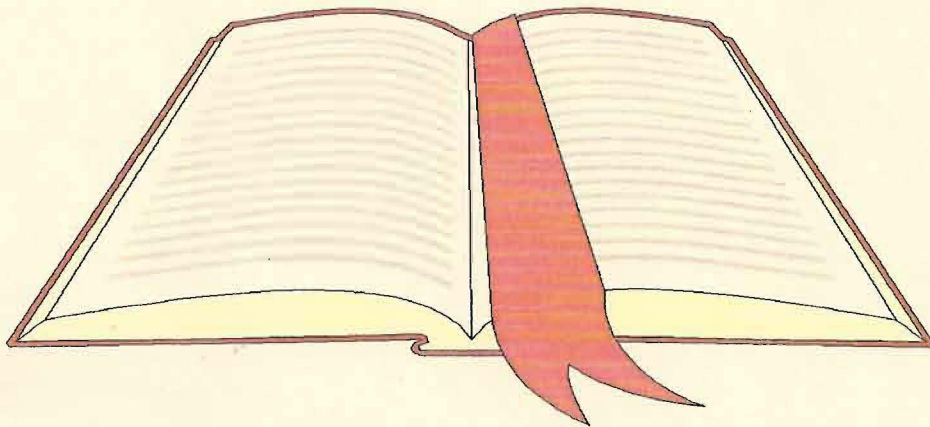


1999 Greater Murfreesboro Area Lectureship

November 11-14, 1999

“FIRST PRINCIPLES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT”

*“Therefore leaving the doctrine of the first principles of
Christ...(Hebrews 6:1, ASV 1901)*



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Steven E. Yeatts, Editor

Preface

It was not my original intent when planning this lectureship to have a book published. However, when further considering the theme of the lectureship and the fact that the topics involved can greatly benefit Christian growth, I decided to pursue the printed medium as well as providing audio tapes of the lessons. I have gained a higher level of respect and appreciation for brethren who have edited and compiled lengthy lectureship books that make this effort seem insignificant. I thank my wife Brenda for her support, encouragement and assistance. I owe a large debt of gratitude to all at the Bethlehem church of Christ who have made this possible. I also thank the congregation here at Bethlehem for embracing the lectureship since its inception and for their love of the truth. Most of all, I am grateful for the longsuffering nature of God. It is due to His patience that I have the opportunity to serve Him and to be a fellow laborer with these brethren who have contributed their time, effort and study to make this lectureship book a reality. *"Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift" (II Corinthians 9:15).*

-Steven E. Yeatts, Editor

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Chapter One

BIBLE AUTHORITY

Kent Bailey

Introduction

In order that we may live lives in harmony with the scriptures we must accept the authoritative nature of the word of God. Careful study of the scriptures themselves necessitates such a conclusion:

"And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father by him" (Col. 3:17).

"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son" (II John 9).

As we study the importance of Bible authority, we have in mind that of proper authority underlying our actions and attitudes. Our actions are products of our attitude; our actions extend from our obligations. Both individually and collectively, as children of God, our obligations relate to one core point: The salvation of humanity. Indeed such is the work of the New Testament church.

Noting the work of the church is that of the salvation of humanity, the scriptures teach that such a work is accomplished by carrying out subordinate general obligations of (1) Evangelism, (2) Edification, and (3) Benevolence.

As to whether or not we meet these obligations – if we are to be obedient to God – we have no choice. However, with reference to how we meet these obligations there are areas of choice. The essential question raised in our study is: How do we ascertain Bible authority with regard to how we meet our obligations?

We Must Respect The Authority of The Scriptures

Within the confines of the church of the Lord we have continuously battled two particular problems: (1) Anti-ism, and (2) Liberalism. Anti-ism makes laws that God has not made. Liberalism disregards laws that God indeed has made. Anti-ism treats matters

of opinion as if they were matters of faith. Liberalism treats matters of faith as if they were matters of opinion. In both Anti-ism and Liberalism one does not respect nor properly ascertain the authority of the scriptures.

The Authority of The Scriptures Implies Plenary Verbal Inspiration

Due to the fact that the Bible is God's authoritative book, such necessitates its inspiration. By the term inspiration we refer to that which is "God breathed." When we speak with regard to "plenary verbal inspiration" we refer to "complete", "full", or "total" inspiration. By this we simply mean that every word which constitutes the scriptures is fully inspired of God.

Much false doctrine regarding that of inspiration confuses the masses. (1) There are some that deny that there is anything special about the Bible. They teach that the Bible is of purely human origin, and that God was not its author. (2) Some advocate the view that the Bible is nothing more than a compilation of previously existing human documents, brought together and edited by some redactor. (3) Still others claim that the Bible is inspired, but only in certain places, or in measure, or to a certain extent. We ask: in what places? In what measure? To what extent? Who decides? (4) Some hold to the false view that God gave certain individuals indefinite nebulous thoughts, and allowed these individuals to state these thoughts in their own words. These three views of inspiration do not constitute what the scriptures affirm with reference to such and destroys the basic message of the Bible itself.

The Biblical concept of inspiration is set forth within the scriptures themselves as to the basic meaning of the term:

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Tim. 3:16-17).

"For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,

Whereby when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit..."(Eph. 3:1-5).

In these particular passages we note that the Bible is inspired, i.e., "God breathed". We also note the fact that Paul wrote specific words that one can read, ascertain and therefore understand. We thus conclude that by "inspiration" we are discussing plenary verbal inspiration.

The Authority of The Scriptures Implies A Pattern

The case being that the Bible is God's authoritative plenary inspired and inerrant word necessitates that such constitutes a pattern for humanity to follow. We note such in the New Testament Greek term *tupos*. The Biblical usage of this term carries with it these particular ideas:

The Moral Concept. Individuals lives mentioned in the scriptures worthy of imitation are referred to as being models or patterns of proper living. Paul noted: "*Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample*" (*tupos*). (Phil. 3:17)

Evangelists are to be models for brethren to imitate (I Tim. 4:12; Titus 2:7).

The Technical Concept. The term *tupos* is used of a pattern in conformity to which a thing must be made, as when God commanded Moses to make the tabernacle "*according to the fashion (tupos) that he had seen* (Acts 7:44).

The Doctrinal Sense. The term *tupos* is used of a particular teaching. Paul reminded the brethren at Rome that they had obeyed from the heart a form *tupos* of doctrine in order to be made free from sin (Rom. 6:17-18). Paul charged Timothy to hold to a distinct body of doctrine, or teaching: "*Hold fast the form of sound words...*" (II Tim. 1:13).

The pattern principle means no more than going to the Bible to learn what God wants humanity to believe and obey. This pattern encompasses what one must do to be saved from past alien sins, being thus added to the Lord's one true New Testament

church. This pattern also encompasses what Christians must do to be faithful both individually and in the church. Whether we are talking about all of humanity, Christians as individuals, or collectively as the church we must follow the New Testament Pattern (Acts 2:42; I Cor. 4:17; I Cor. 7:17; I Cor. 14:34-37; II Tim. 2:2; I John 4:1,6).

The Authority of The Scriptures Implies that One Can Know Truth

As logical, rational, properly thinking humans we can know that both God exists and that the Bible is the plenary verbally inspired word of God. Such being the case one can identify the New Testament pattern due to the fact that we can indeed recognize and know truth.

The law of rationality necessitates that we must justify our conclusions by adequate evidence. Adequate evidence absolutely demands particular conclusions. We are not talking about assumptions. We are not talking about guesses, or speculations, or probabilities, or possibilities. We are speaking of that conclusion which is demanded by the proper evidence. And that conclusion which is demanded by the evidence is a matter of knowledge. It is knowledge just as much as it the case with regard to sense perceptions. When we speak regarding the inspiration and authority of the scriptures, we are discussing one's coming to a knowledge of God's truth wherein one can not only know such with such certainty that one can know that one cannot be wrong, but that one also follow such truth. The authority of the scriptures demands such knowledge and requires such obedience (John 17:3,17; John 8:32; John 6:69; II Cor. 5:1; II Cor. 5:6-8; II Tim. 1:12; John 4:42; I John 2:13,14; I John 2:23-29).

