. ⁹ And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.' ¹⁰ So the people asked him, saying, 'What shall we do then?' ¹¹ He answered and said to them, 'He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him*

do likewise.’¹² Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, ‘Teacher, what shall we do?’¹³ And he said to them, ‘Collect no more than what is appointed for you.’¹⁴ Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, ‘And what shall we do?’ So he said to them, ‘Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages.’”

John demanded from those who were coming to his baptism that they bear fruits worthy of repentance. Repentance has a produce. In other words, repentance is not only something that is said but something that is done.

The common people — the tax collectors, and the soldiers — all asked the same thing from John, “What shall we do?” To each he gave specific instructions. He encouraged the common people to give; “If you have two tunics give one to him who has none.” So to the general populace the message of repentance would say that we stop being selfish and become generous. Stop looking only to our own needs but also look to the needs of others. The tax collectors were told to be honest; “Don’t collect any more than you are supposed to.” Maybe our politicians should read this. And the soldiers were told not to intimidate or use fear against the people and not use their position to get more than their wages. Those in military or officer positions should take heed to these teachings.

The most astounding thing that John said in this passage is that they should not say to themselves that they have Abraham as their father. He was coming against the very heart of the Old Testament covenant. John was telling the Jews that their kinship to Abraham would not save them! That is the equivalent of telling people today that believing in Jesus will not save you. And if we will learn the lesson from the church at Sardis we may understand that unless we repent of our dead works we may find our names blotted from the Book of Life.

MORE ON THE PRODUCE OF REPENTANCE

To further enlarge on the thought of fruits worthy of repentance, I want us to look at II Corinthians 7:9-II,

“⁹ Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. ¹⁰ For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. ¹¹ For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter.”

Godly sorrow or conviction produces repentance and salvation, while on the other hand, worldly sorrow produces death (dead works).

Worldly sorrow or grief is expressed through fear, depression, anger, etc. Even those who experience Godly sorrow may experience these things but the difference is that those in worldly sorrow never come out of fear, depression, anger, etc.

According to verse II, Godly sorrow produces repentance and repentance produces a diligence that will clear you from the matter. The heart of repentance is to clear yourself from any further association with the sin that once held you.

GOOD WORKS

In the Book of Ephesians 2:8-10 we read, “⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

We are not saved by what we do! We are saved by grace! I want to make that clear. I believe that salvation is by grace through faith! But, God has ordained that the saved will walk in good works.

FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD

The Book of Ephesians clearly tells us that we are saved by grace through faith. The Book of James 2:14-26 gives us further insight to

this thought,

“¹⁴ What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,’ but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? ¹⁷ Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. ¹⁸ But someone will say, ‘You have faith, and I have works.’ Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. ¹⁹ You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe — and tremble! ²⁰ But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? ²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? ²² Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? ²³ And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ And he was called the friend of God. ²⁴ You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. ²⁵ Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? ²⁶ For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”

James emphatically teaches us that faith without works is dead. So, in keeping with our theme of “dead works” it is safe to say that dead faith produces dead works.

MORE ABOUT GOOD WORKS

There are no less than 18 passages of Scripture in the New Testament alone that exhort us to do good works. I want to point out a few of them to make our case for good works.

Hebrews 9:13-14, *“¹³ For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”*

The power of the blood of Jesus is to cleanse the conscience from

dead works to serve (good works) the living God. The dead works of religion are man's attempt to clean his own conscience. The power of the blood of Jesus takes away the sin, and clears the conscience of man, so that we may do good works for Him. We work because we *are* clean, not to *become* clean.

Jesus taught us about good works in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:14-16,

¹⁴ "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. ¹⁶ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

Letting our lights shine could rightly be interpreted as good works, especially if we interpret light as fellowship. John interpreted light as fellowship in I John 1:6-7,

⁶ If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."

As we fellowship with one another all should see that your works reflect that of Christian behavior, especially those who are "in the house".

In the Books of I and II Timothy there are five references to good works. In I Timothy 2:10 women are exhorted to good works. In 5:10 one of the conditions to qualify widows for church assistance was good works. In 5:25 good works could not be hidden. In 6:18, rich people should give to be rich in good works. And finally in II Timothy 3:16-17 Scripture equips us for good works.

The little Book of Titus has only three chapters but in those short pages we find five more references to good works. In 1:16 some professed to know God but denied Him through works even calling their works prostrate. In 2:7, we are taught to develop a pattern of good works. In

2:14, we must be zealous for good works. In 3:8 believers are instructed to maintain good works. And finally in 3:14 we are to learn the good work of meeting urgent needs.

We haven't come close to exhausting all of the verses concerning good works in the New Testament but I hope that you will see just how interwoven the thought of good works is with repentance from dead works. Hebrews 10:24, ²⁴ *And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works[...]*"

GOD WANTS ALL MEN TO REPENT

II Peter 3:9, ⁹ The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."

God wants us all to come to repentance and our repentance should clear us of dead works and bring us into good works.

CHAPTER 4:

FAITH DEFINED

If you recall there are two “foundational” doctrines. The first foundational doctrine is repentance from dead works. The second foundational doctrine is the doctrine of faith toward God. In the first chapter on faith we will focus on defining the word “faith”.

THE DEFINITION OF FAITH

The Greek word for faith is “*pistis*” and by every definition that I can find it means *to be persuaded*. STRONG’S EXHAUSTIVE CONCORDANCE OF THE BIBLE defines faith as: *persuasion, to convince by argument: agree, assure, believe, have confidence, make friend, obey, persuade, trust, yield*. ZODHIATES WORD STUDY DICTIONARY says faith is: *to win over, persuade, firm persuasion, conviction, and belief in the truth*. VINE’S EXPOSITORY DICTIONARY OF NEW TESTAMENT WORDS calls faith: *firm persuasion, a conviction based upon hearing. A firm conviction, producing a full acknowledgement of God’s revelation or truth*.

The common denominator of these definitions is “firm persuasion”. If we believe something to be a certain way, in order to be persuaded or believe differently, we must have a presentation of facts that changes our minds. Looking back to the first foundational doctrine we remember that repentance means to change the way we think. The work of repentance changes the mind; faith is the firm persuasion that follows repentance. Repentance changes the way we think, then faith changes the way we act.

REPENTANCE AND FAITH ALWAYS WORK TOGETHER

Repentance and faith will always work together. One without the other will always result in a faulty foundation that will surely fall. If

we change the way we think and never change our actions the result is a mental assent to God in word only. James 1:22 warns us about this, *“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”* James takes this a step further in chapter 2:26, *“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”*

On the other hand, if we change our actions and never change the way we think our efforts to “act” Christian will result in dead, religious works. Remember that the doctrine of repentance means to repent from dead works. When religious actions are attempted by a person with an unrepentant mind, that person will always live as a hypocrite. The actions give the appearance of a child of God while the mind is still firmly controlled by sin. Complying with religious requirements will not bring about the powerful work of remission from sins. It’s only a matter of time before the sinful mind will mingle with the religious work and a hypocrite is born.

THE BIBLE’S DEFINITION OF FAITH

The best way to define a biblical word is to let the Bible define itself. The book of Hebrews 11:1 defines faith this way, *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”* Let’s take a closer look at this passage and extract all of the understanding that we can to define faith.

The first word in this verse is “Now” and I believe it to be a key to understanding faith. Faith always operates in the present tense- in other words - right now. That which is past is history. I can look back on the past and draw inspiration for my present faith but I can not live in the past “...the just shall live by faith.” Neither can faith operate in the future. Faith actually brings the future into the present.

“Now faith is the substance...” The Greek word for substance is *“hupostastis”* which means *to stand under or support (under gird/a foundation)*. Faith is the foundation on which hope stands.

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for,” The Greek word for hope is *“elpis”* which means *to anticipate, to expect, or to confide*. The basis

of the Christians' hope is the resurrection from the dead. The gospel has three major parts the death, burial, and the resurrection of Christ. Not only has Jesus Christ risen from the dead, His great promise to us is that we too will rise from the dead! All of the Christian hope is based in the resurrection from the dead.

If you were to study the word "hope" in scripture you would find that it is consistently mentioned with the word "resurrection" or *a promise of eternity*. The references are too numerous to list here but I'll insert one from I Peter 1:3, "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*" Hope is in the future, but faith makes it come alive now!

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." The word evidence means proof. If you were to go on trial, the lawyers would look for eye witnesses who could testify for or against you. Once the proof or evidence is presented, the judge can then rule to convict or acquit. In the case of faith the evidence is not seen. Faith proves the unseen. You have never seen God, but faith proves that He exists as your life continually worships Him. The Bible promises great things. Faith lays hold to those promises and enjoys them in the present. When the promise says, "I'm saved", faith frees me from sin. When the promise says, "I'm healed", faith stands up and walks. When the promises of God are contrary to the way of the world, faith walks contrary, bearing the ridicule. Faith is the victory that overcomes the world!

Faith is the end result of repentance. When your mind is confronted with the powerful arguments from God's Word and you become fully persuaded your life will bring evidence that you walk with God.

CHAPTER 5:

FAITH DERIVED

Where does faith come from? In this chapter we will look at three origins of faith that teach us how to get and keep faith. Actually, the three origins of faith all come from one source - God. We will see how the Bible highlights God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit as each part of the Godhead takes their role in bringing us to faith and keeping us in faith.

IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD

Ephesians 2:8-10, *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”*

This passage is very plain concerning the source of faith, “it is the gift of God.” Let’s look a little closer at how God gives us this gift.

The word grace is the English translation of the Greek word “*charis*”. It’s where we get the word “charismatic” from. “*Charis*” comes from another Greek word, “*chairō*” which means *to be cheerful, calm, happy, joyful, or well off*. The word “*charis*” has a wide variety of uses in the Bible and can get quite complicated. So, to simplify we will look at what the word grace means when applied to salvation by grace through faith.

The term “by grace” implies that salvation comes by the means of grace. THE STRONG’S EXHAUSTIVE CONCORDANCE OF THE BIBLE defines “grace/*charis*” as *the divine influence upon the heart and its reflection in the life*. The cross of Christ is the best way to define God’s divine influence upon man. God’s holiness demands the judgment of death to everyone

who sins. God's love extends mercy and pardon. The cross is where holy judgment and holy love meet. Christ, the sinless Son of God, was brutally crucified satisfying God's judgment. Allowing Christ to be substituted in the place of man is the highest act of love and mercy. When this is revealed in the heart of a person, it makes us tremble at the thought of God's wrath, and then it melts us in the mercy of His love. Once we are so impressed by the cross, it will ultimately reflect God's glory on our outward countenance.

Salvation is another very complicated subject. The Greek word for saved is "sozo" and it means *to save, deliver, protect, heal, preserve, do well, or make whole*. Modern evangelism implies that we are saved from hell, but this is only true if we are first saved from sin. If we are saved from sin, it is sure that we will escape hell. On the other hand, if we are not saved from sin, neither will we be saved from hell.

The next term to look at is "through faith". The word "through" means *the channel of an act*. We remember from the last chapter that faith means "strong persuasion". Grace comes to man through the channel of the act of faith. The grace of God (the cross) has been there for over two thousand years, but it will only benefit us when we appropriate it into our lives through the channel of the act of faith.

If we use our new understanding of these words and terms Ephesians 2:8 would read, "Salvation from sin, comes to man through the act of being fully persuaded by the cross of Christ, changing the man to reflect God's glory."

Now we can finally answer the question, "Where does faith come from?" First, we need to know where it does not come from. It is not from within man neither is it produced by what man does. Faith is a gift or a present from God. This will better help us to understand how God gives us the gift of faith as we examine Jesus' role in getting faith to us.

HEARING THE WORD OF GOD

Romans 10:13-17, ⁴³For 'whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall

be saved.’¹⁴ How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?¹⁵ And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!’¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the gospel, For Isaiah says, ‘Lord, who has believed our report?’¹⁷ So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

To call upon the name of the Lord is more than just saying His name. It indicates a relationship with God through prayer in the name of Jesus. Because of the cross, God has rewarded Jesus by exalting His name above all others (Philippians 2:5-11). Acts 4:12 says it this way, “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

“How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?” A person must first believe before he can live a life calling on the name of the Lord in prayer or calling themselves by the name of the Lord as a Christian.

“How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?” You have to hear about the name of Jesus before you can believe and pray.

“And how shall they hear without a preacher?” God uses preachers to bring His message of salvation to people. Hearing means more than simply hearing the sounds of the preacher’s voice. Hearing means to listen then obey. When someone says, “I just won’t hear of it” the sound has already reached their ears but they have no desire or intention to do what was said.

“And how shall they preach unless they are sent?” God prepares His messengers and equips them with the gospel, which means “good news”. God’s preachers are to tell the good news of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. These preachers first prepare us to receive Jesus by demanding that we repent, or change the way we think, and then believe the report of the gospel. God has incorporated preachers into the plan of salvation. Every generation of souls is dependent on the obedience of God’s messengers to fearlessly preach God’s truth and

deliver souls from sin and death! But for all of that, many still do not obey the gospel delivered by God's servants, prompting Isaiah to cry out, "*Lord who has believed our report?*" This often reflects the heart of every honest preacher of the word who works tirelessly to get the message out, often with little fruit to show for it.

Romans 10:17, "*So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*"

Finally we get to the key point of Jesus' role in getting faith to us. Jesus is the Word of God and faith comes by not only hearing but obeying the Word.

The Bible begins in Genesis 1:1-3,

"¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. ³ Then God said, 'let there be light'; and there was light."

Now let's look at how John's Gospel says the same thing in John 1:1-5,

"¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. ⁴ In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ And the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it."

Finally in John 1:14, "*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*"

The Apostle John says without doubt that Jesus is the Word of God. Faith comes when we hear and obey Jesus. This not only holds true for salvation, but also for daily living as a Christian. We need the daily bread of God's Word to keep us continually nourished in faith. As we develop our relationship with Jesus by learning to hear and obey Him, we will see our faith grow. If we neglect His Word we will lose faith.

PRAYING IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

Jude 20, *“But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit.”*

Last and certainly not least in the sources of faith, is the Holy Spirit. Just as we daily find faith through the Word of God, we also find faith praying in the Holy Spirit. The Word and Prayer are like a two cylinder engine. Prayer is one cylinder, and the Word of God is the other. As prayer and the Word compress in each cylinder our faith is ignited and moves us with God.

Praying in the Holy Spirit is different from just saying prayers with your understanding. I Corinthians 14:14-15 says,

“¹⁴ For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. ¹⁵ What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.”

We have a duty to pray with our minds the things that we know to pray. But we also have a duty to pray with our spirit things we don't know or understand.

Romans 8:26-27, *“²⁶ Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. ²⁷ Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.”*

You see how the Holy Spirit helps us pray when we have gone as far as our understanding can take us. When you come to an end of all of your words and there is still so much more to express to God, the Holy Spirit brings us to the groaning language of tongues.

I Corinthians 12:2, *“² For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.”*

When we pray in tongues it is not for men even though men may hear us praying. Praying in tongues is the language of heart felt groaning that speaks mysteries too marvelous for the human mind. Jude tells us that the exercise of praying in the Holy Spirit builds us up on our most holy faith. So faith comes when we pray in tongues.

One last thought about getting faith from the Holy Spirit is found in I Corinthians 12:7-11,

“⁷ But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: ⁸ for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, ¹⁰ to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.”

Just as Ephesians said that faith is a gift from God, this passage teaches us that the Holy Spirit gives us the gift of faith.

CHAPTER 6:

FAITH'S FIRST DUTY

Now that we have defined faith and learned where faith comes from let's see what faith does. Faiths' first work is to justify sinners.

THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH

Habakkuk 2:I-4, ¹ *I will stand my watch and set myself on the rampart, and watch to see what He will say to me. And what I will answer when I am corrected.* ² *Then the Lord answered me and said: 'Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it.'* ³ *For the vision is yet for an appointed time; But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.* ⁴ *Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith."*

This is a curious passage of scripture for several reasons. First, the word "faith" is only used twice in the Old Testament and this is one of them. Second, this verse tells the vision of the entire New Testament, "*The just shall live by his faith.*" Third, this passage is repeated as a reference three times in the New Testament.

God told Habakkuk to, "*Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it.*" I have heard many sermons on "vision" in my life, and have preached quite a few of them myself. I'm sad to say that many well meaning preachers (including myself) have used this passage to promote the vision of their local churches. Instead of writing the vision that God gave us, we make up our own vision and put it in booklets and on banners and have everyone "running with the vision". I have been determined to run with *His* vision ever since He revealed this to me.

Notice that God's vision is for "*an appointed time.*" God appointed a specific time when this vision would speak, "*...at the end it will speak, and it will not lie.*" God's vision was appointed to speak to men in the end times. He also emphasized that His vision "*will not lie.*" The Old Testament records many times through the prophets that there were some prophets who spoke a vision from their own hearts. Hear what Jeremiah 23:16 says, "*Do not listen to the word of the prophets who prophesy to you. They make you worthless; they speak a vision of their own heart, not from the mouth of the Lord.*" Many so-called "visions" today are no more than the visions of a man's heart. Their visions are a lie.

God's vision for the New Testament is written plainly, "*Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith.*" Pride is the arch-enemy of God's vision. "*Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him. . .*" Pride seeks to lift a person up; a proud man is all about self-exaltation. The Bible says in James 4:6, "*God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.*" Again in James 4:10, "*But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: 'Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.'*" Pride can find its way into anyone, but God is willing to give "*more grace.*" When we humble ourselves, we become candidates for His grace. If we lift ourselves up, we are proud, and we become the enemies of God. If God chooses to lift you up, stay humble and be sure to give Him the glory.

Now let's get to the heart of God's vision, "*But the just shall live by his faith.*" The "just" is referring to those who have been justified or made right by faith in Jesus. The word "just" comes from the Hebrew word "*tsaddiyq*" meaning *to be made right in a moral sense. To cleanse, clear self, be righteous, justified.* The words "just" and "right" mean essentially the same thing.

When faith enters the heart of a sinner it produces a powerful transformation, making us free from the guilt and power of sin. All of this starts at the cross. First a sinner realizes their sin and the certain judgment of eternal death due to sin. Then, God reveals His judgment and mercy at the cross. Next, the sinner believes for the first time that Jesus' death is the only antidote for sin and by faith believes that the blood of Jesus satisfies God's wrath and judgment. Then he/she can

hear heavens' gavel fall, and the voice of God will resound in their heart, as they clearly and distinctly hear God declare them, "**Not guilty!**" There is no greater liberation than when **God** confirms in the heart of a sinner that they have been justified by faith.

What I just described is the initial introduction into justification by faith. But the vision does not stop there. The vision says, "*. . . the just shall live by faith.*" It does not say the just get saved by faith, then stop. It says that the just *live* by faith. We can only live in the present. We may recall the past or consider the future, but we are only alive right now! Remember in chapter 4 we learned that Hebrews II:I defines faith this way, "*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*" Faith only works **now**. God's vision for the New Testament is to redeem sinners by grace (the cross) through faith. Once redeemed, His people should live by faith every day. We should think by faith, talk by faith, walk by faith — **we are the people of faith!**

As I said earlier, one of the peculiar features of this passage of scripture is that it is repeated three times in the New Testament. Let's examine in context how the early church applied this passage.

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IS REVEALED FROM FAITH TO FAITH

Romans I:16-19, ¹⁶ *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.* ¹⁷ *For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'* ¹⁸ *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,* ¹⁹ *because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them."*

The Apostle Paul refers here to the gospel of Christ (death, burial, and resurrection; I Corinthians 15:1-4). He calls the gospel the "*power of God to salvation*" Paul then says something very significant; in the gospel, "*the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith.*" The gospel reveals the righteousness of God. Then, God expects that the gospel would perpetuate itself. As His righteousness is revealed in a person that person is expected to reveal God's righteousness to another.

First let's look at what is meant by the phrase "*the righteousness of God.*" This is an often repeated phrase in the New Testament and many times we read over it without actually understanding what it means.

Romans 3:19-26, ¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. ²⁰ Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. ²¹ But now the **righteousness of God** apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²² even the **righteousness of God** through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate **His righteousness**, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, ²⁶ to demonstrate at the present time **His righteousness**, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."

The law makes everyone guilty in God's sight. God reveals "His Righteousness" at the cross by substituting His innocent Son in the place of sinful man. Man then becomes righteous when by faith we are justified by the blood of Jesus. II Corinthians 5:21 puts it another way, "*For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*"

When God reveals His righteousness in a person He then expects that person to reveal His righteousness to others, in word and in deed. This is the "just living by faith". God's wrath is poured out on those who suppress His righteousness. Romans 1:19-32 goes on to tell us how God judges those who have been partakers of His righteousness and suppress it through unrighteous living. Those people will begin a downward spiral into moral decline that will make them worse than they were before. God blesses obedience to the gospel, but He harshly judges disobedience.

NO ONE IS JUSTIFIED BY THE LAW

Let's look at the second use of Habakkuk 2:I-4 in the New Testament.

Galatians 3:10-14, ⁴⁰ *For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.'* ¹¹ *But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for 'the just shall live by faith.'* ¹² *Yet the law is not of faith, but 'the man who does them shall live by them.'* ¹³ *Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree'),* ¹⁴ *that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."*

Here the Apostle Paul has written a scathing rebuke to the religious Galatians for the error of mixing Christianity with the Old Testament law and circumcision. This is why he emphasizes the curse of the law in this passage. Actually, Paul is saying the same thing in Galatians that he said in Romans 1:16-19 with one point added. Verse 14 says, "...that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." The Holy Spirit is the seal of the promise. When we become the children of Abraham through faith in Jesus Christ, God seals us with the Holy Spirit. The vision of the New Testament is to live a life justified by faith in Jesus and to be daily filled with the promise of the Holy Spirit. The Galatians were becoming demonized by mixing the Old Covenant religious works with the New Testament, causing the moral decline that Romans warned us about.

DO NOT DRAW BACK

Now let's see the final use of Habakkuk's vision in the New Testament.

Hebrews 10:36-39, ³⁶ *For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:* ³⁷ *'For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry.'* ³⁸ *Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in*

him.’³⁹ But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.”

The final use of Habakkuk 2:I-4 is an exhortation to continue to live by faith. If you were to read Hebrews chapters 10-11 you would see that surrounding the thought of “*the just shall live by faith*” is first, a re-emphasizing of what the New Testament is, followed in chapter 11 by one encouraging example of faith after another.

The stern warning that we find here is that if you draw back God has no pleasure in you.

James 4:6-10, “⁶ But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’⁷ Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.⁸ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.⁹ Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.¹⁰ Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.”

This passage teaches us that in order to draw near to God we must humble ourselves. This gives us a better understanding of what it would mean to draw back. Humility draws near to God, pride draws back from Him. If we draw back, we will wind up in a certain perdition or destruction of all that God started in you. Now, and in the world to come!

Verse 36 of Hebrews 10 tells us that there is a promise of reward “after” we do the will of God. This can be interpreted at least two ways. First, if we will obey Him we will daily receive the Holy Spirit of grace. Second, if we obey Him we will ultimately attain to the resurrection from the dead and eternal life with God.

CHAPTER 7:

FAITH'S DERIVATIVES

In the first three chapters concerning faith we first defined faith, second found where faith comes from and third learned about faith's first duty. We learned that the first duty of faith was to justify or make us right with God. In this chapter we will learn about some of the other things that faith does. Faith has many benefits. When we understand what faith is, and where faith comes from, we can understand the things that come from faith.

DIVINE HEALING: MATTHEW 9:27-31

Matthew 9:27-31, “²⁷ When Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, ‘Son of David, have mercy on us!’ ²⁸ And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, ‘Do you believe that I am able to do this?’ They said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord.’ ²⁹ Then He touched their eyes, saying, ‘According to your faith let it be to you.’ ³⁰ And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, saying, ‘See that no one knows it.’ ³¹ But when they had departed, they spread the news about Him in all that country.”

Think about the effort that these two men had to put forth in order to follow Jesus. Better yet, put a blindfold on and try to follow someone around. Only then you could better appreciate their effort. It would certainly be easier for someone with this handicap to stay in a comfort zone, but faith prompted them to follow, crying out for mercy. They followed Him uninvited into the house that Jesus was visiting and they came to Him. Faith will always seek Jesus out., There they stood before Jesus and He asked them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” and their immediate response was, “Yes, Lord.” It seems that their efforts

to this point already answered the question, but Jesus requires words and deeds; not one or the other - both. Finally, He laid His hands on their eyes and said, *“According to your faith let it be to you.”* What a wonderful story! Two blind men healed by faith in Jesus. Their work of faith brought them to Jesus and restored their sight! Yet for all of that, when He commanded them not to tell anyone, they disobeyed. They had faith to get healed but no faith to be obedient.

This is only one of many New Testament stories of people in desperation who, after seeking Jesus, heard the words, *“According to your faith let it be to you.”*

In Mark 5:25-34 a woman with an issue of blood pressed through the crowd and heard, *“Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace and be healed of your affliction.”*

In Luke 17:12-19, ten lepers cried out to Jesus for mercy. He told them to go show themselves to the priests and on the way they were cleansed. One of the men, a Samaritan, turned back to Jesus and began to glorify God. Jesus said to him, *“Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well.”*

In Acts 3:1-16, Peter and John healed the man at the gate of the temple and he began to leap for joy. The apostles then told the wondering crowd, *“And His name (Jesus), through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.”*

Psalm 103:1-3, *“Bless the Lord, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases. . .”* We should always remember that God not only forgives sins but He also heals diseases. The blood that Jesus shed for the forgiveness of sins is the same blood that heals our bodies. Healing is in the atonement!

DELIVERANCE: MARK 9:14-29

Mark 9:14-29, ⁴⁴ *And when He came to the disciples, He saw a great*

multitude around them, and scribes disputing with them.¹⁵ Immediately, when they saw Him, all the people were greatly amazed, and running to Him, greeted Him.¹⁶ And He asked the scribes, 'What are you discussing with them?'¹⁷ Then one of the crowd answered and said, 'Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit.¹⁸ And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not.'¹⁹ He answered him and said, 'O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me.'²⁰ Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth.²¹ So He asked his father, 'How long has this been happening to him?' And he said, 'From childhood.²² And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.'²³ Jesus said to him, 'If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.'²⁴ Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, 'Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!'²⁵ When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, 'Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!'²⁶ Then the spirit cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, 'He is dead.'²⁷ But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose.²⁸ And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, 'Why could we not cast it out?'²⁹ So He said to them, 'This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.'"

Jesus was so angered with His disciples' inability to cast out this demon that He called them "faithless." When the demon saw Jesus it manifested by throwing the boy into violent convulsions. At Jesus' prompting the man told Him all of the history of his sons' tormented life. Then, the father asked for Jesus to help them. Jesus said, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes." What a wonderful promise from Jesus, unlimited possibilities "if" we believe. However, many times "if" is the highest hurdle in the race. "If" always implies conditions. This boys' deliverance was conditional on the dads' ability to believe. This should put the pressure on all parents as we realize our children are depending on us to believe! The man cried out with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" What a revelation - faith and unbelief happening

at one time. The desperate confession of this father moved Jesus to a speedy response that set his son free forever!

RAISING THE DEAD

Raising the dead is another benefit or derivative of faith. In John chapter II, we learn the story of Jesus' friend Lazarus. When Jesus heard the news that Lazarus was sick, instead of immediately going to heal him, He waited. He waited so long that Lazarus died. By the time that Jesus arrived at Lazarus' house he'd already been dead for four days. When Lazarus' sisters heard the news that Jesus had come, Martha went out to meet Him but Mary stayed in the house.

Martha's first statement to Jesus was an accusation mixed with some measure of faith. *"Now Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever You ask God, God will give You.'"* Maybe this gives us some insight as to why Mary did not come out to meet Jesus; they thought it was His fault that Lazarus was dead. Mary had the reputation of being one who liked to sit at the feet of Jesus (Luke 10:38-40) while Martha was the anxious one. How often we find ourselves just like Mary, we worship Jesus when everything is going our way then we blame and ignore Him when things go wrong.

Jesus told Martha, *"Your brother will rise again."* Martha's response showed good theology but lacked faith, *"I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."* I like to call this futuristic faith. Martha had faith that there was a future day appointed when the dead will rise, and there is. But Jesus was trying to teach her, and us, that the power of the resurrection is here in the present, if we will believe. Jesus' answer cleared the matter, He said, *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"* It's one thing to believe in a future resurrection because it requires no proof, but it's another thing to believe for a present resurrection. Jesus was trying to get Martha to believe now. She proved she did when she said, *"Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."* Now Martha understood that the resurrection was not an event, the resurrection is a person and The

Resurrection is Jesus! With that they went to the tomb and Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead!

UNITY: EPHESIANS 4:1-16

Ephesians 4:1-16, ¹“ I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, ² with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, ³ endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. ⁷ But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. ⁸ Therefore He says: ‘When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men.’ ⁹ (Now this, ‘He ascended’—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰ He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) ¹¹ And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³ till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; ¹⁴ that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, ¹⁵ but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

In verse three we find the phrase, “unity of the Spirit,” again in verse 13, “unity of the faith.” The word unity means *oneness or unanimity or even unanimous*. Isn’t it strange that the Bible speaks of unity while modern Christianity is divided by over 22,000 denominations? Maybe if we understood Ephesians 4:1-16 we could stay out of the denominational divisions and work for the unity of the faith.

The “five-fold ministry” found in verse eleven refers to the gifts of

apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers given to the church by Christ at His ascension into heaven. In the 1990's we had lots of discussion concerning the definition of these ministries - in particular the apostles and prophets. I appreciate the clarity that came to these gifts during that time but we failed to apply them properly. We just changed the pastors names to prophet then to bishop and then to apostle. These gifts will never be understood in the old wineskin of the traditional congregational church no matter what the denomination is. When these gifts are employed in the relational house church structure of worship and church planting we can fully appreciate their unifying power.

The five fold ministry has only one objective which is “edifying the body of Christ”. The body of Christ is edified or built one of two ways; first, by personal maturity, second by adding new people to the body. The five fold ministry equips every believer to be involved in the edification of the body.

The results of proper equipping are found in verse thirteen; first, unity of the faith, second, knowledge of the Son of God, third, grown up Christians who act like Jesus. When believers are trained in a proper New Testament environment they learn to practice their faith relationally, resulting in love that births new Christians and new Churches!

Jesus prayed for unity right before He was crucified in the gospel of John 17:20-23,

“²⁰ I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; ²¹ that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. ²² And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: ²³ I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.”

Unity begins when God and Jesus come into a person in the form of the Holy Spirit and that person becomes one with God. Those

who have been reconciled to God will work tirelessly to be at one with others who have experienced the miraculous new birth. **Faith's greatest challenge is not to walk with God but to walk with God's people!**

CHAPTER 8:

FAITH'S DIRECTION

FAITH TOWARD GOD

Mark II:12-14, ¹²“Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry. ¹³And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. ¹⁴In response Jesus said to it, ‘Let no one eat fruit from you ever again.’ And His disciples heard it.”

Mark II: 20-26, ²⁰“Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. ²¹And Peter, remembering, said to Him, ‘Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away.’ ²²So Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Have faith in God. ²³For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. ²⁴Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them. ²⁵And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. ²⁶But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.”

Remember that the doctrine we are studying is “faith toward God”. Faith must be in the proper direction. As you will see in this chapter it is easy to direct our faith into things other than God. We will also learn about one of the biggest obstacles to faith toward God.

AN UNUSUAL SERIES OF EVENTS

In Mark II: 20-26 we find an unusual series of events. Jesus is leaving

Bethany on his way to Jerusalem. On the way He was hungry and saw a fig tree. As He approached the tree to eat of its fruit He found none, so He cursed the tree with barrenness. Then He entered Jerusalem, went into the temple and threw a righteous fit! He turned over the tables of the money changers, and the seats of those selling animal sacrifices, and would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. His sermon that day was very short, *“Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations’? But you have made it a ‘den of thieves.’”* The next day, as they were passing by the cursed fig tree, His disciples saw that the tree had withered. This is where our study begins.

THE CURSE OF THE FIG TREE

First, let’s examine the fig tree. Why did Jesus curse it? It wasn’t time for figs but He cursed it anyway. It doesn’t seem fair or sensible. So what is the lesson here?

In the book of Genesis chapter 2:7-3:24, we find the story of Adam and Eve. Before Adam and Eve sinned they were in the Garden of Eden, naked and not ashamed. The only rule they had was not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that was in the middle of the garden. One day, the serpent (the devil) tempted Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit and she did. Then, she offered some to Adam, and he too ate of the fruit. What they did next ties their story to the cursed fig tree. In Genesis 3:7, *“Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.”* The fig leaf was the material that man used to attempt to hide his sin from God. The only thing that Jesus ever cursed was man’s attempt to cover his sins!

In chapter 3:21, *“Also for Adam and his wife the Lord God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.”* Where did God get the skins to make the coats for Adam and Eve? He (God) killed two animals and used their skins to cover Adam and Eve’s nakedness. Imagine the impact on Adam and Eve of watching the first bloodshed on the earth as two innocent animals were killed for something they had done. The cross of Christ should have an even greater impact upon us. God sacrificed His Son for

something that we did. The innocent died for the guilty. Our sins are not covered unless they are covered by God. God curses any attempt of man to cover his own sins.

THE ZEAL OF MY HOUSE HAS EATEN ME UP

Back in Mark II Jesus cursed the fig tree, then went to the temple and drove out the money changers. After this, they see the withered fig tree, which Jesus uses to illustrate His point of faith toward God. It is so easy to use religious activity to cover our sins. Have faith toward God, not toward religious activity. You can go to church, get baptized, join Sunday school, sing in the choir, give money, serve in programs, even be the preacher and not have faith toward God. All of our busyness can become the objects of our faith. We can believe in a lot of things other than God. In John's account of driving the moneychangers from the temple he writes in chapter 2:17, "*Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up.*" Being zealous for religious activity can actually devour Jesus.

MOVING MOUNTAINS

The true lessons of faith toward God start with moving mountains. The mountain represents obstacles in our lives that block our relationship with God. The sheer size of the obstacle has an overwhelming affect on us that could easily divert our faith from God (the solution), to the mountain (the problem). Jesus tells us to confront the mountain and speak to it without doubt. Doubt is a sign of fear. Don't be afraid — **God is bigger than your mountain!** The mountain must obey the believing heart.

In verse 24, we find the heart of the message, "*Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.*" Prayer is the pinnacle our relationship with God. We are not speaking to the air, we are praying to the living God. The only thing that can interfere is if we have allowed sin in our life and tried to cover it with religious activity. Religion is the arch enemy of our relationship with God. We can get so religiously busy that we lose our prayer privileges. Christians should pray with power, but religious

prayers become pathetic instead of powerful. God guarantees believing prayer will be answered!

FIVE WAYS TO BE OFFENDED

Verses 25-26 of Mark II, really define the mountain for us — **unforgiveness**. There are five ways to be offended and if offences go unresolved our prayers will be unanswered. The five offences are:

I) We can offend God.

Matthew 16:21-23, ²¹ *From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.* ²² *Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, 'Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!'* ²³ *But He turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.'*"

Peter offended Jesus by trying to move Him off of His destiny with the cross. Jesus prophesied of God's will for Him and Peter was trying to undo it with a sentimental argument.

2) God can offend us.

Matthew 11:1-6, ¹ *Now it came to pass, when Jesus finished commanding His twelve disciples, that He departed from there to teach and to preach in their cities.* ² *And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples ³ and said to Him, 'Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?'* ⁴ *Jesus answered and said to them, 'Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: ⁵ The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. ⁶ And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.'*"

Jesus' works were so outside of the religious norm that they were offensive to John. John was actually wondering if he made a mistake when he declared that Jesus was the Lamb of God. Jesus encouraged him not to be, "...offended because of Me." We must take care not to be

offended in what Jesus does or in what He requires us to do.

3) We can offend people.

Matthew 18:1-7, ⁴¹ *At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, 'Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, ³ and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ⁵ Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me. ⁶ Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. ⁷ Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!'"*

If we cause others to sin we have offended them.

4) People can offend us.

Matthew 18:15-20, ⁴¹⁵ *Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶ But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' ¹⁷ And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. ¹⁸ Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹ Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."*

We must take care to remove every offence between us and others. If not properly dealt with, offence will destroy your relationship with others and with God.

5) We can offend ourselves.

Matthew 18:8-10, ⁴⁸ *If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off*

and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire.⁹ And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.¹⁰ Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.¹¹ For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.”

One of the most overlooked areas of offences is self inflicted. We are offended by our own actions and then we blame others for the things that we caused ourselves.

FAITH TO FORGIVE

Jesus repeatedly taught His disciples the lesson concerning the continual work of forgiveness.

Luke 17:1-6, “¹ Then He said to the disciples, ‘It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come!’² It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.³ Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.⁴ And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, ‘I repent,’ you shall forgive him.’⁵ And the apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith.’⁶ So the Lord said, ‘If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.”

Notice the disciple’s response when Jesus taught them to forgive continually, “*Increase our faith.*” The disciples thought that this was much more than they could do, and asked for more faith. Jesus then swiftly corrected them with a message similar to the one of moving mountains, only this time He said to move a mulberry tree (a task equally as difficult as moving a mountain). The lesson here is that we have enough faith, but it must be in the right direction, “toward God”. If all that we can believe is how we have been wronged, or how someone has wronged us, then our faith is misdirected. Instead, we should believe how big God is, and how great His mercy toward us is, then

everything gets into proper perspective. That's when the mountains and the mulberry trees will move!

THE UNFORGIVING SERVANT

Another illustration of our great need to keep our hearts free from offences is found in Matthew 18:20-35,

²⁰ 'For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.'²¹ Then Peter came to Him and said, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?'²² Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.'²³ Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants.²⁴ And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.²⁵ But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made.²⁶ The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, "Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all."²⁷ Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.²⁸ But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, "Pay me what you owe!"²⁹ So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you all."³⁰ And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt.³¹ So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done.³² Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, "You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me.³³ Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?"³⁴ And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.³⁵ So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."

This story is really the picture of every Christian's life. God forgave us of a debt (sin) that none of us could ever repay. Then the trial comes when someone owes us something how will we treat them? Will we

show them the same mercy that God showed us? Or will we demand justice? Our Father will throw everyone who refuses to forgive into the tormentor's prison if we, *from the heart*, do not forgive our brother.

THE TORMENTOR'S PRISON

I want to show you something concerning the idea of being turned over to the tormentors or the tormentor's prison. In I John 4:17-19 we read,

“¹⁷ Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. ¹⁸ There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. ¹⁹ We love Him because He first loved us.”

Fear involves torment! The tormentor's prison is the place where God delivers you over to your worst nightmares. The only deliverance is when we, through perfect love, cast out fear. Perfect love is a love that will continue to have mercy. This kind of love keeps our hearts free from all unforgiveness. We can only love like this when we have first been loved by Him. As His mercy is renewed in us daily, we too should show mercy to all. As He is, so are we in this world.

Isn't this the same way that Jesus taught us to pray?

Matthew 6:9-13, “⁹ In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. ¹⁰ Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread. ¹² And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors. ¹³ And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”

God will only forgive us as much as we will forgive others. We will be judged by our own judgments.

CHAPTER 9:

INTRODUCTION TO BAPTISMS, THE BAPTISM INTO CHRIST

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE, NOT A JEWISH CEREMONY

The doctrine of baptisms, found in Hebrews 6:2, is an unusual phrase. This is the only time the word baptism is used in a plural sense. The Greek word used here is “*baptismos*”, which is usually used in connection with Jewish ceremonial washings. Many of our modern translations, such as the New American Standard, use the term, “instructions about washings” instead of the word “baptisms”. The King James and New King James use the term “baptisms”. The New International Version merges both thoughts by saying “instructions about baptisms”. The STRONG’S CONCORDANCE, ZODHIATES WORD STUDY DICTIONARY, and VINE’S EXPOSITORY DICTIONARY all suggest that we should never confuse the word “*baptismos*” with “*baptizo*”.

I agree with these rules of interpretation except in the case of Hebrews 6:2. In every use of the term “*baptismos*” in the scriptures, it is used in context of ceremonial washing except in Hebrews 6:2.

Hebrews 6:1-3, ^a *Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,* ² *of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.* ³ *And this we will do if God permits.”*

Repentance, faith, baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment are Christian doctrines not Jewish

traditions! All scholars agree that the term “*baptismos*” is taken from the root word “*baptizo*”, which is the root word for all uses of the term “baptism”. Baptism means *to overwhelm with a fluid or make fully wet*. In this study, we will apply the word baptisms (“*baptismos*”) in the sense of Christian baptism, not Jewish ceremonies.

ONE BAPTISM

As I said before, this is the only time in scripture that the word baptism is used in a plural sense. Before I begin a discussion on the idea of baptisms let’s solve a scriptural problem before it happens.

Ephesians 4:4-6, *“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”*

Here the scripture teaches that there is “one baptism”, yet Hebrews 6:2 uses baptisms in the plural. The scripture also teaches that there is one God, yet Jesus is called God, the Holy Spirit is called God and God the Father is called God. We never suggest that Christians serve three gods, we serve One God. Neither do I suggest that there are many baptisms, but one baptism, which continually immerses us deeper into God throughout our journey with the Lord. I like to use the phrase “progressive order of baptism”.

WHAT ARE WE BEING BAPTIZED WITH?

Another problem that I want to address concerning baptisms is not a scriptural problem, but a traditional problem. Whenever the word “baptize” is mentioned, we are traditionally conditioned to associate that word with water. Most teachings concerning water baptism say that the water is “symbolic” of our old man being buried with Christ and raised from the dead. We are so used to this symbolic ritual that we have made symbolic Christians. I am not suggesting that there isn’t scriptural ground for water baptism. However, what I want to focus on in this teaching about baptisms is not what we are symbolically baptized into, but what we are actually being baptized into.

BAPTISM INTO CHRIST

Galatians 3:26-27, ²⁶ *For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.* ²⁷ *For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.* ²⁸ *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.* ²⁹ *And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."*

The Baptism into Christ is the all encompassing "one baptism". During the course of the next six chapters we will learn the specifics of our baptism into Christ which are:

- 1) The Baptism into Christ
- 2) The Baptism into Christ's Mind (Repentance)
- 3) The Baptism into Christ's Name
- 4) The Baptism into Christ's Death
- 5) The Baptism into Christ's Spirit
- 6) The Baptism into Christ's Body (The Church)
- 7) The Baptism into Christ's Cup (Suffering)

All of the promises of the New Testament are conditional on us being "in Christ" or "in Him". The entire Christian life is a continual baptism, as we are immersed deeper and deeper into Christ. Let's examine exactly what we are being baptized into.

ANOINTED

The English word "Christ" is translated from the Greek word "*Christos*" which means anointed. "*Christos*", is derived from the root word "*chrío*", which means *to smear or rub with oil, or to be consecrated for service to God.*

I want to examine three Old Testament passages quoted in the New

Testament that use the word “*Christos*.” These passages also serve as proof that Jesus is the Messiah, the anointed King of Israel.

THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE HAS ANOINTED ME

The first passage that I want to study is found in Luke 4:14-21 and is a direct quote from Isaiah 61:1-3.

Luke 4:14-21, ¹⁴ *Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region. ¹⁵ And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all. ¹⁶ So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. ¹⁷ And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: ¹⁸ ‘The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; ¹⁹ To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.’ ²⁰ Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. ²¹ And He began to say to them, ‘Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.’”*

Verse 18, is where we find our word “*Christos*”, “*The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me. . .*” The Holy Spirit is the anointing.