The Nature of The Scriptures Require That We Ascertain Bible Authority

In order that we respect God and his divine authority as set forth in the scriptures, we must constantly remind ourselves that God does not authorize various elements based upon our personal likes, or dislikes; upon the basis of what pleases us; upon the basis of erroneous conclusions which I may reach; upon the basis of our opinions, or the opinions of other; upon the basis of what is popular; upon the basis of what may be the consensus

in some lectureship; upon the basis of human traditions; upon the basis of our inability to see danger; upon the basis of practices of long standing; upon the basis of the silence of the scriptures.

God authorizes by **Direct Statement**. By the phrase direct statement we refer to that which is explicitly stated. It may be the form of a command, or it may be hortatory, conditional, prohibitory, declarative, permissive, mandatory, or interrogative. It may involve that which is real, or that which is potential. As we note Mark 16:16, Jesus Christ explicitly stated: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

By this direct statement we thus know that water baptism, to the believer, is necessary for salvation from past alien sins. While indeed direct/explicit statements are necessary such are not the exclusive way that one ascertains Bible authority, due to the fact that there is no explicit teaching in the Bible directly stated to any one living today. Neither does there exist any explicit teaching affirming that only by direct and/or explicit statements we come to ascertain Bible authority.

God authorizes by **Implication**. By the term implication we refer to a logical deduction necessitated by proper consequence. In Mark 16:16, Christ implicitly teaches that the unbeliever cannot scripturally be baptized. In Acts 2:38 we note that without repentance an alien sinner cannot be baptized for the remission of sins. When an action, fact, or teaching is absolutely demanded by proper evidence, without being explicitly stated, then that action, fact, or teaching is just as true, just as factual, and just as authoritative as that which is taught explicitly.

God authorized by **Example**. By the term example we refer to that which is to be followed, or imitated; a pattern. We have already demonstrated the pattern concept of the New Testament. To deny the pattern concept is to affirm that there is no need of following such revealed truth. To affirm the following of revealed truth implies the reality of existing examples and our need to follow them.

The authoritative nature of examples is affirmed in that of the Lord's Supper. In I Corinthians 11:23-30 we read of the importance of the Lord's Supper. In noting carefully Acts 20:7, we find that the Lord's Supper was the focal point of the first day of the week assembly. As Paul gave order to the church at Corinth to lay by in store “every first day of the week” (κατα μίαν σαββατῶν) such necessitates the first day of the week assembly of exhortation. Furthermore, the case being that the observance of the Lord's Supper was the focal point of the first day of the week assembly; such an example necessitates observing the Lord's Supper every first day of the week in accordance with Acts 20:7.

During the course of our study let it be remembered that **all** New Testament examples are authoritative, and therefore binding. Not all accounts of action constitute examples, models, or patterns. However, when an account of action constitutes an example, by its very nature, such constitutes a pattern to be followed.

As one considers direct statements, implications, and/or examples we must consider the background information of each to determine whether or not such is binding upon individuals today. As we especially note the authoritative nature of New Testament examples, we must give serious considerations to **significant distinctions** by which one can ascertain when accounts of action become examples, models, or patterns to follow.

The Importance of Significant Distinctions

The case being that we must ascertain Bible authority by direct statement, implication, and example necessitates us that we make proper application of such in our study of the scriptures. One tremendously important area is that of ascertaining when an account of action becomes an example to be followed. Noting important Biblical distinctions will assist greatly.

Old/New. We must clearly understand the difference between the Old and New Covenants (Heb. 9:16-17; 10:10). Further, it is important that we realize that God has dealt with humanity in three distinct systems of religion. Knowledge of this fact is absolutely essential in understanding the Bible. There was the *Patriarchal Dispensation*.

This period embraces the events from Adam to the giving of the Mosaic Law. There was *Judaism*. This period embraces the events from the giving of the Mosaic law at Sinai to the cross. Presently God's acceptable religion is New Testament Christianity. This time period began on the first Pentecost following the resurrection of Christ and will extend to the Lord's final coming. It is during this time period that all accountable individuals are accountable to the New Covenant of Christ.

Faith/Opinion. It is necessary that we distinguish clearly between faith and opinion, between faith and human judgment. *We know* that Nicodemus came to Christ by night. One can have an opinion as to why Nicodemus chose the evening hours to approach the Lord, however, *we cannot know* by New Testament information as to why Nicodemus actually chose the evening hours to approach Christ. We cannot force such into being a matter of faith.

Temporary/Permanent. There were apostles of Christ in the first century church, who upon reception of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, were given apostolic authority (Acts 1:8). These special representatives of Christ had the ability to impart miraculous gifts to select individuals in the first century church (Acts 8:14-17; Rom. 1:11). These gifts were temporary in nature to bring a confirmed and completed revelation of the New Testament unto humanity. These gifts were provisional in nature and lasted only during the duration of the first century. When the confirmed New Testament revelation was complete, these gifts came to an end (I Cor. 12:28-31; 13:1-13; Jas. 1:21-25).

General/Specific. In the study of the Bible not only do we find explicit and implicit teaching, we also find generic and specific teaching. By the term generic we refer to that which is general in nature. By the term specific we refer to that which is particular in nature. In Genesis chapter 6 God specified gopher wood out of all different types of wood to construct the ark. In Matthew 26 Jesus specified unleavened bread and fruit of the vine as elements in the Lord's Supper. That which is specific is exclusive in nature and excludes all non-specified elements. The type of music authorized for New

Testament worship is exclusively singing. Such rules out playing a mechanical instrument. More will be stated on this in our discussion on Biblical silence.

Circumstance/Condition. In Acts 16:13-15 we read of the conversion of Lydia. In text we note that such teaching took place at a river side. This was the circumstance in which Lydia was found. The conditions taught for salvation were faith, repentance, confession of Christ, and baptism for the remission of sins to be added to the one true New Testament church. The circumstance of the geographical location was unimportant the conditions of the gospel were indeed important.

Incidental/Essential. According to Acts 20:7 the brethren of Troas met for worship on the third floor of a building. Obviously, the fact that the meeting place was on the third floor had nothing to do with acceptable worship (John 4:19-24). However, the observance of the Lord's Supper was essential to their faithfulness to the Lord, both individually and collectively (I Cor. 11:23-30; 4:17; John 16:12-13).

Means/Principle. In the study of Bible teaching we must distinguish between that of means and principle. There are times when we become so involved in consideration of means that we totally ignore the principle under consideration.

I Corinthians 14:26-40 is a discussion of the regulation of spiritual gifts. In going back to chapter 12 we note Paul discussing the nature of spiritual gifts. In chapter 13 he discusses the duration of such. While indeed the assembly of chapter 14 is the same assembly of chapter 11, the means under consideration is that of regulation of spiritual gifts.

The attempt to study I Corinthians 14:26-40 without due consideration to the context has produced some tragic consequences. There are brethren who quote verse 34 who have no idea as to what is in verse 26.

In these verses Paul deals with the regulation of these miraculous gifts. With regard to such, he gives divine instruction as to the fact that there were even two conditions wherein the men were to keep silence. The silence both for women and men was that of not uttering a sound.

In our assemblies women are allowed and encouraged to sing. When they sing they speak, and when they speak they teach. Women are encouraged to publicly confess their faith in Christ. If they are unfaithful children of God, they are encouraged to confess their sin. Obviously, the silence that is advocated in I Corinthians 14:26-40 is a different situation than the silence of I Timothy 2:11-12. The silence in I Timothy 2:11-12 is that of quietness.

What is the application? Indeed, I Corinthians 14 applies to us to day, however, due to the fact that spiritual gifts are no longer extant in the church; it is the principle not the means that applies to us today. We must: (1) Let all things be done to edifying. (2) Remember that God is not the author of confusion. (3) Remember that it is the plan of God for women are to be in subjection to men. (4) That all things must be done decently and in order.

Custom/Law. We must take great care to distinguish between that of custom and law. Such indeed is an important factor in understanding the question regarding the "covering" in I Corinthians 11:2-16. Much of that which is taught in these verses relates to the custom prevalent in Corinth of women wearing the veil. There is no divine requirement wherein women must wear an artificial veil; but rather, Paul in view of a particular custom emphasizes particular sacred principles which are just as binding today as they were in the first century: (1) The head of Christ is God; the head of every man is Christ; the head of the woman is the man; (2) The man is to do nothing that will dishonor Christ; (3) The woman is to do nothing that will dishonor the man; she is to maintain an attitude of respect and subordination; (4) It is right to be in harmony with the customs that are intrinsically right; we should never offend others by breaking such; (5) We should not bring reproach upon the church by violating customs that are good; (6) We must not dress in such fashion as to become identified with sinful individuals; (7) We must not dress as to be offensive to God, or his angels present in the worship assemblies; (8) Our dress must indicate a deep and abiding concern about purity and decency.