Jesus was just baptized by John the Baptist, and filled with the Holy Spirit. Then, the Holy Spirit led Him into the wilderness, where for forty days He fasted and faced incredible temptations from the devil. Even though His flesh was at its weakest because of the fasting, the Holy Spirit brought Him through the trial with a great victory over the devil.

As surely as the anointing of the Holy Spirit brought Jesus through His trials, He will bring us through ours. Truly, the Holy Spirit is the “Kingdom Come” and as we are immersed into Christ’s anointing we

too will win our victory over the devil!

WHY DID THE NATIONS RAGE...?

The second passage that I want us to look at is found in Acts 4:24-31 and is a direct quote from Psalm 2:1-3.

Acts 4:24-31, ²⁴ *So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: 'Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them,* ²⁵ *who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: "Why did the nations rage, And the people plot vain things?"* ²⁶ *The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the LORD and against His Christ."* ²⁷ *"For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together* ²⁸ *to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.* ²⁹ *Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word,* ³⁰ *by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.'* ³¹ *And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness."*

The apostles Peter and John were just threatened by the Jewish leaders for their role in healing a crippled man at the Gate Beautiful leading to the temple. The Jews were angry that they were teaching that Jesus was resurrected from the dead, and were accrediting the healing to the Name of Jesus. This infuriated the Jews because they were responsible for Jesus' death and the apostles were holding them to it. After being threatened, Peter and John went back and reported all of this to the church and a powerful prayer meeting broke out with Psalm 2:1-3 being the catalyst for the prayer.

There are two mentions of "Christos" in this passage, the first is, "And the rulers were gathered together Against the LORD and against His Christ." The religious rulers were against the Lord and His Anointed one!

The second mention is immediately after the first one, "For truly

against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.” Not only were the religious leaders against the Lord’s Anointed One, but so were the political leaders. They didn’t even realize that they were fulfilling God’s plan and purpose when they killed Jesus.

The disciples all drew great strength from this passage in the face of persecution. The religious and political forces that killed Jesus were now threatening to silence them by fear, but they would not be silenced. On the contrary their prayer was, “Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.” Not only did they refuse to be silenced, they were praying for more boldness.

This is how it is when we are being baptized into Christ, we will draw our strength from His example. I Peter 2:21-25,

“²¹ For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: ²² ‘Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth’; ²³ who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; ²⁴ who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed. ²⁵ For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.”

ANOINTED WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS

The third and final passage that I want us to see is found in Hebrews 1:8-9 and is quoted directly from Psalm 45:6-7,

Hebrews 1:8-9, ⁶⁸ *But to the Son He says: ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. ⁹ You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions.’”*

The oil of gladness is the anointing. This is the Holy Spirit. Notice why He received this anointing - because He loved righteousness and hated lawlessness, so God gave Him this powerful anointing.

God's throne is forever established on righteousness and so also is the scepter (rod) of His authority.

As we are being immersed into His authority, we too will learn to love righteousness and hate lawlessness. His rod of chastening will come upon us many times as we learn obedience to Him, but afterward we too will be sealed with the oil of gladness.

IN HIM AMEN

II Corinthians 1:19-22, ¹⁹ *For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us—by me, Silvanus, and Timothy—was not Yes and No, but in Him was Yes.* ²⁰ *For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.* ²¹ *Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God,* ²² *who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.”*

As I said earlier in this chapter, all of God's promises are conditional on us being “in Him”, that is, “in Christ”. When we are “in Christ”, all of His promises are absolute and Amen!

Now I want you to see that the same anointing that was on Christ is given to us through the Holy Spirit, “*Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.*” The apostle Paul was telling the Corinthians that they had the same Holy Spirit he had. They were all being established “in Christ” together through the anointing and seal of the Holy Spirit. May we walk with the same character as Jesus, and the Apostles, and our predecessors in the early church, as we are baptized into Christ.

CHAPTER 10:

BAPTISM INTO CHRIST'S MIND (REPENTANCE)

DEFINING REPENTANCE

The first use of the word “baptism” in the Bible is found in the New Testament and is used in the context of a “baptism of repentance”. The word “baptism” means *to cover with a fluid or to make fully wet*. The word “repent” means *to change the way you think*. We covered the word “repent” thoroughly in chapter two, so I won’t belabor the definition here. However, I do want to point out that the baptism of repentance is *not* different from the foundation of repentance that we studied in chapters 2-3. Throughout our Christian walk, our minds will repeatedly be baptized into the mind of Christ.

JOHN’S BAPTISM

The first mention of the baptism of repentance in the Bible is found in Matthew 3:1-6,

“¹ In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, ² and saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!’ ³ For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.’” ⁴ Now John himself was clothed in camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵ Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him ⁶ and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.”

Notice that John became known as John the Baptist because as he preached his message he baptized the people who believed him.

SPECIFICS OF JOHN'S BAPTISM

I want to point out several things concerning the baptism of repentance in this passage:

First, John the Baptist's message was, "*Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*" Maybe it would be better stated this way, "Change your way of thinking because God's kingdom is close enough to touch". The coming of the kingdom is the reason, or catalyst, for changing your thinking concerning the things of God.

Second, "*Prepare the way of the Lord...*" Repentance makes us ready to receive the Lord. Repentance means that they changed their minds about the way they were living when they heard that the Lord was near.

Third, "*...they were baptized by him in the Jordan...*" In Matthew 3:11, John the Baptist says, "*I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance...*" John baptized with water in the Jordan River. The water was symbolic for the "washing of water by the Word (Ephesians 5:26). The actual baptism was that men's minds were baptized in God's truths. The term "brainwashing" could never be used in a more truthful context.

Fourth, "*...confessing their sins.*" Externally washing them in water did not prepare them to receive the Lord, rather, the internal cleansing by confessing their sins did. Remember that the water was only symbolic. The message of the kingdom was what their minds were actually being baptized into. Hearing the news that God's kingdom was near prompted them to confess their sins to prepare to meet the Lord.

THE FRUIT OF REPENTANCE

If we were to read further in the gospel of Matthew 3:7-10 we will find another truth concerning repentance.

Matthew 3:7-10, *"^{c7} But when he saw many of the Pharisees and*

Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, 'Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?'⁸ Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance,⁹ and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.¹⁰ And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.'"

Repentance bears fruit, or evidence in your life that you have changed your way of thinking.

REPENTANCE IS NOT...

Before we see what the fruit of repentance is, let's look at what it is not — *religion!* When John the Baptist warned the Jews not to trust in their kinship to Abraham, it would be today's equivalent of saying "Do not trust Jesus for salvation". Could you imagine how they would treat a preacher today if he said that Jesus does not save? That's just how the religious viewed what John was preaching. With all of their religious traditions and rituals, which they practiced zealously, John said, "You need to change to be eligible for God's kingdom." I believe that there are many today equally as zealous for the church's traditions and rituals, who should repent to become eligible for God's kingdom. John said it well when he called the religious crowd a "brood of vipers", because religion is a spiritual snakebite that kills many.

REPENTANCE IS...

Now let's look at what the fruit of repentance is. In Luke's account of John the Baptist, he says in chapter 3:7-14,

"⁷ Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, 'Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?'⁸ Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.⁹ And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut

down and thrown into the fire.’¹⁰ So the people asked him, saying, ‘What shall we do then?’¹¹ He answered and said to them, ‘He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise.’¹² Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, ‘Teacher, what shall we do?’¹³ And he said to them, ‘Collect no more than what is appointed for you.’¹⁴ Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, ‘And what shall we do?’ So he said to them, ‘Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages.’”

The people, the tax collectors, and the soldiers all asked, “What shall we do?” Repentance requires **works!** This is why the “grace only” crowd hates the message of repentance. It messes up the tidy package of easy believism that bears no fruit of Divine change.

MORE FRUIT OF REPENTANCE

Another lesson on the fruit of repentance is found in II Corinthians 7:8-11,

“⁸ For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it. For I perceive that the same epistle made you sorry, though only for a while. ⁹ Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. ¹⁰ For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. ¹¹ For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter.”

Paul teaches us that there are two types of sorrow; godly and worldly. The sorrow of the world will kill you, godly sorrow will give you life. Notice that godly sorrow produces repentance. Once you repent, or change your mind, there is even more evidence when by your *actions* you clear yourself from whatever matter you were in need of repentance!

THE GOSPEL BEGINS WITH REPENTANCE

Another passage of scripture concerning repentance that I would like to discuss is Mark I:1-5,

¹ The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. ² As it is written in the Prophets: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You. ³ The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight."' ⁴ John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. ⁵ Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins."

Most scholars believe that Mark wrote the first gospel. The first verses of the first gospel begin with the message of repentance. The first part of the gospel is to repent. Any gospel that does not demand repentance is not Biblical.

PUBLIC CONFESSION OF SINS

The baptism of repentance has one more unique feature that I want to point out. When they were baptized unto repentance, they confessed their sins publicly. This is much different from today's salvation offers where the preachers ask everyone to bow their heads and close their eyes and even privately make Jesus their Savior. It's no wonder that today's "Christians" don't produce Biblical fruit. It's because they are not Biblical, which leaves us to wonder if they could be called Christian!

PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD

John's Baptism prepares the way of the Lord by baptizing the mind of the hearer in God's truth. The hearer then publicly confesses his/her sins, and bears fruit of their repentance. This prepares us to receive the Lord. Consider what the Apostle Paul asked the believers in Ephesus, in Acts 19:1-6,

¹ And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed

through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples ² he said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' So they said to him, 'We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.'³ And he said to them, 'Into what then were you baptized?' So they said, 'Into John's baptism.'⁴ Then Paul said, 'John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.'⁵ When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.⁶ And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied."

The baptism of repentance prepares us to be baptized into Jesus!

CHAPTER 11:

BAPTISM INTO CHRIST'S NAME

Our next chapter on baptisms is found in the “Great Commission”. This is the term that has been given to Jesus’ parting words to His disciples in Matthew 28:18-20,

“¹⁸ And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen.”

BAPTIZED INTO HIS IDENTITY

When we are baptized in the name of the Lord we are being baptized into all that His Name represents. We are being completely immersed into the identity of the Lord Jesus, who is the full expression of all of the godhead bodily here on earth. We are then to carry His image in the earth to bear witness of Him. When we are water baptized, it is our first confession to all that we are to be identified with Jesus from now on. We are being baptized into who He is, how He acts, what He does, and what He says. We are to walk, talk, and act like Jesus.

In many nations when someone is water baptized it causes immediate persecution. In other nations to be water baptized is socially accepted and has almost no effect. Most put the emphasis on being baptized in water. I would rather emphasize, that as we are discipled to obey His commandments we are being immersed into His name. When we disciple people to obey Jesus commandments, and they actually begin to live like Christ taught us to live, the symbol of water baptism pales in comparison to the actual life immersed into Jesus.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Jesus began the Great Commission by flatly stating that He had been given ALL authority over heaven and earth. The Apostle Paul was no doubt making reference to this when he said in Philippians 2:5-II,

⁶ Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. ⁹ Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹ and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Paul understood perfectly that because Jesus obeyed the Father, even when it killed Him on the cross, He was given the *Lordship* over heaven and earth. His name embodied His Lordship.

Think of products that have so dominated their fields that their name begins to be totally associated with the product. For instance we don't say “let's go get a soda” we say “let's go get a Coke”. We don't ask for a “cotton swab” we ask for a “Q-tip”. We don't ask for “an adhesive bandage strip” we ask for a “Band-aid”. Do you get the point? Jesus is so outstanding in the field of humanity that His name has been elevated above every name that is named. He is the model citizen of the kingdom of God. It is absolutely vital that all of His subjects bear His image in the earth to properly represent our *Lord!*

SIGNS AND WONDERS

Mark, in his gospel, also included the parting commission by Jesus to His disciples, but he gives us further insight into the Great Commission.

Mark 16:15-18, ¹⁵ *And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and*

preach the gospel to every creature. ¹⁶ He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. ¹⁷ And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; ¹⁸ they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

Consider this: does being immersed in water give a person power? I know many people who have been water baptized, yet they don't even have the power to live for Jesus, much less to do signs and wonders in His name.

I would caution here that Jesus also spoke of those who can do signs and wonders, but cannot live a Christian life.

Matthew 7:21-23, ²¹ Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. ²² Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ ²³ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”

This stern warning is given in the context of identifying false prophets. You see, there is power in the name of Jesus. Even though many are powerless to live the life of Jesus they learn to call on the power of Jesus' name. That in no way makes them Christian, it only proves that God did truly empower Jesus Name! Think of the potential power when a person lives his/her life as a reflection of Jesus, and has power to do the signs and wonders in His Name. This is the witness that we are commissioned by Jesus to have.

RADICAL LIFE-STYLE CHANGES

On the day of Pentecost, the Apostle Peter preached the first sermon that would begin the church age.

Acts 2:36-41, ³⁶ ‘Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.’

³⁷ Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' ³⁸ Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.' ⁴⁰ And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, 'Be saved from this perverse generation.' ⁴¹ Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them."

Peter's sermon climaxed on the point of two baptisms: first, repentance (see chapter 10), and second, the baptism in the name of Jesus Christ. Peter did not stop with the baptism of repentance, but encouraged the hearers to go deeper into the name of Jesus. Once they were baptized, it resulted in a new way of living as shown in Acts 2:42-47,

⁴² And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. ⁴³ Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, ⁴⁵ and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. ⁴⁶ So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved."

Radical lifestyle changes followed the baptism of repentance and the baptism into the name of Jesus.

SAMARITAN REVIVAL

In Acts 8:12-17, we see this baptism highlighted once again in the Samaritan revival, led by Philip the evangelist,

Acts 8:12-17, ⁴² But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. ¹³ Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and

signs which were done. ¹⁴ Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, ¹⁵ who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. ¹⁶ For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷ Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.”

In this passage we find that Philip baptized the believers in the name of the Lord Jesus, then the apostles were called in to confirm this by baptizing them in the Holy Spirit (we will cover this baptism in chapter 13).

CONVERSION OF SAUL

The conversion of Saul of Tarsus, whose name was later changed to the Apostle Paul, gives us more insight into the baptism in the name of the Lord.

Acts 9:17-19, ^{“17} And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, ‘Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.’ ¹⁸ Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized. ¹⁹ So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus.”

While it does not specifically state that Paul was baptized in the name of the Lord in Acts 22:12-16 while testifying of his conversion he says,

^{“12} Then a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt there, ¹³ came to me; and he stood and said to me, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight.’ And at that same hour I looked up at him. ¹⁴ Then he said, ‘The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and bear the voice of His mouth. ¹⁵ For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶ And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.’”

Is there any doubt that the life that Saul lived as the Apostle Paul reflected that he was truly immersed into Jesus' identity?

THE GENTILES RECEIVE THE LORD

If anyone is tempted to make some formula about the order of baptisms, the conversion of Cornelius' house should completely destroy that idea. Cornelius was the first of the Gentiles to get saved. God, through a series of angelic visitations and visions, sent the Apostle Peter to Cornelius' house to preach the gospel. It was strictly forbidden for a Jew to enter into the house of a Gentile, making this one of the most fascinating events of the New Testament. When God finally got Peter to go to Cornelius' house, Peter began to preach, in Acts 10:34-48,

⁶⁴ Then Peter opened his mouth and said: 'In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. ³⁵ But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him. ³⁶ The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all—³⁷ that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. ³⁹ And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree. ⁴⁰ Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly, ⁴¹ not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. ⁴² And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³ To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins.' ⁴⁴ While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. ⁴⁵ And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. ⁴⁶ For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered, ⁴⁷ 'Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?' ⁴⁸ And

he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.”

The household of Cornelius actually received the Holy Spirit and began to speak with tongues, and then were baptized with water in the name of the Lord! God can immerse anyone at any time into anything that He wants to. The lesson is not a doctrinal creed or formula, the lesson is that throughout your Christian journey, God will continually immerse you deeper into Himself!

THREE BAPTISMS

I want to include one last entry into the idea of being baptized into the name of the Lord.

Acts 19:1-7, “¹ And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples ² he said to them, ‘Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?’ So they said to him, ‘We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.’ ³ And he said to them, ‘Into what then were you baptized?’ So they said, ‘Into John’s baptism.’ ⁴ Then Paul said, ‘John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.’ ⁵ When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. ⁷ Now the men were about twelve in all.”

I know that many in the Charismatic and Pentecostal movements have made the doctrinal distinction between being born again and being baptized in the Holy Spirit. While I believe this distinction, I also believe that this passage applies to many more baptisms in the Scriptures. In these verses we see the baptism of repentance pointed out in verses 3-4. We see the baptism into Jesus name emphasized in verse 5. Then we see the baptism in the Holy Spirit in verse 6. Continue reading and I will introduce additional baptisms found in Scripture.

OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT TEMPLES

Another powerful point concerning baptism into His Name is found by drawing a parallel between the Old Testament temple and the New Testament temple. At the dedication of the temple in I Kings 8:16-48 there are at least thirteen direct references saying that the temple was built for the “name of the Lord”. This is just in I Kings 8, but the references are too many to list here so I will choose just one to make my point. When Solomon was about to begin to build the temple, this is what he said in I Kings 5:2-5,

“² Then Solomon sent to Hiram, saying: ³ You know how my father David could not build a house for the name of the LORD his God because of the wars which were fought against him on every side, until the LORD put his foes under the soles of his feet. ⁴ But now the LORD my God has given me rest on every side; there is neither adversary nor evil occurrence. ⁵ And behold, I propose to build a house for the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD spoke to my father David, saying, ‘Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, he shall build the house for My name.’”

It is obvious that the temple was built as a dwelling place for the name of the Lord.

The significance of this is great when we fully understand how God puts His name in a place. God showed this to Moses in Exodus 23:20-23,

“²⁰ Behold, I send an Angel before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. ²¹ Beware of Him and obey His voice; do not provoke Him, for He will not pardon your transgressions; for My name is in Him. ²² But if you indeed obey His voice and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries. ²³ For My Angel will go before you and bring you in to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites and the Hivites and the Jebusites; and I will cut them off.”

The Angel that God was describing is the Holy Spirit. God’s name is in Him. He went before Moses as fire by night and a cloud by day, He

filled Moses tabernacle with the cloud of glory. This is the same Angel that filled Solomon's temple in I Kings 8.

In the New Testament, *we are the temple of the Holy Spirit!* God is placing His name in the sanctified temples of men. We must be careful to fulfill the Lord's Prayer "Hallowed be thy Name", as He is hallowed in our temples.

COVENANT

When a couple enters into the covenant of marriage the woman takes on the name of the man. They are no longer known individually — they are now one.

A name change is part of covenant with God. When Abram entered covenant with God he was no longer called Abram but now he was called Abr-ah-am. Sarai also had her name changed to Sar-ah. Both Abram and Sarai incorporated part of God's name "Yah" into their names. They were called by the name of the Lord.

This was seen even in the New Testament when Simon's name became Peter. James and John became "Boanerges" or the sons of thunder. Saul became Paul. Every believer takes on the name of "Christian" — we carry His name in us.

ADOPTION

My final point concerning baptism into His Name is found in the plan of adoption comes from the Book of Ephesians I:3-6,

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, ⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, ⁵ having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved."

God predestined the plan of adoption. When we enter into covenant

with God, we are legally adopted into His family, and are then called by His name. It is one thing to be legally adopted but it's quite another to actually feel like part of His family.

Paul addressed this in the Book of Romans 8:14-17,

“¹⁴ For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” ¹⁶ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”

The spirit of bondage to fear is religion. The Spirit of adoption is when God's Holy Spirit bears witness in our spirits that we are His children. This confirmation from heaven settles all doubt. The covenant work of adopting us through the blood of Jesus satisfies the legal issues in the courts of heaven. The Spirit of adoption unites us in heart and soul with the family of God. We can now call Him Father and He can embrace us as children without any reservations.

CHAPTER 12:

BAPTISM INTO CHRIST'S DEATH

REMISSION OF SINS

Our first two chapters about baptisms covered the baptism of repentance and the baptism in the Name of the Lord. Now I want to point out something that I purposely did not highlight in those two baptisms. In this chapter we will discuss in detail the remission of sins.

John baptized with water unto repentance for the remission of sins (Mark 1:4). The Apostles baptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). The reason that I did not bring this up in previous chapters is because it would have detracted from the specific issues of baptizing the mind into truth and baptizing a person into the identity of Jesus. As we have learned both of these can be distinctly taught as scriptural baptisms and both have tremendous merit. Notice that when we are focused on immersing our minds into truth (the Bible) or immersing ourselves into Christ's identity how we have specific issues to deal with. The same holds true with the baptism into Christ's death for the remission of sins.

DEAD TO SIN

Romans 6:1-11, ¹ *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?* ² *Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?* ³ *Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?* ⁴ *Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of*

life.⁵ For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection,⁶ knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.⁷ For he who has died has been freed from sin.⁸ Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,⁹ knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.¹⁰ For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.¹¹ Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

In verse three, we see that when we are baptized into Christ Jesus we are baptized into His death. I believe that this is a separate issue from being baptized into who Jesus is. Now we are being baptized into how Jesus died. We cannot successfully live like Jesus unless we first die with Him. As a matter of fact, the more we learn about how Jesus lived on earth, the more we are convicted of sin and our need to die with Him.

Paul asks a series of questions that I believe get to the very heart of this baptism. The first question is in verse one, “*What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not!*” Paul is saying that we cannot go on sinning and claiming grace. There must be a departure from sin.

HOW TO DIE TO SIN

The second question found in verse two is astounding to modern theology and tradition, “*How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?*” When does the believer actually die to sin? Verses 3-4 hold the answer, “*Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*” The believer dies to sin when he dies with Christ on the cross. We need to quit teaching this as a symbol in water, and teach this as actually going to the cross and being immersed into the death of Jesus. The old man must die and the new man (Christ)

must live in us!

Consider what Paul says in Romans 8:13, *“For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”* There is a work of the Holy Spirit that will actually take a person through the cross.

One of the ministries of the Holy Spirit is conviction. We find this in John 16:7-11,

“⁷ Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. ⁸ And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: ⁹ of sin, because they do not believe in Me; ¹⁰ of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; ¹¹ of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.”

The King James Version of the Bible uses the word “reprove”, in the place of “convict”, in verse eight. The Greek work is “*elegcho*” and means *to admonish, convict, re-buke, or re-prove*. I have hyphenated rebuke and reprove to make a point. To reprove is to prove again. The Law of God and the law of the mind convict the conscience, but the Holy Spirit takes us deeper. To convict means that a guilty verdict has been handed down. The Holy Spirit carries out that sentence by putting the inner man to death with Jesus!

DYING DAILY

This not just a one time experience, Jesus said in Luke 9:23, *“Then He said to them all, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.’”* To follow Jesus is to be led by the Holy Spirit. He will daily bring us to a place where we find our own will is contrary to God’s will. When we come to that place, the Holy Spirit will help the surrendered soul to “put to death the deeds of the body.” The cross isn’t just for carrying, it is for crucifixion. Jesus already died on the cross, now it’s your turn!

BEWITCHED

Paul told the Galatians in chapter 3:1-3,

“¹ O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? ² This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? ³ Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?”

Paul is saying that the way that the apostles’ preached made the hearer feel like they were seeing the crucifixion, and that the Holy Spirit would bring them to places in God that the flesh never could. Not by will power, but by grace power, they learned obedience. However, when the Law teachers mingled with the grace teacher, Paul said, “*Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth?*” In other words, who demonized you with doctrines that cause you not to obey Jesus?

CIRCUMCISION VERSES BAPTISM

Look at Paul’s exhortation to the Colossians, in chapter 2:6-15,

“⁶ As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, ⁷ rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. ⁸ Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. ⁹ For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; ¹⁰ and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power. ¹¹ In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹² buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. ¹³ And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, ¹⁴ having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. ¹⁵ Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of

them, triumphing over them in it."

Here Paul warns us of traditions that spoil Christianity. Then he compares baptism to circumcision. Circumcision was the Old Testaments blood covenant. The excess flesh of the life source of man's flesh was cut off, leaving the man permanently scarred to show that he was in blood covenant with God. In baptism, through the cross, the excess flesh is cut away from the heart, which is the life source of the spirit, leaving the hearer permanently scarred in his/her spirit, showing that they are in covenant with God. The Old Testament was outward, the New Testament is inward. The wound left in our hearts when our trespasses were nailed with Jesus to the cross is how the New Testament is triumphant over sin!

YOU KILLED JESUS

The Apostle Peter, in the book of Acts 2:36-38, brought the hearers to the cross then made them responsible for crucifying Jesus,

Acts 2:36-38, ⁶⁶ *'Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.'*
³⁷ *Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?'* ³⁸ *Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'*

Oh for a generation of preachers who can bring the hearers to the cross, so that the Holy Spirit can bring them through the cross!

CHAPTER 13:

THE BAPTISM INTO CHRIST'S SPIRIT

THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

One of the most exciting baptisms is the baptism in the Holy Spirit. I am going to spend extra time teaching on this baptism because of its importance to the church age. God is in heaven, Jesus is seated at His right hand, but the Holy Spirit is *here now*. He is God with us today. One of the greatest mistakes that we can make regarding the Holy Spirit, is to refer to Him as “it”. The Holy Spirit is not a thing, *He* is God! He should be referred to as a person, not a thing. All too often we see the benefits of the Holy Spirit placed before His attributes.

Another reason for spending so much time on this baptism is because of the excesses and of the ignorance of the Charismatic movement. The Charismatics almost reduced the Holy Spirit to simply speaking in tongues. I am appalled at the tongue talkers that I have met that are so fully engaged in sin, yet claim the baptism in the Holy Spirit. This is due to excess and ignorance. This series of studies on the Holy Spirit will hopefully right some of the wrongs of the Charismatic era.

In the following chapters we will study: 1) The Promise of the Spirit. 2) The Person of the Spirit. 3) The Proof of the Spirit. 4) The Produce of the Spirit. 5) The Power of the Spirit. Let's begin.

THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Luke the physician, a traveling companion of the Apostle Paul, wrote two letters to a nobleman by the name of Theophilus. These two letters

became known as the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts.

Luke ends his first letter with this statement found in Luke 24:49, *“Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.”*

Luke picks up where he left off in his second letter to Theophilus, in Acts I:4-8,

“⁴ And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, ‘which,’ He said, ‘you have heard from Me; ⁵ for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’⁶ Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, ‘Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?’⁷ And He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. ⁸ But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Now let me point something out by asking a question — when did the Father promise to send the Holy Spirit? There are many references to the Holy Spirit beginning in the gospels, and all throughout the New Testament, but the promise of the Father was given in the Old Testament. Let’s examine some of these Old Testament passages where the Father promised to send us the Holy Spirit.

THE PROMISE OF THE FATHER IN ISAIAH

The first passage that I want to point out is in Isaiah 28:9-13,

“⁹ Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just drawn from the breasts?¹⁰ For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little. ¹¹ For with stammering lips and another tongue He will speak to this people, ¹² To whom He said, ‘This is the rest with which You may cause the weary to rest,’ And, ‘This is the refreshing;’ Yet they would not hear. ¹³ But the word of the LORD was to them, ‘Precept

upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little,' That they might go and fall backward, and be broken and snared and caught."

SYSTEMATIC BIBLE STUDY... NO MENTAL ASSENT TO REST

Isaiah begins his message with a question. He asks, "Who God would cause to learn and understand His message?" Then he proposes something unreasonable to the scholarly mind. Would a sucking infant or a newly weaned child understand? Then, he shows the tedious work of the scholarly scribe's systematic study of Scripture, learning line by line and precept by precept. Scholars take years, even a lifetime to sort out the message of God, so it seems very unreasonable that a little child would understand. I am not against systematic Bible study, but it cannot be an end in itself. You cannot get the Promise of the Father through a mental assent!

REST AND REFRESHING

Then Isaiah reveals the promise of the Father, in verses II-12, "*For with stammering lips and another tongue He will speak to this people, To whom He said, 'This is the rest with which You may cause the weary to rest,' And, 'This is the refreshing'; Yet they would not hear.*" Just in case you are wondering how I came to the conclusion that this is a promise of the Holy Spirit, let me show you how the Apostle Paul interpreted Isaiah's word.

PAUL'S CONFIRMATION

I Corinthians 14:18-22, ¹⁸ *I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all;* ¹⁹ *yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.* ²⁰ *Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature.* ²¹ *In the law it is written: 'With men of other tongues and other lips I will speak to this people; And yet, for all that, they will not hear Me,' says the Lord.* ²² *Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe."*

Without a doubt, the Apostle Paul interprets Isaiah's message as a prophecy that the Holy Spirit would cause believers to speak in tongues. Now let's get back to Isaiah's words.

INSULTING RELIGIOUS MINDS

Stammering lips and another tongue — what an insult to the proud scholarly mind! Religious scholars stumble at this message, because even the sucking infant and the newly weaned can get what the most diligent scholar may miss, *“this is the rest. . . this is the refreshing.”* Could this be what Jesus was referring to in Matthew II:25-30?

Matthew II:25-30, ²⁵ *At that time Jesus answered and said, ‘I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes.* ²⁶ *Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.* ²⁷ *All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.* ²⁸ *Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* ²⁹ *Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.* ³⁰ *For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”*

This, and many other New Testament passages, point to receiving as a little child, but still the New Testament Bible scholars resist the rest and refreshing of the Holy Spirit.

A TRAGIC ENDING

Isaiah repeats the “line upon line, precept upon precept” thought, then adds, *“That they might go and fall backward, and be broken and snared and caught.”* What a tragic end to those who seem to mean well. The very Scriptures that they study become a snare to their souls, damning them in religious bondage, while rejecting the rest and refreshing of the Holy Spirit. The students of Scripture must never allow themselves to become proud because of knowledge. This will absolutely keep you from receiving the Holy Spirit, and instead will become a snare to your

soul.

Isaiah goes on to say in 28:16, “Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, A tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; Whoever believes will not act hastily.’” Perhaps this is why the cornerstone is such a “stumbling stone” to the religious mind.

THE PROMISE OF THE FATHER IN JOEL

Probably the most well known of the Old Testament promises of the Holy Spirit, is found in Joel 2:28-32,

“²⁸ And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions. ²⁹ And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. ³⁰ And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke. ³¹ The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. ³² And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, As the LORD has said, Among the remnant whom the LORD calls.”

SELECTED TEXT FOR PENTECOST

This was the passage of Scripture that the Apostle Peter chose to explain the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. In Acts 2:1-4 the Spirit was given,

“¹ When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. ² And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

THE SOUND FROM HEAVEN

The promise of the Father began dramatically with “*a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind.*” This is a point that most of us pass by. Imagine that day in Jerusalem, the Feast of Pentecost drawing visitors from many regions all around to celebrate the festival. Suddenly, the Father released “*a sound of heaven*” rushing through the city that everyone heard! Although the sound was heard by all, it came to rest in only one house, where those waiting for the promise of the Father were praying. Then the appearance of tongues of fire sat upon each of the one hundred and twenty people in the house, and they were filled with the Holy Spirit and they began to speak in tongues, as they were given utterance by the Holy Spirit. Wow! What happened? Was it a tornado? Was it a wind shear, or perhaps some other weather phenomenon? The crowd gathered quickly to see the damage of the rushing wind. Let’s examine the confusion of the religious crowd, who were there to celebrate a feast to God, but could not recognize the God of the feast.

AMAZED AND PERPLEXED

Acts 2:5-13, ⁶ *And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven.* ⁶ *And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language.* ⁷ *Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, ‘Look, are not all these who speak Galileans?’* ⁸ *And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?’* ⁹ *Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,* ¹⁰ *Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,* ¹¹ *Cretans and Arabs—we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.’* ¹² *So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘Whatever could this mean?’* ¹³ *Others mocking said, ‘They are full of new wine.’”*

The disciples were filled with the Spirit and began to speak in tongues. The multitudes who witnessed were hearing in their own languages. They were “amazed and perplexed” as each of them heard in their

own languages the “wonderful works of God”. Some even mistakenly thought that the disciples were drunk. Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, dispelled all confusion as he began to preach. . .

EXPOUNDING ON JOEL'S PROPHECY

Acts 2:14-21, ¹⁴ But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, ‘Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. ¹⁵ For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. ¹⁶ But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ¹⁷ “And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. ¹⁸ And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy. ¹⁹ I will show wonders in heaven above And signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke. ²⁰ The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. ²¹ And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved.”’

Peter put all confusion to rest that day, with the first sermon of the Church Age. While under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit he correlated the sound from heaven, the rushing wind, and tongues as the fulfillment of Joel’s prophesy. The Promise of the Father had truly come, and religion was never going to be the same, Hallelujah!

THE PROMISE OF THE FATHER IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

The last prophesy concerning the “Promise of the Father” that I want to examine is in John 7:37-39,

³⁷ On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸ He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’ ³⁹ But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”

BELIEVE ON JESUS ACCORDING TO SCRIPTURE

There are many prophesies of the Old Testament telling us that God would send the Messiah. The law is our “tutor” that leads us to Christ, (Galatians 3:24). When Jesus says that, “*He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said . . .*” He is confirming that the Scripture says much concerning Christ. Here, Jesus is prophesying concerning the coming of the Holy Spirit when He says, “*out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.*” When we believe in Christ as the Scriptures teach us, the Holy Spirit will be an endless stream of life flowing out of the heart of the believer!

A WELL OR A RIVER?

The Prophet Isaiah likened salvation to a well in Isaiah 12:3, “*Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.*” There is great joy to be drawn from the message of salvation. But a well is a limited supply, with a single source, and many times a well will go dry. The message of salvation is exactly the same whenever we tell of it. The Holy Spirit is daily in our lives being applied in every circumstance, constantly filling and renewing us. The Holy Spirit is likened to a river, in Ezekiel 47:1-12, and also in Revelation 22:1-2. The Holy Spirit is a mighty river, with a powerful current, and an endless supply of life giving water. Those who drink are nourished and healed. The farther that we wade into The River, the more buoyant we become, until finally, our feet are swept away into The River’s current, and the Holy Spirit is fully in control to take us where He wills!

I pray that as we study the Holy Spirit in the next few chapters that we will lay hold of the wonderful Promise of our Father.

CHAPTER 14:

THE BAPTISM INTO CHRIST'S SPIRIT THE PERSON OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, PART I

BEWARE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Remember when we studied “The Baptism in the Name of the Lord”, we learned that when God put His name in a place, He did so by sending the Holy Spirit there. We discovered that in the New Testament we are the temple of the Holy Spirit, and we carry the name of the Lord. We also learned that the Holy Spirit was the Angel that led Israel through their journeys as a Cloud by day, and Fire by night, and that He could easily be offended.

Exodus 23:20-23, ²⁰ Behold, I send an Angel before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. ²¹ Beware of Him and obey His voice; do not provoke Him, for He will not pardon your transgressions; for My name is in Him. ²² But if you indeed obey His voice and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries. ²³ For My Angel will go before you and bring you in to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites and the Hivites and the Jebusites; and I will cut them off.”

In the New Testament we are being led by the Holy Spirit. The same Holy Spirit that Israel was cautioned to “beware of Him” we too should beware and not provoke Him. I now want to point out some warnings

in the New Testament concerning the Holy Spirit, starting from the mildest warning, proceeding to the most severe.

DO NOT GRIEVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

Ephesians 4:25-32, ²⁵ *Therefore, putting away lying, 'Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,' for we are members of one another.* ²⁶ *'Be angry, and do not sin': do not let the sun go down on your wrath,* ²⁷ *nor give place to the devil.* ²⁸ *Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.* ²⁹ *Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.* ³⁰ *And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.* ³¹ *Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.* ³² *And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you."*

The word "grieve" means to make Him sad or distressed. The context that we find this warning in is concerning Christian behavior. Lying, anger, wrath, theft, laziness, bad language - all of these sadden or distress your relationship with the Holy Spirit. Think about people in your life that sadden or distress you. Do you really want to be around them? Neither will the Spirit abide with this sort of behavior for long.

DO NOT QUENCH THE HOLY SPIRIT

I Thessalonians 5:14-24, ¹⁴ *Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.* ¹⁵ *See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.* ¹⁶ *Rejoice always,* ¹⁷ *pray without ceasing,* ¹⁸ *in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.* ¹⁹ *Do not quench the Spirit.* ²⁰ *Do not despise prophecies.* ²¹ *Test all things; hold fast what is good.* ²² *Abstain from every form of evil.* ²³ *Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* ²⁴ *He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it."*

The word “quench” means to extinguish, like putting a fire out. Once again, we find that we could literally put the Holy Spirit out of our lives with bad behavior. This warning applies especially for those who are not rejoicing, praying, or giving thanks in all things. It also applies for despising prophecies or not proving prophecy. Either extreme can quench Him. And finally, if we abort any part of the sanctification process we quench the Spirit.

DO NOT INSULT THE SPIRIT OF GRACE

Hebrews 10:24-31, ²⁴ *And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, ²⁵ not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. ²⁶ For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. ²⁸ Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. ²⁹ Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? ³⁰ For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. And again, “The LORD will judge His people.” ³¹ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”*

The King James Version of the Bible uses the phrase “done despite” instead of “insult”. I prefer the term “insult” because it is a better translation. To insult means to be boldly rude to someone. Let’s look at the things that insult the Holy Spirit of Grace.

The context of the reading is pertaining to those who “forsake the assembling of ourselves together”. Think of a jig-saw puzzle. It comes in a box with a picture on the lid that shows what the “assembled” puzzle will be. However, when we open the box, it is just a gathering of the pieces. This shows the great error in today’s unbiblical, non-relational, congregational models of the Church. They gather together in a box, but are not assembled. It also shows the soundness of the

apostolic model of house churches that assemble relationally. Most people today would rather a loose gathering in a box, instead of an assembly that joins us to others in a committed relationship. Refusing to assemble insults the Holy Spirit!

More specifically, those who refuse to assemble trample Jesus under their feet and count His sanctifying blood as nothing. This insults the Holy Spirit!

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS JEALOUS

James 4:1-10, ¹ *Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?* ² *You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.* ³ *You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.* ⁴ *Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.* ⁵ *Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, 'The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously?'* *But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: 'God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.'* ⁷ *Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.* ⁸ *Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.* ⁹ *Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.* ¹⁰ *Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up."*

Have you ever been jealous about someone? If so, you understand that the thoughts and feelings of anger, hurt, sadness, etc. can overwhelm the jealous lover! The Holy Spirit is very jealous of God's people and resists those who, in pride, seek to fulfill their pleasures with the world. But He gives grace to the humble soul that resists this devilish temptation. When we humbly draw near to God, He will draw near to us.

The Bible warns that in the last days men would love pleasure more than God, (II Timothy 3:1-5). It specifically foretells that this would be predominant in religious circles, "...having a form of godliness but denying

its power. And of such turn away." This prophecy is being fulfilled right before our eyes in today's American church. Pleasure hungry Americans have even perverted prayer, that we might consume the gifts of God on our own pleasures. James called this *adultery!* To be in adultery means that we are in covenant with one person but we are being intimate with someone else. James was saying that Christians are in covenant with Christ, yet they are committing adultery with the world. The Apostle Paul told the Galatians that they had turned to "another gospel" and refused to obey Jesus, "But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." (Galatians 6:14). Christians have been crucified with Christ to the world, and the world has been crucified to us.

Consider Isaiah 57:15-18, ¹⁵ *For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: 'I dwell in the high and holy place, With him who has a contrite and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones. 16 For I will not contend forever, Nor will I always be angry; For the spirit would fail before Me, And the souls which I have made. 17 For the iniquity of his covetousness I was angry and struck him; I hid and was angry, And he went on backsliding in the way of his heart. 18 I have seen his ways, and will heal him; I will also lead him, And restore comforts to him And to his mourners.'*"

God strikes the covetous soul in anger, but if we will humble ourselves God will restore us. If we remain proud God will continue resist us.

DO NOT BLASPHEME THE HOLY SPIRIT

Matthew 12:22-37, ²² *Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw. 23 And all the multitudes were amazed and said, 'Could this be the Son of David?' 24 Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, 'This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.' 25 But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: 'Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. 26 If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? 27 And if I cast out*

demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. ²⁸ But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²⁹ Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house. ³⁰ He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad. ³¹ Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. ³² Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come. ³³ Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit. ³⁴ Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. ³⁵ A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. ³⁶ But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. ³⁷ For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”

Blasphemy means verbal abuse against someone, which denotes the very worst kind of slander that ruins someone's reputation. In the context of this passage, blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is giving credit to Satan for something that the Holy Spirit is doing. Jesus strengthens the argument that the Holy Spirit does not pardon by saying that you can get away with blasphemy against Jesus, and even God, but **not against the Holy Spirit!**

This sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is judged in this life and in eternity. There is no forgiveness forever!

Let me close part one of “The Person of the Holy Spirit” with this thought. The Holy Spirit's first name is *Holy*. Holiness is the most outstanding feature of God. I know that many today think that God's most prominent attribute is love, and the Scripture does say that God is Love. But I will remind you that the Scripture also says that God is Holy! When the heavenly hosts look at God, they don't cry out “Love, love, love”. No, they cry out “**Holy, holy holy!**” This should provoke us

to *fear the Lord*, and to *beware* of the Holy Spirit, that we do not offend Him.

CHAPTER 15:

THE BAPTISM INTO CHRIST'S SPIRIT THE PERSON OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, PART II

WHERE I AM GOING, YOU CANNOT COME...

After Jesus' last Passover on earth, He washed the feet of His disciples, then announced that one of them would betray Him. Following these events, Jesus makes a statement that fueled a question and answer session between Himself and His disciples. That discussion gives us our greatest insights to the Person of the Holy Spirit.

John 13:31-35, ⁶¹ So, when he had gone out, Jesus said, 'Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him. ³² If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and glorify Him immediately. ³³ Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, "Where I am going, you cannot come," so now I say to you. ³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Jesus makes three major points in this statement. First, the course was now set in stone; Jesus was on the path to the crucifixion. His glorious sacrifice on the cross would bring the greatest glory to God! And God would quickly glorify Jesus through the resurrection! The second point is the one that provoked the discussion that followed

from chapter I3 all of the way through chapter I7, “*Where I am going, you cannot come.*” He followed this with assurances that they would follow Him after. The third point was, “*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*” The New Testament commandment to love one another would surely prove to be the greatest reason to give us a “Helper.”

The cross, where I am going you cannot come, and the commandment to love; these three points became the catalyst for the conversation that gave us our greatest insights to the Holy Spirit.

ANOTHER HELPER...THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH

Jesus gives us our first insight to the Person of the Holy Spirit in response to Peter’s question, “Lord, where are you going? And is found in John I4:I5-2I,

“¹⁵ If you love Me, keep My commandments. ¹⁶ And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—¹⁷ the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. ¹⁸ I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. ²⁰ At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. ²¹ He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.”

THE HELPER

“Another Helper” is the first name that Jesus ascribed to the Holy Spirit. As we learned in chapter II a name gives us insight to identity. The Greek word for the Holy Spirit is “*Parakletos*” which means *called alongside to aid or help; especially in a legal sense as an advocate or intercessor*. To follow Jesus in the way of the cross and loving one another as the test of our discipleship absolutely calls for Divine help. These two tasks

will require all the help that heaven could send. Remember when God created Adam He said in Genesis 2:18, *"It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him."* God gave the man that He created a helper called woman. When they came together in intimacy, it created a covenant where the two became one. This helper would help man to fulfill his purpose in the Garden of Eden. Now in the re-creation of man, it is still not good for us to be alone. God has sent us another helper, The Holy Spirit, that we are to enter into covenant with, become one; He in us, and us in Him. He will help us to fulfill our purpose in the Kingdom of God.

THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH

The Greek word for Truth is *"Aletheia"* which means *the final reality lying at the basis of an appearance*. Things are not always what they appear to be; the Spirit of Truth separates appearance from final reality. It's important to understand "final reality" as truth, because there are things that are real, but they are not true. For instance, lies are real, but they are not true. The Spirit of Truth gets to the base or foundation of what we see. The world does not understand this, but the Spirit of Truth will live in the disciples who love Jesus. They will want to know the truth no matter what. They will love the truth, they will always seek truth. The Spirit of Truth will manifest, reveal, uncover, and discern. Can you think of a greater way to help than the Spirit of Truth?

IF YOU LOVE ME, KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS

Receiving the Helper, the Spirit of Truth is conditional upon proving our love for Jesus by keeping His commandments. Acts 5:32 says, *"And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."* The Holy Spirit is given a Helper to those who display evidence that they love Jesus by doing what He says. Why do we need a Helper if we have no intention of obeying?

I WILL NOT LEAVE YOU ORPHANS

The Helper will actually bring us through all of the legal process of

Divine adoption!

Ephesians I:3-6, ⁴³ *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, ⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, ⁵ having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.*”

God predestinated the plan of adoption. Every seeker of Jesus enters the process of being adopted as sons by Jesus Christ. We were chosen *“in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.”* Many want to claim that they are sons and daughters with absolutely no desire to be holy and without blame before Him in love. The plan was predestined, not the individuals. The adoption process can be confirmed through obedience or aborted through disobedience!

Ephesians I:11-14, ⁴¹ *In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, ¹² that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. ¹³ In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.*”

Ask yourself if you believe that God would actually seal a willful sinner with the guarantee of eternal inheritance? No way! But to the soul that trusts Christ after hearing the word of **truth**, this is the one that God will seal.

I know that we have already discussed this but it bears repeating. In Romans 8:15-16, Paul tells us how the adoption process is confirmed, *“For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,”* The Helper — Spirit of

Truth will bring you heaven's confirmation of your adoption.

THE SECOND INSIGHT INTO THE PERSON OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

John 14:22-31, ²² *Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, 'Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?'* ²³ *Jesus answered and said to him, 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.'* ²⁴ *He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me.* ²⁵ *These things I have spoken to you while being present with you.* ²⁶ *But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.* ²⁷ *Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.* ²⁸ *You have heard Me say to you, "I am going away and coming back to you." If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, "I am going to the Father," for My Father is greater than I.* ²⁹ *And now I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe.* ³⁰ *I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me.* ³¹ *But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do. Arise, let us go from here.'"*

HOW WILL HE MANIFEST HIMSELF TO US?

"Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, 'Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?'" The answer to Judas' question gives us our next glimpse into the Person of the Holy Spirit.

IF ANYONE LOVES ME, HE WILL KEEP MY WORD...

Once again we find Jesus emphasizing obedience prior to receiving the benefits. In this case the benefit is that Jesus and the Father would live within the believer through the Person of the Holy Spirit. Then He gives us a litmus test of sorts by showing the downside, *"He who does not love Me does not keep My words."* The promise of the Holy Spirit living within the believer is based on loving Jesus and obeying His words. It

is safe then to interpret that those who do not love and obey will not get the Holy Spirit. This is how He will manifest Himself to us and not to the world.

TWO WAYS THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT HELPS US

Notice that the Helper is sent in Jesus' name. Remember chapter eleven about being baptized in His name? This confirms the progression that after being baptized into His name, we are then baptized in the Holy Spirit. The two ways the Holy Spirit helps us are, first, "*He will teach you all things,*" and second, "*He will bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.*"

HE WILL TEACH YOU ALL THINGS

The Holy Spirit will continually teach us all things. The reluctance of most people to learn concerning spiritual things is appalling! So many people are willing to be taught things concerning their jobs or financial advancement, while they are absolutely unwilling to be taught spiritual things. Another problem is that many want to know things, yet they have no intention of *doing* anything that they know.

Christians are called disciples. The word disciple means to be a learner under discipline. In the world we have many disciplinarians: our parents, teachers, coaches, bosses, government, etc. Most accept discipline from these, but very few are willing to be disciplined by the Holy Spirit. When the Spirit teaches He drives His lessons home through discipline. Many pull away when He does. But to the submissive student, the Holy Spirit will continually develop your mind, until your earthly education is completed by graduating to heaven.

ALL THINGS TO YOUR REMEMBRANCE

To remember a thing you first have to "member" it. We must learn in such a way that the thing learned becomes part of us. Many times when I am preaching, teaching, witnessing, or even simply fellowshiping, the Holy Spirit brings up things that I have filed away in the deep

recesses of my mind. Those things were once prevalent subjects or thoughts, but I have since moved on to other things. This is natural. What is easily forgotten by humans is divinely stored by the Holy Spirit, and He speedily brings them up as needed.

One last point that I want to make here is “Use it or lose it”. As I said before, we are continually being taught by the Holy Spirit until our life on earth is ended, or until we drop out of His school. Just because you have been a Christian for a while is no excuse to stop being taught. The day that you think you know it all is the day you cease to learn from Him. Let me put it another way; getting older is no excuse for forgetting. The Holy Spirit is the ultimate reminder.

PEACE

Jesus didn't change subjects when He promised us peace here. I believe that knowing Him and His will, is the most peaceful life that a person can have. Even though you may be going through turmoil, inward peace is God's promise.

CHAPTER 16:

THE BAPTISM INTO CHRIST'S SPIRIT

THE PERSON OF THE HOLY SPIRIT,

PART III

THE THIRD INSIGHT INTO THE PERSON OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

John 15:1-27, ¹ *I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.* ² *Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.* ³ *You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.* ⁴ *Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.* ⁵ *I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.* ⁶ *If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.* ⁷ *If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.* ⁸ *By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.* ⁹ *As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.* ¹⁰ *If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.* ¹¹ *These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.* ¹² *This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.* ¹³ *Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.* ¹⁴ *You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.* ¹⁵ *No longer do I call*

you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ *You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.* ¹⁷ *These things I command you, that you love one another* ¹⁸ *If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you.* ¹⁹ *If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.* ²⁰ *Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.* ²¹ *But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me.* ²² *If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.* ²³ *He who hates Me hates My Father also.* ²⁴ *If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would have no sin; but now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father.* ²⁵ *But this happened that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, 'They hated Me without a cause.'* ²⁶ *But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.* ²⁷ *And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning."*

BEARING FRUIT

I realize that this is a lengthy reading. But understanding the context of this passage of Scripture is the key to understanding how the Holy Spirit helps us bear the fruit that God desires. In verses 1-8, Jesus teaches us that everyone who abides in Him *must* be fruitful without exception. The unfruitful will be burned!

THE FRUIT OF FRIENDSHIP

In verses 9-17, He then tells us what that fruit is... *friends!* The context that He is speaking in is all about God loving us, and in turn we love *one another*. The only proof that we love God is how we show our love to other Christians. Then the world will know that we are His.

Jesus reemphasizes His commandment to love one another, then teaches us that the greatest love is to lay down your life for your friends. Friends will cost you your life. Jesus paid for our friendship with His own life, and now He expects us to pay for friendship with one another with our lives.

We are chosen in Him to bear the fruit of friends, lasting friendships that remain. In order for this to happen we must resolve every conflict, and forgive every offence, not only in word but from the heart.

PERSECUTION PROMISED

Verses 18-24, warns us that we who live in the way of love will be persecuted in the earth. Just as they crucified Jesus, so will they persecute us.

WE WILL BEAR WITNESS

Verses 25-26, bring us to the next lesson of the Helper. *“He will testify of Me.”* If you were called to testify in a court case you could only testify of those things that you know first hand. The Holy Spirit has the most intimate insight to the heart of Jesus, and He wants to tell us all about Him! Once the Holy Spirit reveals the things about Jesus to us, He expects us to bear witness of those things. He will testify to us about Jesus, and we will bear witness to all people about those things.

In this case specifically, the witness that the Holy Spirit wants us to bear to others is the witness of friendship. When Christ laid His life down for His friends it became the greatest testimony of God's love for man. We now bear witness as we lay our lives down for others. This is the witness that God would have us to bear in the earth, and this is what the Holy Spirit will help us to do. *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”*

THE FOURTH INSIGHT TO THE PERSON OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

John 16:1-11, ^a *“These things I have spoken to you, that you should not*

be made to stumble. ² *They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service.* ³ *And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me.* ⁴ *But these things I have told you, that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them. And these things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you.* ⁵ *“But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, ‘Where are You going?’”* ⁶ *But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart.* ⁷ *Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.* ⁸ *And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:* ⁹ *of sin, because they do not believe in Me;* ¹⁰ *of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more;* ¹¹ *of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.”*

Here Jesus warns us of religious persecution. This persecution comes from pursuing true friendship with God and with God’s people. The persecution is so severe that they would not only drive us out of religious services, but even kill us. Jesus warns that this could make us stumble, so to keep us from falling, He gives us the Holy Spirit to *convict the world!* Let me point out that religion is nothing but a system of the world. Religion may talk of God, Jesus, and even the Holy Spirit while persecuting those who seek to obey Him. The most vicious religious persecution comes from those who are willing to attend a loose congregational gathering yet vehemently oppose the commitment of a relational assembly! The Holy Spirit will cause us to convict them in three ways.

CONVICTION OF SIN

To convict means that someone has been tried and found guilty. The first arena of conviction is sin. I have noticed that sin is rarely mentioned in today’s pulpits. Most pulpits are fervently offering people an escape from hell, and an assurance to heaven, while they ignore sin. Matthew 1:21, *“And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.”* When the angel announced the birth of Jesus (which means Savior), he said that He would save His people

from their sins. You cannot be saved from hell while you are still in your sins, but if you are saved from your sins you will certainly be saved from hell!

Most religious people that I encounter will fight you tooth and nail to justify their sins. They claim “nobody’s perfect, just forgiven” while continuing in sin and claiming grace. God forbid! When religious people get convicted they get vicious. The meanest people that I have encountered have been in churches, and I was a bouncer in a night club before coming to Christ!

CONVICT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Conviction of sin tells us that we should *not do* certain things. Conviction of righteousness tells us that we must *do* something. Another arena that the religious world will fight you is concerning good works. They immediately claim that you are teaching legalism or law and they dismiss any responsibility to do good works. I agree that working to get saved is a dead work, but the saved are ordained to do good works!

Ephesians 2:8-10, ⁸ *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”*

To those who have been re-created in Christ Jesus, God has ordained that they walk in good works. Faith without works is dead!!!

CONVICT OF JUDGMENT

Conviction concerning eternal judgment is the final arena that stirs the ire of the religious. As I mentioned under conviction of sin, the religious have a nice tidy package concerning eternity. Just say a prayer, and Jesus saves you from hell, and secures you in heaven. When the Holy Spirit uses us to come against the fallacies of this erroneous non-Biblical teaching, He infuriates the religious. Be bold enough to confront those who have anesthetized themselves with false teachings

of eternal security while they continue in sin, and see how fervently they defend their sin and their eternal salvation.

YOU CAN'T JUDGE ME

Have you ever heard some religious person say, “You can’t judge me”? Christians are commanded to judge.

I Corinthians 6:1-8, “¹ Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints?² Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters?³ Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?⁴ If then you have judgments concerning things pertaining to this life, do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the church to judge?⁵ I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren?⁶ But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers!⁷ Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourselves be cheated?⁸ No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat, and you do these things to your brethren!”

The church is commanded to judge its internal issues in order to be self cleansing. Religion hates this and resists this accountability.

THREE BIBLICAL METHODS OF DISCERNMENT

Another way to see how the Holy Spirit convicts concerning judgment is in the context of discernment. When someone shows that they exercise good judgment it means that they discern or judge properly.

There are three Biblical way to have discernment, Hebrew 4:12, “*For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*” The Bible helps us to be discerning, but our generation is so Biblically ignorant, that it’s no wonder that the church has lost her sense of judgment. I can hear the religious crying foul because “you don’t know my heart”. The Bible says the Word discerns

the thoughts and intents (motives) of the heart. Let the religious rage but let the church discern!

Hebrews 5:12-14, ^{a2} *For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. ¹³ For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. ¹⁴ But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*"

Here we see that once we understand and use scripture our senses will become sharpened to discern good from evil.

Finally, I Corinthians 12:7-11, ^{a1} *But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: ⁸ for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, ¹⁰ to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.*"

The third and most effective method of discernment is through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Remember, He is *The Spirit of Truth*, and He sees right through the way things appear, getting to the truth of the matter!

The Holy Spirit uses us to convict the religious, as we prove our love for Jesus by building true friendships with one another. Be prepared for the battle that comes from religion. The Helper will not let you stumble if you stay faithful to Him.

THE FIFTH AND FINAL INSIGHT TO THE PERSON OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

John 16:12-16, ^{a2} *I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. ¹⁴*

He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵ All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you. ¹⁶ 'A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me, because I go to the Father.'"

HE SHOWS US GOD'S HEART

To be cliché, last and certainly not least, the Holy Spirit will tell us what He hears from God. The Apostle Paul tells us how the Holy Spirit does this in I Corinthians 2:9-16,

⁹ But as it is written: 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.' ¹⁰ But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. ¹¹ For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. ¹² Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. ¹³ These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. ¹⁴ But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵ But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. ¹⁶ For 'who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?' But we have the mind of Christ."

The Holy Spirit knows the heart and mind of God, and He will reveal those things to all who maintain a proper relationship with Him. The Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth. He will hear from God and reveal what He hears to us. He will show us things to come. He will glorify Jesus. The listening, obedient ear of those who are led by the Spirit of God will hear privileged things too marvelous for common man! Persecution pales in comparison to the glory that is revealed to those who love Him.

CHAPTER 17:

THE PROOF OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT

When I came to Christ in 1981 the Charismatic Movement was in full swing. Many were being filled with the Holy Spirit with evidence of speaking in tongues. It seems that everywhere that Christians gathered this topic was in the forefront. As a new Christian who had been radically converted to Christ, I desired to receive every promise that God had, including the Holy Spirit. The zeal of those who were Spirit baptized heavily influenced me to seek the baptism for myself. I searched the Scriptures, and I sought God, until I too was powerfully baptized in the Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues.

Now , nearly 30 years later, I rarely hear a word about the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The excesses of the Charismatic Churches turned the presence of God into a three ring circus. The rise of the hyper-faith movement, (name it and claim it), also took its toll on would be seekers. Another revival killer is prosperity preaching (God wants you to be rich), that has even crept into undeveloped nations, hindering their revivals. But most of all, sin in the lives of both the shepherds and sheep killed the movement. I will go so far as to say that the fall of Jim Bakker, and the two public falls of Jimmy Swaggart, marked the beginning of a national apostasy in America. Our boast of the baptism in the Holy Spirit failed to produce holiness! Without holy lives to substantiate our claims to the Holy Spirit our witness to men becomes “sounding brass and tinkling cymbals”!

After the fall of these giant ministries, the gospel ground in America became hardened. When once we could witness and see wonderful

results, now we see scoffers and skeptics accusing all Christians of being phony. Now the church leaders, who were addicted to church growth, began to counter the skeptics by moving away from the message of the cross, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit so that they would not offend those who attend their church services. This new movement is called the seeker-sensitive, or the emergent church movement. Instead of the authority of Scripture, they stand on the authority of church growth. I must warn that even cancer will grow, and I believe the emergent church movement to be a cancer to the gospel.

With that said, I do not believe that we should throw the baby out with the bath water. The failure of men does not undo the truths of God. I believe that there are still hungry sincere Christians who desire more of God, and they too should have the opportunity to receive the truth and proof of the Holy Spirit. Throughout history revivals have come and gone, but God's truths remain constant. You can have personal revival by obeying the gospel and being baptized in the Holy Spirit. Let's begin. . .

THE DAY OF PENTECOST

Acts 2:1-4, ¹ "When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. ² And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

WAITING FOR THE PROMISE

In chapter 13, The Promise of the Holy Spirit, we covered the events leading up to the day of Pentecost. Jesus commanded His disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father. He further instructed them that when they received the promise they would receive the power to become effective witnesses for Him. After that, Jesus was taken up into heaven and the disciples waited. They didn't only sit around waiting; they were actively waiting in prayer. Like an expectant father

waiting for the delivery of a new born child, they waited in prayer, expecting that heaven was about to birth something new into the earth.

HE BYPASSED RELIGION

Then the day of Pentecost came with a sound from heaven and a rushing mighty wind. The Holy Spirit didn't come to the multitudes of religious worshippers who had come to Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. Neither did He come to the prominent religious leaders. The Holy Spirit came to the diligent followers of Jesus, who witnessed His death on the cross, and His mighty resurrection. Now, in obedience to Jesus, they were waiting on The Helper that He promised to send, to empower them to be His witnesses. The Holy Spirit will bypass religious leaders who block the way to what God is doing. On the other hand, He will come to those who ignore the religious leaders and trends to wait for the fulfilling of God's Word!

HE MAKES HIS MINISTERS A FLAME OF FIRE

The appearance of "tongues of fire" sitting on each of them is a significant sign. In the Book of Psalms 104:4 we read, "*Who makes His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire.*" God makes His ministers a "flame of fire". The Holy Spirit was being poured out to empower us to be witnesses for Jesus. When empowerment becomes an end in itself we have no need to be empowered. The Holy Spirit is given to help us be effective witnesses for Jesus.

I Corinthians 4:20 says, "*For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power.*" God makes the words of His ministers powerful. Signs and wonders will accompany His Word as He sets His ministers on fire. When John Wesley was asked how he drew such large crowds he said, "I set myself on fire and the people come to watch me burn". We need a new army of ministers who are set on fire by God. We need those whose hearts, heads, and bodies are so baptized by fire that the world will come to watch them burn!

FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

When the fire came to rest on those waiting saints on the Day of Pentecost, they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Then we read, “[...] and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” What a fitting sign for those waiting to be witnesses; tongues to bridge the language barriers to reach all of the nations for Jesus. Everyone who heard them that day heard in their own language the wonderful works of God.

Those who spoke in tongues that day spoke in other tongues of known dialects, without having learned them. Tongues are in no way limited to known languages as we will see in other passages. Many times it was unknown tongues.

THE GENTILES RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

After a series of angelic visitations, dreams, and visions, the Apostle Peter was summoned by God to the house of a Gentile named Cornelius. It was forbidden for a Jew to go into the house of a Gentile. So you can understand why God did so many miracles in order to get Peter to go against all of his religious upbringing and preach in the house of a Gentile. Imagine the expectancy in the house! If God did all of those miracles to get Peter there, what’s next?

Acts 10:34-48, ⁶⁴ *Then Peter opened his mouth and said: ‘In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. ³⁵ But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him. ³⁶ The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all— ³⁷ that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. ³⁹ And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree. ⁴⁰ Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly, ⁴¹ not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate*

and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.⁴² And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead.⁴³ To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins.’⁴⁴ While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.⁴⁵ And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.⁴⁶ For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered,⁴⁷ ‘Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?’⁴⁸ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.”

When the hungry hearers in the house of Cornelius heard the gospel from the mouth of Peter, they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with tongues! God broke through all religious and racial barriers to bring salvation, first to Cornelius’ house, and then to all nations. Once again, we see the accompanying sign of tongues with the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

THE UNUSUAL CASE OF THE EPHESIANS RECEIVING THE SPIRIT

Acts 19:1-7, ¹“ And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples ² he said to them, ‘Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?’ So they said to him, ‘We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.’ ³ And he said to them, ‘Into what then were you baptized?’ So they said, ‘Into John’s baptism.’ ⁴ Then Paul said, ‘John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.’ ⁵ When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. ⁷ Now the men were about twelve in all.”

The question that Paul asked the Ephesians is still pertinent for us today, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” I believe that their response to Paul is much like ours today, “We have not so much as

heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.” The ignorance of John’s disciples was keeping them from going further with God, just as spiritual ignorance hinders us today.

They only knew the baptism of repentance, so Paul took them into the baptism in the name of the Lord, Christ’s death, and into the Holy Spirit in rapid succession. They received in a matter of moments or hours, what took me several years to receive due to my ignorance. Don’t let ignorance hinder you! God has revealed these wonderful truths, and He is waiting for hungry souls to seek His promises by faith, and be filled with more of God.

Paul laid his hands on them, then the Holy Spirit filled them and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. Notice how God used both the Apostles Peter and Paul to baptize others. We will learn more about this when we study the laying on of hands. I only stress this here so that you will not be reluctant to receive from God’s ministers.

DOCTRINAL ERRORS

Many denominational people miss the baptism of the Spirit due to doctrinal errors.

TONGUES WILL CEASE

The first error that I will mention is the idea that tongues were for Bible times but are not for today. One minister that I discussed this with made his case based on I Corinthians 13:8, where Paul says, *“Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.”* He built his arguments on the idea that prophecy and tongues ceased because of this verse. I told him if that were the case then knowledge would also have ceased, which he does not believe, making his interpretation of Scripture inconsistent. I believe that the correct reading of this passage is that the more we emphasize love the less we will rely on prophesy, tongues, and knowledge. In my own experience there was a time when I was totally focused on the gifts and knowledge, but as I have matured in my faith, those gifts take the back seat to loving relationships. Love

is maturity that causes us to put away childish things. But that does not undo our need for prophecy, tongues, and knowledge.

THE GIFT OF TONGUES VERSUS PRAYING IN TONGUES

The next error that I would point out is the failure of the denominational teachers to distinguish between a prayer language and prophesying in tongues.

In I Corinthians 12:7-II, we find a list of the “gifts of the Holy Spirit.”

I Corinthians 12:7-II, ⁶⁷ *But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: ⁸ for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, ¹⁰ to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.”*

This passage teaches us that the Holy Spirit can give the gift of tongues to whomever He desires.

DO ALL SPEAK IN TONGUES?

Later in I Corinthians 12:28-31, the Apostle Paul asks a series of questions.

I Corinthians 12:28-31, ²⁸ *And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. ²⁹ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? ³⁰ Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹ But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.”*

The obvious answer to all of these questions is no. And in the context of “the gifts of the Holy Spirit” it is certain that not everyone will be used to bring messages of prophecy through tongues, and

interpretations, (tongues with interpretation is the same as prophecy). These are of the Spirit's choosing, not ours.

The error occurs, by applying the verses that are dealing with "the gifts of the Holy Spirit" to verses that are pertaining to the prayer language that we *all* receive in the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The apostles always recognized the outpouring of the Holy Spirit when they heard the believers speak in tongues. Let me say it this way; speaking in tongues is the initial evidence or proof that you have received the Holy Spirit.

NO ONE INTERPRETED

Another common error is the notion that every time that someone speaks in tongues it must be interpreted. In I Corinthians 14:1-4 we read,

"¹ Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. ² For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries. ³ But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men. ⁴ He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church."

In verse two we see the distinction between praying in tongues and prophesying in tongues. "He who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God." If I am praying in tongues I am not speaking to men, I am speaking to God. Therefore, it needs no interpretation. I'll venture to say that it must not be interpreted, because men would mess it up!

Later in I Corinthians 14:26-33 the Apostle Paul describes the typical New Testament worship service,

"²⁶ How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. ²⁷ If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret. ²⁸ But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God. ²⁹ Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. ³⁰ But if

anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. ³¹ *For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged.* ³² *And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.* ³³ *For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.”*

Paul required interpretation to those who bring messages in tongues. I agree whole heartedly with this, but praying in tongues required no interpretation because they spoke to “themselves and to God”.

A FEW CLOSING EXHORTATIONS

PRAYING WITH THE SPIRIT AND WITH THE MIND

Consider I Corinthians 14:14-15,

“¹⁴ For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. ¹⁵ What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.”

Praying in tongues means that we are praying in the spirit. Praying with the understanding means that we are praying what we know and understand. We have a duty to do both.

THE GROANINGS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Romans 8:22-27, *“²² For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. ²³ Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. ²⁴ For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance. ²⁶ Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. ²⁷ Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.”*

I find that when I come to the end of my understanding in prayer,

the Holy Spirit takes me further than my understanding by praying in tongues.

As I pointed out in chapter 13, “The Promise of the Holy Spirit”, the proud religious mind that is puffed up in knowledge is insulted by the groaning of tongues. Please humble yourself and seek the rest and refreshing that comes from praying in tongues.

PRAYING IN TONGUES BUILDS FAITH

In the short epistle of Jude 20 we read, *“But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit. . .”*

Praying in the Holy Spirit actually builds our faith. If you will recall our study in chapter 5 “Faith Derived”, we found that there were three places that we got faith from: **1)** Faith is a gift from God. **2)** Faith comes by hearing the word of God. **3)** Faith comes from praying in the Holy Spirit.

When the trials of life bring us to mental, emotional, and physical exhaustion, praying in the Holy Spirit brings a supernatural rest and refreshing that cannot be obtained through fleshly means.

Please consider this, and seek God for the baptism in Holy Spirit. Don't stop until He fills you with the Spirit and the evidence of speaking in tongues.

CHAPTER 18:

THE PRODUCE OF THE SPIRIT,

PART I

There are many types of fruit mentioned throughout the Scriptures. We have already discussed a few of them such as, the fruit of repentance and the fruit of friendship. Aside from these, there are many more varieties of fruit: fruit unto death, fruit of righteousness, fruit of holiness, fruit of labor, fruit of eternal life, fruit of our lips. You get the picture. The Bible uses the agricultural term of bearing fruit to describe many attributes of men and of God. The one we will discuss in this lesson is the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 5:16-26, ¹⁶ *I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.* ¹⁷ *For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.* ¹⁸ *But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.* ¹⁹ *Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,* ²⁰ *idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies,* ²¹ *envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.* ²² *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,* ²³ *gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.* ²⁴ *And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.* ²⁵ *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.* ²⁶ *Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another."*

WALK IN THE SPIRIT

Before we discuss the fruit of the Spirit, let's look at the full context that we find this in. In verses 16-18, Paul tells us, *"I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law."* To be Christian, you must walk in the Spirit. When we begin to "walk with God" an internal warfare begins. The Spirit of God wants us to do the will of God, while our flesh wants to do what we want. Christianity is one continual process of surrendering our will to the will of God.

NOT UNDER THE LAW

Galatians 5:18 says, *"18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law."* We would do well here to investigate the term "under the law" due to the fact that the law gives strength to sin.

In Romans 3:19-20 we learn, *"Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin."* This passage defines clearly the effects of being "under the law". The law makes every person who tries to "justify" themselves shut up, because the law makes the whole world guilty before God. The law gives everyone the knowledge of sin.

Another passage from the book of Romans 6:14-18 will help us to understand the term "under the law."

Romans 6:14-18, ¹⁴*For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.* ¹⁵*What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!* ¹⁶*Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?* ¹⁷*But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.* ¹⁸

And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.”

When someone successfully transitions out from under the law to grace, sin will lose its dominance over that person. When a person argues that they are not under the law as though it is a free ticket to sin, they are arguing directly opposite of what being under grace is about. Grace frees us from sin’s dominating power! Their arguments actually prove that they have not obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine that delivers us from sin. It is vital for us to understand that false doctrine can forever enslave a person to sin.

The last passage that I want to examine will help us to understand how we transition from being “under the law”, to being “under grace”. The passage is found in Romans 7:4-6,

“4 Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God. 5 For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. 6 But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.”

When we die with Christ we become dead to the law. **Dead men don’t sin.** We are then raised with Christ, to serve Him in the newness of the Spirit. This is when we begin to bear “fruit to God”. Remember that this chapter is about the fruit of the Holy Spirit. If we don’t settle the sin issue by dying to the law, we will never bear the fruit that God is expecting from us.

THE WORKS OF THE FLESH AND THE HUMAN WILL

Next the Apostle Paul lists specific sins as “the works of the flesh”. In Galatians 5:19-21 we read,

“19 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders,

drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

OUR EVER PRESENT WILL

All of these sins were awakened in the flesh by the law. In Romans 7:18 we find yet another helpful insight to understand the problem with the flesh, *“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.”* The presence of the human will is the source of our Christian warfare.

When God created man, He created him to live forever. The first time that death is mentioned in the Scripture is when God gave man His first commandment or law.

Genesis 2:15-17, ¹⁵ Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’”

Man in his original state had free will to do what he pleased. He had eternal life, and he was totally innocent of sin. When God gave the man a commandment, the presence of man’s will created the potential to sin. If man were to have the knowledge of good and evil, free will, and eternal life, he would be like God. In order to keep this from happening God mandated that if man sinned he would lose eternal life.

YOUR WILL BE DONE

Man did sin, and his eyes were opened to know good and evil, so God took away eternal life. Now, in the New Testament, God sent Jesus to take away our sins and to restore us to eternal life. The problem is that we still have the knowledge of good and evil. So in order to give us eternal life back, God commands us to surrender our wills to His.

When Jesus cried out to God in the Garden of Gethsemane before the crucifixion, His humanity asked God for another way, but God's will was always the deciding factor. Again and again He asked the Father, "*...if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.*" The book of Luke says that He was in such agony that He was sweating blood, yet He obeyed God, even in death. God's will was that He die on the cross. It is also God's will that we die with Christ on the cross.

The Christian walk is a long journey of surrendering our will to God's will. How fitting when Jesus taught His disciples to pray "... Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." A kingdom is the dominion of a king. The Holy Spirit comes to every person who bows to the Lordship of King Jesus. When our hearts become the dominion of The King, the kingdom comes in our hearts through the presence of the Holy Spirit. When we pray for the kingdom to come, we are actually praying for the Holy Spirit to come.

This is why we desperately need the Helper to put to death the deeds of the body. You cannot do this by sheer willpower. We must "will" to obey, then the Spirit helps our infirmities with the supernatural ability to do what we were fleshly incapable of doing — stop sinning!

CHAPTER 19:

THE PRODUCE OF THE SPIRIT,

PART II

FRUIT

You will notice that the word “fruit” is singular, even though there are nine different things listed as the “the fruit of the Spirit”. Each Christian individually, is the “fruit of the Spirit”, and should possess all of these qualities as evidence that we are not fulfilling the lusts of the flesh. When we studied the “Person of the Holy Spirit”, we learned that “friends” were the fruit that God desired from us. The fruit of the Spirit is not an end in itself, but leads us to the greater fruit that God desires from us, which is lasting friendships and the redemption of those friends.

Jesus said in John 15:8-14, ⁸ *By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.* ⁹ *As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.* ¹⁰ *If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.* ¹¹ *These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.* ¹² *This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.* ¹³ *Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.* ¹⁴ *You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.”*

Friends cost Jesus His life and friends will cost you your life!

In the book of Proverbs 18:24 it says, “A man who has friends must himself be friendly, But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.” I believe that the

fruit of the Spirit gives us the qualities that make us a good friend. When the fruit of the Spirit makes us friendly, we will bear the fruit of lasting friendships that become closer than a brother.

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS...LOVE

Without a doubt, the heart of a good relationship is love, but the heart of love, is giving. Giving is the best way to define love. One of the most famous Bible quotes is found in John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” God loved us so much that He gave. God’s love for us cost Him His Son.

LOVE DEFINED

The Scripture that gives us our clearest definition of love is found in I John 4:7-21,

“⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸ He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. ⁹ In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another ¹² No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. ¹³ By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. ¹⁵ Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. ¹⁶ And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. ¹⁷ Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. ¹⁸ There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. ¹⁹ We love Him because He first loved us. ²⁰ If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen,

how can he love God whom he has not seen? ²¹ And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.”

GOD IS LOVE

In verses 8 and 16, we find the much quoted term, “God is love”. This is why I think that I John gives us our clearest definition of love, because it states so plainly that “God is love”. But there are so many defining points in this reading that I want to highlight a few.

Verses 7 and 8 tell us that love is the litmus test for the new birth. He who loves is born of God. If you don’t love, you don’t even know God. Remember that love is best defined by giving, especially when you give your life, or the thing you love the most. Love is not just some empty word that we flippantly interject to prove our Christianity. It is the giving of ourselves to others. So many who claim to have love in word, prove they don’t know God in deed.

Verses 9-11 reemphasize John 3:16. God manifested His love to us by sending His Son into a hostile world to pay the redemption price for our sins with His own blood! We then, show our love to God by loving one another.

Verses 12-18 teach us how to be perfected in love. We have never seen God, but when we love one another by faith, God’s love is being perfected in us. When we love one another, the Holy Spirit comes to live among us. He helps us through the warfare we face when our love for one another is tested, because of our confession of Christ. Everything from hell will fight against us loving one another; the devil will stop at nothing in order to ruin our witness of our love for Him. Perfect love gives us boldness as we walk through the judgment that begins at the house of God. As Jesus is now, so are we in this world. This perfect love casts out every fear of having relationships, and we become fearless lovers, who are ready to give in love to the end.

Verses 19-21 end the teaching of love with a powerful point. We can only love Him after we have received His love. We will run out of human love quickly, but the Divine love of God is inexhaustible.

We must first receive His love in order to give love. When we try to love people we will find ourselves quickly depleted. We must stay in a constant communion with God to be filled again and again with His love.

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS...JOY

I am convinced that the fruit of the Spirit is a means to a greater end. The fruit that God desires in John 15 is friendship. We have already examined the role of love in friendship, now let's look at the part that joy plays in good relationships.

Once again we will examine John 15:8-14, ⁸ *By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.* ⁹ *As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.* ¹⁰ *If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.* ¹¹ *These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.* ¹² *This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.* ¹³ *Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.* ¹⁴ *You are My friends if you do whatever I command you."*

Verse eight tells us that God is glorified when we bear much fruit. It even seems like bearing fruit is the diploma for our discipleship. In verse nine we see the flow of Divine love from The Father to Jesus, and then from Jesus to us. Finally, we are to abide in love with one another. Verse ten teaches us that abiding in His love is conditional on keeping His commandments. Verses eleven and twelve reveal the heart of what I want us to see. Those who keep the commandment of loving one another can have the same fullness of joy that Jesus has. Verse thirteen seals the discussion; the greatest love is when someone gives up their life for another. Jesus' crowning jewel of obedience to the Father was accomplished when He died for His friends on the cross.

Hebrews 12:1-4, ^a *Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,*
² *looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that*

was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. ⁴ You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.”

What was the joy that was set before Jesus? Was it eternity in heaven? He already had that. He had to leave heaven to come to earth. The joy that compelled Jesus to endure the cross was the redemption of His friends. Certainly eternity factors in, but without redemption, eternity is unspeakable sorrows for all of mankind.

Christians should be the most joyful people on the face of the earth! Isaiah 12:3 says, “*Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.*” Every time we draw and drink from the well of remembrance of what Jesus did for us, joy fills our souls!

I Peter 1:3-9 says it this way,

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵ who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, ⁸ whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, ⁹ receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.”

No matter what we are going through, Christians can draw and drink from the well of what Jesus did for us at the cross. Or we can look ahead to the joy of eternity with the one who purchased our souls. Either way, we rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory!

Remember, salvation is like a well. The well represents the cross and how it personally affected each of us. The Holy Spirit is like a river;

He is an inexhaustible supply of continuing joy springing up in the believer.

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS...PEACE

As I have repeatedly stated, John 15 is conveying the idea that Jesus centered friendship is the fruit that God wants from us. In John 15 we found out that love and joy are the catalyst for good friendships. The chapters preceding and following John 15, reveal that peace should surround our relationships with God, and with one another.

John 14:26-27, ²⁶ *But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.* ²⁷ *Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*"

Our Helper, the Holy Spirit, gives us an internal peace that is beyond human reasoning. The Apostle Paul describes this in Philippians 4:6-7,

⁶ *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;* ⁷ *and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*"

The initial work of the Holy Spirit gives us peace in our hearts and minds that causes all trouble and fear to subside. The Apostle Paul started all of his letters with the same opening exhortation "Grace and peace be with you..." The first work of grace is peace. The word "peace" means to join or to make one. As in marriage, the two become one, so in the New Covenant, we become one in Christ. When all of the sins and condemnation that separated us from God are taken away through the blood of the New Covenant, we become one with God, and peace fills our hearts and minds.

When I testify of my own conversion to Christ, I compare the initial forgiveness of sins to the principles of displacement. When God's grace

was applied to my sins, His mercy displaced my guilt, and peace drove out the condemnation. My own heart that only knew trouble was then ruled by the peace of God. I can certainly tell you that this happened, but my human capacity to communicate is inadequate to fully describe the “peace that passes understanding”! I don’t have to understand it to fully appreciate it. Praise the Lord!

John 14:26-27 teaches us about the peace that God gives us from all internal trouble. In John 16:33 we will learn that we can have peace in the midst of external trouble, *“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”*

Jesus assures us that the Christian will have tribulation in the world. Let me be even more specific; when we begin to obey Jesus’ command to love one another, everything from hell and earth will come against you! The devil knows that when Christians agree, and come into unity, then our prayers are the mightiest force on earth. Jesus did not promise us that we would escape tribulation instead, He promises that we will have tribulation. His promise is that we will have peace in the midst of the trial. He goes even further by telling us to cheer up, because He has overcome the world that is trying to overcome you!

Love, joy, and peace are the first fruits of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps we could call them the “foundational fruit”. I believe that the Holy Spirit produces these first in us, so that we can produce friendships that are Christ centered and eternal. The Holy Spirit bears this fruit in us so that we can bear fruit to God.

CHAPTER 20:

THE PRODUCE OF THE SPIRIT,

PART III

In chapter 19 we discussed the “foundational fruit” of love, joy, and peace. The rest of the fruit of the Holy Spirit seems to come from these, but all of them work toward the ultimate goal of bearing the fruit of friendship.

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS...LONGSUFFERING, KINDNESS

In I Corinthians 13 we find the most famous chapter concerning love in the Bible. In verse four the Apostle Paul begins his definition of love by saying, “Love suffers long and is kind. . .” Paul chose longsuffering and kindness as the first words to describe love. Everyone suffers in this life but not every one is kind while suffering. I have been around some people who are sweet as they can be under normal circumstances, but when suffering begins they lose it. On the other hand, in my twenty eight years of ministry I have walked with many who were enduring tremendous trials of afflictions, and the kindness they displayed was truly divine. I would go to minister to them, but instead, I would be ministered to by their kindness. Kindness in the midst of suffering is truly one of the sweetest attributes that the Holy Spirit produces in the lives of Christians!

BROTHERLY KINDNESS

Kindness seems to be underrated in the modern pulpits but the Apostles understood this divine trait perfectly. In II Peter 1:2-8 we read,

“2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, ³ as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, ⁴ by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. ⁵ But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, ⁶ to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, ⁷ to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. ⁸ For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Notice the phrase, “brotherly kindness”. Peter is describing the attributes of those who are partakers of the divine nature. He shows how we start with faith, then keep adding until we end with love. Brotherly kindness is the last building block before love, and is a significant factor in bearing the fruit of friendship. Consider Proverbs 18:24, *“A man who has friends must himself be friendly, But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”* When we approach Christianity as a relationship, and not as religion, we will experience the strains of relationships that we previously only experienced within our immediate families. When we walk in the Spirit we show brotherly kindness to those who are not family members, or are even strangers. This is the witness that the Holy Spirit wants those without Christ to see. He will use your displays of loving kindness to win others to Jesus.

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS...GOODNESS

The words good and goodness are mostly used in Scripture as a reference to God. Jesus would not even allow Himself to be called good, when in Matthew 19:16-17, He told the rich young ruler, *“Now behold, one came and said to Him, ‘Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?’ So He said to him, ‘Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.’”* The use of the words “good” and “goodness”, when pertaining to men, is usually in the context of what we do instead of who we are. However, I will remind us again that the Holy Spirit is God, and He is good! If

you are filled with the Spirit, you are filled with His goodness.

We have been stressing the point that the fruit of the Spirit is not an end in itself, but a means to a greater end - the fruit of friendships. As with the other fruit that we have studied, so it is with goodness. Let's look at Romans 15:13-14,

¹³ Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁴ Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another."

Faith in "the God of hope" causes us to be filled with love, joy, and peace; out of those three springs the rest of the fruit of the Spirit. This holds true with goodness. Goodness comes from hope, hope comes from joy and peace, joy and peace come from the Holy Spirit. When we are "full of goodness" we are then able to admonish one another gently. The fruit of the Spirit always has a positive influence on those we are around.

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS...FAITHFULNESS

Faith is a part of the fruit of the Spirit. I want to point something out in the first half of Galatians chapter five. Paul is giving an exhortation to the Galatians to "stand fast in the liberty by which Christ has made us free". Paul then once again drives home the theme of the entire epistle by discussing how circumcision would cause them to fall from grace. Then, in verses 5-6, he reveals the point I want us to see concerning faith, "*For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.*" Notice how faith works - through love. Once again let me remind you that the foundational fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, and peace. Do you see how love produces faith?

If we read just a few verses further in Galatians 5:13-15,

¹³ For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. ¹⁴ For all

the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'¹⁵ But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!"

These are the verses that immediately precede the text for the fruit of the Spirit. Under the Law of Moses they failed miserably at loving their neighbor as themselves. But under the Law of the Spirit we see this fulfilled. Our inability to love one another is an indictment that we are still under law. The modern equivalent to circumcision is religion; we practice religion in our flesh but are incapable of producing the fruit of the Spirit.

Faith works through love. The fruit of the Spirit produces love, and love produces faith. The greatest faith that we can display is when we love and serve one another, believing that we are loving and serving Jesus!

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS...GENTLENESS

The English word “gentleness” only appears twice in the New Testament. But the Greek word that it is derived from “*chrestotes*” is used numerous times in the New Testament, translated as goodness, kindness, and gentleness. The word means *grace which pervades the whole nature, mellowing all which would be seen harsh and austere.*

One of the best uses of this word “*chrestotes*” is found in Colossians 3:12-13, “*Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.*” This seems to capture the essence of the use of the word gentleness. It reinforces the point we are making that the fruit of the Spirit is a means to a greater end - friendships. Notice the powerful effects that gentleness has on relationships: bearing with one another and forgiving complaints. These qualities are the bedrock of relationship. When by gentleness we mellow our harsher qualities, we bear the fruit that wins others to Jesus!

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS...SELF-CONTROL

In Titus 1:7-9, Paul describes the qualifications of an Elder (a New Testament pastor or house church leader),

“⁷ For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, ⁸ but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, ⁹ holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.”

Self-control is self explanatory; the ability to control yourself, especially in the area of appetites of the flesh (food, sex, sleep...). Once again, I see the idea of relationships reinforced through the Holy Spirit’s fruit of self-control. God wants this quality in the leaders of the church because the church is being built by relationships. Now, I know that many will justify themselves by thinking that this only applies to leaders in the church, so let’s look at another passage.

Self-control and temperance mean the same thing. The word temperance is a little more obsolete, but we see these words interchanged in Scripture. In I Corinthians 9:24-27 the Apostle Paul uses this word to describe the disciplines it takes to attain the incorruptible crown,

I Corinthians 9:24-27, “²⁴ Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. ²⁵ And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. ²⁶ Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. ²⁷ But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.”

Self-control is the main discipline to keep our bodies under subjection to achieve the incorruptible crown.

SUMMARY

To end the chapters on the fruit of the Spirit, let’s read Galatians

5:22-26 on more time,

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. ²⁴ And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another."

There is no law against the fruit of the Spirit! There is no need to punish anyone for love, joy, peace, etc. It sounds funny to think about it. Imagine a policeman putting you under arrest because you have too much love, joy, and peace.