The Authority of The Scriptures Demands Respect For Biblical Silence

In properly understanding *Bible Authority*, one must properly understand *Biblical Silence*. Many are presently arguing that the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship unto God is authorized by the *silence* of the scriptures. They argue that the Bible does not have anything to say about such a practice, therefore it is scriptural to engage within the use of such. It is interesting to note that some of these very same individuals are arguing that an element or practice does not have to be authorized in order to be acceptable unto God. It is terribly inconsistent to argue that one does not have to find authority for what we do, then argue that the Bible authorizes a particular element and/or practice upon the basis of its silence.

The Bible authorizes by what it teaches, not by what it does not teach! The Bible teaches nothing about counting beads, burning incense, or offering animal sacrifices in New Testament worship. Therefore, the employment of such would be without authority and therefore sinful. This is the very approach some are taking in their attempt to bring mechanical instruments of music into New Testament worship. We correctly emphasize that the usage of such is just as sinful as any other addition. This concept regarding silence is stressed in Hebrews 7:14. The Lord himself could not possibly serve as a priest after the Mosaic system due to the fact there was no authority for it! The silence of the scriptures is exclusive not inclusive!

The purpose of our study has been to ascertain and apply the principles of Bible authority. May we always remember that to abandon such leads one into sin (Col. 3:17; II John 9-11).

Chapter Two

CAN WE UNDERSTAND THE SCRIPTURES?

Keith B. Cozort

Introduction

The subject that has been assigned to me is, “Can We Understand the Scriptures?” This is a very important question because if we cannot understand the scriptures then there is no need to spend our precious time studying them. I am convinced though that we can understand the scriptures if we use some basic rules while we study the Bible.

There are many conservative religious people who state their belief that the Bible is God’s Word. They will even quote such passages as,

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (II Timothy 3:16,17).

They will even quote, *“For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (II Peter 1:21).*

Then there are others who say the Bible is a “dead letter” and it is essential for there to be an official interpreter if people are to understand the scriptures. Some will even say that the sinner is “dead” in sin that he must be enlightened by the Holy Spirit in order to have a “saving knowledge” of the scriptures.

The apostle Paul believed it was possible to understand the scriptures (Ephesians 3:1-7). To whom did Paul direct these words? Was he directing them toward the “official interpreters” of his day? No, he was directing them towards the “saints” and those who were “faithful in Christ” (Ephesians 1:1).

God’s word is a revelation (Ephesians 3:5). To “reveal” something means to uncover or unveil. The Christian religion is given as a written revelation and if it cannot be understood then it is not a “revelation.”

Paul stated, "Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ." Does it sound as if he believed it was possible for the Ephesian Christians to understand what he was writing to them? Paul indicates that if you will read, you can understand! To "understand" is to see clearly, or to get the sense of the passage (Ephesians 3:9). During the days of Nehemiah, "they read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand" (Nehemiah 8:8). God wants man to understand His will. Notice what Paul says, "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (Ephesians 5:17). Understanding is necessary for salvation and edification.

We need to remember some basic principles of Bible study if we desire to understand the scripture.

There Must be a Desire to Understand

Jesus said, "*If you love me, keep my commandments (John 14:15)*. If we are going to keep, or obey His commandments, then we must be able to understand those commandments. We must have a love for the truth of God. Paul states, "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved" (II Thessalonians 2:10). Some individuals do not understand the truth because they simply have no desire to understand. They are not interested in salvation or how it can be obtained.

There Must be an Honest Heart

Jesus expressed it this way, "*If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak unto myself*" (John 7:17). An honest is absolutely essential for one to come to an understanding of the scriptures.

The Principles of Bible Wisdom

It is important in studying the scriptures, as it is in studying any other literature, to remember the principles of learning. These principles include asking certain questions. Question such as: Who is doing the speaking? To whom is the passage being addressed? Why

were the statements made, or what is the design of the passage? Was the passage designed to tell one what to do to be saved, or was it given to show how to live to a saved individual? All of these questions are critical in understanding any piece of literature, but they are essential if one is going to have any hope of understanding the Bible.

God's Word Enables Man to Understand

The apostle Paul reminded the Ephesian Christians that when they read what he had written to them, they would understand his inspired knowledge concerning, "the mystery of Christ (Ephesians 3:4). "Mystery" simply means that which men cannot understand until it has been revealed. Once it has been revealed it is no longer a mystery; it is a revelation.

The mystery involved the joining of Jew and Gentile in one body. Paul, in the book of Ephesians, makes known how God had accomplished His purpose. In fact, the church which is the one body, is a manifestation of God's eternal purpose (Ephesians 3:10,11).

Conclusion

Yes, most assuredly we can understand the scriptures. Peter states, "*According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue*" (II Peter 1:3). God's word provides "milk" and "meat" for the Christian's spiritual being (I Peter 2:2).

Chapter Three

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

Paul Curlless

Introduction

The Christian religion is founded upon the Divinity of Jesus. If it can be proven that Jesus was not a Divine person, then Christianity and all it stands for is a fraud and it can be easily overthrown and destroyed. Knowing this, Satan and all of his henchmen have worked unceasingly through the ages to prove Christ to be an ordinary man, a created being, and not Divine.

Let us never forget that Satan is the real enemy. Peter said, "*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour*" (1 Peter 5:8). Satan is pictured as walking up and down the earth seeking whom he may devour and he is after Christians, members of the Lord's church. Let us never forget that he has all the denominational people in his camp/kingdom.

The birth of Jesus is recorded by both Matthew and Luke. Luke's account begins at an earlier time in the course of events, so we will use Luke's account for our study. The importance of this lesson is to show the integrity of the Bible involved in the Scriptural record of Jesus' virgin birth, and also that one's respect for Christ and His teaching is involved in the Biblical doctrine of the virgin birth.

The basic issue in the virgin birth is NOT the birth itself! The birth of Jesus Christ was a normal, natural process regarding the physical aspect of it (nine months). In our lesson will examine Luke's record in light of:

- 1) THE REALITY OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH
- 2) THE VIRGIN BIRTH AND JESUS' DEITY
- 3) THE RELIABLE WORD OF GOD

The Reality of the Virgin Birth (Luke 1:26-31)

Three Biblical affirmations of the virgin birth are mentioned: "*a virgin espoused/betrothed* (Luke 1:27). Espoused means "a promise to marry one or one who is taken, engaged. It was a strong commitment to marriage, very difficult to break. "The virgin's name was Mary (Luke 1:27). Mary said that she was a virgin- "*Then said Mary, unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing that I know not a man* (Luke 1:34).

The virgin birth was the subject of prophecy. "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). The Hebrew word for virgin is *alma* in KJV, ASV (1901), and NKJV. It is correctly rendered "virgin", not "young woman" like the RSV and other corrupt versions have it. The Hebrew word for "young woman" is *bethulah*.

Matthew 1:21-25 refers back to Isaiah the prophet and his prophesying of the virgin birth of Jesus. He prophesied of the virgin Mary some 750 years before Christ was born. Many deny that Isaiah predicted the virgin birth of Christ, especially among the liberals, Modernists, Athiests, and a host of others who would like to disprove the Bible and the fact that Jesus is Deity- the Son of God.

Humanism is a religion, which would have man capable of attempting to resolve all of his problems independent of God because of the denial of the Deity of Christ. One must not forget that Matthew said the birth of Jesus fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy! "*Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoke of the Lord by the prophet...(Matthew 1:22).*

The real issue regarding the virgin birth is the conception, NOT the birth. Conception is the act of becoming pregnant. Let us consider a few facts concerning the virgin birth of Christ. It was a normal birth according to Luke 2:4-7. Verse six indicates that the normal time frame occurred. However, the conception was supernatural. "*Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing that I know not man? And the angel answered her and said unto her, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power*

of the Highest shall over shadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the son of God" (Luke 1:34,35).

Matthew's account says that Jesus was conceived by Mary by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:20). The prophet Isaiah said, "*a virgin shall conceive*" (Isaiah 7:14). He did not say a "young woman", but a virgin, one who has not had any sexual relationship with any man!

The basic issue in the conception is the pre-existence of Christ. "*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*" (Philippians 2:5-8)

One can see clearly that Christ was equal with God or a part of the Godhead. The Lord's prayer is recorded in John 17. Jesus prayed "*And now, O Father, glorify thou with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was*" (John 17:5). Christ was with God from the beginning and **is** God.

Make no mistake about it, Christ was not just a mere prophet; nor did He become Deity at the time of His resurrection. He has always been Deity/God and is everlasting/eternal just like God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. There is an interesting statement recorded in Micah 5:2. There it states, "*But thou, O Bethlehem, Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.*"

Many modern versions of the Bible, such as the RSV and Good News Bible, and others, pervert this passage to eliminate the eternal existence of Christ. That passage from Micah lets us learn two very important lessons. First, Christ would be born in Bethlehem of Judea (Matthew 2:1; Luke 2:4), not in Jerusalem as the perverted book of

Mormon states in Alma 7:10. Christ is everlasting or eternal, not a created being as the Jehovah's witnesses teach and believe (The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life, p. 47).

The Virgin Birth and Deity of Jesus

Luke 2:1-11 records the birth of Christ. Both Joseph and Mary (who was great with child), went unto the city of David (called that because David also was born there), which is called Bethlehem to be taxed. Joseph was of the hose of David (Luke 1:27). The virgin Mary accompanied him because she was his espoused wife (verse 5). While in the manger in Bethlehem, she brought forth her firstborn son and used a manger as his bed, for there was no room for them in the inn (verse 7). Many people today crowd their lives with things of little importance. Brethren, let us always make room for Jesus in our hearts and lives. *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness..."* (*Matthew 6:33*). Shepherds were in the field watching over their flock at night (verse 8). This verse informs us that the season was probably Spring, Summer or Fall and NOT Winter when it is very cold and rainy. The shepherds would have not been out at night during the Winter months.

The celebration of December 25th as the birthday of Christ is a combination of Paganism and Catholicism, and not founded upon the word of God at all. We only have Bible authority to remember Christ's death, not His birth in a religious fashion. *"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show (proclaim, ASV 1901) the Lord's death till he come"* (*I Corinthians*). This verse tells us what to do, not when to do it. Acts 20:7 tells Christians when we should do this. *"And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread..."*.

His name would be called Jesus (Luke 1:31-32). *"And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David."*

Jesus means Savior, therefore He is the Savior of the world. As Matthew 1:21 says, "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."

Is salvation from sin a reality? Yes! If one is willing to humble himself in complete obedience to the gospel plan of salvation. Just as Jesus humbled himself before God the Father, so must all who expect to be saved from their past sins; "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:8-9). Jesus saves only those who truly obey His will, not those that say and do not (Luke 6:46).

He is the Son of the Most High. The concept of "Son of God" surely connects to the virgin birth of Christ. He is called God's only begotten Son (John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son...") It is interesting to note the Greek word for "only begotten" is "monogenes" this word is recorded in John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; and I John 4:9. There are those who say "monogenes" should not be rendered "only begotten"; however, if it is not accurate in one of these places, it is not accurate in the other four. The same Greek word occurs in all five of these verses! Brother Hugo McCord went so far as to say that only begotten as a rendering was "false on the face of it." (Debate, Dec. 3, 1988). It seems clear to me that all who take this position are doing nothing but trying to do away with the Deity of Christ.

Jesus is Deity – God's only begotten Son. Genesis 1:1, 26 "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness..." The word God in Genesis 1:1 is from the Hebrew word "Elohim"; which means, "God in the plural form. Therefore, Christ is Deity, eternal as God the Father, and is His "only begotten."

God's Reliable Word

Luke 1:37 informs us that, "For with God nothing shall be impossible." Faith in the virgin birth is crucial to one's respect for the Bible! If the Bible says that Jesus was born of a virgin, He was born of a virgin! (God said it, and that settles it). The choice: believe or disbelieve God's Word.

If we reject the Biblical doctrine of the virgin birth; why believe the plan of salvation set forth in the Bible? (Mark 16:16; Matthew 7:21). Why respect Jesus' statement about the necessity of faith? "... If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins. (John 8:24). Why repent and be baptized? Acts 2:38 "Then Peter said unto them, repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..." If we reject the virgin birth why accept Biblical morality? (Titus 2:11-14). If we reject the virgin birth why accept the Biblical doctrine of the resurrection of the dead? (I Corinthians 15:12-19). You see, it wouldn't matter if one doesn't believe in the virgin birth or Christ' Deity. If we reject the virgin birth why accept the Biblical fact of a heaven prepared for faithful Christians? John 14:1-3 and Revelation 20:15 "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." There is one thing I do know, all those who do not believe in the virgin birth and Obey God's plan for becoming a Christian will not have their names in the "Book of Life." None of the things just mentioned amount to a "hill of beans" – if one doesn't believe in the virgin birth of Christ – just like the Bible records it!

Conclusion

Mary's response should be our reaction, "...be it unto me according to thy word...(Luke 1:38). We should respect Jesus was born of a virgin because He is the Son of God, and the Bible makes that clear. The virgin birth is but a verification of the unique nature of Jesus the Christ; Who is Deity, a part of the Godhead, eternal, and Savior to all who would obey Him!

Chapter Four

CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

Gary Grizzell

Introduction

It has been documented that wherever Christian missionaries go over the face of the globe, men of all cultures are found to have a belief in the supernatural.

When Paul, the apostle of Christ, came into first century Athens he discovered that men had erected idols to represent their concept of supernatural beings. He even noticed that they had erected an idol and placed the inscription on it which read, "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD" (Acts 17:22-23).

Today, in our own country and throughout the world the many religions that exist, serves as evidence that man (generally speaking) desires to believe there is a higher power in existence somewhere in the universe and beyond.

In view of the facts which exist, that is, 1) The universe about us exists, 2) The plant kingdom exists, 3) The animal kingdom exists, and 4) Man exists, and is a religious creature, someone may ask, does it really matter who or what each individual chooses to worship? Is one "God" as good as another? May not a religious people worship who or what it pleases?

The Object Of Worship Must Be

The Correct Object Of Worship

From the standpoint of the only standard in existence which has been proven to be the inspired Word of the true and living God, (the Bible, 2 Timothy 3:16-17), it DOES make a difference who or what one chooses to revere as one's higher power!

The "object" of worship is not a what but is a who! He is the true and living God. The Bible, which reveals the God of all creation, is that book which consists of 66 smaller books which make up God's total written revelation to man today (from Genesis to Revelation). He is the God of whom Moses wrote when he said, "In the beginning,

God created in the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). So, in the first verse of the first chapter of the first book of the Bible the existence of God is affirmed (by implication, Gen. 1:1).

He is the self-existing God of eternity (Isa. 57:15). When Moses was to lead the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage he asked God to reveal to him his identity. God answered and said, "I AM THAT I AM" (Exodus 3:14). Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, later would use this expression to refer to himself (John 8:58). When Jesus said this he was not saying that he and God the Father were one and the same person, but that he and His Father were of the same divine nature (there are three persons who make up the one God, 2 Corinthians 13:14; Philippians 2:5-6).

The Correct Standard Must Be Used

The Bible, both the Old Testament with its 39 books and the New Testament with its 27 books, affirm the existence of the God of Heaven. While God was to be worshipped according to His revealed pattern of worship during the Patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations, the New Testament of Jesus Christ reveals God's pattern of worship for Christ's church today. We are living during the Christian dispensation today and are required to worship according to the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9-11). On the day of judgment men now living will be judged by the words of Christ (John 12:48; Colossians 2:14).

In Acts chapter 17 Paul in his speech at Mars Hill taught that God will judge men who live during the Christian age by Jesus Christ. He stated, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained: whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31).

The apostles' doctrine mentioned in Acts 2:42 is called the doctrine of Christ in 2 John verse 9 and the law of Christ in Galatians 6:2. This is that standard which all spiritually responsible individuals must obey today (and until the end of time) in order to

be pleasing to God. It is to this law (the New Testament with its 27 books, Matthew through Revelation) that we are to look to find God's pattern of worship today.