The key to bearing this fruit is found in verse 24, Christians put the flesh to death at the cross. The work of the cross keeps us humble, it keeps us near to Christ, and it keeps us in love with Him. The Holy Spirit will keep us near the cross, and as He does, our communion with Christ's sufferings will cause us to be lifted up above the law of sin and death. Then, we will begin to produce the fruit of the Spirit, and in turn the fruit of the Spirit will cause us to win others to Christ!

CHAPTER 21:

THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT,

PART I

Since beginning our study on the “Baptism in the Holy Spirit”, we have spent most of our time trying to impart an understanding of the “Person of the Holy Spirit”. I believe that a large error of the Charismatic Movement was a lack of teaching concerning the Person of the Holy Spirit, and an over emphasis on the gifts of the Spirit. I certainly believe that all of the gifts of the Spirit are for today. But I also believe that power without character is dangerous, and someone is bound to get hurt. We would never consider giving a little child a loaded gun for a toy. However, today we press immature people to get powerful spiritual gifts, while lacking the spiritual character to act responsibly. We have taken much time to emphasize our relationship with the Holy Spirit. In the formation of this relationship we are simultaneously forming the Christ-like character to handle God’s power.

WHY DID GOD GIVES US POWER?

There are two passages of Scripture that I want us to examine to help us understand the power of the Holy Spirit, and the use of His power.

THE RIGHT TO MAKE DISCIPLES

The first Scripture that I want us to see concerning power, is found in Matthew 28:18-20,

¹⁸ *And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All **power** is given unto me in heaven and in earth. ¹⁹ Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: ²⁰ Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” (KJV)*

I chose to use the King James Version of the Bible for this passage because most modern versions rightly use the word “authority” instead of “power” in verse 18. The Greek word for power here is “*exousia*” and it means *the right to rule*.

This passage of Scripture is commonly called “The Great Commission”. Here Jesus claims that He had “all power in heaven and earth”. He then transfers that power to His disciples so we can fulfill the work of making disciples of all of the nations. We have the God given right to make disciples for Him in all of the nations.

THE ABILITY TO MAKE DISCIPLES

The next passage that I want us to see is found in Acts I:4-8,

⁴ *And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, ‘which,’ He said, ‘you have heard from Me; ⁵ for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’ ⁶ Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, ‘Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?’ ⁷ And He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. ⁸ But you shall receive **power** when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.’”*

In verse eight, I underlined and highlighted the word power, because I wanted to emphasize that with the Holy Spirit comes power, and that power is to make us effective witnesses for Jesus. The Greek word used here for power is “*dunamis*” which means *force or power*. We also derive the English word “dynamite” from this term. The meaning of this word for power is *the ability to rule*.

Let's put these two passages together to truly understand the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus commissioned His disciples by giving them the authority (or right) to make disciples of all of the nations. Then He gave us the Holy Spirit so that we would have "the power or ability" to make disciples of all of the nations. We have the right, and the power, to make disciples. Using His power for any other purpose is to usurp His authority/power! When we lose our vision for the mission of the Great Commission, we also lose our power.

THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

In I Corinthians 12:I-II we find a list of gifts given to us by the Holy Spirit,

^a Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant: ² You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led. ³ Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. ⁴ There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵ There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. ⁶ And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. ⁷ But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: ⁸ for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, ¹⁰ to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills."

SPIRITUAL IGNORANCE

Before studying each particular gift, I want to point out a few things that the Apostle Paul said concerning spiritual gifts. First, in verse one he said, "I do not want you to be ignorant". It's amazing that he said he doesn't want us to be ignorant about spiritual gifts, yet the church remains largely ignorant about the gifts. To be ignorant means to be

unlearned or untrained about a subject. The information is here to learn and train but we largely ignore it! As a matter of fact, why do we even need the spiritual gifts in modern Christianity? The gospel has been presented in a way that releases the members of the church from any responsibility to reach the nations. All that most of today's church wants from God is not to go to hell in the end. But there will be hell to pay for those who refuse to obey the Great Commission.

THE GIFTS AND THE GODHEAD

The next thing that I want to point out before we study the gifts of the Holy Spirit, is a distinction that the Apostle Paul makes concerning who gives which gifts.

GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

In verse four we find, *“There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.”* I won't belabor this here because this will be the subject we are about to study, but I will point out that the Spirit gives a diversity of gifts.

GIFTS OF JESUS

In verse five we read, *“There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord.”* The Lord (Jesus is The Lord), also gives gifts of ministry. We find the gifts that Jesus gives for ministry in Ephesians 4:7-11,

“⁷ But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸ Therefore He says: ‘When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men.’ ⁹ (Now this, ‘He ascended’—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰ He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) ¹¹ And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, [. . .]”

Here we find a list of gifts that Jesus gives in association with His ascension from the grave to heaven, *“He led captivity captive and gave gifts to men.”* All of the souls who died before Christ were waiting in Sheol for the Messiah to come. After Jesus fulfilled His earthly work on the

cross, by shedding the blood that would redeem mankind, He first went into the lower parts of the earth (paradise or Abraham's Bosom). Then He led those who died waiting for the Messiah, out of Sheol to be with Him forever. There is something about His ascension, with all of the Old Testament leaders that enabled Him to give the gifts of ministry to New Testament leaders. I believe that all of the gifts of the Old Testament ministers are now given to the New Testament leaders in addition to the power of the Holy Spirit. That's why the Old Testament leaders wished they could have seen our day. So why are we looking back to their day? Is it because we are ignorant of the gifts that God has given to His Church?

He gave some apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. These are gifts given by Jesus. I believe that any disciple of Jesus can also receive these gifts just as those closest to Him did. In Matthew 10:1-2 we read,

¹ And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease. ² Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;"

Notice that He called them His "disciples", He gave them power, then He introduced them as "apostles"! The disciples of Jesus will graduate to the work of ministry, or they will abort the entire purpose of the New Testament Commission. Read Matthew 10:7-8, "And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give." The success of the New Testament hinges on our willingness to freely give what we have freely received!!! We need more apostle, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers than ever. We must lose the mentality that these are super gifts for a special few, and understand that these are graduation gifts to faithful disciples ready to go fulfill the Great Commission.

GIFTS OF GOD

In I Corinthians 12:6 we find that God gives gifts also, "And there are

diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.”

Romans 12:1-21, ¹“ I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. ³ For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, **as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.** ⁴ For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, ⁵ so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. ⁶ **Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us,** let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; ⁷ or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; ⁸ he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. ⁹ Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; ¹¹ not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; ¹² rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; ¹³ distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. ¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. ¹⁷ Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. ¹⁹ Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. ²⁰ Therefore ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.’ ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

I have emphasized the work of God with bold letters where He is giving us the “measure of faith” and the “gifts of grace”. The gifts mentioned here seem to be given as part of the new birth and deeply affect our character. The DNA of God gives us gifts that fit proportionately to

our measure of faith. That is why there are still diversities. We are not all cookie cutters, but each one's character and personality in the new birth will be wonderfully expressed in our service to Him.

So we see that God gives gifts affecting our character. Jesus gives us gifts of ministry. Next we will examine the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER 22:

THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT,

PART II

Remember the Holy Spirit is giving us power to be witnesses. If we are not testifying of Jesus we have no need for power. The reason the church today lacks power is because we have made Christianity a mental assent to God. However, “the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power” (I Cor.4:20). The Apostle Paul knew this well and revealed the effectiveness of his ministry in I Corinthians 2:1-5,

“¹ And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. ² For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. ³ I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. ⁴ And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”

Too much of today’s faith relies on the wisdom of men and not on the power of God. The Apostle Paul came with physical weakness but spiritual power. As he testified of the cross of Christ the Spirit confirmed the message with strong demonstrations of power!

THE MANIFESTATION OF THE SPIRIT

In this chapter we will focus on I Corinthians 12:7-11, *“⁷ But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: ⁸ for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same*

Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit,¹⁰ to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.¹¹ But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.”

Notice how the Holy Spirit manifests Himself in verse 7, “*the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one. . .*” The Holy Spirit manifests Himself to “*each one.*” He will reveal Himself to and through every Christian, not only a select few.

THE WORD OF WISDOM

The Greek word for wisdom is “*sophia*” and is used in Scripture to refer to both worldly and spiritual wisdom. Again, we will refer to I Corinthians 2:6-7 to see this distinction in Scripture, “*However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory,*” The Apostle Paul makes a distinction here between the wisdom of this age and the wisdom of God. The wisdom of God is best defined by the cross itself.

I Corinthians I:17-30, ¹⁷ *For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.* ¹⁸ *For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.* ¹⁹ *For it is written: ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.’* ²⁰ *Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?* ²¹ *For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.* ²² *For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom;* ²³ *but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness,* ²⁴ *but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.* ²⁵ *Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.* ²⁶ *For*

you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. ²⁷ But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; ²⁸ and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, ²⁹ that no flesh should glory in His presence. ³⁰ But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption— ³¹ that, as it is written, ‘He who glories, let him glory in the LORD.’ Without a doubt the wisdom of God is manifested in the cross!’

I read another definition for wisdom once that said, “Wisdom is the ability to live life skillfully”. That definition stuck with me, especially when you understand that the cross is the foundation for all wisdom. Consider these sayings of Jesus, “the first shall be last and the last shall be first”, “the least shall be greatest”, “lose your life to save it, save your life and lose it”. The death of the cross is the way to life and is the beginning and foundation for all wisdom.

Let’s see the spiritual gift of the word of wisdom in action.

Matthew 22:15-22, ¹⁵ Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in His talk. ¹⁶ And they sent to Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, ‘Teacher, we know that You are true, and teach the way of God in truth; nor do You care about anyone, for You do not regard the person of men. ¹⁷ Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?’ ¹⁸ But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, ‘Why do you test Me, you hypocrites? ¹⁹ Show Me the tax money.’ So they brought Him a denarius. ²⁰ And He said to them, ‘Whose image and inscription is this?’ ²¹ They said to Him, ‘Caesar’s.’ And He said to them, ‘Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.’ ²² When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left Him and went their way.”

I remember the first time that I read this I thought, “How clever!” This is not just clever, smart, or a quick response - this is the word of wisdom in action. What a wonderful gift to silence those who are trying to trap you in your words. Remember this the next time you are

witnessing and religious devils try to trick you with words; James 1:5, *“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”*

THE WORD OF KNOWLEDGE

The word of knowledge is a gift that allows you to know things by the Holy Spirit that you did not gain through learned means. One example of this is found in John 1:47-51,

“⁴⁷ Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, ‘Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!’ ⁴⁸ Nathanael said to Him, ‘How do You know me?’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.’ ⁴⁹ Nathanael answered and said to Him, ‘Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!’ ⁵⁰ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Because I said to you, “I saw you under the fig tree,” do you believe? You will see greater things than these.’ ⁵¹ And He said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.’”

Nathanael was blown away because Jesus knew facts about him without having previously met him. He was so impressed that he confessed Christ as the Son of God and the King of Israel!

Another great example of this is found as Jesus is witnessing to the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4:15-19,

“¹⁵ The woman said to Him, ‘Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw.’ ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, ‘Go, call your husband, and come here.’ ¹⁷ The woman answered and said, ‘I have no husband.’ Jesus said to her, ‘You have well said, “I have no husband,” ¹⁸ for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly.’ ¹⁹ The woman said to Him, ‘Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet.’”

The Holy Spirit told Jesus about specific issues in her life, thus causing her to confess that Jesus was a prophet.

I know many critics will say that Jesus did these things because He is God, but I contend that He did these things by the power of the Holy

Spirit. He even told His disciples in John 14:12, *“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.”*

FAITH

We studied faith extensively in chapters 4-9 so we won't cover the same ground here.

Let me point out that many times Jesus used the phrases “according to your faith” or “your faith has healed you”. There is no doubt that Jesus possessed the power to heal, deliver, and perform miracles, but the people who received from His power had to have faith to receive. In Matthew 9:1-2, *“So He got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own city. Then behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, ‘Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.’”* He “saw” their faith. The very act of bringing the sick to Jesus for healing reveals faith. When we do all that we can to get to Jesus, He recognizes our acts of faith.

Another instance of “seeing someone's faith” is found in the Book of Acts 14:8-10, *“And in Lystra a certain man without strength in his feet was sitting, a cripple from his mother's womb, who had never walked. This man heard Paul speaking. Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, ‘Stand up straight on your feet!’ And he leaped and walked.”* Paul recognized that the man had faith to be healed. This is the gift of faith in action. As the man “heard Paul speak” his faith came alive and Paul recognized it. Immediately Paul seized the moment and the man was healed. I believe that both Paul and the man in this story were operating in the “gift of faith”!

GIFTS OF HEALINGS

Notice that both words “gifts” and “healings” are plural. I believe there are various gifts for various healings. Some people are healed through prayer, some through laying on of hands. Jesus made mud from spit and dirt and healed a man. Peter's shadow fell on others and

healed them. God uses different people in different ways to heal, but all of these are the “gifts of healings” and we should learn to recognize them.

Let me share a verse with you from Matthew 8:16, “*When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick,*” When the gifts of healing are present, “*all*” were healed. No one went away disappointed; not then, and not now.

MIRACLES

Miracles are different from healings. Even though healings are miraculous, they are limited to healings of sickness and disease. Miracles, on the other hand, encompass so much more than just healing. For example: turning water into wine, walking on water, or quieting the sea. Miracles defy natural laws of physics and gravity, because the **higher law** of Romans 8:2 applies here, “*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.*” When a law is in force and a higher law comes against it, the higher law wins. When the law of lift is exercised over the law of gravity airplanes fly! So it is with the law of the Spirit of life. It is the *highest law!*

Some people are used in different, even unusual ways to perform miracles. Take the Apostle Paul for instance in Acts 19:11-12, “*Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them.*” Notice that this is an “unusual” miracle, not everybody operates this way, neither is it limited to this. Miracles just defy all logic!!!

PROPHECY

Prophecy means *to foretell or predict*. This is very different from preaching which is *to tell forth*.

Jesus prophesied often to His disciples. He told them that He would be crucified in Jerusalem. He told Peter that He would deny Him three

times. He told them that Judas would betray Him. You get the point that Jesus prophesied often.

Some of the best verses to teach us concerning prophecy are found in I Corinthians 14. In verses 1-3,

¹ Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. ² For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries. ³ But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.”

Paul actually encourages us to desire the gift of prophecy. Prophecy serves to edify, exhort, and to comfort the church, but is not limited to just that.

I Corinthians 14:22-25, ²² Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe. ²³ Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those who are uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind? ²⁴ But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all. ²⁵ And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you.”

Prophecy convinces and convicts unbelievers by revealing the secrets of their hearts!

I Corinthians 14:31, *“For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged.”* Everyone can prophecy in every church service!

DISCERNING OF SPIRITS

The word “discern” means *to have a judicial estimation*. I believe this gift has been rendered useless today by false doctrines that cause Christians not to judge. We are commanded to judge!

I Corinthians 6:1-3, ¹ Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? ² Do

you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? ³ Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?"

We will judge angels in the future and we are commanded to judge things pertaining to this life in the present. We need to repent of false doctrines imposed on the Church by the world and unbelievers and see the gifts of discernment restored!

There are three ways to discern. First, the Word of God is a discerner Hebrews 4:12, *"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."* Knowing God's Word will cause us to be able to discern even motives of the heart. Second, our senses can discern, Hebrews 5:14, *"But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."* Mature believers exercise their senses to discern. Finally, the gift of the Holy Ghost is given to discern spirits, both evil and good.

Let's look at the discerning of evil spirits. Acts 8:14-24,

¹⁴ Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, ¹⁵ who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. ¹⁶ For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷ Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸ And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, ¹⁹ saying, 'Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit.' ²⁰ But Peter said to him, 'Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! ²¹ You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. ²² Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. ²³ For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.' ²⁴ Then Simon answered and said, 'Pray to the Lord for me, that none of the things which you have spoken

may come upon me.”

Here we see the Apostle discerned something the Evangelist missed. Peter discerned that Simon’s heart was not right. Can you imagine preachers today telling someone their heart is not right? Everyone would accuse him of judging. Peter did judge and the church was spared a false disciple.

Another example of discerning an evil spirit is found in Acts 16:16-18,

“¹⁶ Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. ¹⁷ This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, ‘These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation.’ ¹⁸ And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, ‘I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.’ And he came out that very hour.”

Although this girl was saying religious things the Apostle discerned that she had an annoying demon. So many religious people just annoy the Holy Spirit and they need deliverance!

The last thing that I want to point out concerning discerning of spirits is that we also need to discern the Holy Spirit.

I Corinthians 11:26-31, *“²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes. ²⁷ Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹ For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. ³⁰ For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. ³¹ For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.”*

We need to discern the Lord’s Body, which is the church, and we need to discern the various parts of His Body. We will study this further in the next chapter “The Baptism into His Body”.

TONGUES AND INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES

We discussed tongues in Chapter 17 “The Proof of the Holy Spirit” so again, I will not be redundant here. I will just reinforce that the prayer language that comes with the Baptism in the Holy Spirit is different than prophesying in tongues. I Corinthians 14:2, “*For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.*” When someone is praying to God in tongues it requires no interpretation even when others hear you. We are not praying to men, we are praying to God, speaking in mysteries!

Only when we bring a message in tongues to the church is the tongue required to be interpreted. Tongues plus interpretation equals prophecy.

I Corinthians 14:27-28, ²⁷ If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret. ²⁸ But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God.”

We are to keep strict order here to avoid confusion. I Corinthians 14:39, “*Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues.*”

We need to put away our ignorance concerning the spiritual gifts and see the power of God restored in our churches today!

CHAPTER 23:

BAPTISM INTO HIS BODY, PART I

We concluded our study of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit with a discussion of the gifts of the Spirit found in I Corinthians 12:1-11. This is a good place to transition into our next baptism found in I Corinthians 12:12-13, The Baptism into His Body.

I Corinthians 12:12-13, ¹² *For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. ¹³ For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.*”

We will examine the full context of I Corinthians 12 a little later in this chapter, but for now I want to look at two ways that we could interpret the Baptism into His Body.

THE PHYSICAL BODY OF JESUS

The first way to interpret “His Body” is the physical body that Jesus had when He lived on this earth. Luke 22:19, *“And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’”*

He gave us His physical body when He died on the cross, I Peter 2:24, *“who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.”*

Hebrews 10:5-10, ⁵ *Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: ‘Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me. ⁶ In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. ⁷ Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come—In the volume of the book it is written of*

*Me—To do Your will, O God.”*⁸ Previously saying, ‘Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them’ (which are offered according to the law),⁹ then He said, ‘Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.’ He takes away the first that He may establish the second.¹⁰ By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”

Jesus received a physical body to fulfill God’s will for Him, to die as a substitute sacrifice in the place of all who have sinned against God. The one offering of His Perfect Body satisfied God’s wrath against all sinners who come believing that Jesus broken body and shed blood are the only means to be saved from their sins.

Whenever we eat together as a church it should be a memorial of His broken body.

I Corinthians II:17-34,⁴⁷ Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse.¹⁸ For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it.¹⁹ For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you.²⁰ Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord’s Supper.²¹ For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk.²² What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you.²³ For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread;²⁴ and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’²⁵ In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.²⁷ Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.²⁸ But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.²⁹ For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner

*eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.*³⁰ *For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.*³¹ *For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.*³² *But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.*³³ *Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.*³⁴ *But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment. And the rest I will set in order when I come."*

Paul was correcting the Corinthian church for abusing the Lord's Supper. Notice, that it was a full meal, just like the Passover Jesus shared with His disciples. Some were coming and eating all that they had brought, while others were doing without. Some were even using intoxicating wine and getting drunk. Paul said that when you come together this way it is not good. But he corrected them, and restored the sobering thought that we should remember His death when we eat together, and examine ourselves to properly discern the Lord's Body.

This passage of Scripture completes our first thought of how to interpret "His Body" as the physical body of Jesus, and will lead us to our second thought.

THE CHURCH IS HIS BODY

The church is "His Body". Ephesians I:22-23, *"And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."* This passage clearly defines the church as "His Body".

Again in Colossians I:18-24, ¹⁸ *And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.*¹⁹ *For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell,*²⁰ *and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.*²¹ *And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled*²² *in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—*²³ *if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which*

was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister. ²⁴ I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church[...]”

The church is His Body and He is the Head of His Body.

Ephesians 2:13-22, ¹³ *But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, ¹⁵ having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. ¹⁷ And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.*

We have been reconciled “in one body through the cross”! The physical body of Jesus reconciled us to God, but we have also been reconciled to God in one body, His Church. What I am trying to point out here is this; we are certainly baptized into His Body at the cross, Romans 6:3, “*Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?*” But we are also baptized into His Body, the Church, at the cross. I Corinthians 12:12-13, “*For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.*” Our reconciliation to God is not completed until we are baptized or immersed into the church!

BLOOD COVENANT WITH HIM AND WITH HIS CHURCH

Romans 7:1-4, ¹“Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? ²For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. ³So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. ⁴Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.”

We are dead to the law (religion) through the body of Christ. The Apostle Paul uses the law concerning marriage to point out that we are free from the law when we die with Christ on the cross. Now we are free to marry Jesus! We are in a marriage covenant through the literal body of Christ, and the church which is His body.

Ephesians 5:22-33 strengthens this point,

²²Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. ²⁴Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. ²⁵Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, ²⁶that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. ²⁸So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. ³⁰For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. ³¹For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. ³²This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. ³³Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”

As with the passage from Romans 7, the Apostle Paul uses marriage to describe Christ's relationship to His church. Notice in verse 32, "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church." He is not addressing marriage, he is addressing the church. Look at verses 30-31, "For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." The same verses that teach us of the blood covenant in a marriage relationship are used to teach us of the blood covenant between Christ and His church. We have become "one flesh" in the body of Christ. This is not a loose affiliation but a *blood covenant!* Not only are we in covenant with Christ, but we also are in covenant with one another in his body!

The failure of so many marriages today is a perfect reflection of our failings in our covenant with His Body.

BAPTIZED INTO ONE BODY

As I said earlier let's look at the full context of I Corinthians 12:12-31,

¹² For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. ¹³ For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. ¹⁴ For in fact the body is not one member but many. ¹⁵ If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,' is it therefore not of the body? ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,' is it therefore not of the body? ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? ¹⁸ But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. ¹⁹ And if they were all one member, where would the body be? ²⁰ But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. ²¹ And the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you'; nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' ²² No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. ²³ And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unrepresentable parts have greater modesty,

24 but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, 25 that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. 26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. 27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. 28 And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? 30 Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.”

THE HUMAN BODY ILLUSTRATES HIS BODY

The Apostle Paul uses the anatomy of the human body to teach us the relationship we have to one another in His Body. The body has many members but it is one body. I am grateful that my leg doesn't have the “independence” to go join another body at its choosing! My leg is “interdependent” on the other members for its usefulness. Thank God that it takes its marching orders from my head and doesn't have a mind of its own.

If the church today worked this way we would represent the Body of Christ in a glorious way. But the independence in the churches today is an indictment that we are not receiving instruction from The Head (Christ) but from our own heads!

GOD SETS US AT HIS PLEASURE

Let me point out a couple of things in this passage of Scripture. Look at verse 18, “*But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.*” God sets the members into the body at His pleasure. The word “set” means *to set in a proper place or to assign a place*. God assigns each member its place in the one body.

JOINED TOGETHER

Another thing that I would point out is found in verse 24, “*But*

God *composed the body.*” The King James Version of the Bible uses the word *tempered* instead of *composed*. It means to mix together. In a figurative sense it means to join together, or temper together, so that one part counter-balances another.

Ephesians 4:11-16 further enforces this point,

“¹¹ And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³ till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; ¹⁴ that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, ¹⁵ but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

The body of Christ is joined and knit together by what every joint supplies.

HOW WE ARE JOINED AND KNIT TOGETHER

The last thing that I want to point out in I Corinthians 12: 31-I Corinthians 13,

“³¹ But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way. ^{13:1} Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. ² And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³ And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. ⁴ Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; ⁵ does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; ⁶ does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; ⁷ bears all

things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸ *Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.* ⁹ *For we know in part and we prophesy in part.* ¹⁰ *But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.* ¹¹ *When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.* ¹² *For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.* ¹³ *And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”*

The joints are knit together through loving relationships. These are not loose affiliations, but are in a stronger form of love than a marriage covenant. The Body of Christ is held together by love for Jesus, and love for one another.

LOVE IS STRONGER THAN DEATH

The Song of Solomon says this well in Chapter 8:6-7,

“6 Set me as a seal upon your heart, As a seal upon your arm; For love is as strong as death, Jealousy as cruel as the grave; Its flames are flames of fire, A most vehement flame. 7 Many waters cannot quench love, Nor can the floods drown it. If a man would give for love All the wealth of his house, It would be utterly despised.”

When a marriage takes place the couple says, “Until death do us part”. This is blood covenant because we make an oath that nothing but death will separate us. The same is true in our covenant with Christ.

We are not only in a blood covenant with Christ, but we are in blood covenant with one another. The agape love that we have been shown at the cross in the body of Jesus is what we must show one another in the body of Christ, His church. This love is stronger than death!

CHAPTER 24:

BAPTISM INTO HIS BODY,

PART II

To be baptized means to be fully immersed into a fluid, however, water baptism is *always* symbolic. In our discussions of baptisms we are not dealing with symbols. We are learning about the actual baptisms. While studying the baptism into His body, we are learning about being baptized or fully immersed into the church, which is the body of Christ.

It is important to understand that when I talk about the “church” I am not speaking of a building where we meet. As a matter of fact, the New Testament church didn’t meet in buildings, but in homes. Churches were not formal institutions, led by professional clergymen who performed spiritual rituals once a week. They were family and friends, who met in homes, led by men and women who loved Jesus, and loved each other. The key to the New Testament church is *relationships!*

Therefore, whenever I say the word “church”, please understand I am not talking about religious institutions and denominations, who meet in sterile non-relational environments to fulfill religious duties. I am talking about the called out assembly of Jesus’ disciples, who follow Him in the Biblical way of loving relationships, and meet in the homes of the members becoming best friends with one another.

MEMBERS OF ONE ANOTHER

With that definition in mind let’s read Romans 12:1-5,

“¹ I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. ³ For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. ⁴ For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, ⁵ so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.”

The body of Christ is made up of individuals who become part of one another. So much emphasis has been put on your “personal relationship” with Jesus that the personal relationship has become an end in itself. This is not God’s intention for His body. We certainly have a personal relationship with Jesus, but it is worthless without a relationship to the rest of His body. We are interdependent on one another.

PRESENT YOUR BODIES A LIVING SACRIFICE

So how do we become “members of one another”? How can we actually become a part of another person? In chapter 23 we learned that the Bible uses marriage to show how the church enters into blood covenant, not only with Christ, but with one another. In marriage the two become one, and also in Christianity the two become one. It doesn’t take newlyweds long to realize that it is a difficult process for the two to become one. The same holds true in the baptism into His body. Notice in verse one Paul exhorts us to “present our bodies as a living sacrifice”.

Consider the idea of making a present of your body, as a living sacrifice to God, in the context of becoming part of His body. That is exactly what this passage is talking about. When we consider the living sacrifices we make like, dying to self in order to fit with others, we can surely understand why it is a “baptism” into His body. You know the symbol means that we are buried under the water and then

raised to life. The reality is that you die to yourself as you are buried under relational demands of His body, and you are raised to life as you become a fully fastened part of His body.

STAY ON THE ALTAR

The temptation is for a living sacrifice to get off the altar and not suffer or die. I encourage you to stay on the altar. Remember, we die to this life to live in His life. There is a resurrection after death. If you save your life, you will lose it, if you lose your life, you will save it. This applies to all baptisms, but I believe it is most challenging here, especially since we have all been defiled by the traditions of congregational worship, where there is no relationship required. As we attempt to be immersed into His body and we realize the relational demands, conflicts, and challenges, it is very tempting to go back to the non-relational way of church. Don't do it! Stay on the altar (the cross), until you are dead to your selfish ways and are raised from the dead in loving relationships with His body, the church.

REASONABLE SERVICE

Becoming a living sacrifice is only our reasonable service. This is not an unreasonable idea, especially when you look at in perspective to Christ's sacrifice on the cross. We are grateful that He died for us, but we seem to resent that He wants us to die for Him. He does require this of us, and it is not unreasonable.

Think about it this way:

I Corinthians 6:13-20, ¹³ Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. ¹⁴ And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power. ¹⁵ Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! ¹⁶ Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For 'the two,' He says, 'shall become one flesh.' ¹⁷ But he who is joined to the Lord is one

spirit with Him. ¹⁸ *Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.* ¹⁹ *Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?* ²⁰ *For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."*

We are not our own, we have been bought with the price of the blood of Jesus. Jesus became like us and sacrificed His body on the cross. Now, He expects us to sacrifice our bodies for His body so that we can become like Him. This is not unreasonable considering the amount that He paid for us.

TRANSFORMED

In verse two we find another insight to being a living sacrifice. Paul warns us not to be conformed to this world. Religion is a system of the world — even Christian religion! To conform means *to be fashioned outwardly alike*. Religion wants us all to look alike outwardly, but requires no inward change. It's easy to change clothes or hairstyles or even worship styles. It's quite another thing to change the heart and mind. Outward conformity should never be confused with inward transformation.

Paul then tells us to be “transformed by the renewing of the mind.” The Greek word for “transformed” is “*metamorphoo*.” It is where we get the English word metamorphosis. It means *to change the form, or re-formation*, especially of the mind, and eventually the physical body in the resurrection.

This is the same word used in Matthew 17:1-2, “*Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.*” Jesus underwent a supernatural physical transformation that caused His face and clothing to radiate with God's glory. This physical change points to the glorious outward change all Christians will experience at the resurrection from the dead.

The use of the word metamorphoo in Romans 12:2 points to the present supernatural change of our minds, as we sacrifice our living bodies, to become part of His body. Just as Jesus' outward appearance radiated with God's glory, so will we radiate, as our minds are divinely impressed to change to the image of Christ, in order to fit as a part of His body.

There is coming a day when we will undergo the mighty transfiguration or transformation of the resurrection of our bodies. But God does not intend for Christians to wait around for this future outward change. He intends that we are to cooperate with the resurrection in this present life, as the power of the resurrection transforms our lowly bodies into the body of Christ, the church. Paul explains this wonderfully in the Book of Philippians.

FROM A LOWLY BODY TO A GLORIOUS BODY

Philippians 3:1-21, ¹ Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe. ² Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! ³ For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, ⁴ though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: ⁵ circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. ⁷ But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. ⁸ Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; ¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, ¹¹ if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. ¹² Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. ¹³ Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing

I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,¹⁴ I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.¹⁵ Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.¹⁶ Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.¹⁷ Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.¹⁸ For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:¹⁹ whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things.²⁰ For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,²¹ who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.”

WORSHIP IN THE SPIRIT

In verses I-3 we are given an exhortation to worship God in the Spirit. John 4:24, “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” The opposite of Spirit and Truth would be flesh and falsehood. If there are true worshippers, then there can be false worshippers. This is why Paul warns us against dogs, evil workers, and mutilation. All of these are a reference to religion. I believe that traditional congregational worship has cheated us from Spirit and Truth worship. The Holy Spirit wants to baptize us into His body, and our worship will be relational lifestyle, not a religious meeting.

DUNG

In verses 4-8, Paul recalls his family lineage and denomination and considers them as rubbish so that he might gain Christ. The King James Version of the Bible uses the word “dung” instead of “rubbish.” I like that word better when we are discussing religion. It is dung!

ATTAIN TO THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

In verses 9-II, Paul reinforces his belief in righteousness by faith and not law, and then he shows us an unusual progression of events that

lead to the resurrection from the dead.

It starts with “knowing Him”. After knowing Him, he wants us to know the power of the resurrection. We should know the power of the resurrection in this life if we hope to be resurrected with Him to the next life. Then we should know the fellowship of His sufferings. Just as Christ suffered in His earthly life, so will we. Finally, we are to be conformed to His death while we are alive here. These are the means by which we attain to the resurrection from the dead.

THE GOAL OF THE PRIZE

In verse 12, Paul dismisses any thought that he had already attained the perfection that is ultimately fulfilled at the resurrection of our bodies. Then, in verse 16, he embraces perfection or maturity in the mind. Although we have not been physically perfected we can be inwardly perfected. The goal of the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus is to become perfected in the heart and soul. This perfection is revealed as our inward transformation is reflected in our outward walk, until we are called upward in the resurrection.

ANOTHER WARNING CONCERNING RELIGION

Then, Paul warns us of those who are enemies of the cross. He tells us that the end of their lives will be destruction.

Paul said that those bound for destruction serve the god of their belly. Did you ever consider this? Our generation is consumed with the belly; I like to use the terms “fat bellies and flat bellies”. We are either eating like gluttons to fill our bellies, or we are obsessed with the perfect midriff that show our well toned abs. Our generation worships the belly!

Another indicator of those bound for destruction is that they glory in their shame. In other words, they are proud of shameful things. The churches today actually boast in their ability to embrace things that God Himself rejects. Now we see churches that not only allow homosexuals in but ordain homosexual ministers. Other churches even

endorse abortion. Most will not even confront any sin. The glory of today's churches is a shame to Biblical Christianity.

The final indicator of those bound for destruction is that they set their minds on earthly things. Most churches today can hardly be distinguished from worldly activity. The church and the world are at one. God says that friendship with the world makes you His enemy (James 4:4).

Remember, Paul is writing to warn Christians that there are those who are religiously associated who are actually enemies of the cross. I believe that traditional congregational churches are filled with those that Paul is describing. Yes, there are some genuine Christians there, but it seems that God has more enemies than friends in the churches.

TRANSFORMING THE LOWLY BODY INTO A GLORIOUS BODY

Verses 20-21 get to the point that we are trying to make; Christians live on earth like they are citizens of heaven. We wait for the return of our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ who will one day transform our lowly mortal bodies into glorious immortal bodies. Until the day of that physical resurrection our bodies are now in the process of being transformed in His body, the Church.

As we get to know Him here on earth, we will know Him in the power of the resurrection now. We are being inwardly transformed to be outwardly joined to His body.

CALLED IN ONE BODY

In closing I want to point out one last scripture from the Book of Colossians 3:12-15,

¹² Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; ¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. ¹⁴ But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. ¹⁵ And let the peace of God rule in your

hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.”

Passages like this make more sense when we understand the church as the body of Christ in a relational way, instead of the traditional religious way. Holiness, mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering, bearing with one another, forgiveness, love, maturity, and peace are the heart and soul of Christian behavior when we have a relationship with Jesus and His people. But all of those things are optional at best when we only see the people once or twice a week in a non-relational religious environment like a traditional congregation.

Christians are called into one body, the church, which is the body of Christ. As we answer His call to enter His body you can be sure there are many difficulties, trials, and challenges, but you can be equally sure that once you are baptized into His body, the glory will outweigh the suffering!

CHAPTER 25:

THE BAPTISM OF FIRE

The symbol of water baptism teaches us the lesson that we are buried with Him and then raised from the dead to a new creature. In every baptism that we have studied it requires our death, burial, and then the resurrection of a new creature in Christ. Consider the struggles that we endure when our minds are immersed in the truth of God's Word - when we realize that we are wrong and must change. When we are baptized into His death, we grasp the revelation that He died in our place for our sins, and we die with Him. You get the point that in every baptism we die, are buried, and we rise again.

The baptism of fire takes place in each baptism. It represents the warfare we endure as some part of our life is facing death on the cross. The fire represents all of the fears, doubts, and temptations that war in our souls as our faith compels us to follow Christ, while our flesh resists every step of the way.

John the Baptist introduces us to this baptism in Matthew 3:11-12,

"¹¹ I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹² His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

In this passage John calls three baptisms by name and implies a fourth. He was baptizing with water unto repentance. Then he refers to the one coming after him which is Jesus, this implies our baptism into Christ. Next he proclaims that Jesus will baptize us with the Holy Ghost and with fire, thus we have four baptisms in this passage alone.

ON THE THRESHING FLOOR

In verse twelve, John uses the threshing process to describe baptisms. During harvest the grain was taken from the field and brought to a threshing floor. Once placed on the threshing floor, the grain was beaten with sticks, or walked on by oxen to remove the husks or chaff. Then a winnowing fork or fan was used to toss the grain into the air. The heavier grain would fall straight down, but the chaff would be blown to the side. The grain was then stored and the chaff was burned.

Every baptism that we endure in our walk with Christ is depicted in the threshing process, as God separates the good fruit in us from the chaff that spoils the good grain. It is not a pleasant experience to be beaten and tossed and separated from our outer covering (the flesh), but it is absolutely necessary for us to become like Christ. I believe so many people fall away from God because they have no understanding of the baptism of fire or suffering. They are falsely led to believe that when we come to Jesus only good things will happen to us. Once the suffering starts they run back to the world.

FIRE ON THE EARTH

In Luke 12:49-50 we find Christ Himself making reference to this baptism, *“I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!”*

We know from Luke 3:21-22 that Jesus was already baptized by John in water, and that the Holy Ghost came upon Him at that time. So what baptism is He referring to? And why is it associated with Him sending fire on the earth?

THE CUP

Matthew 20:20-23, ²⁰ *Then the mother of Zebedee’s sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. ²¹ And He said to her, ‘What do you wish?’ She said to Him, ‘Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in*

Your kingdom.’²² But Jesus answered and said, ‘You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?’ They said to Him, ‘We are able.’²³ So He said to them, ‘You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father.’”

Once again Jesus makes reference to His baptism, and this time puts it in the context of drinking the “cup”. I believe He is talking about the baptism of fire.

NOT MY WILL, BUT YOURS BE DONE

Luke 22:39-42 clearly defines the “cup”,

³⁹ Coming out, He went to the Mount of Olives, as He was accustomed, and His disciples also followed Him. ⁴⁰ When He came to the place, He said to them, ‘Pray that you may not enter into temptation.’ ⁴¹ And He was withdrawn from them about a stone’s throw, and He knelt down and prayed, ⁴² saying, ‘Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.’”

The ultimate goal of the baptism of fire is revealed in this passage. All of the struggles of Jesus’ humanity are revealed as He wrestled with the reality of the cross. As He agonized in prayer considering what He was about to go through His prayer ended with one thought, “. . .not my will, but yours be done.” The baptism of fire will always manifest whose will is going to be done. Ours — or God’s? The baptism ends when that question is settled. We will either submit to the will of God, or we will give in to the flesh and do our own will.

LEARNED OBEDIENCE

I want to look at a passage that sums up Jesus’ struggles in Gethsemane in the Book of Hebrews 5:7-8,

⁷ who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and

supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, ⁸ though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.”

The humanity of Jesus is clearly seen here through Jesus’ fears and tears. The greater revelation is His obedience which He learned through suffering. If Jesus learned obedience through suffering, how much more do we need this lesson? Pain is a wonderful teacher! None of us want to suffer, but the lessons learned in the midst of pain stay with us more than the ones learned in pleasure.

SIFTED LIKE WHEAT

Many want to say that Jesus suffered so we don’t have to, but the contrary is true. Jesus suffered and we will follow Him in His sufferings. Our greatest tests of discipleship will come from suffering.

Consider the Apostle Peter’s baptism of fire in Luke 22:31-34,

“³¹ And the Lord said, ‘Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. ³² But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.’ ³³ But he said to Him, ‘Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death.’ ³⁴ Then He said, ‘I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me.’”

Sifting like wheat is another way of saying that you are going to be put on the threshing floor. Peter, like us, had things in his flesh that was spoiling the good fruit and it had to be removed. The devil asked if he could sift Peter like wheat. Notice Jesus’ response, “I have prayed that your faith would not fail.” Jesus didn’t stop the devil from putting Peter on trial, He simply prayed that Peter’s faith would endure it!

WHEN YOU ARE CONVERTED

Notice also that Jesus said, “. . .and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.” The threshing process actually brought Peter to a place of denying Jesus and needing to return to Him. The King James Version

of the Bible says “. . .and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” This is a work of conversion, where our hearts are converted to God. Think about it, Peter was a disciple who followed Jesus, and was sent out by Jesus to heal the sick and preach the gospel, (so was Judas). He was one of Jesus’ best friends, but he needed conversion. Smith Wigglesworth used to say, “There are a thousand chambers in my heart that need conversion”. This is why Christianity is a continual process of baptism; God is continually converting our hearts to do His will.

STRENGTHEN YOUR BRETHREN

I believe that we will best minister to others from the places in our hearts that have been through the conversion of fire. We will recall our failures, and the pain that leaves us deeply scarred, humbled, and tender, when we serve others who are going through the same trials that we have gone through.

PETER’S TRIAL BY FIRE

In Luke 22:54-62 we see Peter actually go through the baptism of fire during Jesus’ trial,

“⁶⁴ Having arrested Him, they led Him and brought Him into the high priest’s house. But Peter followed at a distance. ⁵⁵ Now when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. ⁵⁶ And a certain servant girl, seeing him as he sat by the fire, looked intently at him and said, ‘This man was also with Him.’ ⁵⁷ But he denied Him, saying, ‘Woman, I do not know Him.’ ⁵⁸ And after a little while another saw him and said, ‘You also are of them.’ But Peter said, ‘Man, I am not!’ ⁵⁹ Then after about an hour had passed, another confidently affirmed, saying, ‘Surely this fellow also was with Him, for he is a Galilean.’ ⁶⁰ But Peter said, ‘Man, I do not know what you are saying!’ Immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. ⁶¹ And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, ‘Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.’ ⁶² So Peter went out and wept bitterly.”

Just as Jesus prophesied, Peter denied Him three times. Peter’s heart

must have smote him with each denial, but as the cock crowed fulfilling the prophesy, Jesus turned and looked at Peter. That look was the final blow. Jesus was silently accepting His fate while Peter was talking his way out of being put to death with him. His heart sunk as Jesus turned and looked at his friend with a broken heart. Peter wasn't nailed to the cross that day, but his heart was, and he went out and wept bitterly. As far as he was concerned he denied Jesus, and all hope was gone...but Jesus had another plan.

TELL PETER

Mark 16:1-7, *“¹ Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. ² Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. ³ And they said among themselves, ‘Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?’ ⁴ But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away—for it was very large. ⁵ And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. ⁶ But he said to them, ‘Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. ⁷ But go, tell His disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you.”*

It was the third day following the crucifixion of Christ. His disciples were grieving the death of Jesus and what they had seen Him endure. Judas committed suicide and Peter was bitterly weeping from the grief of his failure. Then the report came that an angel appeared to the women saying, *“He has risen!”* Go tell the disciples *and* Peter. The angel called Peter by name. God sent a special message, through a supernatural messenger, to tell the disciples that Jesus had risen from the dead. But the messenger also had specific instructions — to call Peter by name! After Peter's failure God confirmed him. What a challenge; can I really believe that God still loves me after I denied Him? Can I really believe that He still wants me after what I have done? Peter ran to the tomb and answered the call. God called him by name and he was ready and willing to receive a second chance. In answer to Jesus' prayer his faith

did not fail!

THREE DENIALS THREE AFFIRMATIONS

John 21:15-19, ⁴⁵ *So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Feed My lambs.'* ¹⁶ *He said to him again a second time, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Tend My sheep.'* ¹⁷ *He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?' Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, 'Do you love Me?' And he said to Him, 'Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed My sheep.'* ¹⁸ *Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish.'* ¹⁹ *This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, 'Follow Me.'"*

Three times Peter denied Jesus, and now three times Jesus made Him confess his commitment to feeding His Lambs. Once again Jesus prophesied to Peter. This time it was not of denial, but that Peter would also die on a cross. The baptism of fire so impressed Peter that he would now rather die than deny. History tells us that Peter was sentenced to be crucified but he asked if he could be crucified upside down because he was not worthy to be crucified like his Lord. His request was granted.