God Seeks True Worshippers Today

When Jesus talked with the woman at the well, he stated, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24). This reveals that in God's thinking there are two major kinds of worship: 1) True Worship, and 2) False Worship. To worship refers to "an act of homage or reverence" ... "PROSKUNEO ... is the most frequent word rendered to worship," meaning, "to make obeisance, do reverence to" (W.E. Vine's Expository Dic. of Old and NT Words, World Bible Publishers, Iowa Falls, Iowa. 1981. p. 235). Before looking at what constitutes true worship (how to be a true worshipper); note the New Testament expressions for false worship that we should avoid:

Vain Worship

In the context of Matthew 15:1-9 vain worship takes place when men, although they worship the right God (the only God), 1) live hypocritically in their daily lives with regard to personal righteousness, and 2) when they teach for doctrines the commandments of men. When men are inconsistent in their application of God's Word (as in the case of the Pharisees condemning the apostles for eating with unwashed hands, while they themselves did not obey God's command to honor their parents), their worship is said to have been in vain. When men who lead God's people teach (on any day of the week) that which is false doctrine, their worship is in vain (empty) and therefore without God's approval. We must not support those who advocate false teaching. If we do then God will not accept our worship (Mt. 15:14).

Ignorant Worship

This is done when men worship something or someone other than the one true and living God. This was done at Mars' Hill when the people worshipped an idol with the

inscription, "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD" (Acts 17:23). It may be classified as ignorant worship when an unscriptural, unauthorized pattern of worship is practiced due to ignorance of the New Testament pattern of worship.

Will Worship

This is worship after man's own will as opposed to God's will. Note the problems with it according to God's inspired Word: (see chart below)

Will Worship

Colossians 2:18-23

- 18 - It is a voluntary humility.
- 18 - The true "object" of worship is neglected.
- 18 - It is the product of the imagination of the puffed-up mind.
- 19 - Those who practice it do not hold Christ, the head of the church, in his rightful position.
- 20, 22 - Makes followers subject to unscriptural ordinances.
- 23 - Such worship impresses the gullible, self-centered person, but it will not answer the spiritual needs of the soul.

True Worship

According to Jesus in John 4:23-24 true worship reveres the right being, "the Father." Christians on the first day of the week worship God the Father, through Christ. We honor Christ in worship when we worship God the Father THROUGH Jesus Christ. "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed by thy name" (Mt. 6:9). "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 3:14). Christ is the mediator, the go-between (I Tim. 2:5). He is the way to God the Father (Jn. 14:6).

There are two major ways that a true worshipper worships God the Father. These are as follows: (1) "in spirit" - i.e., rationally, and sincerely" (Guy N. Woods, *The Gospel According To John*. Gospel Advocate Co. Nashville, TN. 1981. p. 83). This is opposed to

the concept of living a wicked, immoral, rebellious life during the week, then pretending to offer to God in worship a holy, consecrated life (Rom. 12:1-2). One cannot live like an angel on Sunday and a devil on Monday if he expects his worship to be acceptable to God. God is not mocked (Gal. 6:7-8). The Christian is to be a living sacrifice in daily living so that when he comes before God in worship on the first day of the week he may worship sincerely (2) "in truth" — that is, according to the teaching of God's Word, the New Testament (Jn. 17:17). We must have New Testament authority for all we say and do in matters pertaining to salvation, Christianity and religion. THIS INCLUDES WORSHIP! (Col. 3:16-17).

Closer Look: Worshipping "In Truth"

God has always give a pattern for worship. He has not left man to make up his own way of worshipping. That would be will-worship (will worship is condemned in Col. 2:18-23). According to Hebrews 8:5 the Old Testament priests led the people in worship to God in harmony with the pattern God had shown to Moses. God told Moses how He wanted to be worshipped by the people of Israel (God's people, at that time). He told Moses to "make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount." So God gave tabernacle worship, which included many specific things (for example, the offering of animal sacrifices).

The Law of Moses is no longer binding. Colossians 2:14 says, "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." Just as the body of Jesus on the cross died, so the Law of Moses with its pattern for worship died in it's binding nature. "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should should take away sins" (Heb. 10:4). After God showed man certain concepts concerning redemption from sin (for example, that the shedding of blood was necessary to have forgiveness from sin; as Heb. 9:22 says, "... without the shedding of blood is no remission") by Old Testament worship, He ushered in the New Testament. Now men are taught to worship and serve God by it. Hebrews 9:13-15: "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of

Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance." Christians (not the meetinghouse where some Christians may assemble for worship) constitute God's church today (Acts 2:47; I Tim. 3:15). There are five divinely given acts of acceptable worship according to the New Testament pattern for worship. These are as follows:

Prayer - Acts 2:42

Public prayers were offered in worship on the first day of the week in the first century church. "And they continued stedfastly ... in prayers." Qualified Christian men are to lead prayers decently and in order (I Tim.2:8; I Cor. 14:40).

Vocal Congregational Singing - Ephesians 5:19

"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19). There are two kinds of music in existence today: 1) Vocal (with the human voice) and, 2) Instrumental (with a mechanical instrument). However, the Holy Spirit commanded only vocal music (with the human voice) and every Christian who has a voice is to sing. This rules out solos and choirs in the worship assembly. He revealed clearly that the instrument upon which one is to make melody is one's own heart. This is the reason there is absolutely no example of the early church on earth using harps, or any other mechanical instruments of music in worship to Deity. There is no direct command, approved account of action (example) or implication in the New Testament that authorizes mechanical instruments such as pianos, organs, guitars, drums, etc. to be acceptably used in the worship of God today (to accompany congregational singing). We must have authority from Jesus for whatever we do in worship to His Father (Col. 3:16-17; Mt. 28:18).

Preaching - Acts 20:7

Paul is seen in this passage preaching the gospel on the first day of the week during worship.

The Lord's Supper - Matthew 26:26-29

Acts 2:42 & Acts 20:7

The early church partook of the Lord's Supper every first day of the week. If a congregation of the Lord today does not do this every Sunday, that church is disobeying God. If an individual Christian fails to worship God in partaking of the Lord's supper (or any of the five acts of worship) each first day of the week, he sins. The faithful Christian wants to commemorate the Lord's death as God has commanded.

Contribution - I Corinthians 16:1-2

Each Christian in the first century church was to give of his financial means as God had prospered him. This was done each first day of the week.

Attend On A Regular Basis

First century Christians (and we today) were commanded not to forsake the assembling for worship on the first day of each week (Hebrews 10:25). Also, when the eldership (or leadership, that is, the men of the congregation wherein a plurality of men are not as yet qualified to be appointed as elders, I Tim. 3:1-7) scripturally appoints additional Bible Study periods (which falls into the area of expediency) with the decision to obligate all members to attend, all members who are physically capable will do so. Faithful Christians desire to "obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls" (Heb. 13:17).

Must Not Add To Or Take Away

Men today must not add to or take away from the revealed pattern for worship given in the New Testament! To do so is to incur the wrath of God. (Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:6 & Rev. 22:18-19). There are not six, sixteen or 60 acts of public worship. There are five and only five to be practiced by God's people today! God knows what kind of worship pleases Himself better than any man or group of men. A healthy respect for God's Word will go

far in seeking to be a true worshipper of God by following God's revealed pattern. As we practice true worship here on earth, we look forward to worshipping before the great white throne of God in Heaven in eternity (Rev. 4-5).

**If All The Christian Life
Is Worship, What Then?**

The inspired text of Luke 11:14-23 tells us that Jesus cast out a devil. Demon possession was on the scene of human history to glorify the power of Christ and prove his deity (Jn. 20:30-31; there is no demon possession today and we may resist the Devil expecting him to flee from us with no miracle required - James 4:7). After the demon was miraculously cast out the Bible says that the dumb spake. When the dumb spake, the people wondered. Not only did they wonder but some falsely accused Christ of working by the power of Beelzebub.

In Jesus' conversation with his critics, the Jews, the characteristics and tactics of His enemies are set forth by the inspired writer and may be observed by the careful Bible student. When one contemplates these attitudes, dispositions and attacks he cannot but note that these same characteristics are seen in enemies of Christians today.

Characteristic #1 — False Accusation — verse 15

Characteristic #2 — An Arrogant, Demanding Spirit —verse 16

Characteristic #3 — Irrationality in Reaching Their Conclusions — 17-18

Characteristic #4 — Inconsistency and Hypocrisy — 19

Characteristic #5 — Ignorance — 20

Consider characteristic #3 — Irrationality in Reaching Their Conclusions — 17-18: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house [divided] against a house falleth. If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub." By reaching conclusions by improper thinking and apparently trusting whatever thoughts popped into their heads, the people who had witnessed the Lord perform a marvelous miracle reasoned irrationally. Jesus exposed their irrational, contradictory thinking. Satan's business was to insert or infuse evil demons into a human being — NOT cast them out. Satan wanted

the devils in and would not have been "caught dead" ordering his messenger to cast them out. Anyone with half a brain should have been able to have seen Jesus' point on this.

Today, this is just as easy to do as it was then. To reason irrationally just trust in your feelings, your likes and dislikes, and your self-serving preferences. Consider your likes and dislikes over the written Word of the Living God. However, to reason logically practice Paul's admonition to the brethren at Thessalonica and prove all things (I Th. 5:21). After you have proved all positions (in regard to things necessary for salvation) by the New Testament, then hold fast (firmly) to the correctly interpreted will of God.

Proving all things by evidence is the nature of the work of the civil courts. This is good. Should not the practice of proving all things in the "court" of spiritual matters (matters pertaining to the eternal soul) necessitate the proper use of evidence as well? Most certainly! Jesus our Lord trusted in what was/is written for his conclusions (Mt. 4:1-11). So should men today. The Bereans are commended for both readiness of mind and their act of searching the Scriptures in order to reach the proper interpretation or understanding (Acts 17:10-12). When God's people today give a book, chapter and verse for what they believe, teach and practice in regard to salvation, Christianity and religion, it is unfair for denominationalists (those of man made religion) to irrationally accuse the church of being arrogant and high-minded. It is also wicked for liberals in the church today to depend on a so-called new hermeneutic to arrive at their unscriptural conclusions on essential matters! May we continue to make it known that faithful brethren intend to mark and avoid those who teach false doctrine (Rom. 16:17-18). However, we will not be surprised when such happens since we are no greater than our Lord who was so treated (Jn. 15:20).

In verse 19 Jesus challenged, "And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast [them] out? therefore shall they be your judges." Today, some have imitated this characteristic which Jesus' enemies possessed, that is, Irrationality in Reaching Their Conclusions, in concluding that all of the Christian life is worship. However, note below some ludicrous, ridiculous, unscriptural implications of this

doctrine. We will use the if that - then this form of argumentation that Jesus implemented with the Jews.

If It Is True That All Of A Christian's Life Constitutes "Worship" (except when sinning), Then:

1. When a group of Christians (separate and apart from the worship assembly where the Lord's Supper is taken) sing a secular (non-religious but morally pure) song, while playing musical instruments (such as the guitar, piano, flute) to accompany their singing, this using of mechanical instruments to accompany singing is acceptable worship to God. (But consider Eph. 5:19).
2. When intently watching a football game on TV, one may worship God without doing it "in spirit" (Jn. 4:24). (Jesus teaches that when scriptural worship takes place, it is to be done "in spirit" and "in truth" [Jn. 4:24]. The expression "in spirit" refers to sincerity of heart [mind] involving concentration and conscious purpose).
3. One may worship God while having no thought of glorifying God, but of only of enjoying himself in pure recreation. (read Jesus in John 4:24 -"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth").
4. The expression "public worship" is defined as every public scriptural action performed by an individual Christian each day he lives.
5. The expression "private worship" is defined as every private scriptural action performed by an individual Christian each day he lives.
6. The number of acts of worship are the number of authorized actions, both public and private, of the individual Christian.
7. The individual Christian determines the number of acts of worship each day by the number of authorized actions he can accomplish, no matter how mundane.
8. It is possible to perform 1,000 acts of worship in one day (or more). Some members of the church could probably bounce a tennis ball 1,000 times in a day, easy!
9. The pattern for worship becomes the daily behavior of the Christian, as opposed to a pattern revealed by an objective body of teaching. (But read Acts 2:42; 2 Jn. 9-11; Jn. 4:23-24).

10. There are other acts of worship to God other than prayer, singing spiritual songs, preaching, the Lord's Supper, and giving. These other acts include but are not limited to sleeping, walking and jogging.

11. Things we normally think of as mundane in nature do not tend to diminish the significance of these aforementioned divinely given five acts of worship.

12. When a football player (who happens to be a faithful Christian) catches a pass and runs for a touchdown to the cheering of the crowd, it is correct to say he performed an act of PUBLIC worship.

13. An example of the difference between private and public worship could be as follows: 1) The act (action) of blowing one's nose into a handkerchief in the confines of one's own house, and 2) The act (action) of blowing one's nose in a crowded elevator.

**If It Is True That All Behavior Which Gives "Glory" To God Constitutes
Worship To God, Then:**

1. Suffering persecution is worshipping God since (according to I Peter 4:14) it brings glory to God.
2. One begins his worship period the moment the persecution begins and ends his worship period the moment the persecution ends. The next authorized action he performs after the period of persecution is also worship, just a different level.
3. Being filled with the fruits of righteousness is equivalent to worshipping God since this is done unto the glory and praise of God (Phil.1:11). (In truth the expression, "Being filled with the fruits of righteousness" in this passage is equivalent to the concept of living a faithful Christian life that includes personal growth [which would include, but would not be limited to worship]).
4. The act of confessing Jesus Christ is Lord is equivalent to worshipping God, since this gives glory to God (Phil. 2:11). (In truth all scriptural worship gives glory to God, but not all behavior which gives glory to God is worship).
5. A sinner who confesses Jesus Christ is Lord prior to water baptism is worshipping God when making that good confession because confessing Christ gives glory to God.
6. The act of repentance gives God glory, therefore the act of repentance is worship. (Revelation 16:9 says: "And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the

name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory").

7. A sinner who is in the process of sincerely obeying the five steps of the plan of salvation is worshipping God when he repents {in compliance to Acts 2:38}.

8. God accepts the worship of a sinner who repents prior to his baptism. (Acts 2:38, 41).

9. Whenever the word "glory" is found in the New Testament it always connotes worship. This is worship language. Therefore, lilies worship God. (see Lu. 12:27 - "Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his GLORY was not arrayed like one of these." The word "glory" is from the same Greek word as in I Cor. 10:31. Matthew's account reads: "And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his GLORY was not arrayed like one of these"; {Mt. 6:29}. "Glory" here is from same Greek word as is found in I Cor. 10:31).

10. Alien sinners in Acts 4:21 were worshipping God simply by giving God the credit for the healing of a lame man. (Acts 4:21 - "So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done." The expression "all men" refers to two general classes here: 1) Christians present who knew of the miracle accomplished, and 2) Alien sinners present who knew of the miracle accomplished. These alien sinners are said to have "glorified God").

If It Is True That All Behavior Which Constitutes "Sacrifice" Connotes

Worship, Then:

1. The "spiritual sacrifices" of I Peter 2:5 are not defined as the positive, planned good works (as in Titus 3:8; James 1:27 & Gal. 6:10) done by Christians, as opposed to behavior consisting of the incidental (or mundane) activities of life. By incidental I refer to sleeping, necessary bodily functions and such like. I Peter 2:5 says, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

2. Jesus was worshipping every minute while on the cross because he was our sacrifice while on the cross. (Hebrews teaches the following about Jesus as our sacrifice: "he offered up himself" — 7:27; "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" — 9:26; "a body

hast thou prepared" — 10:5; "offered one sacrifice for sins for ever" — 10:12. Paul declares in Ephesians 5:2 that "Christ ... hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.")

3. A Christian is to offer praise to God with his lips every minute of every day. (Hebrews 13:16 says, "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name." Since figurative language is now left up to the individual to define, it may be argued that "continually" is to be interpreted literally).

4. Paul's sacrifice of time and hard work in preaching in behalf of the faith of the Philippians was an act of worship and was an act of worship toward the Philippians. (see Phil. 2:17 — "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all").

5. The "sacrifice" of the Philippians, that is, the sending of the messenger, Epaphroditus, was an act of worship. (Philippians 4:18 says, "But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God" — Note: It is not the contribution per se but the action of the church in sending this messenger to which the reader's attention is directed).