TESTED BY FIRE

Peter was so impressed by his trial by fire that he often wrote about it in his letters. In I Peter 1:6-9 we read,

⁶ *In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials,* ⁷ *that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,* ⁸ *whom*

having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, ⁹ receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.”

Here Peter acknowledges that trials come with much grief, but he encourages those who are going through the trials to see the glorious end. The fire tests the genuineness of faith and this is more precious than gold.

THINK IT NOT STRANGE

The most powerful reference to his trial by fire is found in I Peter 4:12-19,

¹² Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; ¹³ but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. ¹⁴ If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. ¹⁵ But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people’s matters. ¹⁶ Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. ¹⁷ For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸ Now ‘If the righteous one is scarcely saved, Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?’ ¹⁹ Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.”

Peter confidently taught others that they too would endure a “fiery trial”, and that this was not a strange thing but a normal part of Christian life. The lesson was that we would be partakers of Christ’s sufferings. He was very careful to include the thought that Christians were not to suffer because of blatant sins, but we were to suffer because of following Christ. This is suffering according to the will of God.

We are the temple of God, and judgment begins with us. There are things in our life that God judges now so that He will not have to

judge us in eternity. We will speak more of this later in the “Judgment Seat of Christ.

THE THRESHING FLOOR OF ORNAN

Do you remember when King David sinned? You probably thought about Bathsheba, but that is not the sin I’m referring to. I am thinking of when David sinned in pride by counting how many people were in Israel. All of his men were against this and had absolutely no desire to count the people, but the king’s word prevailed and he numbered the people. You can read all about this in I Chronicles 21. God was angry with David because of this sin, and He sent a plague on Israel that caused seventy thousand people to die. God sent an angel to carry out His judgment on Israel. God opened David’s eyes to this angel at a place called the “threshing floor of Ornan”. God instructed David to purchase the threshing floor and make a sacrifice and the plague stopped.

Now you will recall that John the Baptist used the threshing process to teach us in particular about the baptism of fire. The interesting thing about the threshing floor of Ornan is found in II Chronicles 3:1, *“Now Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD had appeared to his father David, at the place that David had prepared on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.”*

The threshing floor of Ornan is the site on which Solomon’s Temple is built. The Old Testament Temple was built on a threshing floor and so is the New Testament Temple. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit and God builds us on the threshing floor. We can expect that as we are being built as the habitation of the Holy Spirit that God will separate our wheat from the chaff many times. And He will always burn the chaff with fire.

THE WAY TO THE TREE OF LIFE

One last thought that I want to inject into this teaching is found in the book of Genesis 3:22-24,

“²² Then the LORD God said, ‘Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever’—²³ therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴ So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.”

After Adam and Eve sinned God banished them from the Garden of Eden. He placed cherubim and a flaming sword to guard the way to the tree of life. These cherubim are still guarding the way to the tree of life (the cross), and in order for us to get to it we must go through the flaming swords. This is the baptism of fire. The closer that we get to God, the hotter the flame is. God wants us near to Him, but He will test us every step of the way to see how genuine our faith and love is. I often joke that when Jesus says “*Well done* thou good and faithful servant.” it means that we have been burnt to a crisp!

COUNT IT ALL JOY

James I:2-3, “² My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.”

Only when we understand the baptism of fire can we truly be joyful during trials.

CHAPTER 26:

LAYING ON OF HANDS, INTRODUCTION

We have invested much time studying the “Doctrine of Baptisms” and now it’s time to move on to a new subject. In this chapter we will begin studying the doctrine of “laying on of hands” found in Hebrews 6:1-3,

“¹ Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, ² of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. ³ And this we will do if God permits.”

BAPTIZED TO BAPTIZE

One interesting observation to note concerning the Doctrines of Christ is that they come in pairs. First we find the “foundations” of repentance and faith. The second pair is the doctrines of baptisms and the laying on of hands. And the third pair is the doctrines of the resurrection from the dead and eternal judgment.

The first and last pairings are easily connected to one another. But the pairing of baptisms with laying on of hands was not quite as obvious, that is until God opened my understanding that the laying on of hands is all about ministry. Getting baptized is about someone ministering to you. The laying on of hands is about you ministering to someone else. Let’s put it this way; once you are baptized, you should become a baptizer! The success of the entire New Testament is hinged

on the transition from being baptized, to becoming a baptizer. Let me explain.

TIME TO BE TEACHERS

The very text of this entire book is written in the context of this point. The Apostle Paul was explaining to the Hebrews that once you have been taught you should be able to teach. Hebrews 5:12- 14,

“^{a2} For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. ¹³ For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. ¹⁴ But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

Paul expected that those who were taught should become the next generation of teachers. This theme is repeated time and again in the New Testament.

FREELY YOU HAVE RECEIVED, FREELY GIVE

Consider how Jesus taught His disciples in Matthew 10:7-8, *“And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.”* He expected that those whom He invested His time and words in, could now take those words and give them to others.

“Freely you have received, freely give” is a principle that must be adhered to. Learning cannot be the end in itself or it will become religious. We are taught to teach, we are baptized to baptize, and we have been ministered to in order to minister. The church throughout history has struggled with this concept, but this generation must become successful at passing the mantle to the next generation.

I believe that as we leave the one man show of the Constantine model of congregations and go back to the relational apostolic model, that we can see this pattern restored. Jesus successfully passed the baton to His

disciples because He relationally invested His life into them. When we return to this pattern of making disciples, we will see the ones that we disciple become teachers.

BIRTHING SONS

The very last words of the Old Testament set the precedence for the New Testament. Malachi 4:4-6,

⁴ Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. ⁵ Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. ⁶ And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.”

According to Jesus, the promise of God to send Elijah was fulfilled in John the Baptist. Matthew 11:12-14,

¹² And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. ¹³ For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. ¹⁴ And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come.”

Now we put these two thoughts together; sending Elijah would restore relationships between fathers and sons, and this was fulfilled in John the Baptist. Elijah was a successful prophet who led the nation of Israel into repentance, but he was a loner. I believe that the first part of Elijah’s ministry represents the one man pyramid paradigm of Constantine congregations. However, the last days of Elijah’s ministry were invested into relationship building with Elisha. He literally gave his life to Elisha until the day he was taken to heaven by God, when Elisha called him, “My Father, My Father...” Truly, a father son relationship was established between the two.

The first time that we find the word “disciple” is in the Book of Isaiah 8:16-18,

¹⁶ Bind up the testimony, Seal the law among my disciples. ¹⁷ And I will wait on the LORD, Who hides His face from the house of Jacob; And I will

hope in Him. ¹⁸ Here am I and the children whom the LORD has given me! We are for signs and wonders in Israel From the LORD of hosts, Who dwells in Mount Zion.”

This passage is a prophecy about the coming of the Messiah. Notice how Messiah will bind the testimony and the word to His disciples, and then he goes on to call His disciples His children. This is the only time the word disciple is used in the Old Testament. The next time this word appears is in the ministry of John the Baptist.

John made disciples, Jesus made disciples, then He commanded us to go make disciples of all of the nations. I don't believe this is done in the sterile environment of a classroom. Disciples are birthed as we share life with them, just as John, Jesus, and then the apostles, shared life with their disciples, who eventually became sons.

PAUL BIRTHED SONS

I Corinthians 4:15-17, ¹⁵ For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. ¹⁶ Therefore I urge you, imitate me. ¹⁷ For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.”

This passage gives us great insight to the way that Paul ministered. He was not some distant preacher who you came to listen to, and then left you alone to sort out what he said. He was intricately involved in the lives of those he disciplined. He made a clear distinction between an instructor and a father. Paul further emphasized this in his relationship with Timothy, and in another place with Titus (Titus 1:4).

Paul made sure that he taught Timothy to do the same for the ones that he was discipling. In II Timothy 2:1-2, *“You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”* Once again, Paul emphasized his father-son relationship with Timothy and exhorted him to teach faithful men who would teach faithful men.

I hope that I am getting my point across to you - the doctrine of baptisms occurs as someone is discipling us to lead us deeper into God. We, in turn, begin to minister to others out of those things that we have been taught and experienced in our baptisms.

STRENGTHEN YOU BRETHREN

Remember in the last chapter, “The Baptism of Fire”, we spent a good deal of time discussing the Apostle Peter’s baptism by fire when he denied Jesus. I want to point out once again Jesus’ instruction to him before his fiery trial began.

Luke 22:31-32, ⁶¹ *And the Lord said, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. ³² But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.”*

Jesus warned Peter that Satan would soon take him to the threshing floor to sift him like wheat. He encouraged him when He said that He prayed that his faith would not fail. I believe that Jesus is always interceding for us that our faith will not fail during the baptisms of fire that we experience. It is out of these fiery trials that we hear the exhortation, “and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.”

BAPTIZED TO BAPTIZE

The fiery trials are designed to burn the lessons of mercy and faith into our hearts. The cold instructions of head knowledge, pale in comparison when we hear those who have been plucked from the flames of fire. God’s intention is that we are to minister out of the things that He brings us through. I will say it again because it bears repeating; the success of the New Testament hinges on those who have been baptized becoming the next generation of baptizers!

HANDS ON

When talking about the doctrine of “the ministry of laying on of hands”, I like to rearrange the words to “hands on ministry”. In the

traditional congregational church, laying hands on others is almost always done in the formal setting of a worship, healing, or ordination service. While I am not totally opposed to the formal times of doing this ministry, I am opposed to the exclusion of relational form in this.

The very definition of laying hands on someone means to touch them. There is a big difference between a cold meaningless touch and the warm relational touch. The touch is to establish a point of contact where a transfer is made from one to another. When Jesus sent out His disciples, it was after years of being “in touch” with them on a daily basis.

Each lesson of the doctrine of laying on of hands will emphasize the personal touch of relationship between the Baptist, and the one being baptized.

CHAPTER 27:

LAYING ON OF HANDS

PART I: FATHERS AND SONS

One of the rules of Bible study is called the “law of first mention”. Many times the first use of a word or subject in the Scriptures will give us valuable insight to its meaning. The first mention of laying hands on someone in Scripture is particularly revealing, especially in light of “hands on” or relational discipleship.

I know that this reading is rather lengthy but there is so much to extract from this chapter that I included all of it. We find our first mention in Genesis 48:1-22,

^a Now it came to pass after these things that Joseph was told, ‘Indeed your father is sick’; and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. ² And Jacob was told, ‘Look, your son Joseph is coming to you’; and Israel strengthened himself and sat up on the bed. ³ Then Jacob said to Joseph: ‘God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, ⁴ and said to me, “Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will make of you a multitude of people, and give this land to your descendants after you as an everlasting possession.” ⁵ And now your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine. ⁶ Your offspring whom you beget after them shall be yours; they will be called by the name of their brothers in their inheritance. ⁷ But as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died beside me in the land of Canaan on the way, when there was but a little distance to go to Ephrath; and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem).’ ⁸ Then Israel saw Joseph’s sons, and said,

*'Who are these?'*⁹ Joseph said to his father, *'They are my sons, whom God has given me in this place.'* And he said, *'Please bring them to me, and I will bless them.'*¹⁰ Now the eyes of Israel were dim with age, so that he could not see. Then Joseph brought them near him, and he kissed them and embraced them.¹¹ And Israel said to Joseph, *'I had not thought to see your face; but in fact, God has also shown me your offspring!'*¹² So Joseph brought them from beside his knees, and he bowed down with his face to the earth.¹³ And Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near him.¹⁴ Then Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, guiding his hands knowingly, for Manasseh was the firstborn.¹⁵ And he blessed Joseph, and said: *'God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, The God who has fed me all my life long to this day,*¹⁶ *The Angel who has redeemed me from all evil, Bless the lads; Let my name be named upon them, And the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; And let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.'*¹⁷ Now when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him; so he took hold of his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head.¹⁸ And Joseph said to his father, *'Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head.'*¹⁹ But his father refused and said, *'I know, my son, I know. He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations.'*²⁰ So he blessed them that day, saying, *'By you Israel will bless, saying, "May God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh!"'* And thus he set Ephraim before Manasseh.²¹ Then Israel said to Joseph, *'Behold, I am dying, but God will be with you and bring you back to the land of your fathers.'*²² Moreover I have given to you one portion above your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow."²³

FATHERS LAYING HANDS ON SONS

The first mention of laying on of hands in the Bible is a Father laying hands on his sons. Does this sound familiar? Remember in the last chapter, introducing the laying on of hands, we discovered the Apostle Paul's father-son relationship that he established with those that he

was discipling. Let me emphasize a major point here — **there is no way to overstate the power of a father laying hands on his son and prophesying!**

Consider what the Apostle Paul told his spiritual son in I Timothy 1:18, *“This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare,”* He expected Timothy to be strengthened to fight the spiritual war because of the prophecies that were in his heart given by his spiritual father.

Paul makes reference to this again in II Timothy 1:6-7, *“Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”* Once again we see the spiritual strength that follows sons into adulthood and ministry, calming all fear and self-doubt, and strengthening the mind because of the words of a loving spiritual father.

THREEFOLD BLESSING

In verses 1-4, we find our first point concerning the laying on of hands. Jacob recalled to his sons how God first appeared to him, and how He blessed him. The blessing was threefold, *“God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, and said to me, ‘Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will make of you a multitude of people, and give this land to your descendants after you as an everlasting possession.’”*

Jacob’s three blessings were actually one. His house would bear fruit and multiply into more houses, until he became a multitude, and then God would give him a land to accommodate their increase. This promise began with Abraham, then was passed to Isaac, and finally to Jacob. Now he was about to pass the promise to his sons.

The thing to keep in mind as Jacob lays his hands on Ephraim and Manasseh, is that there were only about 70 people in the family at this point, and the only land that they actually owned was Sarah’s burial plot at the cave of Machpelah.

When Jacob laid his hands on Joseph’s sons that day and prophesied,

he spoke purely on the authority of the vision that God gave him, by faith that God would bring it to pass!

ADOPTION

In verse 5, Jacob actually adopts Joseph's two sons Ephraim and Manasseh, and includes them along side his natural born sons in the inheritance. This is unusual since the two boys already had Joseph for their father. I believe this represents the need that we all have for spiritual adoption.

Jesus taught us that He would not leave us as orphans (John 14:18). This was a promise that He would come to us in the Holy Spirit. Romans 8: 16-17 further illustrates this, "*The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*"

Joseph's sons were going to have a spiritual encounter that day that would forever mark their lives. I believe that spiritual adoption happens through hearing the words and laying on of hands of spiritual fathers.

SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY

The next point that I want us to consider is in verse 12, "*So Joseph brought them from beside his knees, and he bowed down with his face to the earth.*"

Can you imagine how this impressed Ephraim and Manasseh that day? Their father was the second most powerful political figure in the world! The only man he ever bowed to was Pharaoh himself. But today, with wide eyes, they marveled as their father bowed before his father.

This lesson is one of spiritual authority. It is a higher authority than family, politics, finances, or even popularity. In the laying on of hands we need to understand that if we have something, we can impart it.

Joseph was certainly a spiritually gifted man and wonderfully used by God. But the promise of the blessings was in his father, not in

him.

IMPARTING THE PROPHETIC BLESSINGS

In verses 13-18, we see the greatest insights to this lesson, as Jacob laid his hands on Ephraim and Manasseh and began to prophetically impart spiritual blessings to them. Let's look at the particulars of what he imparted that day.

First, He worshipped God. Our sons must see the fathers as those who initiate spiritual worship. Too often is the case that spiritual business is left up to women these days -this ought not be so. We need spiritual men who worship God. Not only going to religious services, but actually leading in prayers, words, and deeds. Parents have powerful authority and anointing in the realm of their families. They should never forfeit this by delegating spiritual issues in the family to others.

Second, he gave them his name/identity. Those young men knew who they were spiritually from that day forward. Our generation is in an identity crisis. The failure of the Constantine congregational pastors to actually father anyone, and the breakdown of the family through divorce and fornication, has birthed a confused society. We just don't know who we are. It is one thing to be directionally lost; this is easily corrected. But not knowing who you are is much more difficult to fix. We need spiritual adoption and confirmation to secure this lost generation, turning father's hearts to the sons, and the son's hearts to the fathers.

Third, he passed on the vision of being fruitful and multiplying into a multitude. These young men had success in their spirits from then on. They knew who they were and what they were going to do. They had every confidence from their fathers earthly and heavenly.

Fourth, he gave specifics of their lot in life. He even foretold that Ephraim (the younger), would do better than Manasseh (the elder), which was unusual.

Fifth, he made them the blessing, *"May God make you as Ephraim and as*

Manasseh.” Their names would become so famous that people would actually use them as the benchmark of all blessings!

Finally, he gave the land to them, prophesying that God would bring them back to the land of their fathers. This so impressed Joseph that when he was dying he gave a commandment for his bones to be brought with Israel when they returned to their land. The prophetic impartation through the laying on of hands is so powerful that it will affect future generations.

KEEP IT REAL NOT RELIGIOUS

I want to close this chapter with an exhortation. I have seen much abuse of the laying on of hands and prophesying in the Charismatic movement. This ministry has, in many cases, taken on the form of a three ring circus. On the other hand, the ministry of laying on of hands is neglected by many traditional denominations. I disagree with both camps.

I believe that people can be instantly healed by the laying on of hands. I also believe that there is no substitute for “hands on” relational impartation. The norm in Christian discipleship is that we would share in life together, and the impartation would come through the spiritual communion enjoyed between mentor and disciple. At all costs we need to leave the old habits of the congregational lifestyle and be immersed into the relational life of the Biblical Church. Then we will see Biblical results.

CHAPTER 28:

LAYING ON OF HANDS

PART II: BY JESUS

The four gospels are filled with testimonies of the healings and miracles of Jesus. Nearly every page contains the exciting stories of how He healed the sick, opened blind eyes and deaf ears, cast out devils, cleansed the lepers, and raised the dead. Surprisingly, there are only a few references in Scripture that point out the fact that Jesus actually laid His hands on someone.

CLEANSING

The first time that laying on of hands is pointed out in Jesus' ministry is perhaps the most fascinating.

Matthew 8:1-4, "1 When He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. 2 And behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, 'Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.' 3 Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, 'I am willing; be cleansed.' Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. 4 And Jesus said to him, 'See that you tell no one; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.'"

As I am writing this we are privileged to have staying in our home Dr. Deanna Hagge, a missionary in Nepal whose work is to study leprosy. She points out the fact that Jesus made a distinction between healing the sick and cleansing the lepers. According to the Old Testament, there were actually four arenas of life where one could be

called “unclean”: reproduction, food, death and leprosy. An unclean spirit could be attached to any of these, causing a need for supernatural cleansing. Consider the need of cleansing for those who have been deemed unclean through sexual sin, eating problems, obsessions with death, and fleshly impurity. These all need the compassionate human touch through the laying on of hands.

Lepers were outcasts from society; no one would go near them for fear of catching the dreaded plague. This man knew that people refused to come near him, also forbidding him to approach them, but still he drew near to Jesus and asked the question in hope of a miracle. In a bold move of faith, and with a heart full of hope, his mouth voiced his uncertainties, *“Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.”* Surely his heart must have leapt for joy when Jesus revealed His will, once and for all, concerning cleansing, *“Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, ‘I am willing; be cleansed.’”* Think about this powerful act, Jesus put out His hand and touched him. This man was rejected by all, he was banished from all human touch and interaction, but with one touch from Jesus’ hand he was immediately cleansed.

Our first lesson from Jesus, concerning laying on of hands, teaches us the need for the compassionate human touch to those whom society rejects and pronounces unclean. Jesus’ will is to touch those that others will not touch and bring their cleansing.

REVELATION

The next instance of Jesus actually laying his hands on someone is related to the cleansing of the unclean. Jesus wants them clean and wants us to go cleanse them. He teaches this lesson when He opened the eyes of a blind man in Mark 8:22-26,

“²² Then He came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to Him, and begged Him to touch him. ²³ So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town. And when He had spit on his eyes and put His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything. ²⁴ And he looked up and said, ‘I see men like trees, walking.’ ²⁵ Then He put His hands on his eyes again and made him look up. And he was restored and saw everyone clearly. ²⁶ Then

He sent him away to his house, saying, 'Neither go into the town, nor tell anyone in the town.'"

Opening blind eyes was one of the most unique miracles that Jesus performed, even prompting the Pharisees in one case to say, "Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind" (John 9:32).

Jesus declared this to be a major part of what He was sent to do. He began His public speaking ministry by reading Isaiah's prophecy concerning Messiah in Luke 4:18-19, "*The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.*" Surely, the recovery of sight is something that Jesus wants to perform for His people.

This case is very unusual because He spit on the man's eyes and then laid His hands on him. I'm not sure of the significance of the spit because spitting is usually a form of degradation. Maybe it could be Jesus revealing how He really feels about religious blindness but that would be purely conjecture. Whatever the reason for the spit, this is one of the cases where Scripture makes note that Jesus laid His hands on someone.

Another unique feature to this miracle is the need for a second touch from the Lord to get full clarity of sight. With the first application of His hands the man could see people looking like trees walking around. After the second touch Jesus "made the man look up". I believe that it takes a supernatural touch from Jesus to lift the head of those who are cast down. Then, the man was restored and saw everyone clearly.

It's significant to note that once Jesus opened the man's eyes and got him looking up that he saw people clearly. Jesus touches us then expects us to go and touch others.

Jesus told His disciples,

⁶⁴ *Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me,*

and to finish His work.³⁵ Do you not say, “There are still four months and then comes the harvest”? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!³⁶ And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.³⁷ For in this the saying is true: “One sows and another reaps.”³⁸ I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors.” (John 4:34-38).

Notice in verse 35 He commands them to “lift up your eyes and look...” There is a conscious effort that we must make to get our eyes onto the things that Jesus wants us to pay attention to. We must shift our eyes off of ourselves and onto others. The first thing that the Lord made this man see when his eyes were restored is people, and he was made to see them clearly. Jesus wants to open our eyes to the people around us to see their needs. He wants us to see them as He sees them.

There is another case of Jesus touching the eyes of the blind and associating this with harvest found in Matthew 9:27-31,

“²⁷ When Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, ‘Son of David, have mercy on us!’²⁸ And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, ‘Do you believe that I am able to do this?’ They said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord.’²⁹ Then He touched their eyes, saying, ‘According to your faith let it be to you.’³⁰ And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, saying, ‘See that no one knows it.’³¹ But when they had departed, they spread the news about Him in all that country.”

After opening the eyes of these blind men Jesus was so moved with compassion for the multitudes that once again He instructed His disciples to see the harvest. Consider how He was trying to convey what He saw to His disciples in Matthew 9:36-38,

“³⁶ But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.³⁷ Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers

are few. ³⁸ *Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.”*

Once again He makes reference to harvest and people. When He saw the people through eyes of compassion, He saw them as weary and scattered, in need of a shepherd. Now He was trying to get the disciples to see the same. Then He sent them to the harvest with this command, *“And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.”* (Matthew 10:7-8).

Jesus has His eyes on the harvest and now He is trying to get us to see it. He didn’t open our eyes just to see our own desires; He opened our eyes to see what He wants - people! There are so many passages that I could use to reinforce this point, but there is no way that I could include them all. I’m sure you can tie them together now.

Let me make a final statement about the opening of blind eyes. I am in no way trying to just “spiritualize” this topic. I believe in physical divine healing of blind eyes. I only want to open the spiritual eyes of our understanding, to get us to see the gross spiritual and religious blindness in our generation. If the light that is in us is darkness how great is that darkness?

BLESSING

The next time that Bible talks of Jesus laying hands on someone is much different from the first two. In Matthew 19:13-15 we read,

“¹³ Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴ But Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.’ ¹⁵ And He laid His hands on them and departed from there.”

I think we thoroughly covered the meaning of this in chapter 27, “The Laying on of Hands, Fathers and Sons”, so I will not repeat what we learned in that chapter. But I would like to point out something that we need to overcome, in order for us to see the fathers blessing

the children. The disciples were so busy conducting the affairs of Jesus that they viewed the children as a nuisance. But Jesus rebuked them for it.

One of the biggest challenges of the traditional congregational structure is what to do with the children. Children are viewed as disruptive; and they only want to play or they get bored and act out. So the answer to this “dilemma” is nursery, children’s church, and youth groups. Yuck! Just try to get nursery workers; no one wants to do this job. Children churches and youth groups become paid positions because children are viewed as a chore instead of a blessing.

In the house church ministry our children participate in our worship services. We want to hear from them and they often bring verses of Scriptures that they have read, join in prayers and every facet of what is done when we assemble. They are not problems, they are blessings! We like to recognize them when the church is assembled and to lay hands on them, prophesy and speak blessings over them. We also correct them when they are wrong with a healthy balance of nurture and admonition.

Jesus said, *“Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”* We should not forbid nor hinder our children from coming to Jesus. We should do everything that we can to facilitate them coming to Him and enjoying in His blessings.

In Matthew 23, Jesus preached the most fiery sermon of His ministry. In a scathing public rebuke of the Scribes and Pharisees He called them hypocrites again and again. I want to point out how He closed His message that day in verses 37-39,

“³⁷ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!³⁸ See! Your house is left to you desolate;³⁹ for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’”

Jesus wept over Jerusalem, because they murdered prophets, and

persecuted those God sent there. Through His tears, He mentions that the reason for sending the prophets and messengers was to gather the children under His wings. I speak to every preacher, prophet, pastor or whatever you want to call yourself that we need to acknowledge the importance of the lambs! Spend time with them, and feed them, lay hands on them and speak prophetic blessings. Stop thinking that you are only sent to the ones who earn wages and pay tithes. If we don't bless the children they will become adults someday and refuse to bless our churches!

Maybe it's time to learn from children, because the kingdom is made up of those who have childlike faith, and totally depend on God!

CHAPTER 29:

LAYING ON OF HANDS

PART III: BY BELIEVERS

When we transitioned from the doctrine of baptisms to the laying on of hands, I pointed out the idea that we move from being baptized, to becoming a baptizer. Someone has ministered to us, and now we begin to minister to others; “Freely you have received, freely give”. In this chapter we will examine the passages where Jesus tells us to lay hands on others and examples of the believers actually administering the laying on of hands.

THE GREAT COMMISSION

Mark 16:14-20, ¹⁴ Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen. ¹⁵ And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. ¹⁶ He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. ¹⁷ And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; ¹⁸ they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.’ ¹⁹ So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. ²⁰ And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.”

Mark’s account of the Great Commission does much to strengthen

my view on the idea of being baptized then becoming a baptizer. Those who believe and are baptized are then commanded to go into all of the world and minister to others. Our ministry includes casting out devils, speaking in tongues, defying the venom of serpents and the potency of poison and, last but not least, we are to lay hands on the sick that they shall recover.

How is it that an ordinary believer could lay hands on the sick and they recover? And why is it that we see so little ability in today's disciples to do such things? Let's recap what we have learned so far in our discussions of baptisms and laying on of hands to see if we can answer these questions.

When we believe in Jesus someone begins to mentor us through our baptisms. They will walk with us through our baptisms into Christ, repentance, His name, His death, The Holy Spirit, His Body, and Fire. That mentoring relationship will become one of a father-son. This is how we "believe and are baptized". There is a big difference between this understanding of baptism and the traditional one, don't you think?

Once we are baptized we become mature enough to disciple some one else. The Great Commission actually gives us the authority and power from God to be effective ministers to others. This is not just for a select few. I believe that it is the intention of Christ that we all mature and become ministers!

Finally, those things that are imparted to us through our baptisms are resident within us, and can be transferred to others. This is how we can lay hands on the sick and they will recover. This helps us understand why we see so little of this today. The traditional understanding of baptism and discipleship does very little to impart the presence and power of God.

EXAMPLES OF HEALING THROUGH THE LAYING ON OF HANDS BY BELIEVERS

THE GATE BEAUTIFUL

Acts 3:1-8, ¹ Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. ² And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms from those who entered the temple; ³ who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked for alms. ⁴ And fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said, 'Look at us.' ⁵ So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. ⁶ Then Peter said, 'Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.' ⁷ And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. ⁸ So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them—walking, leaping, and praising God."

Peter and John were discipled by Jesus for three and a half years. They were witnesses of His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension into heaven. Finally, they were filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Now Jesus was in heaven and they were on their own. Their baptisms were complete, and it was their turn to become baptizers.

The man asked Peter to give him alms (money) and Peter boldly replied, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." Another way to say this is "I don't have money but I do have the power of God"! Peter and John were well aware of the presence of God in them and the power thereof. That which was freely given them by Jesus they were now giving out freely.

Peter looked at the man and made the man look at him, then he took him *by the hand* (laying on of hands) and lifted him up with a commandment "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." I know that Peter and John were apostles, but I believe that it is a grievous error to think that only a special few should do these things. They began as disciples and graduated to apostles. They were commanded to follow Jesus as disciples then they were sent out to disciple others. Every believer should come to this estate, where we too lay hands on the sick and they recover.

ANANIAS AND SAUL

Our next example is found in Acts 9:1-19,

“¹ Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ² and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. ³ As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. ⁴ Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’ ⁵ And he said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ Then the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ ⁶ So he, trembling and astonished, said, ‘Lord, what do You want me to do?’ Then the Lord said to him, ‘Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.’ ⁷ And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one. ⁸ Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. ⁹ And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank. ¹⁰ Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, ‘Ananias.’ And he said, ‘Here I am, Lord.’ ¹¹ So the Lord said to him, ‘Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. ¹² And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight.’ ¹³ Then Ananias answered, ‘Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name.’ ¹⁵ But the Lord said to him, ‘Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. ¹⁶ For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.’ ¹⁷ And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, ‘Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.’ ¹⁸ Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized. ¹⁹ So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus.”

I really like this passage concerning the conversion of Saul, who eventually became the Apostle Paul. I'm especially fond of this one because Ananias laid hands on Paul and healed him and baptized him. Who was Ananias? He was just a Christian who lived in Damascus, nobody famous! He wasn't one of the apostles, he is only mentioned one more time in the Bible, when the Apostle Paul gave his testimony to the Jews at Jerusalem in Acts 22:12-16,

¹² Then a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt there, ¹³ came to me; and he stood and said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And at that same hour I looked up at him. ¹⁴ Then he said, 'The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth. ¹⁵ For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶ And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'

Just an average Christian was given the task of laying hands on and prophesying over the man who would eventually become the most influential figure of the church age, who also would pen a huge portion of the New Testament! Yet this "Average Joe" laid his hands on Saul healed him, baptized him in the name of the Lord and the Holy Spirit, and prophesied of the greatness of the ministry that God was giving him.

A man so powerfully used was then lost in obscurity, never to be heard from again in Scripture. Ananias, not the apostles, should do more to set the precedence for all believers. If he can do this so can we!

PAUL HEALS PUBLIUS' FATHER

Our final example of laying on of hands by a believer comes in the Book of Acts 28:7-9,

⁷ In that region there was an estate of the leading citizen of the island, whose name was Publius, who received us and entertained us courteously for three days. ⁸ And it happened that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and

dysentery. Paul went in to him and prayed, and he laid his hands on him and healed him. ⁹ So when this was done, the rest of those on the island who had diseases also came and were healed.”

I thought it important to include this episode of healing by the laying on of hands because this happened in the last chapter of the Book of Acts. Divine healing through the laying on of hands was given as a charge to us in the Great Commission. This was the normal practice of Jesus and His followers throughout the early church era, all the way to the end of the history of the early church. I see no reason why it should stop there.

I should note here one interesting fact about laying on of hands by the Apostle Paul found in Acts 19:11-12, “Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them.” The Bible calls the works of Paul “unusual”. He was not the norm, even among the other apostles. But I believe that **all** believers who are baptized have the ability to lay hands on the sick and see them recover. In order to restore this mighty gift we must restore the work of baptisms.

LAYING ON OF HANDS FOR THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The next usage of the ministry of laying on of hands is found in Acts 8:14-17,

¹⁴ Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, ¹⁵ who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. ¹⁶ For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷ Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.”

After the persecution of the church broke out in Jerusalem, Philip the evangelist went to Samaria and saw great results from preaching the gospel. When the apostles received the word of the great outpouring of grace in Samaria, they also went to verify the work there. I point this out because it is important to note that the evangelist brought them

to Christ, but there was more work to do and it was necessary for the apostles to come.

Verse 17 is the key verse, “*Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.*” The Holy Spirit was given through the laying on of hands of the apostles.

Another passage that further illustrates this is found in Acts 19:1-7,

“¹ And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples ² he said to them, ‘Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?’ So they said to him, ‘We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.’³ And he said to them, ‘Into what then were you baptized?’ So they said, ‘Into John’s baptism.’⁴ Then Paul said, ‘John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.’⁵ When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.’⁶ And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. ⁷ Now the men were about twelve in all.”

Once again the Bible points out the need of going further than “John’s baptism”. The Apostle Paul pressed the issue, he didn’t leave this as some optional thing for only a certain few. He point-blanked asked them, “*Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?*” I believe that every believer should answer this question. When they confessed their ignorance to this wonderful baptism, the Apostle Paul immediately took action, and immersed them in the name of Jesus (see chapter II, “baptism into His name”). Then he laid his hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues and prophesying.

We need the restoration of the proper use of laying on of hands by apostolic workers to see everyone receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit, with tongues and prophecy!

IMPARTING GIFTS

In chapters 26 and 27, we discussed the laying on of hands by fathers

to sons. The same idea is found here in the impartation of spiritual gifts. I don't want to be redundant, but I do want to drive the point home, so let's revisit a couple of verses that we covered in chapter 27.

I Timothy 1:18, ⁴⁸ *This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare [...]*"

I Timothy 4:14, ⁴⁴ *Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership."*

II Timothy 1:6-7, ⁴⁶ *Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. ⁷ For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."*

Laying on of hands and prophecy are an absolute in relational discipleship. Some may say that this was because Timothy was a minister and this was part of the ordination work. I don't totally disagree and will explain this in the next point of laying on of hands for ordination. But, I believe this was done with all believers.

One of the clearest cases that proves this point is found in Romans 1:11, *"For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established."*

Imparting of spiritual gifts was done through the laying on of hands, not only in the case of Timothy, but for all believers. I believe that this is the norm in relational discipleship.

LAYING ON OF HANDS FOR ORDINATION

The last topic that I want to address in this chapter is concerning the ordination of ministers. There are two cases of ordaining to office in the New Testament by the laying on of hands. We can only assume that this was done in other cases. This practice was more than likely based on Aaron and his sons laying their hands on the sacrifices for the Old Testament consecration of the priesthood (see Exodus 29).

The first case is found in Acts 6:1-7,

“^a Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. ² Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, ‘It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. ³ Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; ⁴ but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.’ ⁵ And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, ⁶ whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.”

As the administration of food, clothing, finance, land, etc. became very large, it created the need for someone to oversee and perform this work. The apostles couldn't see leaving their ministry in the word and prayer, so they counseled the church to choose qualified men, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, to become business administrators. The daily distribution by the church to the needy requires that those doing this business be full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom. Obviously, you don't need these qualifications just to dip soup in a kitchen or hand out goods. The discernment of the Holy Spirit and wisdom was needed to determine who should get what and how much.

Once the people made their selection, the apostles laid hands on them so everyone could see that the apostles endorsed them as worthy of this office. I want to point out that the selection of these men was done by those who were in relationship with them. They displayed the qualities that the apostles approved of. This ordination was selected by relational approval, not an appointment by the apostles that forced the people to accept their leadership. This is neither democracy, nor bureaucracy; it is a perfect example of relational promotion.

The next passage that illustrates ordination through the laying on of hands is found in Acts 13:1-4,

“^a Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene,

Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ² As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, 'Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'³ Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away. ⁴ So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus."

The means of selecting Barnabas and Saul (Paul) for the apostolic work was quite different from the case of business administrators. As the elders of the church of Antioch prayed and fasted, the Holy Spirit spoke a clear word to separate them for the work. The Holy Spirit - not the people - selected them. Then they were to be separated for this work. Finally, they prayed and fasted a little longer, laid hands on them and sent them out.

These two cases of ordination show that the people were sometimes used to select leaders, and other times the Holy Spirit simply made His will known. I want to point out one more passage that does not expressly say that they laid hands on the people, but it does give us insight to the Biblical norm in leadership ordination.

Titus I:4-7, "⁴ To Titus, a true son in our common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior. ⁵ For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you— ⁶ if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. ⁷ For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money [...]"

Paul called Titus his son and gave him a specific charge concerning the Island of Crete, that he would set order in the churches and ordain elders in every city, just as Paul appointed Titus as an elder.

We can glean much insight from this if we will forget about trying to apply this in the old Constantine congregational style of pyramid churches. Instead, think of the Biblical Church application of these terms and functions.

The ordination of Titus came out of the father-son relationship between himself and Paul. Then Paul set Titus up as the bishop of Crete. He had two major job functions. First, bring order; I believe that he was to teach the order of the New Testament Church found especially in I Corinthians I4:26-40. Second, he was to identify, then equip (through relational discipleship) and ordain elders in every city.

There were about 100 cities in Crete. Titus was to spend time in each city and ordain city elders, who would ordain house church elders. Paul was an apostolic elder, Titus was a bishop elder that ordained city elders, who ordained house church elders. All of these were discovered relationally, and were approved through observation of their manner of life. The criteria for their qualifications are found in Titus I:7-9, and in I Timothy 3.

DON'T BE TOO QUICK

One last point in the laying on of hands is found in I Timothy 5:17-22,

“¹⁷ Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. ¹⁸ For the Scripture says, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,’ and, ‘The laborer is worthy of his wages.’ ¹⁹ Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. ²⁰ Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear. ²¹ I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality. ²² Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people’s sins; keep yourself pure.”

The command not to “lay hands on anyone hastily” is found in the context of ordaining elders. We should know their manner of life and see them proven before we ever lay hands on them for eldership. This should not stop us from laying hands on people we do not know for healing.

CHAPTER 30:

LAYING ON OF HANDS

PART IV: SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY

Our final chapter in the discussion of laying on of hands will begin in the Book of Mark 6:1-6,

“¹ Then He went out from there and came to His own country, and His disciples followed Him. ² And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. And many bearing Him were astonished, saying, ‘Where did this Man get these things? And what wisdom is this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands!’ ³ Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?’ So they were offended at Him. ⁴ But Jesus said to them, ‘A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house.’ ⁵ Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. ⁶ And He marveled because of their unbelief. Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching.”

INEFFECTIVE AT HOME

This passage of Scripture gives us one of the most insightful lessons on the subject of laying on of hands. Miracles, signs, and wonders followed Jesus everywhere that He went, except in His own hometown. Certainly Jesus had the power within Himself to do the miracles, so what could short-circuit this power and render Him ineffective at home? I want to point out four issues that I see in this passage that we should learn from, and avoid if we are to be effective when hands are

laid on us, or when we lay hands on others.

THEY WERE ASTONISHED

One of the best ways to study The Bible is by studying words. When we understand the meaning of a word and its usage, it will often help us to understand the meaning of an entire passage or subject. So it is in the case of the word “astonished”. When Jesus expounded on the Scriptures that day in His home town synagogue His friends and relatives were “astonished”.

The Greek word for astonished is “*ekpleto*” and it means *to knock one out of their senses*. This meaning goes much further than our typical understanding of this word, such as, amazement, or even admiration. Jesus’ words hit so hard that they had a traumatic effect, like getting punched in the head. I used to do a little boxing and I understand what it’s like to get hit really hard in the head. I was hit in the right ear by a left hook twice in the same boxing match. I never saw either of the blows coming but I remember that my mind just went blank. My legs were strong and I was still standing, but my mind was like a test of the emergency broadcast system, with wailing sirens in my ears. I took the standing eight count and continued, but my mind was “astonished”.

Astonishment seemed to be a normal reaction to Jesus’ teachings. For instance look at the crowd’s response at the close of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7:28, “*And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching.*” The Sermon on the Mount to the religious mind was like being hit in the head by Muhammad Ali.

Consider the Sadducees’ response, when Jesus corrected the foundational errors in their doctrine concerning the resurrection from the dead, in Matthew 22:33, “*And when the multitudes heard this, they were astonished at His teaching.*” Once again He delivered a knockout blow to their religious minds.

When Jesus silenced the rich young ruler it was very similar to my experience of being hit with two left hooks in the same fight. They were twice astonished.

Mark 10:23-27, ²³ *Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, 'How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!'* ²⁴ *And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, 'Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God!'* ²⁵ *It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.'* ²⁶ *And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, 'Who then can be saved?'* ²⁷ *But Jesus looked at them and said, 'With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.'"*

They were knocked out of their senses to hear that it was hard for rich people to enter the kingdom of God. Then, while they were still reeling from the first blow, the second came, as He expounded on the teaching, leaving them to ask, *"Who then can be saved?"* That's what I call hard hitting preaching!

Perhaps the most insightful use of the word "astonished" is found at the beginning of Jesus' ministry at Capernaum. We read this in Mark 1:21-22, *"Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught. And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."* He taught with authority. People lose their minds when they encounter authority!

The effectiveness of the ministry of laying on of hands is hinged on our ability to receive Divine Authority. All too often our humanity blinds others to authority, as we will see in the next point.

THEY WERE OFFENDED

Jesus' teachings are the source of astonishment in all of the cases that we studied. The things that He said knocked them out of their senses. But the case of astonishment in His hometown was not only "what" He said, but more so, "Who" was saying it.

Once they began to absorb what He was saying, they turned their sight on His humanity. They thought to themselves, "He's not a preacher, He's a carpenter... That's Mary's boy... That's James, Joses, Judas, and Simon's brother... Who does He think He is?" And they

were offended at Him.

There's an old saying that goes like this, "familiarity breeds contempt". Those familiar with Jesus' family, upbringing, and work background were challenged by what He said, then immediately viewed Him with eyes of contempt.

Psalm 123:1-4 gives us some insight to the idea of contempt,

¹ Unto You I lift up my eyes, O You who dwell in the heavens. ² Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters, As the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, So our eyes look to the LORD our God, Until He has mercy on us. ³ Have mercy on us, O LORD, have mercy on us! For we are exceedingly filled with contempt. ⁴ Our soul is exceedingly filled With the scorn of those who are at ease, With the contempt of the proud."

Contempt runs two ways. When someone looks on another person with contempt (disrespect), the one being looked upon feels the effects of it. Those in Psalm 123 said that their souls were filled with contempt, because they were being looked upon by the proud with contempt. This Psalm is all about crying to God for mercy to be healed from contempt.

One more thought about contempt is that it is generated from a proud heart. The pride of Jesus' friends and family in His hometown rose up. They humanized Him and were offended at Him.

In chapter 8: Faith's Direction, we learned that there were five ways that we could be offended. First, we can offend God, Matthew 16:21-23. Second, God can offend us, Matthew 11:1-6. Third, we can offend people, Matthew 18:1-7. Fourth, people can offend us, Matthew 18:15-20. And fifth, we can offend ourselves, Matthew 18:8-10.

What was the reason for the offence in this case? If you chose the second reason you are correct - they were offended by God. There was absolutely nothing wrong with anything that Jesus was saying; the problem was "who" was talking. If we judge the contents of what is being said, we will be less contemptible toward those who are saying it.

THEY DISHONORED HIM

When Jesus perceived their offence birthed out of proud contempt He said, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house.” It’s grievous to be used by God and accepted by strangers, only to be rejected by those closest to you.