What Does Romans 12:1 Really Mean?

There is not one shred of evidence in the New Testament which authorizes any man living to teach that all the Christian life is one continual worship service to God, with the tacked on disclaimer: except when sinning. Those who claim Romans 12:1 teaches it ignore the context of Paul's statements. The King James Version states, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, [which is] your reasonable service."

Paul commands the Christian to be a living sacrifice, that is, one who is holy due to the fact that he daily refuses to conform to the sinful standards of the world but instead seeks to daily live out the will of God in his life. He is able to do this due to the fact that he does what Paul taught in Romans 12:2, that is, he daily transforms his mind with the

Word of God. By doing this he proves what is that good, acceptable and perfect will of God.

Is The Action Of Being A Living Sacrifice To Be Ongoing?

Answer: Another way of saying what Paul is teaching in Romans 12:1 is found in Titus 2:12 where Paul taught Christians that they are required to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world, that is, live a faithful Christian life. Specifically Paul wrote, "Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." So, to answer the question, the requirement to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world is ongoing.

Is Being A Living Sacrifice To Be Turned On And Off?

The requirement to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world is not to be turned on and off (Titus 2:12). The need to do God's will is a daily, ongoing requirement. Luke 9:23 says, "And he said to [them] all, If any [man] will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."

Faithful Christian living is not to be turned on and off like a water faucet. Instead, one is to be faithful until death or even unto death (Rev. 2:10 — "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast [some] of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life").

What Is The Meaning Of "Sacrifice?"

In Romans 12:1 the Greek word *thusia* is used by the inspired apostle Paul. W.E. VINE says of the word "sacrifice" — "Greek: *thusia*, primarily denotes "the act of offering;" then, objectively, "that which is offered" ...(d) metaphorically, (1) of the body of the believer, presented to God as a living "sacrifice," Rom. 12:1; (2) of faith, Phil. 2:17; (3) of material assistance rendered to servants of God, Phil. 4:18; (4) of praise, Heb. 13:15; (5) of doing good to others and communicating with their needs, Heb. 13:16; (6) of spiritual "sacrifices" in general, offered by believers as a holy priesthood, 1 Pet. 2:5."

You will note that the word "sacrifice" in Romans 12:1 is a figure of speech, a metaphor.

Is Sacrifice "Worship?"

All worship is sacrifice (service), but not all sacrifice (service) is worship. Note Philippians 2:17 - "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all." Paul sacrificed himself on behalf of the upbuilding of the faith of his brethren in Philippi. The text says that he also served them. If "sacrifice" always connotes "worship" was Paul worshipping the Philippians? No. Should one take the position he was worshipping God by sacrificing himself in his effort to benefit the Philippians? No, his sacrificing of himself in this passage is said to be on behalf of (toward) the brethren.

What about proper hermeneutics in interpreting the meaning of the word "sacrifice" in Romans 12:1? The context will bring out the prominent meaning of a word used. Paul tells us in Romans 12:1 what he meant by the use of the word "sacrifice" (12:1a) when he stated this was the Christian's reasonable "service" (12:1b).

Is it not the case that the prominent meaning of a word must be determined by the way the inspired writer uses it in its context? Are we allowing the context to determine the prominent meaning of "sacrifice" in Romans 12:1? "The metaphor is briefer and more pungent than the simile. On that account the ancients more frequently used it. It presents characteristics by the means of a representative of the thought that is intended to be conveyed, by calling one thing by another term which denotes the characteristic which is to be made prominent." (D.R. Dungan, Hermeneutics, Chapter IX. p. 252).

Complete surrender to the will of God is the prominent meaning of the word "sacrifice" in Romans 12:1. Under the Law of Moses when a lamb was offered as a burnt offering, it submitted to complete surrender. Likewise, the Christian is to be completely surrendered in his love, affection and allegiance to God.

Paul in Romans 12:2 defines what he means by his use of the expression, "a living sacrifice" (12:1). Romans 12:1-2 in the immediate context explains, sheds light on and simply interprets Romans 12:1 for us. We do not need to wonder what is meant by "a

living sacrifice" when we continue to read contextually beyond the expression "a living sacrifice."

Additionally, some specifics for practical Christian living constitutes the application found in Romans 12:3-21. The flow of thought is that one who lives soberly, righteously and godly (as a living sacrifice) will put these character-building principles into effect.

Being a living sacrifice involves periodic worship, but is not limited to worship. Let's beware of those who try to change what the will of the Lord is in regard to worship. (Mt. 7:15). Let us worship God in spirit (in sincerity of mind) and in truth (in harmony with the doctrine of Christ and the five acts of worship revealed) (Jn. 4:23-24). Only then may we be called true worshippers.

One brother made the statement in regard to Romans 12:1 —
"The living sacrifice is service. Sacrifice connotes worship. The presenting our very souls to God as a sacrifice is worship. That is what it is! Paul said so." (Buster Dobbs, Firm Foundation, editorial. Feb. 1999).

In his statement, "Sacrifice connotes worship," the brother implies that all sacrifice (Christian service) constitutes worship. However, according to the New Testament and in contradistinction to this brother: All worship is sacrifice (Christian service), but not all sacrifice (Christian service) is worship!

Proof: This is the case since the word "sacrifice" in the New Testament does not always connote worship as this brother implies! ("connotes" - "to be associated with or inseparable from" - Merriam-Webster Dic.). In Philippians 2:17 Paul wrote: "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice [thusia] and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all." Here is a sacrificing (a servicing) which was not directed toward God and clearly did not connote worship. It was a sacrifice which was directed toward assisting the Philippian brethren. (Now compare the Greek word for "sacrifice" [thusia] in Romans 12:1). (Strong's & Vine's).

Logicians describe such misguided reasoning as the fallacy of thought termed the fallacy of the accident. "The fallacy of the accident consists in tacitly supposing as always true what is true only under certain circumstances." (A.C. Cotter, S.J., Logic and

Epistemology. The Stratford Co. Boston, Massachusetts. 1938. p. 73). Let us pray that the readers of the Firm Foundation will carefully note the departure of the editor on this vital issue. Additionally, faithful brethren do not believe (as brother Lindell Mitchell presently advocates in his defense of brother Dobbs), that this matter is one of senseless controversy and nonessentiality. Shame on this or any other brother for even suggesting such! The issue of what constitutes worshipping in spirit and in truth is an essential one in that God has given men His pattern (Jn. 4:23-24; 2 Jn. 9-11). When God specifies something, that excludes everything else. It will take more than a mere profession of respect for God's Word in resolving any confusion along these lines. (Mt. 28:18; Col. 3:17).

Other Questions Considered

When Abraham said he and Isaac would "go yonder and worship" what was he planning to do? The statement referred to is Genesis 22:5 — "And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you."

The question really should be: what do we believe Abraham was doing while traveling to the place of worship? Was he worshipping on the way to worship? If one believes that those who lived under the old systems were worshipping in all they did (except while sinning), then they must believe also that Abraham was worshipping at the very moment he was planning to "go yonder and worship." Such is inconsistent with both New Testament and Old Testament teaching. It is hedonistically irrational.

Abraham was planning to sacrifice his son as God had specifically instructed him to do. (Gen. 22:2 - "a burnt-offering"). Christ is our sacrifice today (Eph. 5:2; Heb. 9:23).

What Does The Word Translated "glory" In 1 Cor. 10:31 Mean?

W.E. Vine's says of the Greek word: doxa — "glory" (from dokeo, "to seem"), primarily signifies an opinion, estimate, and hence, the honor resulting from a good opinion.

In the context of what Paul was saying in I Cor. 10:31 the word is simply used synonymously with honour. This is the author's position (interpretation) after studying the definition of the word "glory" itself and how Paul used it in the context. All authorized worship gives glory, but not all behavior which gives glory is worship.

In Matthew 5:16 Jesus teaches that good works done by His authority give glory to God, but this verse is not in the specific context of worship to God (not until verses 23-24 does Jesus mention the altar). (Mt. 5:16 says — "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven"). Is the only time men may let their light shine when in worship? The "all the Christian life is worship, except while sinning" position implies this. Is the only time men may do good works in the name of Christ while in worship? Again, the aforementioned position implies such.