Rejection by your country, relatives, and your own house — the better that you are known, the more likely your ministry will be rejected. It amazes me when I travel abroad that I am treated with the status of royalty. I don’t ask for this treatment and, to be quite honest, I am not comfortable with it. I suppose it’s because I am accustomed to the dishonorable status that I am viewed with by my own country and relatives. Although, I do enjoy some honor in my own house.

The main issue here is dishonor. To honor means to place a value upon; to dishonor means to treat as worthless. For instance “Honor thy father and mother” means to count them as valuable .

Another clear example of this is found in I Timothy 5:17-18, *“Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,’ and, ‘The laborer is worthy of his wages.’”* This is an excellent passage to help us understand the word “honor”. The elders who ruled well were to be counted worthy of “double honor”. Then it is followed up by the teaching of wages for a minister. In other words, a good elder that works in word and doctrine is worth double the salary.

Jesus was dishonored. He was treated as worthless. There is a valuable lesson that we should learn here. The more familiar that we get with someone, the more susceptible that we are to hold them in contempt, and to dishonor them. When it comes time for ministry it only amounts to powerless words because we don’t believe that they are sent by God, which brings us to our last point.

UNBELIEF

They were astonished and offended, holding Him in dishonor. Then Jesus summed up all of this with one word - unbelief. He marveled at their unbelief.

It takes great faith to receive the teachings of a teacher and believe that they are sent by God. It seems that any revelation of their humanity undoes any need that we have to receive them.

Unbelief seems to come from a hard heart. In Mark 16:14, *“Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen.”* It seemed impossible to those who witnessed Jesus death to believe the testimony of some women who claimed that He had risen from the dead. Oh yes, they eventually believed when they saw it for themselves, but they could not receive this from the women who made this claim. Jesus rebuked them for not receiving the testimony about Him through others.

Hebrews 3:12-13 explain how unbelief and hard heartedness run together, *“Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”*

Those in Jesus’ hometown allowed their hearts to be hardened through the sin of pride, and rejected Jesus and His teachings. This rendered Jesus largely ineffective, reducing His ministry to just seeing a few minor healings. We need to keep our hearts soft, lest we become hardened through familiarity and reject those that God sends to us.

SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY

I want to inject a short exhortation to understand true authority here. The Constantine congregations are always teaching that we should submit to authority. I believe in submission to God’s authority but I refuse to be beaten into submission by fear.

Romans 8:15, “For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’” In the Old Testament, the religious structure was driven by fear based authority. In the New Testament, we have the Spirit of Adoption, and we are led by the authority of love. I gladly submit to loving authority even when I have to be corrected or rebuked. But I resist to the death those who would try to use fear to control me; fear is of the devil.

One of our clearest teachings of authority comes from Matthew 20:25-28,

“²⁵ But Jesus called them to Himself and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. ²⁶ Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. ²⁷ And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave— ²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.’”

Jesus flatly warned us that we shall not lord over each other with Gentile authority structures. He then taught us that true authority serves in humility.

Another teaching that Jesus gives us concerning proper authority is found in Matthew 21:23-27,

“²³ Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, ‘By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?’ ²⁴ But Jesus answered and said to them, ‘I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things: ²⁵ The baptism of John—where was it from? From heaven or from men?’ And they reasoned among themselves, saying, ‘If we say, “From heaven,” He will say to us, “Why then did you not believe him?” ²⁶ But if we say, “From men,” we fear the multitude, for all count John as a prophet.’ ²⁷ So they answered Jesus and said, ‘We do not know.’ And He said to them, ‘Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.’”

There is an authority that comes from heaven and one that comes

from men. Those with the authority from men always seem to despise those who come with authority from God. John the Baptist had heaven sent authority, while the religious leaders of his day resisted him with their political authority.

We need to learn to recognize the authority that heaven sends. We are so abused by Gentile authority that we seem to not even realize that this has come into the churches of our day. Jesus said *“Yet it shall not be so among you,”* but we readily accept abusive Gentile authority being imposed on us. We must demand that they earn our submission through serving out of love, not lording out of fear.

We must also learn that when the loving, humble servant comes we should recognize him, believe and receive from him.

CHAPTER 31:

RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD, INTRODUCTION

So far we have studied four of the six subjects of the Doctrines of Christ described in Hebrews 6:1-3,

“¹ Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, ² of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. ³ And this we will do if God permits.”

Remember, I said before that the doctrines come in pairs. The first pair is repentance and faith, which we called the foundations. The second pair is baptisms and laying on of hands, which we simply called baptism. The third pair is resurrection and eternal judgment, which we will call eternity.

Before we delve into the Old Testament verses concerning the resurrection, I want you to remember the teachings that we have completed concerning baptisms. The symbol of baptism is that we die with Christ, then we are buried with Christ, and finally we are raised from the dead with Him. The entire Christian walk is putting self to death and burying it to prepare us to be raised from the dead with Christ!

RESURRECTION DEFINED

The resurrection of the dead is how we will enter into eternity. The

Greek word for resurrection is “*anastasis*” which means *to stand again, or to stand up on your feet again.*

There is a coming day when the dead will rise, receive a new glorified body and live forever with God. This doctrine is the basis for the Christian hope. As a matter of fact, when we read the word “hope” in the Bible, it is almost always associated with the resurrection. So where does the doctrine of the resurrection come from?

THE GOSPEL

In I Corinthians 15, the Apostle Paul gives one of the clearest in depth teachings concerning the resurrection of the dead. This chapter will be the basis of most of our teaching on this doctrine, but for now I want us to focus on verses 1-4,

“¹ Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, ² by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. ³ For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures [...]”

In this passage, Paul declares the gospel in a nutshell; it is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. In verse four we find a key phrase that will launch us into our study “*He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.*” Jesus rose from the dead according to the Scriptures. Remember that the Scriptures in Paul’s day meant the Old Testament, so it is safe to conclude that the Old Testament reveals the doctrine of the resurrection. The Apostle Peter understood this well when he expounded on Psalm 16:8-11 on the Day of Pentecost.

YOU WILL NOT LEAVE MY SOUL IN SHEOL

Acts 2:22-36, “²² Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know— ²³ Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken

by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;²⁴ whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.²⁵ For David says concerning Him: 'I foresaw the LORD always before my face, For He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken.²⁶ Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; Moreover my flesh also will rest in hope.²⁷ For You will not leave my soul in Hades, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.²⁸ You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence.'²⁹ Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.³⁰ Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne,³¹ he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption.³² This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.³³ Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.³⁴ For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: 'The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand,³⁵ Till I make Your enemies Your footstool."³⁶ Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.'

King David was testifying of the strength that he received in this present life through his relationship with the Lord when he said, "I foresaw the LORD always before my face, For He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken." It seems that as he meditated on this, his heart was overflowing with joy and he began to prophesy, "Moreover my flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Hades, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption." God began to reveal in David's heart the coming of Messiah and His resurrection from the grave. David could see the dual meaning of this: not only would Messiah rise from the grave, but all those who believe in Him would rise also.

Peter declared with great boldness on the Day of Pentecost that King David was prophesying of the resurrection of Christ from the dead in Psalm 16:8-11, and applied it directly to Jesus when he said, "This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses."

Another Psalm by the sons of Korah gives us insight that those in the Old Testament believed in the resurrection of the dead, in Psalm 49:13-15,

“¹³ This is the way of those who are foolish, And of their posterity who approve their sayings. Selah ¹⁴ Like sheep they are laid in the grave; Death shall feed on them; The upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; And their beauty shall be consumed in the grave, far from their dwelling. ¹⁵ But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, For He shall receive me. Selah”

The grave was meant to hold fools, but the upright believed that God would redeem their souls from the power of the grave.

One final Old Testament passage that I would like to include, is found in the last chapter of the Book of Daniel 12:1-4,

“¹ At that time Michael shall stand up, The great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; And there shall be a time of trouble, Such as never was since there was a nation, Even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, Every one who is found written in the book. ² And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt. ³ Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever. ⁴ But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.”

We will discuss the thoughts in this passage thoroughly in the Doctrine of Eternal Judgment.

We see that the resurrection is plainly spoken of in the Old Testament, and this is how we can conclude that Christ rose from the dead “according to the Scriptures”. However, not all of the Jews believed in the resurrection. We will see this clearly in the strife and division between the Pharisees and Sadducees.

PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES

During Jesus' earthly ministry there were two main divisions in the religious community. The first group was known as the Pharisees and the second group was the Sadducees. One of the main differences dividing these groups was concerning the resurrection from the dead. The Pharisees believed there in the resurrection, the Sadducees did not.

The reason that the Sadducees rejected the resurrection from the dead is due to the fact that they only accepted the written Law of Moses and rejected the writings of the psalms and the prophets. The Pharisees, on the other hand, accepted the Old Testament as we know it, then added to it with strict teachings or traditions that kept people in bondage.

We know that Jesus accepted the written Law of Moses and the psalms and prophets quoting and referencing them often in His teachings. However, He did not endorse the oral law of the Pharisees otherwise known as "traditions of men".

Jesus rebuked the Sadducees teachings concerning the resurrection as error in Matthew 22:23-33,

²³ The same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him and asked Him, ²⁴ saying: 'Teacher, Moses said that if a man dies, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. ²⁵ Now there were with us seven brothers. The first died after he had married, and having no offspring, left his wife to his brother. ²⁶ Likewise the second also, and the third, even to the seventh. ²⁷ Last of all the woman died also. ²⁸ Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her.' ²⁹ Jesus answered and said to them, 'You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. ³⁰ For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven. ³¹ But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, ³² "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?" God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.' ³³ And when the multitudes heard this, they were astonished at His

teaching.”

The Sadducees were building a hypothetical situation based on the Law of the Kinsman Redeemer, in which the next of kin was to raise up children for a deceased brother to carry on his name in the earth. We find this in Deuteronomy 25:5-10,

“⁶ If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the widow of the dead man shall not be married to a stranger outside the family; her husband’s brother shall go in to her, take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband’s brother to her. ⁶ And it shall be that the firstborn son which she bears will succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel. ⁷ But if the man does not want to take his brother’s wife, then let his brother’s wife go up to the gate to the elders, and say, ‘My husband’s brother refuses to raise up a name to his brother in Israel; he will not perform the duty of my husband’s brother.’ ⁸ Then the elders of his city shall call him and speak to him. But if he stands firm and says, ‘I do not want to take her,’ ⁹ then his brother’s wife shall come to him in the presence of the elders, remove his sandal from his foot, spit in his face, and answer and say, ‘So shall it be done to the man who will not build up his brother’s house.’ ¹⁰ And his name shall be called in Israel, ‘The house of him who had his sandal removed.’”

(A very good of example of this is in the Book of Ruth).

Earthly longevity was the Old Testament equivalent to the New Testament resurrection. Their intent was to trap Jesus with an impossible scenario because they did not believe in the resurrection. Instead they found themselves rebuked as Jesus quoted God speaking of the deceased patriarchs in the present tense. Although Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were deceased God spoke of them as alive!

The Apostle Paul even used this sharp division between these two religious sects in his defense before the Jewish council.

Acts 23:6-8, “⁶ But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, ‘Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!’ ⁷ And when he had said this, a dissension arose

between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided. ⁸ For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection—and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both.”

There is a great point to glean from the division of these two “denominations”. It is not easy to believe in the resurrection from the dead. We can have the knowledge of this, but it is difficult to have faith for this. The apostles had trouble believing even after being told often by Jesus that He would rise again. We read in Mark 16:14, “*Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen.*”

Only when the resurrection is revealed in our understanding can we believe that God will raise the dead back to life.

CHAPTER 32:

REVELATION OF THE RESURRECTION

There is time in the future when God is going to raise the dead. However, I believe that the Scripture teaches us that the power of the resurrection is for today, not only the future. I believe that we should avoid, at all cost, the mindset of the resurrection being a futuristic event, which only leads to complacency in the present. I am talking about the work of the future resurrection in our present regeneration.

Jesus raised at least three people from the dead in His earthly ministry. In Luke 7:11-17, He raised a widow's son from the dead in the city of Nain. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all give account of raising Jairus' daughter from the dead. The last one, the raising of Lazarus, is what I want us to study because I believe a valuable lesson is learned in this passage.

RAISING LAZARUS

Lazarus, Mary, and Martha were some of Jesus favorite people. However, when word came to Him that Lazarus was ill He did nothing for several days. Jesus finally told His disciples that He would go to see Lazarus following this by telling them that Lazarus was dead. The disciples were not very eager to go to Bethany, knowing that many religious leaders wanted to kill Jesus, so they went reluctantly. When they finally got to Lazarus' house, they found that Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days.

Let's read the story from that point in John 11:18-27,

¹⁸ Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles away. ¹⁹ And many of the Jews had joined the women around Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. ²⁰ Now Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him, but Mary was sitting in the house. ²¹ Now Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.' ²³ Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' ²⁴ Martha said to Him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.' ²⁵ Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. ²⁶ And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?' ²⁷ She said to Him, 'Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.'"

The first thing I want to point out in this story is that when Jesus arrived Martha went out to meet Him, while Mary stayed in the house. I think that is a very revealing point because of the obvious role reversal of these two women. Surely, Mary knew that Jesus had arrived, yet she would not go to Him. The first thing that Martha said to Him was, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." Do you think that maybe they were blaming Jesus for not coming in time? Could this be why Mary was reluctant to go to Him? How many of us love to hear Jesus' teachings when things are going the way that we want them to go, and then turn on Him as soon as they don't? If you recall Martha was corrected by Jesus for complaining that she was doing all the work in the kitchen, while Mary simply sat and listened to Jesus (Luke 10:38-42). It's fascinating to me that Mary was approved by Jesus for sitting and listening, yet it was Martha who got the miracle.

The Second point is this: not only did Jesus correct Martha for being too busy working, now He was going to reprove her for wrong thinking. It's obvious that Martha must have learned something from Jesus because the next thing she said was, "But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You." Martha believed that it was never too late to get a miracle from Jesus. Surely she must have known about the widow's son in Nain, and Jairus' daughter — but could this happen for Lazarus? Jesus answered her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha's response is the point of the whole lesson, "I know that he will rise again in

the resurrection at the last day.” Martha correctly believed that there was a future resurrection event. How many of us today believe that there is a future resurrection, yet we have no present power? Could it be that the same error in Martha’s thinking is in ours today? Could this type of thinking be causing us to forfeit the power of the resurrection for today?

The third point should correct our thinking. Jesus’ response to Martha was, *“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.”* Here’s the point: the resurrection is not an event, it’s a person. Jesus said I Am the resurrection. If we die we shall live again and if we believe we shall never die!

The fourth point brings the resurrection out of the future and into the present for Martha. Jesus put her faith on the spot, *“Do you believe this?”* She had futuristic faith but now she was being challenged to a present faith. Recall our lessons from faith, *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen.”* The miracle of the resurrection required a present faith. Notice Martha’s response, *“Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”*

Martha’s response sounds just like the revelation that Peter had when Jesus asked His disciples *“Who do men say that I am?”* In Matthew 16:16-20, Peter’s said, *“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”* What Jesus taught him next is essential for us to learn if we are going to walk in the present power of the resurrection.

¹⁷ *Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.*
¹⁸ *And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.* ¹⁹ *And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.’* ²⁰ *Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ.”*

The revelation that Christ is the Son of the Living God is vital for

the Church to prevail over hell. The knowledge of this is not sufficient; we must have a revelation of it. I believe this is why Jesus instructed them that they tell no man He was the Christ. This must be revealed by the Father to His son's and daughters in order for them to walk in power.

This is exactly what happened to Martha. Her faith moved from doctrinal knowledge to a revelation of the Christ. No longer was the resurrection an event of the future; it was the Person standing before her. She knew and believed that He was capable and willing to raise her brother from the dead.

Following the exchange between Martha and Jesus, Martha called for her sister Mary. I wanted to detail what happens next because I believe it reveals the source of Martha and Mary's difficulties with Jesus.

John II:28-37, ²⁸ *And when she had said these things, she went her way and secretly called Mary her sister, saying, 'The Teacher has come and is calling for you.'* ²⁹ *As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly and came to Him.* ³⁰ *Now Jesus had not yet come into the town, but was in the place where Martha met Him.* ³¹ *Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and comforting her, when they saw that Mary rose up quickly and went out, followed her, saying, 'She is going to the tomb to weep there.'* ³² *Then, when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying to Him, 'Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.'* ³³ *Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled.* ³⁴ *And He said, 'Where have you laid him?' They said to Him, 'Lord, come and see.'* ³⁵ *Jesus wept.* ³⁶ *Then the Jews said, 'See how He loved him!'* ³⁷ *And some of them said, 'Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?'"*

Notice that when Mary met Jesus she said the same thing Martha said to Him, *"Then, when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying to Him, 'Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.'"* These two sisters were deeply affected by the death of their brother and were placing the blame on Jesus. They sent for Him in

plenty of time, yet He showed up too late, and now their brother was dead. They saw Him cure so many sicknesses and diseases, perhaps even the one that claimed their brother, and yet they lost Lazarus. Martha and Mary were surely wondering how it benefitted them to be such close friends of Jesus.

Jesus was feeling their pain and the responsibility that they were trying to place on Him. As He saw them weeping, and the religious people weeping with them, He groaned in His Spirit and began to weep as well. I believe the source of the suggestion that Jesus was to blame for Lazarus' death was revealed when the "religious comforters" said, "...*Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?*" Religion will make you question your relationship with Jesus. Martha and Mary were His very good friends, yet they blamed Him for Lazarus' death. The source of the blame came from religious leaders who were supposed to be comforting them. We should be very cautious that this type of thinking does not get into our minds because it will short circuit your relationship with Jesus and His power in your life.

When all of these issues were cleared up Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. We finish reading this in John II:38-44,

⁶⁸ Then Jesus, again groaning in Himself, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. ³⁹ Jesus said, 'Take away the stone.' Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him, 'Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days.' ⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, 'Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?' ⁴¹ Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, 'Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. ⁴² And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me.' ⁴³ Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come forth!' ⁴⁴ And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Loose him, and let him go.'"

I believe that we too need to remove the grave clothes from our minds so that we can get the revelation the Jesus is the Son of the Living God,

and conquer the enemy of death in our thinking.

THE PRAYER OF PAUL

The Apostle Paul reinforces the lesson that we learned from Martha and Mary when he told the Ephesians how he prayed for them.

Ephesians 1:15-23, ¹⁵ *Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints,* ¹⁶ *do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers:* ¹⁷ *that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,* ¹⁸ *the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,* ¹⁹ *and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power* ²⁰ *which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,* ²¹ *far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.* ²² *And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church,* ²³ *which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."*

Paul told the Ephesians his prayer for them was that they would have the *"the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened."* To have knowledge is good — many of us have the knowledge of Jesus. But Paul wanted his disciples to go beyond knowledge; he wanted the wisdom of God to be revealed in their understanding.

Then Paul lists three things in particular that he wanted the people to have the revelation of. First, that they would know the hope of His calling. Second, that they would know the riches of the inheritance that we have as saints. The third thing - the point that I want you to see - the greatness of the power to us who are believers comes from the same power that raised Jesus from the dead! In other words, we should live presently in the power of the resurrection.

If you keep reading the context of Ephesians in chapter 2:4-7 Paul

strengthens this teaching when he says,

“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),⁶ and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,⁷ that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

When we are saved from the death of sin we are, in a sense, resurrected from the dead now. We die with Christ, the old man that we were is buried with Him, and we are resurrected as a new creature in Christ.

Paul says virtually the same thing to the church in Philippians 3:10-11, *“that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”* Paul wanted them to know the power of the resurrection in this present life, so that they may attain resurrection from the dead in the future.

COOPERATING WITH THE RESURRECTION

The final point I want to make concerning the revelation of the resurrection is that we need to learn to cooperate with the resurrection now if we intend to participate in it in the future. In John 10:17-18, Jesus said, *“Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.”* Jesus laid down His life willingly and commands us to lay ours down also. He makes a point to say that no one could take His life from Him but He laid it down of His own will. Jesus reveals that God, through commandment, gave Him the ability to lay down His life and raise it back up from the dead! When we are “in Christ” this same commandment abides in us and we are to cooperate by laying our lives down, knowing we will one day cooperate in raising them back from the dead.

CHAPTER 33:

THE ORDER OF THE RESURRECTION

PART I: THE EARTHLY MAN AND THE HEAVENLY MAN

As I said in Chapter 31, I Corinthians 15 gives us one of the clearest in-depth teachings concerning the resurrection of the dead. I would strongly encourage you to stop reading this book now and read that chapter of Scripture.

WITNESSES AND ADVERSARIES OF THE RESURRECTION

In verses 1-8, Paul first declares the gospel, and then gives a list of those who saw Christ after that He had raised from the dead. Then, in verses 9-19, he comes against those who, like the Sadducees, believed that there was no resurrection from the dead.

THE ORDER OF THE RESURRECTION

We will begin our study where Paul starts His teaching about the resurrection, in verses 20-23,

“²⁰ But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. ²³ But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming.”

In verse twenty three I want you to notice the phrase, “*each one in his own order.*” There is an order to the resurrection; first Christ rose from the dead, next the firstfruits, and finally those who belong to Christ at His coming. This order will become the text for the next several lessons. In this lesson I want us to focus on Paul’s line of reasoning concerning the resurrection.

IN ADAM ALL DIE

In verses 21-22, Paul introduces a very important point, “*For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.*”

If we read ahead a few verses in the chapter we find that Paul continues this thought in verses 45-49,

“⁴⁵ And so it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being.’ The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶ However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. ⁴⁷ The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. ⁴⁸ As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. ⁴⁹ And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.”

Paul stayed with this train of thought throughout the entire chapter. In creation, man was made from the earth and we bear the image of an earthly man. When we are re-created in Christ, we bear the image of the heavenly man in this life and the life to come.

SIN AND DEATH

Death entered the world through the sin of Adam then spread to all men. God said to Adam in Genesis 2:15-17,

“¹⁵ Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall

surely die.”

God gave Adam one commandment and warned him that the penalty of breaking His commandment was death. Adam did break the commandment causing immediate spiritual death and eventual physical death. Through Adam sin and death entered the world and death spread to all men because all sin.

I do not believe the idea of “original sin”. We are not held responsible for what Adam did. We are not born sinners, or else every child that dies prematurely, or even through abortion would go to hell. On the contrary the Bible says in Exodus 32:31-33,

“³¹ Then Moses returned to the LORD and said, ‘Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold! ³² Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written.’ ³³ And the LORD said to Moses, ‘Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book.’”

Each person will be held accountable for his or her own actions. Ezekiel 18:1-4 give strengthens this idea,

“¹ The word of the LORD came to me again, saying, ² ‘What do you mean when you use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying: “The fathers have eaten sour grapes, And the children’s teeth are set on edge?”’ ³ ‘As I live,’ says the Lord GOD, ‘you shall no longer use this proverb in Israel. ⁴ Behold, all souls are Mine; The soul of the father As well as the soul of the son is Mine; The soul who sins shall die.’”

God told Ezekiel that the children would not be held responsible for the sins of the parents, neither would the parents bear the sins of the children. The thing that stands out most to me is in verse four, “Behold, all souls are Mine.” God claims that all souls are His. I believe that every person enters the world with their name written in the Book of Life. When a person sins their name is blotted out of the Book, and only when they are redeemed by the Lamb can their name be written back in. We will further discuss this in the doctrine of Eternal Judgment.

THROUGH ONE MAN...

I Corinthians 15 is not the only time that the Apostle Paul draws on the contrasts between Adam (the first earthly man), and Jesus (the first heavenly man). In the Book of Romans 5:12-19, this subject is more thoroughly explained,

“¹² Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned— ¹³ (For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. ¹⁴ Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. ¹⁵ But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man’s offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. ¹⁶ And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification. ¹⁷ For if by the one man’s offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.) ¹⁸ Therefore, as through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. ¹⁹ For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous.”

The Apostle Paul does a wonderful job in contrasting the results of “one man’s” actions. By one man sin entered the world and death through sin. Adam’s actions brought death to many. On the contrary, through one man’s righteous actions (Jesus) many will be made righteous. At the cross the ultimate act of obedience is displayed; the righteous died in the place of the unrighteous. Through the disobedience of one many were made sinners, through the obedience of one many will be made righteous. Sin abounded to the death of many, now righteousness abounds to the justification of many and the gift of eternal life.

THE EARTHLY AND HEAVENLY MAN

Let's go back to I Corinthians 15:45-49 where Paul takes the contrasts between Adam and Christ further,

“⁴⁵ And so it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being.’ The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶ However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. ⁴⁷ The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. ⁴⁸ As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. ⁴⁹ And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.”

In verses 45-47, the Apostle Paul is referring to the creation of man in Genesis 2:7, “*And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.*” The earthly man represents the temporal man. From dust we came and to dust we shall return. It also represents our unregenerate state without Christ. The heavenly man represents those who have been regenerated through Christ, and what they will be for eternity.

HOW ARE THE DEAD RAISED AND WITH WHAT BODY DO THEY COME?

A few verses back, in I Corinthians 15:35-44, Paul explained how the dead are raised and what kind of body they will have in the resurrection.

I Corinthians 15:35-44, *“³⁵ But someone will say, ‘How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?’ ³⁶ Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. ³⁷ And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain—perhaps wheat or some other grain. ³⁸ But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body. ³⁹ All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, and another of birds. ⁴⁰ There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. ⁴¹ There is one glory of the sun, another glory of*

the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory. ⁴² *So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption.* ⁴³ *It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.* ⁴⁴ *It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.”*

In verses 35-38, Paul uses agricultural process of germination to explain the phenomenon of the resurrection. When we sow seeds they are planted into the ground and they die. In verses 39-41, Paul discusses the difference between the Terrestrial (*earthly or of the earth*), and the Celestial (*heavenly*) bodies. There are various forms of flesh on the earth such as men, animals, fish, and birds. There are also forms in the celestial bodies such as sun, stars and the moon.

In verses 42-44, Paul correlates the sowing and reaping process to the resurrection of the dead with four different points of emphasis. First, the body is sown in corruption but it is raised in incorruption. The sin of Adam brought the death of our physical bodies into the world. Man's body is in a state of corruption even before death. The body is wasting away due to sin. Jesus' physical body was just as ours. He was killed in a corruptible body, but God did not let Him suffer decay; He raised Him in incorruption. Second, the body is sown in dishonor but it is raised in honor. Jesus died the dishonorable death of a criminal on the cross, but God honored and vindicated Him when He raised Him from the dead. Third, the body is sown in weakness but it is raised in power. Jesus must have appeared a weakling because He never defended Himself during His trial and execution, but He defeated death when God raised Him from the dead. Fourth, the body is as a natural body but it is raised as a supernatural body. Herein lies the distinction between Adam (the first earthly man), and Christ (the first heavenly man).

Let's not forget why we are discussing the contrasts between Adam and Christ. This was Paul's line of thinking when he introduced his discussion of the resurrection,

I Corinthians 15:20-23, ⁴²⁰ *But now Christ is risen from the dead,*

and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. ²³ But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming."

Adam brought sin, sickness/disease (incipient death), death and decay into the world. Christ brought redemption from sin, healing for sickness and disease, and the resurrection for death and decay. As in Adam all die, in Christ all shall be made alive!

THE DOUBLE GLORY OF THE GOSPEL

Surely Paul must have borrowed the ideas of I Corinthians 15 from Jesus Himself. Jesus used this same reasoning when He was about to be crucified in John 12:23-24,

"²³ But Jesus answered them, saying, 'The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. ²⁴ Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. ²⁵ He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor. ²⁷ Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? "Father, save Me from this hour?" But for this purpose I came to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify Your name.' Then a voice came from heaven, saying, 'I have both glorified it and will glorify it again.'"

The gospel has a double glory. The first glory was the glory of the cross. Jesus didn't ask to be saved from the cross; He asked that God would be glorified in His obedience. God confirmed that He would be glorified in the cross, and He promised to glorify Himself again through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead!

We also should bring God double glory in this life. We bear the image of the earthly man and have need of redemption through the cross. We need to obey God, die with Christ on the cross and bring God glory in our death. We need to bury the earthly man and be raised

to life in the image of the heavenly man and bring God glory in how we live!

CHAPTER 34:

THE ORDER OF THE RESURRECTION

PART II: THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST, RESURRECTION DAY

Let's read our text again to refresh our thoughts concerning the order of the resurrection. I Corinthians 15:20-23,

“²⁰ But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. ²³ But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.”

CHRIST THE FIRSTFRUITS

I want you to notice the distinction between Christ and the firstfruits. In verse 20 we read, “*20 But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.*” Notice that Christ's resurrection is stated alone, and then it is listed as part of the firstfruits. In verse twenty-three, Christ and the firstfruits are listed together. We will separate these two for teaching purposes, being careful not to detract at all from the significance of the resurrection of Christ. We will study the firstfruits in chapter 36.

PRESENTED ALIVE BY MANY INFALLIBLE PROOFS

All four gospels give an account of the resurrection of Christ and the events that took place before He ascended into heaven. Luke wrote the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts. This is how Luke followed up his gospel account in Acts 1:1-3,

“¹ The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, ² until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, ³ to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.”

The Bible is careful to record that a Roman soldier’s lance pierced the heart of Jesus to make absolutely certain that He was dead. The blood and water poured out of His side erasing any doubt that Jesus was dead indeed. The Bible is equally careful to erase any doubt that Jesus rose from the dead.

THE DAY OF HIS RESURRECTION

The Bible records that Jesus appeared six times to at least fifteen different people on the Sunday of His resurrection. In this lesson we will sort out those accounts of His appearances and set them in order.

SUNDAY MORNING

All four of the gospels record that women visited the tomb at sunrise on Sunday morning following the resurrection. Luke’s gospel gives the most inclusive list of these women.

Luke 24:1-12, “¹ Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. ² But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. ³ Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴ And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold,

two men stood by them in shining garments. ⁵ Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, ‘Why do you seek the living among the dead?’ ⁶ He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, ⁷ saying, ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.’” ⁸ And they remembered His words. ⁹ Then they returned from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰ It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them, who told these things to the apostles. ¹¹ And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them. ¹² But Peter arose and ran to the tomb; and stooping down, he saw the linen cloths lying by themselves; and he departed, marveling to himself at what had happened.”

Just as angels appeared to announce the birth of Jesus on the earth, angels appeared to announce the birth of Jesus from the dead. The angels declared to the women that Jesus was indeed raised from the dead and then instructed them to tell His disciples. They ran from the tomb and faithfully delivered the message, but the disciples were slow to believe. They all ran back to the tomb together with the disciples who had to see for themselves. After seeing the empty tomb they all went home in wonderment trying to sort out what all of these things meant. But one person stayed behind. . .

MARY MAGDALENE

Mary Magdalene was the first person to see Jesus after His resurrection. In Mark 16:9 we read, “Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons.” The Bible says that those who are forgiven much, love much. Surely this is the case with Mary Magdalene. She knew what it was to be tormented by demon possession and be powerfully set free by Jesus Christ. I’m sure those things filled her heart and mind prompting her tears as she stayed behind to weep for Him who had shown her such mercy.

The gospel of John records it this way in John 20:11-18,

¹¹ But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she

stooped down and looked into the tomb. ¹² And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. ¹³ Then they said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.' ¹⁴ Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?' She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, 'Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away.' ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to Him, 'Rabboni!' (which is to say, Teacher). ¹⁷ Jesus said to her, 'Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, "I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God."' ¹⁸ Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things to her."

Consider the picture of the first person to see Jesus alive from the dead. Mary stayed behind at His tomb - weeping. She wept over all that she witnessed in the crucifixion. Now she wept over the message of His resurrection. I believe that Mary represents the process that every person will go through to experience God's salvation. As we weep over the death of Jesus we die with Him, then we witness His resurrection and we live again with Him. If we weep over His death we will surely rejoice over His resurrection. Mary stayed behind to weep and her mourning was turned to rejoicing! She hurried back to the disciples with more than an angelic message. Now she had an eyewitness account that Jesus was alive from the dead.

THE OTHER WOMEN SEE HIM ALIVE

While Mary Magdalene was meeting with Jesus His disciples and the other women were on their way home. After Jesus sent Mary back to tell His disciples what she had seen, He then appeared to the other women.

Matthew 28:9-10, ⁹ And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, 'Rejoice!' So they came and held Him by the feet and

worshiped Him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me.’”

We know that Mary the mother of James, Salome, Joanna, and the “other women” were the next ones to see Him alive. We are not certain just who these other women were but we are certain that they saw Him alive.

I want to point out another thing concerning the events of resurrection Sunday. The angels, and now Jesus Himself, were adamant about getting the message of His resurrection to His disciples. The more that I have studied this, the more it becomes apparent to me how sorely that He wanted His closest friends to believe by faith. He told them about His resurrection repeatedly while He was with them, yet they still couldn’t get it. He could easily have appeared to them before He appeared to the women. Instead He chose to send them His Word, but they did not believe. Jesus’ disappointment was apparent when He finally showed Himself to His disciples.

THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Later on Sunday afternoon Jesus appeared to a disciple named Cleopas and another unnamed disciple.

Luke 24:13-32, ¹³ Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And they talked together of all these things which had happened. ¹⁵ So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. ¹⁶ But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him. ¹⁷ And He said to them, ‘What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?’ ¹⁸ Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, ‘Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?’ ¹⁹ And He said to them, ‘What things?’ So they said to Him, ‘The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰ and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. ²¹ But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this,

today is the third day since these things happened. ²² Yes, and certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us. ²³ When they did not find His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said He was alive. ²⁴ And certain of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but Him they did not see.’ ²⁵ Then He said to them, ‘O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!’ ²⁶ Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?’ ²⁷ And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. ²⁸ Then they drew near to the village where they were going, and He indicated that He would have gone farther. ²⁹ But they constrained Him, saying, ‘Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.’ And He went in to stay with them. ³⁰ Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight. ³² And they said to one another, ‘Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?’”

Unbelief blinded these two disciples so that they could not recognize the resurrected Christ. Jesus’ mounting frustration was obvious when He called them fools for being slow to believe. Once again He expounded on the Scriptures that said that Messiah would suffer then rise from the dead. His teachings set their hearts on fire but they still couldn’t see. I believe that the churches of today are filled with those whose hearts are warmed by the Word of God, yet they are blind to the resurrection power! Only when they constrained Him to stay with them, and share a meal, would their eyes open to recognize Jesus. They knew Him in the breaking of bread. We too need to learn this lesson. Many know about Him through inspired sermons that warm our hearts, but very few constrain Him to come to eat with them, and know Him in the intimacy of breaking bread.

In the intimacy of the communion meal,

His resurrection was revealed.

To those with blinded eyes and head,

He was made known by breaking bread.

At last made known, He did depart,

But He left in them a burning heart.

Whatever business they had in Emmaus was now unimportant. They couldn't wait to return to His disciples and rehearse the events of the afternoon. Luke 24:33-35 goes on to say,

“³³ So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, ³⁴ saying, ‘The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!’ ³⁵ And they told about the things that had happened on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread.”

A PRIVATE MEETING WITH PETER

Sometime between the meeting with Cleopas and the other disciple on the Road to Emmaus, Jesus appeared to Peter. Paul notes this in I Corinthians 15:5, “. . .and He was seen by Cephas then by the twelve.” We don't have any record of what was said between them during that meeting, but you would have to think that it had something to do with confirming Peter's restoration.

All that we know for a fact is that between the time of the encounter on the Road to Emmaus, and the time that Jesus appeared to the ten disciples, He met with Peter privately.

The Book of Luke 24:33-34 records it this way, “*So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, ‘The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!’*” Before Cleopas and the other disciple could give their testimony, the Apostles blurted out that the Lord was risen, and Peter had met with Him. That's all we know about this encounter but still it's an infallible proof.

SUNDAY EVENING

Jesus frustration with His disciples had been building all day. He sent angels, then women, and finally two disciples, yet for all that the closest men to Him failed to believe. Mark 16:14 clearly reveals how Jesus felt about their unbelief, “*14 Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not*

believe those who had seen Him after He had risen.”

It’s amazing that those whom Jesus was with and taught the most were the hardest to convince. We should learn the lesson of how easily unbelief and hardness of heart can blind us to the power of God. No matter how close to Him we have been in times past, or how many revelations we have known from Him, God always requires faith in His Word!

Luke 24:36-43 give details of the rest of the meeting after the rebuke,

“³⁶ Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, ‘Peace to you.’³⁷ But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit.³⁸ And He said to them, ‘Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts?’³⁹ Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.’⁴⁰ When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet.⁴¹ But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, ‘Have you any food here?’⁴² So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb.⁴³ And He took it and ate in their presence.”

They all touched His pierced hands and feet, and they felt that He had flesh and bones, yet still they doubted. Slowly their doubts were being driven out by the reality of what they were now seeing and touching. They were overwhelmed with joy but they still did not believe! He called for something to eat, as he munched on broiled fish reality was sinking in — surely He is alive!

DOUBTING THOMAS

The gospel of John records that Thomas was absent when Jesus first appeared to the disciples on Sunday. In John 20:24-25 we read, “*Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, ‘We have seen the Lord.’ So he said to them, ‘Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.’*”

Thomas earned a nickname throughout history of “Doubting Thomas” but I don’t think we should be too hard on him. Thomas was not the only one that doubted. All of Jesus’ disciples were filled with unbelief. Only after they had seen and handled Jesus were they willing to try to convince Thomas. I am certain that whoever would have had the misfortune of being absent from that first encounter with the disciples would have not believed.

This completes the events of the Sunday of the Resurrection of Jesus. We will continue with the other thirty nine days of appearances in chapter 35.

CHAPTER 35:

THE ORDER OF THE RESURRECTION

PART III: THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST, SEEN FOR FORTY DAYS

UNLESS I SEE...I WILL NOT BELIEVE

The Bible is silent about the week following the resurrection. But I'm sure that the events of that Sunday shaped all of the conversations His disciples had during the week. As the disciples discussed His appearing over and over we can only imagine what was going through Thomas' mind. He made a very bold stance, “. . .Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.” For a full week Thomas had to listen to ten of the greatest preachers that ever walked on this earth discuss the resurrection of Christ — yet still he resisted.

JESUS APPEARS TO THOMAS

John 20:26-29, ²⁶ *And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, ‘Peace to you!’* ²⁷ *Then He said to Thomas, ‘Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.’* ²⁸ *And Thomas answered and said to Him, ‘My Lord and my God!’* ²⁹ *Jesus said to him, ‘Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.’”*

Jesus wasted no time at this appearance. It seems He was here for only one reason. He proclaimed peace to all in the house then focused all of His attention toward Thomas. *“Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side.”* Surely Thomas’ hand was trembling when he reached out and touched the wounds in Jesus’ hands and side. He must have wanted to crawl into a hole as Jesus called him to task over his boasts in unbelief. The reality of what he was witnessing rushed into his mind and he humbly proclaimed, *“My Lord and my God!”* Thomas was finally convinced, and now in a confession of complete surrender, he yielded totally in faith to the Lordship of Christ.

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HAVE NOT SEEN AND YET HAVE BELIEVED

There are two lessons that I want to point out concerning Thomas. The first is the obvious lesson that Jesus wants not only Thomas, but all to believe Him by faith in His Word. Remember that the angels, Mary Magdalene, the group of women, and the disciples on the road to Emmaus all brought the disciples news that He was risen, yet none of them believed by their words. So Thomas was not the only doubting disciple. They all doubted and were rebuked for it. Jesus made this clear when He said, *“Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”* Without a doubt the heart of this lesson is that God wants us to believe without seeing. Faith is our proof!

The second lesson is not the traditional one that points out Thomas’ unbelief. It’s one that points out something correct about what Thomas did. Thomas demanded that he see for himself, and Jesus appeared especially to him! He got what he was asking for! Thomas’ actions were in agreement with just about everyone who ever received a miracle from Jesus. He persisted until he got the personal visitation from the risen Lord.

I believe that we should take Jesus at His Word and we will see great things. But I also know that He helps our unbelief and to the persistent seeking heart He will meet us with a powerful answer to the cry of our

hearts. This is the place where miracles occur.

THE APPEARANCE AT THE SEA OF TIBERIAS

John 21:1-14, ¹“After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and in this way He showed Himself: ²Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together. ³Simon Peter said to them, ‘I am going fishing.’ They said to him, ‘We are going with you also.’ They went out and immediately got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing. ⁴But when the morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵Then Jesus said to them, ‘Children, have you any food?’ They answered Him, ‘No.’ ⁶And He said to them, ‘Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.’ So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish. ⁷Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, ‘It is the Lord!’ Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment (for he had removed it), and plunged into the sea. ⁸But the other disciples came in the little boat (for they were not far from land, but about two hundred cubits), dragging the net with fish. ⁹Then, as soon as they had come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread. ¹⁰Jesus said to them, ‘Bring some of the fish which you have just caught.’ ¹¹Simon Peter went up and dragged the net to land, full of large fish, one hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not broken. ¹²Jesus said to them, ‘Come and eat breakfast.’ Yet none of the disciples dared ask Him, ‘Who are You?’—knowing that it was the Lord. ¹³Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise the fish. ¹⁴This is now the third time Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after He was raised from the dead.”

THE THIRD APPEARANCE TO HIS DISCIPLES

After the resurrection, it didn’t take long for the disciples to return back to their trade of fishing. We see just how quickly we will go back to our old ways and forget about Jesus if we don’t do what He tells us to do. For three years He walked with them and taught them the Word of the Lord. They experienced first hand His manner of life and

character. They were there when He healed the sick and performed countless miracles. They had even been sent out by Him and were doing the same things that He did. But now they considered it over. Jesus was gone, and without Him they decided to go back to their fishing boats.

THE FIRST MIRACULOUS CATCH

As soon as their nets embraced the multitude of fish Peter instantly knew that it was Jesus standing on the shore. Surely their minds raced back to the first time they experience this same kind of miracle in Luke 5:I-II,

“¹ So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret, ² and saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing their nets. ³ Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon’s, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat. ⁴ When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, ‘Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.’ ⁵ But Simon answered and said to Him, ‘Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net.’ ⁶ And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking. ⁷ So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. ⁸ When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, ‘Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!’ ⁹ For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken; ¹⁰ and so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, ‘Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men.’ ¹¹ So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him.”

FISHERS OF MEN

Here, three years later, their nets are teeming with a second miraculous catch of fish. They were standing in the presence of Jesus and staring at a fire of coals, cooking fish and bread. In the silence their minds must have raced back to His words during the first miracle, “Do not be

afraid. From now on you will catch men.” Maybe they were even gaining fresh understanding of the two miracles when He fed the multitudes with a few loaves and fishes. This simple breakfast would alter their lives and set their course forever. Soon they would be turning the world upside down, catching men through relational evangelism, and breaking bread from house to house. It was settled forever; these fishermen were now fishers of men.

FEED MY SHEEP

The lesson did not end there. Next He would give more specific instruction to prepare them (and us) for the ministry.

John 21:15-19, ¹⁵ *So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?’ He said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.’ He said to him, ‘Feed My lambs.’* ¹⁶ *He said to him again a second time, ‘Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?’ He said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.’ He said to him, ‘Tend My sheep.’* ¹⁷ *He said to him the third time, ‘Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?’ Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, ‘Do you love Me?’ And he said to Him, ‘Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed My sheep.’* ¹⁸ *Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish.’* ¹⁹ *This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, ‘Follow Me.’”*

We covered this once before in Chapter 25: The Baptism of Fire, but it bears repeating here. Peter had denied Jesus three times and now He confessed His love for Him three times. Through the restoration of Peter, Jesus was teaching all of us a lesson. The first lesson is about being restored after failing in our actions but not failing in our faith. I know that many presume on God’s grace and actually live their lives believing that they will always fail. Those who believe such error may seize on what I’m saying, but I do not agree with them. To those who have failed Jesus and are broken, it is very hard to believe that we could

ever have our relationship with Him restored. The faith to truly believe after failure is a powerful thing and even a work of conversion!

Peter was restored and now he was ready to learn the next lesson. Feeding Jesus' sheep would eventually put his life in danger again. Jesus prophesied to Peter that he would be carried somewhere that he did not want to go. History says that Peter was captured and sentenced to crucifixion. His last request was to be crucified upside down because he was not worthy to die like the Lord. His request was granted, and he passed the test. He never denied again!

"Follow Me", the first words that He spoke to His disciples were some of the last words that He spoke to them. Their fishing careers were ended, and now the rest of their lives would be devoted to fishing for men, and feeding sheep while loving Jesus every step of the way!

THE GREAT COMMISSION

The fourth time that Jesus appeared to His closest disciples was on an "appointed" mountain in Galilee. There seems to be some disagreement among scholars concerning when Jesus appeared to 500 of the disciples at one time (I Corinthians 15:6). Their argument is that facilitating such a large gathering of disciples near Jerusalem right after the crucifixion would be too dangerous. So He instructed them to meet Him nearly one hundred miles away in Galilee. It was probably here that Jesus appeared not only to the eleven, but also to the five hundred.

STILL DOUBTING

Matthew 28:16-20, ¹⁶ *Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them.* ¹⁷ *When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted.* ¹⁸ *And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.'* ¹⁹ *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,* ²⁰ *teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.' Amen."*

The disciples had already seen Jesus three times since His resurrection. They traveled a hundred miles to Galilee to meet Him. When they saw Him they worshiped Him - but some doubted. This should serve as a powerful warning to us to be on guard against the enemies of our minds that would argue against the resurrection of Christ. They had seen, yet they still doubted. I believe that our churches today are filled with “doubtful worshipers”. We need to drive the unbelief out of our temples and worship Him through the full persuasion that He is alive!

ALL AUTHORITY

In the King James Version of the Bible, the word “power” is used instead of “authority”. The Greek word for authority is “*exousia*.” It means the right to rule. This is different from the word “*dunamis*” which means power (we get the English word dynamite from *dunamis*). Power or *dunamis* is the ability to rule. Authority or *exousia* is the right to rule. Just because you have ability does not give you the right.

Jesus declared on the day of the ascension that all authority in heaven and earth had been given to Him by God. The Apostle Paul records it this way in Philippians 2:5-11,

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.⁹ Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,¹¹ and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

God has exalted Jesus. He has given Him Lordship over all. Every knee must bend to His Lordship, and sooner or later, all will! Now let me point out something in verses five and six that often seem controversial. “*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God,*

did not consider it robbery to be equal with God [...]” The Jews accused Jesus of making Himself equal with God by saying that He was the Son of God. In John 5:18 we read, *“Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.”* Are we not the sons and daughters of God? Do call God our Father when we pray? Wouldn’t we also be accused by the religious of making ourselves equal with God? We are in the family of God and our mindset should reflect this. Jesus humbled Himself and became a servant - so must we. He became obedient unto death and so must we. But we must get the right mind about us to understand the authority given to us in the “Great Commission”.

The disciples still had doubts even to worship Him. To overcome our doubts, we must understand His authority, and the transfer of that authority to us, in order to fulfill the commission that He has given to us. We have been authorized and commissioned by The King of Kings and the Lord of Lords to do a task! Let’s get the doubts out of our minds and get to work.

MAKE DISCIPLES

After Jesus drove the message of authority home to His disciples, He then gave them the details of the work that He has for them and for us. There are four things that I want to point out about our work in making disciples.

ALL NATIONS

God wants us to go to all of the nations of the earth. From the original call of Abraham He has made His intention known that He wants all the nations to come to Him.

Genesis 12:1-3, ¹ *Now the LORD had said to Abram: ‘Get out of your country, From your family And from your father’s house, To a land that I will show you. ² I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’*

God wanted every family in the earth to be blessed through Abraham.

From the call of Abram to the Ascension of Christ, God has made it clear that He wants all men to have the opportunity to come to Him. In Acts 1:8, *“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”* This message is to go out to the end of the earth. We must work to reach out to other nations or we have no need of the power of the Holy Spirit. We will discuss this further in the chapter on His final appearing.

BAPTIZING

I won't belabor this point, I will only remind you. This baptizing is more than the formula of words we say as we dunk someone under water in symbolic baptism. This is the actual baptisms into His Word (repentance), His death, His name, His Spirit, His body, His sufferings (fire). We must fully immerse our disciples into the Godhead.

OBEDIENCE

We must teach those that we disciple obedience to all of the commandments of Jesus. In particular, the commandment to apply the things we learn from Him in loving relationships with one another. Many today have perverted grace by saying that acts of obedience are “works”. They go on to say that we are saved by grace and have no need to “do” anything. This is contrary to the Great Commission and we should reject this type of doctrine, never allowing it into our spirit. We are commanded to be obedient to the faith. The Book of Romans begins and ends with the exhortation to obedience. In Romans 1:5 Paul begins the book by saying, *“Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name. . .”* Then in Romans 16:17-19 he ends the book with these words,

“¹⁷ Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. ¹⁸ For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by

smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.¹⁹ For your obedience has become known to all. Therefore I am glad on your behalf; but I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil.”

You would have to think that a book that starts with obedience, and ends with obedience, would contain obedience in its substance — and it does. We must teach those we disciple to obey Jesus.

I AM WITH YOU

The final point in the Great Commission is that we are promised His presence until the end of the age. The promise of Jesus being present with us is fulfilled in the Holy Spirit. We spoke much of this during the chapter on “The Person of the Holy Spirit”. However, there are many today who teach that the power of the Holy Spirit is not for today. They claim that it ended with the age of the apostles. Did the Great Commission expire with the death of the apostle John (the last apostle to go)? Was Jesus saying that He was only with us during the “age” of His twelve apostles? NO! Even those who teach that the power of the Holy Spirit is not for today, and that there are no longer any apostles, still try to reach the world for Jesus. We will never reach the world without His power that comes with His presence. This kind of false teaching reduces the gospel to words without power. The Scripture says that the kingdom of God is not in words but in power.

They worshiped Him but some doubted. The Great Commission should remove all doubt that He is alive again from the dead and we are now authorized to go in His Name and reach the world for Him. Go in complete confidence that He is with you.

HE WAS SEEN BY JAMES

The Apostle Paul records that Jesus appeared to the Apostle James (the brother of the Lord) in I Corinthians 15:7, “*After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles.*” We have no record of what was said, but we do know that this meeting must have had profound effects on James and the others. James would eventually become the leader of the church

in Jerusalem. He carried great authority among the other apostles. James at one time opposed Jesus' ministry, but after the resurrection he was fully convinced to be His follower. He was the author of the Book of James. He later was killed during the siege and overthrow of Jerusalem. No doubt his private interview with His brother (Jesus) led to His powerful devotion to Christ, and his extraordinary leadership of the church.

SPECIFICS OF THE COMMISSION

After Jesus' private interview with James, He then appeared for a fifth time to the eleven. Keep in mind that Luke wrote both the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts. Luke is the one who records this meeting. Luke ended his Gospel and began the Book of Acts with the account of the fifth appearance of Jesus to His disciples.

Luke 24:44-49, ⁴⁴ *Then He said to them, 'These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.'* ⁴⁵ *And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.* ⁴⁶ *Then He said to them, 'Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day,* ⁴⁷ *and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.* ⁴⁸ *And you are witnesses of these things.* ⁴⁹ *Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."*

Acts I:4-8, ⁴ *And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, 'which,' He said, 'you have heard from Me; ⁵ for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.'* ⁶ *Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, 'Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?'* ⁷ *And He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. ⁸ But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

REPENTANCE AND REMISSION

In the Great Commission Jesus told His disciples to go to the nations and make more disciples that obey Him. During this appearance He gave very specific instructions about what they should emphasize in their discipleship. Repentance and remission of sins were to be the foundations of discipleship. Today's contemporary preachers have all but omitted the teaching of repentance from the message. They throw a huge blanket of remission of sins over everyone with no requirements of repentance. Without repentance there will be no remission of sins!

WAIT FOR THE PROMISE

The other point that Jesus made at this appearance, was to wait in Jerusalem until they are baptized with the Holy Spirit and become empowered to be effective witnesses. Once again I will not belabor a teaching that we covered thoroughly in the "Baptism of the Holy Spirit". However, I will point out that the Apostles turned their world upside down after they were filled with Holy Spirit. Without the power of the Holy Spirit there is no way that we can fulfill the Great Commission in our generation.

THE ASCENSION INTO HEAVEN

Luke ended his Gospel and started the Book of Acts by recording the ascension of Jesus into heaven.

Luke 24:50-53, ⁶⁰ And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. ⁵¹ Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven. ⁵² And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, ⁵³ and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen."

Acts 1:9-12, ⁹ Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, ¹¹ who also said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from

*you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.’
Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near
Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey.”*

Jesus appeared to His disciples with many infallible proofs and taught them many things about the Kingdom of God. As He ended His instructions He was miraculously taken up into heaven. Then God sent two angels to seal His final instructions with one last exhortation, *“This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”* Jesus was taken up into heaven and in like manner He is coming back for us. We should take heed and be ready so that we are found doing all that He instructed us to do before His departure.

CHAPTER 36:

THE ORDER OF THE RESURRECTION

PART IV: THE FIRSTFRUITS

In this lesson we will discuss the resurrection of the firstfruits. I Corinthians 15:20-23,

²⁰ But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. ²³ But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming."

According to verse twenty three, the order of the resurrection is Christ, the firstfruits, and finally those who are Christ's when He returns. If you remember, we separated Christ from the firstfruits in chapter 35 in order to study the resurrection of Christ alone. However, when Christ rose from the dead, the firstfruits or those who had "fallen asleep", resurrected with Him. The Greek word for firstfruits is "aparthe" and it means *to begin*. When we apply this word to the resurrection it means *the beginning of the resurrection*.

HE MADE THE EARTH SHAKE

In Matthew's account of the crucifixion of Christ, at the moment of His death we read in Matthew 27:50-54,

⁵⁰ And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. ⁵¹ Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, ⁵² and the graves were opened; and

many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; ⁵³ and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many. ⁵⁴ So when the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they feared greatly, saying, 'Truly this was the Son of God!'"

The earth quaked as the Spirit of its Creator entered into its core. All who had ever died were being held captive in the center of the earth. The sinless blood of the Son of God had been poured out on the earth, satisfying God's Holy wrath against sin. Now those who had been imprisoned for so long were about to hear the sermon of all sermons. Some would be eternally joyful, the rest would be eternally tormented.

GRAVES OPENED...BODIES RESURRECTED

Remember what Matthew said at the crucifixion, *"and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; ⁵³ and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many."* Can you imagine the stir caused around Jerusalem? Not only were His disciples sharing stories of seeing Jesus alive, but now they were talking about Adam, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Samuel, David, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. Matthew's Gospel is the only gospel to tell of the resurrection of the saints who had fallen asleep. However, this is only the beginning of the hints that Scripture gives us concerning the events that occurred immediately after the death of Jesus.

PARADISE

The next lead the Bible gives us to understand the resurrection of the firstfruits comes from a promise that Jesus made to one of the thieves being crucified with Him.

In Luke's Gospel 23:39-43 we read,

³⁹ Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, 'If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.' ⁴⁰ But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, 'Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the

same condemnation?’⁴¹ And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.’⁴² Then he said to Jesus, ‘Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.’⁴³ And Jesus said to him, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.’”

Jesus promised the thief that “today you will be with Me in Paradise.” On the very day that Jesus died He went to a place that He refers to as “Paradise”. The word “Paradise” is an oriental word that refers to a garden of food or ornaments. In the Old Testament, the Septuagint uses this word in reference to the Garden of Eden. The New Testament uses the word Paradise on two more occasions, but both of them seem to make reference to heaven. We know that on the day that Jesus died He descended before He ascended (we’ll talk more about that later). But for now let’s continue to trace His steps into the inner parts of the earth.

ABRAHAM’S BOSOM

Jesus refers to Paradise by another name when He told the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, found in Luke 16:19-31,

¹⁹ There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. ²⁰ But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, ²¹ desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. ²² So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³ And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. ²⁴ Then he cried and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.’ ²⁵ But Abraham said, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. ²⁶ And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.’ ²⁷ Then he said, ‘I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father’s house, ²⁸ for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them,

lest they also come to this place of torment.’²⁹ Abraham said to him, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.’³⁰ And he said, ‘No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’³¹ But he said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.’”

ANALOGY OF AN ICE CREAM CONE

Lazarus was carried to Abraham’s Bosom, while the rich man went to Hades. There are numerous words in the Bible that make reference to the grave or the place of the dead. When I put all of these words together I like to picture it like an ice cream cone. Paradise is the scoop of ice cream on the top. It’s not heaven, but it’s not hell either. It was here that those who died in faith awaiting the coming of Messiah were kept, being comforted at the bosom of Abraham.

In II Peter 2:4 and 9 we find the little phrase “reserved for judgment”. If we keep this in mind it will help us to get a better understanding of the underworld. There are temporary judgments, and there are eternal judgments. The underworld is a temporary holding place until they either received eternal reward or punishment. We will speak more of this during our study of “Eternal Judgment”.

If we will picture the rest of the underworld like the cone under the ice cream, we would see that it starts wide then tapers down as it goes deeper. The widest part of the cone would be called “*sheol*” in Hebrew, or “*hades*” in Greek. It was the general place of the dead or the grave. These souls are damned for eternity with no way of being pardoned. They await eternal judgment and sentencing.

As the cone goes deeper and tapers further, we find the place called in the Greek language “*Geenna*”. It is here where we begin to see the use of the term “hell-fire”.

Finally, the cone tapers down to its lowest point called in the Greek, “*Tartaros*”. It is the deepest part of the abyss of hell. It is also mentioned in II Peter 2:4 as the holding place of chains of darkness for the angels that sinned as they await eternal judgment.

I might finish this analogy with two thoughts. First, Paradise is now empty. Second, Paradise was the only sweet part of the ice cream cone.

Paradise is empty now. The saints who once only knew the comforts of Abraham, are now comforted by Christ Himself. Those who were not in the firstfruits resurrection await the fury of God's eternal wrath!

PREACHING TO THE SPIRITS IN PRISON

Paul tells us in the Book of Ephesians 4:8-10,

⁴⁸ Therefore He says: 'When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men.' ⁹ (Now this, 'He ascended'—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰ He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)"

When Jesus descended into the lower parts of the earth it was for the purpose of preaching to "all" that were in the grave. We find this in I Peter 3:18-22,

⁴⁸ For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, ¹⁹ by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, ²⁰ who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. ²¹ There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him."

During the three days that Jesus was in the grave He preached to the spirits in prison. According to I Peter, He even preached to those who were disobedient, especially referring to those during Noah's flood. Now don't begin thinking that this was to give them another chance,

because it wasn't. He was sealing their fate. The Holy Spirit of Christ entered the holding chamber of those disobedient souls, and made the declaration that Jesus was the Christ they had rejected.

THE KEYS OF HELL AND DEATH

Another insight to the three days that Jesus was in the grave is found in Revelation 1:18, *"I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death."*

When John saw Jesus on the Isle of Patmos, He made specific reference to the fact that He now possessed the keys of Hades and Death. Sometime during His stay in the grave, Jesus snatched those keys out of the hand of the Devil and now He is Lord over the grave!

HE LED CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE

If we could revisit Ephesians 4:8-10, there are two more points that we should make about that passage,

"⁸ Therefore He says: 'When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men.' ⁹ (Now this, 'He ascended'—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰ He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)"

A SECOND EARTHQUAKE

The first point is that when He descended in the earth's core He caused an earthquake. When He exited it caused another one because of the power of the "firstborn from the dead."

On the third day Jesus rose from the dead. We covered this fully in chapters 34 and 35, so we already know about this. But let's begin at dawn on the Sunday of the resurrection. In Matthew 28:1-8 we read,

Matthew 28:1-8, "¹ Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. ² And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended

from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. ³ His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. ⁴ And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men. ⁵ But the angel answered and said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. ⁷ And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you.’ ⁸ So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word. ⁹ And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, ‘Rejoice!’ So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me.’”

The earth quaked when Jesus entered and it quaked again when He exited. Christ’s sinless blood shook the earth as He entered its core and His resurrection power shook the earth as He exited. The entire underworld had been unsettled as those who had been captive there were released. The keys of hell and death were now firmly in the grip of Jesus’ nail scarred hand. Those who were once held captive in hell were now captive to Him who had the victory over the grave. The underworld shook as this, once inescapable, prison was plundered by the One Who paid the ransom for those who lived and died in faith, believing that Messiah would come. “O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (I Corinthians 15:55-57).

FIRSTBORN FROM THE DEAD

Heaven dispatched an angel who came and rolled away the stone that guarded the mouth of the now empty tomb. Not only did the earth quake, but so did the soldiers at the presence of the angel of the Lord. The angel showed no interest in the quaking guards, his only intent was to deliver the message that heaven dispatched him to bring, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.” Just as the angels

heralded His birth into the world, they were now heralding His birth from the dead!

The Apostle Paul said it this way in the Book of Colossians I:15-18,

“¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷ And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. ¹⁸ And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.”

Not only was Jesus the firstborn of all creation, but now He has become the firstborn from the dead. I hope you notice that the church is included as part of the firstborn from the dead!

HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN

The second point from Ephesians 4:8-10, is that He gave gifts to men. Perhaps this was yet another cause for the second great earthquake, because when He led captivity captive He gave gifts to men. Jesus redistributed all of the gifts of those Old Testament ministers to those who would minister to Him on this side of the cross. All of the powers of hell still tremble at the thought of those gifts in the hands of men alive today. At Pentecost, when the tongues of fire appeared on the heads of those filled with the Holy Spirit, He truly made His ministers a flame of fire!

WHAT HAPPENS NOW WHEN THE SAINTS DIE?

Jesus emptied Paradise on the day of His resurrection and it remains empty until this day. Or perhaps hell has enlarged itself to accommodate the multitudes of sinners who still reject Christ. Whatever the case, Paradise is no longer where the saints go when they die.

II Corinthians 5:6-8, *“⁶ So we are always confident, knowing that*

while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. ⁷ For we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸ We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.”

We know from this passage that to be absent from our bodies is to be present with the Lord.

Philippians 1:21-23 says it this way,

²¹ For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ²² But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. ²³ For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.”

Paul called it “gain” to die, because when Christians die they go to be with Christ.

THE RAPTURE?

I don’t believe in the idea of “the rapture” for a couple of reasons. First, it’s not Scriptural. “Rapture” is a Latin word that means “caught up”. The Bible does not use this word, so neither do I. Using this term only causes confusion about the resurrection. The second reason that I reject the rapture is most of the verses that people use when talking about the rapture are verses that actually point to the resurrection of those who belong to Jesus at His coming.

Remember the resurrection is for the physical body. Perhaps, if there is such a thing as a rapture, it would be when a saint dies and his or her spirit is immediately “caught up” to be with Jesus. However, their physical body will remain here until the resurrection at the return of Christ.

A THIRD EARTHQUAKE

God warns us of another earthquake to come in correlation with the firstborn.

Hebrews 12:22-29, *²² But you have come to Mount Zion and to the*

city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels,²³ to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect,²⁴ to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.²⁵ See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven,²⁶ whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, 'Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.'²⁷ Now this, 'Yet once more,' indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.²⁸ Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.²⁹ For our God is a consuming fire."

There is an earthquake yet to come that will shake heaven and earth. We, the church of the firstborn from the dead, must calm our fears as we await the shaking of all shakings. The earth quaked at the death of Jesus and again at His resurrection. Heaven *and* earth will shake when Jesus comes back again!

CHAPTER 37:

THE ORDER OF THE RESURRECTION

PART V: THOSE WHO ARE HIS AT HIS COMING

In the early days of my Christian walk I was thoroughly confused as I read conflicting views concerning the resurrection. A good deal of that confusion was caused by use of the word “rapture”, which I voiced my disagreement with in chapter 36. Much of the confusion caused by the term “rapture” comes from trying to force this non-Biblical event into, or in addition to, the resurrection. Once I removed that thought much of the confusion was removed. Since then, I have had many wonderful revelations and many instructors, who have given me insight to my understanding of the resurrection. This is my attempt to communicate what the Lord has shown me.

First, let’s refresh our memories concerning our text by re-reading

I Corinthians 15:20-23, “²⁰ But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. ²³ But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming.”

We have covered the resurrection of Christ and the firstfruits, this lesson will focus on those who are Christ’s at His coming.

THE MYSTERY OF THE RESURRECTION

In our chapters concerning the resurrection we have studied most of I Corinthians 15. As I said before, this chapter gives us more insight to the resurrection than any other in the Bible. The last portion of this chapter will be the focal point to understand the resurrection of the “dead in Christ”.

In I Corinthians 15:50-58 we read,

“⁵⁰ Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. ⁵¹ Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’ ⁵⁵ ‘O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?’ ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

In this passage the Apostle Paul unravels the mystery surrounding the resurrection. There is a generation of believers that will be alive when Jesus returns for His church. This is the generation of believers that will not sleep or die. I want to point out here that this is not Jesus’ second coming to the earth. He will only come as far as the clouds and from there He will call the church up to Himself.

WE SHALL ALL BE CHANGED

That generation will not experience death but they will experience the change from a mortal body to an immortal body. Flesh and blood cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. The change from the mortal body as we know it seems to be necessary in order to receive our eternal

rewards. The change will be sudden “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye”. Something will quickly happen to our “flesh and blood” as we put on immortality. As this sudden change occurs death will be swallowed up in victory!

THE DEAD WILL BE RAISED

This passage tells us that the last trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised incorruptible. Then those who are alive will be changed. Remember that the firstfruits have already bodily raised from the dead when Christ resurrected. The people that Paul is referring to are those who have died “in Christ” since the ascension of Christ and the firstfruits. I Thessalonians 4 discusses this further and gives us more insight to the resurrection of those at His coming.

DO NOT BE IGNORANT

I Thessalonians 4:13-17, ^{14,15} *But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. ¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.*

It seems that we are always most ignorant about the things that the Bible tells us not to be ignorant of. There is so much ignorance surrounding the resurrection that the Apostle warns us specifically not to be ignorant about it. It is vital for Christians to understand the resurrection, especially as we grieve for those who have “fallen asleep” in Christ.

Look at verse 14 again, “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.” If we believe that Jesus

died and rose again, we need to be equally sure that He is coming back for us!

THE DEAD IN CHRIST WILL RISE FIRST

Remember, we already discussed in I Corinthians 15:50-58 that we shall not all sleep but we all will be changed. The mysterious changing of those who are alive when Jesus returns will not precede the resurrection of those who are asleep in Christ. The resurrection is an orderly event. Just as the order of the resurrection is Christ, the Firstfruits, then those who are His at His coming. There is an order inside of the order. The dead in Christ will rise first, and then the living will be changed and caught up together with them to meet the Lord “in the air”. Notice that Jesus never steps foot on earth at this time; instead, we ascend up.

IN THE CLOUDS

The angels said in Acts 1:11,

Acts 1:9-11, “⁹ Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, ¹¹ who also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.’”

Revelation 1:7, “⁷ Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. ⁸ ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,’ says the Lord, ‘who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.’”

Jesus was taken to heaven in a cloud and He will return for us in the clouds, then we will be caught up to meet Jesus in the air or in the clouds. Jesus will not step foot on the earth until the millennial reign which we will discuss in “Eternal Judgment”.

PRE; MID; OR POST?

When will all of this happen? I am not trying to determine the exact date but I do believe we can know the order of events leading to this resurrection. The resurrection of the dead will mark the end of the Church Age as we know it. The Day will come when the resurrection of the righteous will occur and the Church Age will end. Then, the Great Tribulation spoken of in Revelation 7:14, will bring a time of persecution like the world has never seen. At the center of this persecution will be the nation of Israel. One of the great controversies among Bible students is whether the resurrection (they say rapture) occur before, during, or after this Great Tribulation. I say that it will occur during the entire tribulation period. Allow me to explain my position.

THE 70 WEEKS OF DANIEL

If we are to sort this out the first step will be to understand the “Great Tribulation”. The “Great Tribulation” (Revelation 7:14) is a seven year period that was spoken of by the Prophet Daniel. Another term for this would be the “70th week of Daniel” which we read about in Daniel 9:24-27,

“²⁴ Seventy weeks are determined For your people and for your holy city, To finish the transgression, To make an end of sins, To make reconciliation for iniquity, To bring in everlasting righteousness, To seal up vision and prophecy, And to anoint the Most Holy. ²⁵ Know therefore and understand, That from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; The street shall be built again, and the wall, Even in troublesome times. ²⁶ And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; And the people of the prince who is to come Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, And till the end of the war desolations are determined. ²⁷ Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate.”

The seventy weeks of Daniel is veiled in prophetic language. These seventy weeks actually stand for four hundred and ninety years. Each week represents seven years. Sixty nine of those weeks or four hundred and eighty three years have already been fulfilled. Seven weeks or forty nine years, represent the rebuilding of Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity. Sixty two weeks or four hundred and thirty four years mark the period between the Old and New Testaments where we have four hundred years of Biblical silence. This time extends right through the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Only one week remains to be fulfilled — this is the seven years of the Great Tribulation.

THE GREAT TRIBULATION

So when does the 70th Week of Daniel or the Great Tribulation take place? Since Daniel's prophecy only pertains to Israel, it is important not to confuse this with the Church Age. The Jews rejected Jesus and crucified Him. After He rose from the dead He sent the Holy Spirit and the Church Age began. Now Jew and Gentile alike have enjoyed God's mercy through the "New Covenant" for over 2000 years. But one day that will end with the resurrection of those who are His at His coming. Then all of the things pertaining to Israel and Daniel's 70th week can be fulfilled. First let's look at the end of the Church Age.

THE CHURCH AGE

The Church Age began on the Day of Pentecost and continues to this present time. The resurrection of those who belong to Jesus at His coming will end the Church Age as we know it.

SEVEN LETTERS TO THE CHURCHES

The Book of Revelation is a record of Jesus' appearance to the Apostle John (the last of the original twelve). John was exiled to the Isle of Patmos because of his faith. In the Book of Revelation chapters one through three, Jesus appears to John and tells him to write seven letters for the seven churches in Asia. I would encourage you to stop right now and read all three chapters.

Revelation I:9-II, ⁹ *I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.* ¹⁰ *I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, ¹¹ saying, 'I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last,' and, 'What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.'*"

These letters were written giving specific instructions to the seven churches of Asia. It is interesting to note that five out of the seven were commanded to repent or they would suffer judgment. Only Smyrna and Philadelphia were commended for their complete devotion to Jesus.

I believe that these letters have a dual meaning. They certainly were written to seven literal churches in Asia. But, I also believe that those churches represent seven church ages. Another way to say this is that each church of Asia corresponds to a specific period during the last 2000 years of the Church Age. The contents of the letters are found in Revelation chapters 2-3. Following is a summary of how each church of Asia correlates to a certain time of history.

SEVEN PERIODS WITHIN THE CHURCH AGE

EPHESUS

The Church of Ephesus represents the Apostolic Age. This period was from 33 A.D.-100 A.D. The revelation of Jesus to this age was the seven stars or ministers and the seven lampstands or churches. This apostolic age lasted during the lives of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. The church of Ephesus was rebuked for leaving their first love and commanded to repent or lose their lampstand (foundation of light).

SMYRNA

The Church of Smyrna (bitterness) represents the Persecution Age. This period overlapped with the Apostolic Age from about 50 A.D.

and lasted until 317 A.D. The revelation to this age was that Jesus was the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life. This revelation encouraged them to endure trials during unthinkable sufferings, as the threat of death loomed continually over their heads. The faithfulness of the church during this intense period of persecution and martyrdom was encouraged by Jesus to overcome by remembering the resurrection — they would live forever.

PERGAMOS

The Church of Pergamos represents the Imperial Age (Age of the Emperors). This age spanned in time from 313 A.D. through 450 A.D. The revelation to this church was that Jesus had the two-edged sword (authority). This revelation would sustain the true church as The Roman Emperor Constantine built a false church structure. Constantine's error was supported through the false doctrines of Augustine, especially the doctrine of the two swords. Augustine believed that the church had a sword of authority and the Roman government had a sword of authority. He taught that the sword of Rome was to force people into water baptism or they would be put to death. Constantine's reforms of the church's theology and structure are among the most perverse things ever to happen to Christianity. These reforms affect Catholic and Protestant alike to this day. I believe the doctrines and structures formed during this period should be avoided at all cost to any sincere seeker of Christ today.

THYATIRA

The Church of Thyatira represents the Papal Age (age of the Popes). This age overlaps with the Imperial Age beginning with Constantine in 313 A.D. extending all the way until 1517. The revelation to this age was the flaming eyes of Jesus and His fiery brass feet (judgment). The spirit of Jezebel (control) manifested through the Roman priest's control over everything. Jezebel's fornication was not only sexual but spiritual. The people were promised heaven as long as they feared the priests. This was a perverted twist from the covenant of loving relationships that the early church enjoyed. This period is also known

as the Dark Ages because of the evil of the Popes. This was the age of the inquisitions where under the Roman Church people were tortured in unthinkable ways. Also, the Roman clergy sold spiritual favors. These favors were known as “indulgences” in which the priests would pardon you at a price. This is how the Roman Church amassed its fortunes.

SARDIS

The Church of Sardis was the Reformation Age. It began in 1517 A.D. and continued through 1750 A.D. The specific revelation to this age was the seven Spirits of God (Revelation 4:5 & 5:6) and the seven stars (ministers). This revelation would be necessary to undo the 1200 years of perversion imposed by the Roman Church and its clergy. This age began when Martin Luther nailed a list of ninety five issues that he wished to debate with the church leaders to the door of the Wittenberg Chapel. This document became known as the 95 theses and it started a war. Luther himself was an Augustinian monk and although he questioned the Roman clergy it is not clear that he ever actually changed. But men did begin to publicly question the heresies of Rome and a true reformation of theology began. However, it was marred by John Calvin who became the main theologian for the reformation. He, much like Augustine, was guilty of putting “heretics” to death while doing much to pervert the doctrine of grace. Augustine and Calvin are the main theologians of the churches to this day and both were guilty of putting people to death in the name of Christianity. I refuse to follow either of them and would encourage all who read this not to be the “sons of those who murdered the prophets” (Matthew 23:31).

PHILADELPHIA

The Church of Philadelphia represents the Missionary Age. It began early in the 1700’s and extended through 2000. The revelation highlighting the Missionary Age was “*He who has the key of David or the opening of the Door.*” The Moravian Brethren and the revivals of John Wesley and George Whitfield began the missionary movement. The Church Age began with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day

of Pentecost, fulfilling the promise of Jesus in Acts 1:8, “*But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*” The Holy Spirit was given to empower us to be effective witnesses all over the world. The Missionary Age was marked by obedience to the command to “Go Ye Therefore and Teach All Nations...” It is no wonder that they were not told to repent...they didn’t need to.

LAODICEA

The Church of Laodicea represents the Lethargic Age. It began January 1, 2001 and we are in it! The specific revelation to our age is The Beginning of the Creation of God. We must get back to the foundations laid at the beginning of the church age or we will be consumed with the nauseating lukewarm spirit of this age. The next event to be fulfilled is the resurrection of those who belong to Christ at His coming.

AFTER THESE THINGS

Revelation 4:1-2, *“After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, ‘Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.’”*² *Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.”*

Revelation 4:1 begins with the statement, “*After these things*” — after what things? After the completion of the seven periods of the Church Age. At the close of the Church Age John saw an open door in heaven.

COME UP HERE

“*Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.*” The voice like a trumpet was calling John up to heaven. I believe that this marks the end of the Church Age and the beginning of the resurrection. Remember that I Corinthians 15, and I Thessalonians 4, both told us of the trumpet sounding and the voice of the archangel when the

resurrection begins. I believe that this is the voice like a trumpet commanding John “Come Up Here!”

Notice that I said the “beginning of the resurrection”. I know that the resurrection of those who belong to Christ at His coming takes place in the “twinkling of an eye”. But I believe that the door remains open and the resurrection continues for at least seven years. This period is known as the “first resurrection” (we will study this in Eternal Judgment). It begins with those who belong to Christ when He comes and continues through the “Great Tribulation.”

After the resurrection of the church, all of the promises of God contained in the Old and New Testaments are still in effect. Make no mistake, the Church Age as we know it is over. But the Word of God will continue and many conversions to Christ and resurrections from the dead take place through the “Great Tribulation”. Many will turn to the Lord and suffer great persecution and death as the promises concerning Israel and Jerusalem are fulfilled.

RESURRECTION OF THE 144000

Revelation 6 tells of the opening of six of the seals, on the scroll of Revelation 5. These six seals seem to be part of the “Great Tribulation”. In chapter 7 of Revelation, 144000 Jews are sealed. I believe this number is not numbering individuals, but it is a prophetic number of complete Divine Government or Apostolic fullness.

Revelation 7:13-17, ¹⁴ *Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, ‘Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?’* ¹⁴ *And I said to him, ‘Sir, you know.’ So he said to me, ‘These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.* ¹⁵ *Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them.* ¹⁶ *They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat;* ¹⁷ *for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”*

Suddenly this multitude of “sealed” Jews who come out of the Great Tribulation are found in heaven. How did they get there? This is part of the continuing resurrection.

RESURRECTION OF THE TWO WITNESSES

Breaking the seventh seal on the scroll is preceded by sounding of seven trumpets; with each blast the tribulation is intensified. These trumpets are sounding from Revelation chapter 8-10. In chapter 11 we read of two witnesses who are despised in the earth for prophesying. They are killed then resurrected from the dead after three and a half days. In Revelation 11:11-12 we read of this,

“⁴¹ Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. ¹² And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, ‘Come up here.’ And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them.”

I believe these “two witnesses” are not two individuals but two gifts — the Apostolic and the Prophetic. In those days people will despise those voices and kill them, but God will raise them to heaven. Notice the call to them, “Come up here.” Once again I submit this to you as part of the continuing resurrection.

CLOSING

If you try to choose any one of these resurrection events, you have to plant your feet in one of the pre, mid, or post doctrines. I believe all three because the door of the first resurrection remains open until the Second Coming of Christ to the earth.

CHAPTER 38:

ETERNAL JUDGMENT

TWO RESURRECTIONS

We have finally arrived at the sixth and final doctrine of Christ, Eternal Judgment. Let's refresh by reading Hebrews 6:1-3 again,

“¹ Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, ² of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. ³ And this we will do if God permits.”

All of the first five doctrines of Christ are lessons that prepare us for eternity. We could even say that eternity begins in us while we are here on earth. First God lays the foundations of repentance and faith in our lives. Then He builds our lives through the baptisms into His Word (repentance), His Death, His Spirit, His Name (identity), His Body (the church), and His Sufferings (fire). He continually immerses us into Himself until we are filled with Him. As we mature He then has us give to others the things that He has given to us (laying on of hands).

God does all of this powerful work of eternity while we are still on this earth in a temporary body. We walk in this world as strangers and pilgrims looking earnestly for that day when we can go to be with Him. Finally, we are resurrected from the dead (or changed while we are alive) to receive our eternal rewards.

But some are going to get the shock of their lives. They have claimed

to be Christian, they have been baptized (with water) and faithfully attend church but Christ will tell them,

“²¹ Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. ²² Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ ²³ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”

There is a day of judgment! There are consequences for our actions! There is a day when all mercy will end and The Righteous Judge judges us with righteous judgment! The resurrection of our bodies will either be the happiest or the saddest day of our lives. We will either enjoy our eternal rewards with Jesus, or begin the eternal torment of the lake of fire. Now I want to examine another passage of Scripture that will help us to transition from the resurrection of the dead and begin our discussion of eternal judgment.

RESURRECTION OF LIFE AND CONDEMNATION

John 5:19-29, *“¹⁹ Then Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. ²⁰ For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel. ²¹ For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will. ²² For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, ²³ that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. ²⁴ Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. ²⁵ Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. ²⁶ For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, ²⁷ and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. ²⁸ Do not marvel at*

this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice²⁹ and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”

ALL JUDGMENT COMMITTED TO JESUS

First let’s look at verses 21-22, “For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will. For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son,” The resurrection from the dead and eternal judgment are tied together. We are changed at the resurrection from the dead to receive a body that will endure eternal judgment, whether good or bad.

THE CROSS IS NOW THE SCALE OF JUSTICE

How did God commit all judgment to Jesus? Let’s read a very familiar passage of Scripture in the context of eternal judgment. In John 3:16-21 we read,

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

This passage of Scripture is probably the most quoted and least understood in the entire Bible — let’s sort it out. God did not send Jesus into the world to condemn the world but to save the world. Notice verse 18, “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” The world has already been condemned by God! This whole world has already been judged and found guilty by God, The Almighty

Judge! This world is under a death penalty and now awaits the eternal sentencing. For the last two thousand years the condemnation of God's death sentence looms over the head of every soul that has committed sin in this world. But God, in His mercy, sent His Son to pay the ransom for the souls of all mankind. Now the judgment of God is the cross of Christ! The cross, like the scales of justice, pivots at the heart of Jesus. All of mankind will be weighed in this balance. *All judgment has been given to Gods' son.*

THIS IS THE CONDEMNATION

John 3:19-21, goes on to define the judgment or condemnation of God,

"19 And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. 21 But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."

Men would rather not have anyone see their evil deeds so they hate the light. The "light" is not only the message of Jesus, but the accountability of others seeing what they are doing. Remember, Jesus said that He is the Light of the world, but He also says that we are the light of the world. This is why people would rather have a religion than a relationship. This is why congregational worship is more appealing than the apostolic structure of house churches. It is very clear that simply saying you believe in Jesus is not salvation. If condemnation hates the light, then salvation loves, and lives in the light, because you no longer practice evil deeds.

PASSING FROM DEATH TO LIFE

John 3:16-21, and John 5:2-27, are practically saying the same thing. In chapter five we learn that hearing the Word of Jesus and believing gives us eternal life that shields us from judgment. We pass from death (judgment) to life (justified). Now is the hour when the dead hear the

Words of Jesus and live. Just as God has life in Himself, so does Jesus. Now we have life in us by the Word of God. The Word of God is alive, and it causes the dead to live now, and in the life to come. This is why I firmly believe that we will cooperate with the resurrection from the dead.

TWO RESURRECTIONS

I want to direct your attention to verses 28-29,

“²⁸ Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice ²⁹ and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”

There is a resurrection of life and a resurrection of condemnation. Some are going to rise from the dead and live with Christ forever. Others are going to rise from the dead and be sent to eternal torment in the lake of fire. We will sort most of this out in the next chapter, “The Judgment Seat of Christ”, but for now I will say that part of the judgment that is given to Jesus is for separation.

ETERNAL VERSES TEMPORAL

We will not properly understand eternal judgment until we separate it from temporary judgment. Many errors come from mixing the two together. Let me show you an example of an error because eternal judgment and temporal judgment are not understood. If a Christian is driving their car over the speed limit and they get in a wreck and are killed, will this person go to heaven or hell? The wreck and the death of that person is the judgment. Their life was cut short due to disobedience but this doesn't necessarily cost them their soul. The Apostle John reinforces this thought in I John 5:16, *“If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that.”*

Another thought that supports this is found in I Corinthians 5:1-5,

¹ It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—that a man has his father’s wife! ² And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you. ³ For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. ⁴ In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁵ deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”

The Apostle Paul’s judgment on this sin was that the whole church would deliver the sinner over to Satan to kill him (temporal judgment), that his soul might be spared (eternal judgment). The man who committed this deed was so broken by this that he repented and cleared himself from the matter (II Corinthians 7:8-16), escaping temporal and eternal judgment.

Now I know that some would like to take this thought even further and try to build a case for “once save always saved”. But this is not what I am saying at all. Remember that in judgment even your motives are on trial, and if your motive is to keep sinning while presuming on God’s mercy, this will be found out in judgment. In presumptuous sin, even something that seems trivial in the natural could be cause for eternal damnation.

RESERVED FOR JUDGMENT

The separation of temporary judgment from eternal judgment is found in II Peter 2:1-9,

¹ But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. ² And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. ³ By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber. ⁴ For if God did not spare the angels who

sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; ⁵ and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; ⁶ and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; ⁷ and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked ⁸ (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)— ⁹ then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment [...]"

I want you to notice in verses 4 and 9 a repetitive phrase “*reserved for judgment.*” In verse four the angels that sinned were cast down to “hell” to be reserved for judgment. You may have heard people say that someone would burn in hell forever. That is not true because hell is a “temporary judgment”. Hell will actually be cast into the lake of fire, which is an eternal judgment. Temporary judgments hold those who are worthy of eternal damnation until they stand before Jesus (the judgment seat of Christ) or God (the Great White Throne of judgment). On the other hand, you may have heard someone say that they will spend eternity in heaven. This also is not true, because heaven and earth as we know it will be destroyed. Then there will be a new heaven and a new earth, and God will live among us (Revelation 21:1-8). This is where the saved will spend eternity.

Remember Abraham’s bosom. Faithful Old Testament saints were held in Paradise, comforted by Abraham, until Christ shed His blood. Then they were led out of Paradise into Heaven to be with Christ. Those who died in unbelief are still bound up in hell waiting for the resurrection of condemnation. Then they will be eternally judged and sent to the lake of fire. We will discuss this more in the chapters on the Judgment Seat of Christ and The Great White Throne of Judgment.

There are two resurrections: the resurrection of the just and the resurrection of the unjust. The resurrection of the just seems to be the most complicated, because so many claim to be Christian but live in

hypocrisy. The Judgment Seat of Christ will be a time of separation and sorting out. This is the subject of our next chapter.

CHAPTER 39:

ETERNAL JUDGMENT

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST,

PART I

The main text for this chapter is found in II Corinthians 5:1-II,

^a For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ² For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, ³ if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. ⁴ For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. ⁵ Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. ⁶ So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. ⁷ For we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸ We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. ⁹ Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. ¹¹ Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.”

GROANING

You will recall that most of our teachings on the resurrection from

the dead were found in I Corinthians 15. The Corinthians were well informed about this teaching, and in Paul's second letter to them he says it in a different way. In verses 1-9, Paul eloquently speaks of our bodies as an "earthly house" or "tent". We should never forget that our bodies on earth are temporary coverings for our immortal spirit and soul. Christians have an internal groaning because of our great desire to be eternally with the Lord. Paul explained this in the Book of Romans 8:18-26,

¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. ¹⁹ For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; ²¹ because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. ²³ Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. ²⁴ For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance. ²⁶ Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

The Holy Spirit is the source of the Christian's groanings. We groan within ourselves waiting for the redemption of our bodies or the resurrection from the dead.

Paul said this another way in the letter to the Ephesians 1:13-14, "In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory." The Holy Spirit is the down payment on our full redemption, which will only be complete when our bodies are raised from the dead. Our spirit and soul enjoy the presence of the Eternal Spirit of God while here on earth. But this eternal bliss is wrapped in a

temporary body. Our immortal souls are imprisoned in a mortal body — so we groan - waiting for mortality to be swallowed up by life. Our walk of faith on earth is daily refreshed with confidence by the Holy Spirit. We are pleased to serve our Lord here in these decaying bodies, but we long to be with Him in immortality. Whether we are serving Jesus on earth, or standing before Him in heaven, the Christian goal is that we always please Him by faith.

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

In verses I0-II we get to the point of our text,

“¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. ¹¹ Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.”

The judgment seat of Christ is where all who call themselves Christian will be judged. The purpose of this judgment is for us to receive punishment or reward for the things that we have done in our mortal bodies whether good or bad. Paul emphasizes the terror of the Lord concerning this judgment. Our generation seems to have lost all fear of the Lord because we presume so much on His mercy. Surely, the Lord is merciful but He is also Holy, and His holiness demands justice. Not everyone that stands before Christ is going to heaven. Many will be found liars and sentenced to eternal torment by Christ Himself.

JUDGMENT BEGINS IN GOD’S HOUSE

The judgment seat of Christ has at least two parts to it. First, we are judged on the earth from the time we call ourselves Christian, to the time we actually stand before Him. Literally standing before Him is the second part of this judgment. The Apostle Peter explains this in I Peter 4:12-19,

“¹² Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; ¹³ but rejoice to the extent

that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. ¹⁴ If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. ¹⁵ But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. ¹⁶ Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. ¹⁷ For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸ Now 'If the righteous one is scarcely saved, Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?' ¹⁹ *Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator."*

The fiery trial of Christian judgment begins the moment that we commit to follow the Lord. He will try us to determine whether we will keep His commandments. This judgment is best described as the judgment seat of Christ, and it begins in this life. It is God's will that Christians would suffer in this life so that we will not be judged in the world to come.

THE BAPTISM OF FIRE

I want us to remember the chapters on Baptisms, in particular the "Baptism of Fire". John the Baptist declared in Matthew 3:11-12, "*I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.*" The Holy Spirit baptizes us in fire! The judgment seat of Christ begins here on earth as the Holy Spirit leads us into test after test throughout our walk on earth. God will be absolutely certain that you love Him, and believe in Him as He tests you in every arena of life.

Consider this in the book of Luke 12:41-50,

⁴¹ Then Peter said to Him, 'Lord, do You speak this parable only to us, or to all people?' ⁴² And the Lord said, 'Who then is that faithful and wise

steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season.⁴³ Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes.⁴⁴ Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has.⁴⁵ But if that servant says in his heart, “My master is delaying his coming,” and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk,⁴⁶ the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.⁴⁷ And that servant who knew his master’s will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.⁴⁸ But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.⁴⁹ I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!⁵⁰ But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!”

When will we be beaten with stripes? Will that happen in the life to come? Or will that happen now? I believe it will happen in this present life and that it is done during our baptism of fire.

THE CHASTENING OF THE LORD

Consider Hebrews 12:1-17,

¹ Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. ⁴ You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. ⁵ And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: ‘My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; ⁶ For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.’ ⁷ If you endure chastening, God deals with

you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? ⁸ But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. ⁹ Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰ For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. ¹¹ Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. ¹² Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, ¹³ and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed. ¹⁴ Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: ¹⁵ looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; ¹⁶ lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. ¹⁷ For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.”

God’s corrects us in this life. His chastening proves His love for us as His children. It is certainly unpleasant to be disciplined by God, but it is far better than the alternative of being rejected and judged in the life to come.

CONVICTION

One more reminder of the teachings concerning the Holy Spirit is found in John I6:7-II,

“⁷ Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. ⁸ And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: ⁹ of sin, because they do not believe in Me; ¹⁰ of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; ¹¹ of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.”

The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, righteousness, and judgment. In order to get conviction, He must first judge us. When we are led by

the Holy Spirit we are relentlessly scrutinized by Him. He does not tolerate disobedience in thought, word, or deed, and will immediately hold us accountable in this life for any transgression. This is part of the Judgment Seat of Christ now.

THE WORD JUDGES US

Another interesting passage that shows us that our judgment begins now through the baptism of fire, is found in John 12:47-50,

“⁴⁷ And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. ⁴⁸ He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. ⁴⁹ For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. ⁵⁰ And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak.”

Jesus says that His Words will judge us in the last day. Without a doubt He is referring to the literal judgment seat of Christ in the last day, but don't His Words judge us even in this present life? In verse 48, He speaks of those who reject Him by rejecting His Words. Many believe that all that is required is to say they believe in Jesus and He will make everything better in the end. Yet they continually refuse to obey His words in this life. This doctrine has permeated today's society. People may think they are getting away with something, but in reality they are postponing the judgments against them until the last day. It is far better to receive our stripes now than at the judgment seat.

OUR MOTIVES ARE ON TRIAL

Hebrews 4:12-13, reinforce the idea of the Word judging us here, *“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give*

account.” The Word of God judges even our motives. And we must give account of how we have handled His Words! I know that when I read His Words I am responsible to obey. I am convicted (judged), and even chastened, if I don’t fulfill the words that He has spoken to me. I would far rather answer now than in the future at the judgment seat when mercy ends!

SELF-JUDGMENT

Another example of the judgment that begins in the house of God is found in I Corinthians II:26-32,

“²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes. ²⁷ Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹ For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. ³⁰ For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. ³¹ For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. ³² But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.”

This passage effectively makes our point. If we judge ourselves now at the communion table, during church, we will escape the future judgment of the world. Notice again, that we experience the chastening of the Lord as He lays stripes on those who would judge themselves with righteous judgment.

There are two thoughts that I want to point out about participating in the communion table of the church in an unworthy manner. First, to eat in an unworthy manner is to do so flippantly or light heartedly. There is no fear of the Lord as we approach the church or the communion table. The second thought is that if we participate while in an active sin we eat unworthily and actually bring sickness and death on ourselves.

APPOINTED TO DIE...THEN JUDGMENT

In the Book of Hebrews 9:27-28 we find another interesting passage that supports this thought of present judgment, *“And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.”* You can read this in a futuristic sense and interpret it concerning the day in the future when you physically die. Or you can consider the following passages that say the Christian dies in the present at the cross:

Romans 6:1-3, ⁴¹ *“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? ² Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? ³ Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?”*

Galatians 2:20, ⁴²⁰ *“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”*

Ephesians 2:4-6, ⁴⁴ *“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus [...]”*

These are just a few passages that point to our present death with Christ. We die now with Christ, and then we begin to be judged by the Holy Spirit, by the Word of God, and by our self examination in the church. I can hear the religious whining that we are not supposed to judge. But these Scriptures make an overwhelming case to the contrary that we must be judged now to avoid being judged later.

I Timothy 5:24, *“Some men’s sins are clearly evident, preceding them to judgment, but those of some men follow later.”* Perhaps now we can better understand what Paul told Timothy in II Timothy 2:19-21,

⁴¹⁹ *“Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: ‘The Lord knows those who are His,’ and, ‘Let everyone who names the name of*

Christ depart from iniquity.’²⁰ But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor.²¹ Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.”

In the next chapter we will examine what happens when your sins are dealt with after your physical death.

CHAPTER 40:

ETERNAL JUDGMENT

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST, PART II

In part one of the Judgment Seat of Christ we learned that this judgment begins at the house of God (us) right now. The Word of God judges us, the Holy Spirit judges us, and we examine ourselves at the communion table of the church. We settled the issue that we would rather be judged now than later. In this chapter we will study our literal appearance before the Judgment Seat of Christ. First, we will arrange in order the events of Scripture that pertain to the Judgment Seat of Christ being established. Then we will explain what will happen at that Judgment.

THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB

You recall that during our studies about the resurrection we talked about the Great Tribulation. We saw that there was a continual resurrection taking place throughout this great event. Chapter 19 of the Book of Revelation tells of two powerful events that will end the Great Tribulation and establish the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Revelation 19:1-10, ¹ *After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, 'Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God!'* ² *For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with*

her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her.’³ Again they said, ‘Alleluia! Her smoke rises up forever and ever!’⁴ And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God who sat on the throne, saying, ‘Amen! Alleluia!’⁵ Then a voice came from the throne, saying, ‘Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!’⁶ And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, ‘Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!’⁷ Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.’⁸ And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.⁹ Then he said to me, ‘Write: “Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!”’ And he said to me, ‘These are the true sayings of God.’¹⁰ And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, ‘See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.’”

After the fall of Babylon (Revelation chapters 17-18) a great multitude in heaven begins to worship God in a powerful way. This multitude are all of the saints who have received their perfected bodies in the resurrection. At long last the Lamb can now enter into covenant with His wife (the church). The Church is given a fine linen garment, clean and bright. This garment is the righteous works of the saints. Then there is a celebration and a feast as the Lamb receives all the rewards of His sufferings. Blessed is he who is called to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb!

ARMAGEDDON

When the celebration ends in heaven there will be hell to pay on earth. In Revelation 19:11-21 we read,

¹¹ Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. ¹³ He was

clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. ¹⁵ Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. ¹⁶ And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. ¹⁷ Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, 'Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, ¹⁸ that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great.' ¹⁹ And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. ²⁰ Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. ²¹ And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.'"

This describes the Second Coming of Christ to the earth, and it is nothing like His first appearing. He is no longer the humble carpenter's son. . . He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Following closely at His heels are all of the armies of heaven (the resurrected saints). He is not coming with mercy, He is coming with judgment. He will strike the nations with the words from His mouth, as He treads out the winepress of the wrath of Almighty God, and establishes His thrones of judgment for 1000 years on earth.

REVELATION 20

Remember, in chapter 38, we discussed the two resurrections mentioned in John 5:19-29. In Revelation 20:1-6, we read about the fulfillment of the first resurrection of the just.

¹ Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. ² He laid hold of the dragon, that

serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; ³ and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while. ⁴ And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵ But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. ⁶ Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.”

In verses I-3, the Devil is bound and imprisoned in the bottomless pit for one thousand years. Just think about the world without deception in it. It will be a time of absolutely righteous judgment, as the Judgment Seat of Christ is established on the earth for what is known as the Millennial (thousand year) Reign.

THRONE(S) AND JUDGMENT

Notice that there are many thrones set up at this time and judgment is committed to them that sit on the thrones. The saints of God will judge the earth along with Christ! We, who were judged in the earth by God's Word, The Holy Spirit, and the Church, will certainly know the standards by which to judge the world. The Apostle Paul fully understood this when he wrote in I Corinthians 6:I-8,

¹ Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? ² Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? ³ Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life? ⁴ If then you have judgments concerning things pertaining to this life, do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the church to judge? ⁵ I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge

between his brethren? ⁶ But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers! ⁷ Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourselves be cheated? ⁸ No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat, and you do these things to your brethren!”

The saints are going to judge the world and angels, so why can't we judge properly in the matters pertaining to this life? It is an utterly demonic folly to try to remove judgment from the church. We, who have been judged by Christ, certainly know how to judge with Christ, now, and in the life to come!

THE FIRST RESURRECTION

The first resurrection begins at the close of the church age and continues through the Great Tribulation, ending after the fall of Babylon. It is summarized in Revelation 20:5-6, *“This is the first resurrection Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years”*

I want to point out once again that we shall reign with Him for a thousand years. Now that we have established when the Judgment Seat of Christ will literally begin on earth, we can study what will happen there.

SEPARATION

The Judgment Seat of Christ is best described as a time of separating. This thought is supported by many of the parables that Jesus told in the gospels. Many of the parables describe this as separating or sorting out the good from the bad. The parables describe the Judgment Seat of Christ, both in this life and the life to come.

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

The Parable of the Sower is repeated in Matthew, Mark, and Luke's gospels. I will use Mark's version of this story because of one particular

verse that uniquely describes this parable.

Mark 4:1-20, ¹ *And again He began to teach by the sea. And a great multitude was gathered to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat in it on the sea; and the whole multitude was on the land facing the sea.* ² *Then He taught them many things by parables, and said to them in His teaching:* ³ *'Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow.* ⁴ *And it happened, as he sowed, that some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds of the air came and devoured it.* ⁵ *Some fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth.* ⁶ *But when the sun was up it was scorched, and because it had no root it withered away.* ⁷ *And some seed fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no crop.* ⁸ *But other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.'* ⁹ *And He said to them, 'He who has ears to hear, let him hear!'* ¹⁰ *But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable.* ¹¹ *And He said to them, 'To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables,* ¹² *so that "Seeing they may see and not perceive, And hearing they may hear and not understand; Lest they should turn, And their sins be forgiven them."* ¹³ *And He said to them, 'Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?'* ¹⁴ *The sower sows the word.* ¹⁵ *And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts.* ¹⁶ *These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness;* ¹⁷ *and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble.* ¹⁸ *Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word,* ¹⁹ *and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.* ²⁰ *But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred."*

A parable is simply an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. Jesus would use everyday illustrations of agriculture and business with veiled meanings so that not everyone could understand. Only those who

follow Jesus, and seek to be His disciples will understand the parables. In verse 13 Jesus told His disciples, *“Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?”* Understanding the parable of the sower is the key to understanding all of the parables.

The sower (preacher) sows the seeds of God’s Word into four different types of soil (the hearts of men). Three of the types of soil (or hearts) are not properly prepared to receive God’s Word so they never bear good fruit to God. Only the good heart will bear good fruit. This parable represents the Judgment Seat of Christ here on earth. Satan steals God’s Word from some, others fall away for lack of depth or character, and others go back into the world. These are all people who heard the Word of God and may even appear for a time to be Christians. But only one of these will be saved.

WHEAT AND TARES

After Matthew’s account of the parable of the sower, Jesus told numerous parables that will help us better understand the Judgment Seat of Christ. The parable of the wheat and tares is found in Matthew 13:24-30. The story is about a man who sowed good seeds in his field, and then an enemy came while he was asleep and re-sowed his field with bad seeds. These bad seeds are known as tares, which look exactly like wheat but do not bear any grain. The man’s workers suggested that they should pull up the weeds, but the owner of the field was concerned that they would damage the wheat if they did. I want us to read the story from this point because it has so much to do with the Judgment Seat of Christ, *“Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.”* There are people who grow together with God’s people but are actually false Christians. At the time of the harvest they will be separated from the Christians and burned, but the true Christians will be saved. Jesus explained this parable to His disciples in Matthew 13:36-43. This all takes place at the Judgment Seat of Christ, now or in the future. It’s up to you to make a determination.

THE MUSTARD SEED

Matthew 13:31-32, ⁶¹ *Another parable He put forth to them, saying: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, ³² which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.'*

I know most folks think, “Oh how sweet the birds come make nests in the branches.” But, this parable shows how the kingdom starts small and, as it grows, is attacked by the birds of the air (demons). We have to keep the devils out in order to go into the kingdom of God. This is all sorted out at the Judgment Seat of Christ either now or in the future, it’s up to you.

LEAVEN

Matthew 13:33, *“Another parable He spoke to them: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened.’”* Once again, the “leaven” is not a good thing. This is yeast and it makes dough rise or swell. This is a picture of pride getting into the good dough and causing us to rise up instead of staying humble. This too will be sorted out at the Judgment Seat of Christ, now or in the future, it’s up to you.

DRAGNET

The last one that I want to point out in Matthew 13 is found in verses 47-50,

⁴⁷ *Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, ⁴⁸ which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. ⁴⁹ So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, ⁵⁰ and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”*

Notice once again, the Judgment Seat of Christ will separate the good fish from the bad.

THE WISE AND FOOLISH VIRGINS

In Matthew 25, Jesus told three more parables that point to the Judgment Seat of Christ. The first is about the wise and foolish virgins found in verse 13. Ten virgins were waiting for the kingdom to come, five were wise and took plenty of oil (the Holy Spirit) to keep their lamps (lives) burning bright for Jesus. The others were foolish and did not have enough oil. When Jesus returns He will only take with Him those who have the Holy Spirit burning brightly in their lives. The others were shut out of the kingdom.

THE TALENTS

After the parable of the virgins Jesus went right into another story about His return. In Matthew 25:14-30, He tells the parable of the talents. In this story, Jesus is portrayed as a man traveling to a far away country (heaven). Before He left, He gave money (gifts) to His three servants (us). The first servant was given the most; he went out and traded with it, doubling the Lord's money. The second did the same. But the third hid the money in the ground because he was afraid to do anything for Jesus. When the Lord returned He rewarded the first and second servants, then sent the third guy to hell! He called him a wicked and slothful servant because he was unproductive in the kingdom. I'm bringing this up to show you the Judgment Seat of Christ is not going to be pleasant for many.

SHEEP AND THE GOATS

The last parable in Matthew 25 is that of the sheep and the goats. When Jesus returns, He is going to judge every nation by separating the sheep from the goats. Some of this is hard to understand because the second coming of Christ happens after the marriage supper of the lamb. In other words, the saints have already been taken up to heaven and are in eternal covenant with Jesus. This is why I am so convinced that the Judgment Seat of Christ takes place now *and* when Jesus returns to the earth.

THE SHEEP

Notice that the sheep were those that Jesus rewards for giving Him food, drink, clothing, shelter, and visiting Him during sickness and imprisonment. The sheep have one outstanding characteristic; they all ask, “When?” They don’t keep score. It is simply by nature of the new birth that they do these things for the least of those in society. Jesus rewards them as though they did Him a personal favor! That is exactly what Proverbs 19:17 says, “*He who has pity on the poor lends to the LORD, And He will pay back what he has given.*” The Lord will repay all who minister to the poor. He actually treats our service to the poor as Him being in debt to pay us back for blessing the poor.

THE GOATS

On the other hand (literally), all the goats have the same indignant characteristic and they too ask the Lord, “When?” The goats refused to help the poor. They cannot associate Jesus with the poor and needy. Maybe those who believe the prosperity gospel ought to repent in light of this parable. Jesus sends the goats away into everlasting fire. This takes place now and at the literal Judgment Seat of Christ, it’s up to you.

CHAPTER 41:

ETERNAL JUDGMENT

THE GREAT WHITE THRONE OF JUDGMENT

The Great White Throne of Judgment will be the final judgment of mankind on the earth as we know it. God Himself will sit as judge at this time and there will be no mercy. This judgment will take place after the Millennial Reign of Jesus or the Judgment Seat of Christ.

SATAN BOUND

The Judgment Seat of Christ begins with Satan being bound in the bottomless pit. Revelation 20:1-3,

¹ Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. ² He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; ³ and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.”

It is almost beyond my imagination to think of the world without any deception in it. We are bombarded with so much deception on a daily basis that we consider it normal. It refreshes my soul to think about life without trying to filter through the lies that seem to never cease. Come quickly Lord Jesus.

SATAN LOOSED

After the Judgment Seat of Christ, Satan will be loosed out of his prison.

Revelation 20:7-10, ⁶⁷ *Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸ and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. ⁹ They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. ¹⁰ The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.*

After Jesus reigns on the earth for one thousand years, with no deception present, Satan is loosed. He immediately resumes his work of deceiving the nations again. How easily we are deceived. All of the nations that are deceived by the devil will gather together to battle against the saints. This won't be much of a battle because God Himself will send fire down and devour all of them.

FIRE FROM GOD

The Apostle Peter spoke of this day when the fire of God comes down in II Peter 3:7-13,

⁶⁷ *But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. ⁸ But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹ The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. ¹¹ Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹² looking for and hastening*

the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? ¹³ Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”

What a terrible day as the fire of God dissolves the entire earth so that even the elements melt. Who can abide the day of the wrath of Almighty God? This is the day that ends His long suffering. This is the Day of God’s Judgment.

THE DAY OF GOD’S JUDGMENT

Revelation 20:11-15 depicts the scene of The Day of the Judgment of God,

“¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. ¹³ The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. ¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. ¹⁵ And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”

Now begins the final judgment of man. The Great White Throne appears and God is seated there. All of heaven and earth try to flee but there is nowhere to run or hide. The fire of God has burned every hiding place that existed during the presence of time, space, and matter. This cannot be understood in three dimensional thinking - eternity has begun. All of the dead are now forced to give account of their rebellion against the Creator of heaven and earth. The temporary judgments of death and Hades give up the dead and all are made to stand before Almighty God as He gives each their final judgment that will endure for eternity.

THE BOOKS OF WORKS

Heaven has kept a record of every deed of every soul that has lived on the face of this earth. Every person who appears before the Great White Throne of God's Judgment will give an account of all of their deeds that are recorded in the books of works. Oh that we would run to the judgment of the cross while the days of mercy remain. We should take our judgments now and not later. The present sufferings of judgment cannot compare with the eternal suffering of the lake of fire. Every sinner should run to the mercy seat of the cross and have their sins blotted out by the blood of Jesus and their name re-written in the Book of Life.

THE BOOK OF LIFE

The Book of Life will be present at the Great White Throne of Judgment. It will play a significant role in the final judgment of all mankind. So, what is the Book of Life? The first mention of the Book of Life is found in Exodus 32:31-33,

“³¹ Then Moses returned to the LORD and said, ‘Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold!’ ³² Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written.’ ³³ And the LORD said to Moses, ‘Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book.’”

Moses knew of a book that God wrote containing the names of His people. When Israel sinned in the matter of making the golden calf, Moses made intercession for them asking God to pardon their sin. Then he told God that if He would not pardon the people to, “. . . blot me out of Your book which You have written.” Moses, in the true spirit of an intercessor, volunteered to be blotted out of the book in place of those who had sinned. God's answer to Moses was, “Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book.” When Moses retells this story in Deuteronomy 9:13-14 he shows the consequences of being “blotted out”, “Furthermore the LORD spoke to me, saying, ‘I have seen this people, and indeed they are a stiff-necked people. Let Me alone, that I may destroy them and blot out their

name from under heaven; and I will make of you a nation mightier and greater than they.” Not only were they to be blotted out of the book, they were to be blotted out from under heaven.

ALL SOULS ARE MINE

In chapter thirty three, we touched on the idea that all men enter into this world written in the Book of Life. We get this from Ezekiel 18:I-4,

“¹ The word of the LORD came to me again, saying, ² What do you mean when you use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying: ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, And the children’s teeth are set on edge?’” ³ As I live,’ says the Lord GOD, ‘you shall no longer use this proverb in Israel. ⁴ Behold, all souls are Mine; The soul of the father As well as the soul of the son is Mine; The soul who sins shall die.”

God claims that “all souls” are His. But He also says that the soul who sins shall die. We come into this world with our names written in the Book of Life. When we sin our names are blotted out of the Book. They can only be written back in when our sins are blotted out and our names are re-written in the Book of Life.

BLOT

The word “blot” appears many times in references to the Book of Life and the “books of works”. The word “blot” means *to rub out or erase*. It can be used to blot out a sinners name from the Book of Life, or to blot out sins from the books of works. King David spoke of his adversaries being blotted out of the book of the living in Psalm 69:28, *“Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, And not be written with the righteous.”* King David also spoke of blotting out sins after his affair with Bathsheba in Psalm 51:I, *“Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions.”* And again in Psalm 51:9, *“Hide Your face from my sins, And blot out all my iniquities.”*

REPENTANCE AND CONVERSION BLOT OUT SINS

The Apostle Peter taught blotting out of sins as a New Testament principle in Acts 3:19-21,

“¹⁹ Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, ²⁰ and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, ²¹ whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.”

Repentance and conversion are the erasers of sins. When we change our minds and our hearts, then our sins are blotted out of the books of remembrance.

OVERCOMING IS VITAL

When Jesus addressed the church of Sardis, He stressed the point of overcoming to remain written in the Book of Life. In Revelation 3:4-5,

“⁴ You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. ⁵ He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.”

Once your name is re-written in the Lamb's Book of Life you must overcome the obstacles that would “defile your garments”. The wages of sin is always death!

THE BOOK OF LIFE AT THE FINAL JUDGMENT

As I said, the Book of Life will play a significant role at the Great White Throne of Judgment. Imagine when each person stands before God and a search is made for their name in the Book of Life. Where their name once appeared only a blot is found. Once it is certain that their name is not in the Book of Life, that cursed soul is forced to hear

the accounting of every one of the wicked deeds he/she committed. Then they will hear the eternal sentencing from God, The Almighty Judge. The memory of seeing that blot in the Book of Life where their name once appeared will only add to the torments of the lake of fire throughout eternity. This is called the “second death”; anyone not found written in the Book of Life will continue in a tormented death forever.

ETERNAL BLISS

After the sentencing of the wicked dead to their eternal graves of torment, eternal bliss will be established for the righteous. This is also an eternal judgment.

Revelation 21:1-8, ¹“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. ²Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.’ ⁵Then He who sat on the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’ And He said to me, ‘Write, for these words are true and faithful.’ ⁶And He said to me, ‘It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. ⁷He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. ⁸But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.’”

A NEW HEAVEN AND A NEW EARTH

Contrary to popular belief we will not spend eternity floating on a cloud in heaven — heaven is a temporary judgment also! After the fire of God destroys the earth as we know it, He will create a new heaven and

a new earth. There will even be a new Holy City, the New Jerusalem, and the Tabernacle of God will be among men. God Himself will dwell with us; we will see God! No longer is there any need to shield man from God or God from man. The barriers of sin and death have been removed. Not only is God Holy but so are we who are with Him. Those who were faithful and trustworthy without seeing Him will certainly be trustworthy when we do see Him.

Then begins the eternal comforts that will come from God Himself as He wipes away every tear. He comforts those who used to mourn. There is no longer any sorrow and grief because death has been swallowed up in victory! Even the pains of our mortal bodies are gone for good because sickness and disease no longer exist — Hallelujah!

The pains of our mortality will quickly be forgotten as we are comforted in the pristine surroundings of the New Heaven and the New Earth, in the presence of our Eternal Father. We will now inherit all things as we take our place as “joint-heirs with Jesus”. Blessings beyond human comprehension ;I dare not even imagine because my finite mind cannot do justice to what God has prepared for those who love Him!

ONE LAST REMINDER

Revelation 21:8 gives one last reminder of the Great White Throne of Judgment, “*But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.*” The Bible makes a distinction between the cowardly (fearful) and the unbeliever. Unbelievers are people who simply do not believe in God. The cowardly/fearful are those who claim to believe but live in fear. Fear is not something to be pitied but rather, hated. Fear is the opposite of faith. Fear is us telling God that He cannot do what He says. The fearful will be counted right along with the abominable, murders, sexual perverts, sorcerers/drug dealers, and idolaters and liars. Liars are last, but not least, in the list of those who will endure the torments of the second death. I cannot over-emphasize the disdain that all of heaven has for lies and

the liars who tell them. God cannot lie, nor can He tolerate those who do. I said before that I can hardly imagine a world without deception, but we will live in one forever. Oh what Bliss, a new heaven and earth where no lies exist, blessings forever in the presence of God. Even so, come quickly Lord Jesus!

CHAPTER 42:

PERFECTION

As we draw near to the end of our studies, I want to re-read the text that provided the outline for this entire book. Hebrews 5:12-14 and 6:1-3:

⁴² For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. ¹³ For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. ¹⁴ But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. ^{6:1} Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, ² of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. ³ And this we will do if God permits.”

The Apostle Paul did not want to discuss the elementary principles of Christ in this passage but he found that he had to because of the people’s immaturity. What he really wanted to discuss was the subject of “perfection”. Paul expected that once people learned the first principles that they should reach perfection. Once someone learns the doctrines of Christ they should be able to teach others.

NOBODY’S PERFECT

Perfection is a touchy subject. When it is brought up most will immediately inject the disclaimer that, “nobody’s perfect”. Or, if you were to press the issue, the language will become more personal, “You think that you are perfect.” The subject of perfection is usually misunderstood and largely ignored even though it is mentioned 130

times in the King James Version of the Bible. Most people define perfection as *the absence of mistakes*. I would rather define perfection as *the presence of maturity*. Remember, Jesus commanded us in Matthew 5:48, “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” We are commanded to be perfect, so how can we immediately declare that it is impossible? Why would Jesus give a commandment that we cannot possibly keep? Could it be that we are just ignorant of the true meaning of this huge subject? I believe that earthly perfection of the Christian is the missing link that Paul was describing when he wrote Hebrews 5:12-14 and 6:1-3. The perpetual infancy that has plagued the church through the ages will continue unless we get this right.

WHAT IS PERFECTION?

As I said before, the English word “perfection” appears at least 130 times in the King James Version of the Bible. Perfection is used 62 times in the New Testament alone and is derived from three basic Greek words.

HIT THE MARK

The first Greek word to be translated “perfection” is “*teleios*,” it means *to be complete*. It is derived from the Greek word “*telos*,” which means *to set out for a definite point or the point aimed at*. Let’s compare this to the Greek word for sin, “*hamartano*”, which means *to miss the mark and not to share in the prize*. Isn’t that interesting? Sin means to miss the mark and perfection means to hit the mark! I believe that we can hit the mark! Christians are not to live in some perpetual state of defeat. Why are we triumphant and victorious or overcomers if we are always losing? Because perfect or mature Christians hit the mark!

The word “*teleios*” is the word used in Matthew 5:48, “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” In other words, you shall hit the mark, just as your Father in heaven hits the mark.

PERFECTLY TRAINED

The second Greek word that is translated to the English word

“perfect” is “kataritzo.” This word means *to complete thoroughly or to repair*. It also means *to put a thing in its appropriate condition, to establish, set up, equip, arrange, prepare, mend or repair*. It basically means to repair that which was broken. Metaphorically it means to take a person in error and restore them.

Let’s examine a passage that translates “kataritzo” to the English word “perfect”. Luke 6:40, *“A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher.”* Before we inject some sub-standard modern teacher in as the teacher referred to above, we need to understand that the teacher that we should be like is Jesus — He is the standard. We should train every disciple to be like Jesus, and those teachers should train others. That is perfect training.

Hebrews 13:20-21 strengthens this thought with another use of the word “kataritzo”,

“²⁰ Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, ²¹ make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

The word “complete”, found in verse 21, is the word “kataritzo.” Perfection brings us to the place where we do good works according to God’s will. I can hear today’s church goers crying foul, because we are not saved by works. Consider the Apostle Paul’s words as he defended himself before King Agrippa in Acts 26:19-20, *“Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.”* Paul even taught the King that repentance toward God included works! A perfectly trained disciple will do good works. The average church members of today are, for the most part, trained by teachers who don’t even believe in perfection. No wonder perfection is such a taboo subject.

ACROBAT

The third and final Greek word that is translated as “perfect” is “*akribos*.” We derive the English word “acrobat” from this term. It means *most exact, or accurate*.

Luke used this word to begin his gospel in Luke I:I-4,

“¹ Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, ² just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, ³ it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.”

In verse three, Luke claims to have “perfect understanding” of the gospel. He was discipled by those who were eyewitnesses of these words, and now he was discipling a man named “Theophilus”. The emphasis was on an accurate or exact account of the life of Christ. We too should exercise such diligence to be accurate about our Lord.

GOD IS PERFECT

Let’s re-visit Matthew 5:48, “*Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.*” This passage comes from Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount and I want to point out a few things about this verse.

The first word of this verse is “therefore.” When “therefore” is used, it is in conclusion to everything said before the final statement. In other words, because of everything that I just said, you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. So what did Jesus say before verse 48?

In verses I-I6, He gave nine blessings otherwise known as the Beatitudes. He calls the Beatitudes the “salt of the earth” and the “light of the world”. The nine characteristics listed in the Beatitudes are the witness that Jesus wants us to be to the world.

In verses I7-20, He tells us that Christianity should have a greater

display of righteousness than those under the Law of Moses. Then in verses 21-47, He proceeds to raise the bar for Christianity higher than the Law of Moses. Moses taught us not to murder, Jesus taught us not even to be angry with our brother. Moses taught us not to commit adultery, Jesus taught us not even to look with lust, and then warned sternly against divorce. Moses taught us to perform our oaths, Jesus taught us to let our words mean exactly what we say. Yes is yes, and no is no; anything more than that is evil. Moses taught us an eye for an eye, Jesus taught us to turn the other cheek. Moses taught us to love our neighbors, Jesus taught us to love our enemies. Contrary to popular belief, Jesus didn't lower the standard for Christian living, He raised the standard. We are not under the Law of Moses, we are under the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus. Men failed miserably in their attempts to keep the Law of Moses. But under the Law of the Spirit we have a better covenant established on better promises. We now have the blood of Jesus to take away our sins and the power of the Holy Spirit to live in victory over sin! Therefore, be perfect, because your Father in heaven is perfect.

The Apostle Peter writes something very similar to this passage in I Peter 1:15-16, "...but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy.'" This passage is a direct quote from Leviticus 11:44; under the Law of Moses holiness was required. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus made it plain that He was raising the bar on the standards of holiness. Why then, do our modern churches live so lax concerning holiness? It is nothing less than a perverted teaching of grace.

It's one thing to ascribe holiness to God, it's quite another to put this on mere mortals, but the Bible does just that. We are to be perfectly holy just as God is perfectly holy. Consider II Corinthians 6:17-18 and 7:1,

⁴⁷ Therefore 'Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you. ¹⁸ I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty.'
^{7:1} *Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all*

filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

God’s presence in us must restore us to the fear of the Lord. This in turn gives us the incentives that motivate us to a renewal of holiness in the churches today.

GOD’S PERFECT WILL

Our perfect God, whom we are commanded to be like, has a perfect will. In Romans 12:1-2 we read, *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”* I know that we already discussed this passage from the perspective of the Baptism into Christ’s Body. But now I want to press the point about God’s perfect will, and even more specifically, that being a living sacrifice is God’s perfect will for us. Paul said that this was our “reasonable service”. It is reasonable because Christ did it for us, and now we are to do it for Him.

Consider Hebrews 2:9-11,

“⁹ But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. ¹⁰ For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. ¹¹ For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren”

The Captain of our Salvation was perfected through sufferings and we who are “being sanctified” are also being perfected through sufferings.

Another thought concerning this comes from Hebrews 10:5-7, and is a direct quote from Psalm 40:5-7, *“Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: ‘Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. Then I said, ‘Behold,*

I have come— In the volume of the book it is written of Me— To do Your will, O God.” God’s perfect will was that Jesus would come to earth in a human body, for the express purpose of dying as the substitute sacrifice for all of mankind. God’s perfect will was for Jesus to suffer on the cross, and now His perfect will is for us to suffer because of the cross!

Peter said in I Peter 4:19, *“Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.”* Peter went on to say in I Peter 5:10, *“But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.”*

Let’s go back to our text concerning the perfect will of God and consider another point. God has a good, and an acceptable, and a perfect will. Today’s church seems to always aim for the lowest standard possible. In this case, it would seem that the “acceptable” will of God would be the lowest point that barely meets the requirements. I heard someone say once that good is the enemy of excellence. God did not command us to be “good” or “acceptable”, He commands us to be perfect. The path to perfection is suffering for sake of the cross of Christ!

GOD’S PERFECT LOVE

In our pursuit of perfect holiness we must remain in perfect love with God and with God’s people. I Corinthians 13:3 warns us of martyrdom without love, *“And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.”* It would be terrible to die a martyr’s death and still go to hell. I have noticed that many who claim holiness seem to be very mean spirited about it. On the other hand, I have found that those who claim love have no standards of holiness.

I John 4:7-21 marries these two thoughts wonderfully,

“⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸ He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. ⁹ In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that

God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. ¹³ By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. ¹⁵ Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. ¹⁶ And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. ¹⁷ Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. ¹⁸ There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. ¹⁹ We love Him because He first loved us. ²⁰ If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? ²¹ And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also."

I know that this is a lengthy reading and that we have covered it in previous chapters, but I find it vital to make the points about God's perfect love.

In verses 7-8, we learn that God is love. In verses 9-10, we find that God's love was manifested through Jesus dying as the substitute sacrifice for our sins. In verses 11-16, we are exhorted to love one another the same way that God loves us. In particular, verse 12 introduces us to the idea of God's love being perfected in us through our love for one another. In other words, the greatest proof of our love for God is our love for one another; this is the perfection of love. Yes, God is love. Now He commands us to display that same love to one another.

Verses 17-19 bring us to the points that I want us to see. Perfect love will cause us to live like Jesus in this world, because as He is, so are we in this world. This kind of love will cause us to walk with a boldness concerning judgment. We are bold because we don't live in sin. We're bold because we live in love with one another. We're bold because we

love fearlessly and without torment. We're bold because we are healed from every inward hurt of relationships that have gone bad. We're bold because every demonic fear in our minds is cast out, as love conquers every vain imagination. We're bold because we are continually being infused and refreshed in the love that God has for us. We're bold enough to live in love with God and with one another because living is loving, and loving is living. We are loved by our perfect God with perfect love and His perfect will is that we love one another perfectly!

I John 5:3 defines love even more clearly, *“For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.”* Perfect love is defined by keeping His commandments. His perfect commandment is to be perfectly in love with one another. This is not burdensome to those who love God.

GOD'S PERFECT GIFTS

God's will is for us to be perfected. He has given us perfect gifts in order for us to attain to that perfection. In James 1:17-18 we read, *“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.”*

God, the Father of lights, is the source for every perfect gift. This is an unusual term and is not found anywhere else in Scripture. I John 1:5-7 does, however, define God as light,

“⁵ This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”

The Greek word for light is “*phos*”, which means to shine or make manifest. Creation began when God said, “Let there be light”. Jesus called Himself the “Light of the world” after He forgave the woman

caught in adultery in John 8:12, “*Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.’*” Notice that James 1:17 says that God is the Father of light(s) — this is plural. God is light, but so are we. Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:14, “*You are the light of the world.*” Jesus is the source of light, and we are the illuminators that are to shine His light in the earth.

God, the Father of lights, has given us perfect gifts to insure that we walk in the light and illuminate His light to the world. So what are these perfect gifts?

We find those perfect gifts in Ephesians 4:7-16,

“⁷ But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. ⁸ Therefore He says: ‘When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men.’ ⁹ (Now this, ‘He ascended’—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰ He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) ¹¹ And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³ till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; ¹⁴ that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, ¹⁵ but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

At the resurrection of the firstfruits God redistributed the gifts of the Old Testament saints so that we can become the firstfruits of His creatures. He gave some apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers for the equipping of the saints. The King James Version uses the word “perfecting” instead of “equipping” in verse 12. This is the same word that Jesus used in Luke 6:40 when He referred to

being “perfectly trained”. The goal of those with the perfect gifts is to disciple every person in the church to become “*a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ [...]*” We want every person in the church to grow up to the stature of Christ. Jesus imparts perfect gifts to those whom He trains to perfection, in order to perfect those that they train.

This was the norm in the early church, consider Colossians 1:28-29, “*Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.*” Paul said that the end or goal of his labor was that everyone would be presented perfect in Christ Jesus.

If we would read further in Colossians 4:12, “*Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.*” Epaphras was the man credited with starting the church at Colosse. He prayed continually to see everyone standing perfect and complete in all of God’s will. I believe this is the Biblical norm and that we should expect no less in our generation.

HOW CAN WE BE PERFECT?

When the rich young ruler asked what he should do to inherit eternal life, Jesus ultimately told him, “*Jesus said to him, ‘If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.’*” (Matthew 19:16-26). To be perfect we must sell out for Jesus.

In I Corinthians 2:6-8 we find another key to becoming perfect,

“⁶ However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. ⁷ But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, ⁸ which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”

The word “mature” found in verse 6 is the same word for perfect. The wisdom of the cross must rule our thinking if we are to be perfected.

Philippians 3:5-10 shows us yet another insight to becoming perfect,

“¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, ¹¹ if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. ¹² Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. ¹³ Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, ¹⁴ I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.”

Paul teaches us here that we will only be fully perfected when our bodies are resurrected. However, in verse 15, he says that “mature” or “perfect” minded people have the power of the resurrection in this life so that we can know the fellowship of His sufferings, and be conformed to His death, then ultimately be raised bodily with Him.

James 1:2-4 reinforces the idea that God’s perfect will is that we walk through suffering. “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” Trials are designed to perfect us!

James gives us another insight to perfection when he says in James 2:22, “Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?” Doing good works perfects our faith. It’s no wonder that Martin Luther didn’t like the Book of James or the Epistles of John, because they caused his theory of “grace only” to unravel.

One last thought from the Book of James 3:2, “For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.” Taming the tongue is one of the greatest displays

of perfection.

I hope that you have caught on by now that perfection is not some obscure word that we find in the Scripture. It is a huge subject that we can no longer dismiss as unattainable. On the contrary, we should pursue perfection as the goal of attaining those Christ like attributes in this life.

THE PERFECT ENDING

I want to speak one final exhortation to conclude our lessons of the Doctrines of Christ that I believe will be the perfect ending to this discourse. In I John 2:12-14 we read,

“¹² I write to you, little children, Because your sins are forgiven you for His name’s sake. ¹³ I write to you, fathers, Because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, Because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, Because you have known the Father. ¹⁴ I have written to you, fathers, Because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, Because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, And you have overcome the wicked one.”

John teaches us that there are three stages of a Christian’s life, childhood, adolescence, and parenthood.

LITTLE CHILDREN

In the childhood stage we have two thoughts in mind. First, forgiveness of sins and second, knowing the Father. The forgiveness of sins is the beginning of our Christian life, yet we have made it the end. It seems that Christians today live in a perpetual state of asking for forgiveness, while ignoring repentance. Yes, forgiveness from God is important but it is not the end in itself. As a matter of fact, if we don’t progress from that point we will be grossly deformed at best, or we will die.

Once our sins are forgiven we should become very intimate with

the Father. The closer we get to our Heavenly Father the more we should love Him and desire to be like Him - holy! As we take on His characteristics more and more we will be identified with Him. The forgiveness of sins begins the legal work of the adoption process and then the Spirit of adoption confirms the work in us. That's when we know who we are in Him! This is a far deeper work than the easy believism of the "sinner's prayer". We must repent of that error and allow the Holy Spirit to do His powerful work at the cross and in the Spirit of adoption.

YOUNG MEN

In the natural, the teenage years are the most awkward transition in life. We grow out of the baby stage and begin to experience things as an adult. The same is true in Christianity. The mark of the adolescent stage is three-fold: strength, the Word of God, and overcoming the wicked one. The Word of God begins to abide in us and we begin to experience warfare with the wicked one. We can only overcome the devil if we have God's Word living in us; this is the source of our strength. Each time that the devil tempted Jesus, the Lord countered with these words, "*It is written. . .*" The Sword of the Spirit is our only offensive weapon against the devil. It's during our adolescence stage that we will either learn the Word or be overcome by the wicked one. So many turn back at this stage because they are not properly disciplined. To deal with this dilemma the churches of our day have simply perpetuated the childhood stage because they are too lazy to do the work of making disciples that actually live like Jesus! I tell you that if you do not pick up God's Word and digest it into your being, you will be defeated by the devil and will not inherit eternal life.

FATHERS

The final stage of Christianity is parenthood. The only thing that makes you a parent is that you have children. As children we have our sins forgiven and we are adopted into God's family. When we are adolescents we get the Word of God in us and become strong enough to overcome the devil. As adults we become mature or perfect, and it's

only then that God wants us to reproduce. The church in our generation is being populated by pre-adolescent children having deformed babies that die in their sins. If we were to hear that elementary school children were having babies we would be appalled, yet in the church we think it's wonderful. We are deluded! We need mature fathers and mothers, who know The Father, birthing the next generation of Christians.

WHEN THAT WHICH IS PERFECT HAS COME

The Apostle Paul captured this thought perfectly in I Corinthians 13:8-13,

⁸ Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part. ¹⁰ But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. ¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. ¹² For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. ¹³ And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

I don't want to deprive anyone of their childhood or adolescence, but I do want us to grow up. It's time that we put away childish things and live perfect! That which is perfect has come, and He died on the cross for us. The hallmark of perfection is love, and the epitome of love is God. God commands us to be perfect. We can give Him nothing less.