Consider also Philippians 2:14-15 — "Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world." The context is not discussing worship but being obedient to God in daily living. This would include one's behavior in worship but would not be limited to behavior while in worship. The context does matter. Is it the case that a son of God, while living amidst a perverse nation, cannot shine as a light in the world except while in worship? The "all the Christian life is worship, except while sinning" position implies such.

At What Point Or Time In A Christian's Life Should He Have No Thought Of Glorifying God?

A Christian should seek to live soberly, righteously and godly each day in this present world. This is synonymous with being a living sacrifice. Being a living sacrifice includes, but is not limited to — worshipping God. All worship is service to God, but not all service is worship (Phil. 2:17 - "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all"). Paul himself wrote that being a living sacrifice is service (Rom. 12:1, KJV). He did not limit service to worship in Romans 12:1.

Consider the practical aspects of behavior. Someone asks, "At what point or time in a Christian's life should he have no thought of glorifying God?"

Figurative language must be understood. I Thessalonians 5:16 teaches in figurative language: "Rejoice evermore." To interpret "evermore" literally is to make a mistake. Practically speaking, it is humanly impossible to occupy the human mind with only thoughts of rejoicing. There must be time for mourning as well. There must be time for weeping with those who weep. (Rom. 12:15 — "weep with them that weep"; James 4:9 — "Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness"). So the context of the New Testament helps us to understand what this beautiful expression means. Likewise, the context should be consulted when determining what "a living sacrifice" means in Rom. 12:1.

Consider also this excellent command: "Pray without ceasing" (I Th. 5:17). The expression, "without ceasing," is to be understood figuratively, not literally. It is a hyperbole, that is, a gross exaggeration because of intense emotion. One may pray without ceasing if he does his praying as God intended. However, it is humanly impossible to pray without ceasing if one interprets this expression literally to mean, pray without stopping to eat, to sleep, to give oneself to family responsibilities or to undergo necessary bodily functions. We understand that this does not mean that a person is to pray every minute to the exclusion of other duties God enjoins upon him.

Faithfulness to God's will is to be without ceasing. Note Colossians 1:23 — "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel." Periodic stops are not authorized in the word "continue" in regard to faithfulness. However, practically speaking, just as eating and sleeping are to be periodic, just so, worship to God is to be periodic (Heb. 10:25; Jn. 4:23-24; Acts 20:7). So, the ongoing state of faithfulness contains periodic happenings.

"Do all to the glory of God." This may be done. However, it is unrealistic, impractical and foolish to believe one can think upon glorifying God every minute of every day. "A doctrine or attitude is practically impossible if it cannot be carried out in practice; e.g. the advice to stop breathing." (Cotter, p. 109). One does not do this in his

sleep. One would likely be run over by a car while crossing a busy street were he to try to think upon glorifying God every minute of every hour, of every day, of every year, of his whole life. Likely, the trip into the unseen realms of eternity would come much sooner than expected were such alone to try to so live here upon this earth. One may do all to the glory of God by interpreting this command as simply meaning to live a faithful Christian life!

**Is The Christian To Be Offering His Body
A Living Sacrifice Without Interruption?**

The Christian is to soberly, righteously and godly in this present world each day, i.e. as long as he has breath in his body and has control of his mental faculties (Titus 2:12; Mk. 14:8).

**Does A Christian Offer His Body As A Living Sacrifice Without Interruption
When He Plays Basketball?**

When a Christian engages in authorized recreation his behavior is to reflect one who truly lives soberly, righteously and godly (Titus 2:12). With pure speech, balanced temperament (as one imitating Christ) and by practicing the golden rule, he reflects one who is a living sacrifice to God (Mt. 5:13-16; 7:12; Phil. 2:5).

**Is The Believer To Live His Whole Life
As A Sacrifice To God Except
When He Plays Basketball?**

The Christian is to live soberly, righteously and godly at all times. One is to live a faithful Christian life while engaging in all authorized behavior (in family life, in public life and private life). (Luke 9:23; Titus 2:12).

Concluding Remarks

Any doctrine that implies a false doctrine is false within itself. This principle is learned from Jesus in Luke 11:17-18. Earlier, it was seen that Jesus overcame the irrationality of his critics by showing that if what they were saying was true, then a fatal

false doctrine was implied. Likewise, when the false position about worship discussed in the foregoing material is reduced to its absurd implications, it is found to be no more than theological rubbish! May we be not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is (Eph. 5:17). For we can do nothing against the truth but for the truth (2 Cor. 13:8).

Chapter Five

THE GODHEAD

Mark Lance

Introduction

A study of the Godhead is a study that has been neglected by most, and often those who have studied and taught on the subject have misunderstood the true meaning of the Godhead as it is found in the Bible.

Anytime a subject as important as the one before us is misunderstood it will likely lead to our misunderstanding of other important Bible subjects. In the study that is to follow, we will look at various aspects of the Godhead, which should help us have a better understanding of the subject. We will notice first that God (the Godhead) does exist. Then we will see that all three entities of the Godhead had a part in man's existence, as well as his salvation. How the Godhead dwells in man will be an important part of this study. Finally, we will look at some of the false teaching on the subject as taught by the Pentecostals and how this teaching can be addressed.

The Godhead Does Exist

In a lot of our public school systems as well as universities across the country, our young people are being taught the false theory of evolution. We have reaped the sad rewards in this country of that line of reasoning. If God does not exist and man simply evolved, then there is no hope of heaven, no moral standard, nor is there even a reason to care. But contrary to what the self-proclaimed elite have shoved down the throats of our children; God does exist.

The Bible starts out by simply stating, "*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*" (Genesis 1:1). This is stated as fact. No arguments are given here, only the plain and simple fact that God is. The evidence is irrefutable. There is a creation that demands that there is a Creator. The Psalmist wrote, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork", and again the Psalmist wrote,

"Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture" (Psalms 19:1; 100:3).

No, we cannot see God, but the evidence around us proves that God exists beyond a shadow of a doubt. Man has to look no further than himself to see that God exists; for how could something as complex as the human body just come into existence from nothing. The Psalmist also penned these words, *"I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well"* (Psalms 139:14). When a man considers all that is around him, he cannot but acknowledge the existence of God. How could anyone go outside on a starlit night and see the moon and stars and think it all just happened. The complex world in which we live demands a Creator. The evidence just given may indeed prove the existence of God, but the question that is vital to our study is how can there be one God and yet three different personalities? Sometimes the word trinity is used in reference to the Godhead. We will admit that the word trinity is not found in the Bible, but the thought of it is. The word trinity simply means three.

In Genesis, the writer Moses wrote the following, *"And God said, Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness"* (Genesis 1:26). We can see here the plural term "we" is used. There is more than one personage in the Godhead. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for God is **Elohim**. This word is in the plural form, which proves that there is more than just one entity of the Godhead. Brother Ted L. Clarke in the *Fulton County Gospel News* wrote concerning Genesis 1:26 that "the plurality" of this verse cannot be God speaking to the angels because Colossians 1:16 says that Christ created everything that was created.ⁱ

A very clear picture is given to us in the New Testament that shows all of the members of the Godhead. This is seen when John the Immerser baptized God the Son. After Jesus was baptized, God the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove and a voice came from God the Father out of heaven, saying, *"This is my beloved Son in thee I*

am well pleased" (Luke 3:21,22). This is one of the passages that clearly show the three distinct personalities of the Godhead.

Some have tried to discredit God by saying that you cannot see Him. It must be remembered that God is a Spirit and does not have flesh and bones (John 4:24). God must not be spoken of in a lighthearted way as so many do today. "*The God that made the world and all things therein, he, being Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands, Neither is he served by men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things*" (Acts 17:24,25).

All three of the Godhead: the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are three real, living, and distinct personalities that deserve our utmost respect. Yes, the fact that they are referred to in the masculine sense in the Bible must be pointed out in a time when feminists are attacking everything the Bible teaches. Some would have us to believe that God can be referred to in a feminine sense, but every time, with no exceptions, the inspired word of God shows that God is always in the masculine sense.

The Godhead and the Creator

We noticed earlier the Godhead in creation (Genesis 1:26), but let us go a little further. In Genesis chapter one, we see that God created light, the firmament, the dry land, the grass, the trees, the sun, moon and stars, and God's greatest creation of all- man. It has already been pointed out that the Hebrew word for God, Elohim, is a plural term, which shows all three of the Godhead were involved in creation.

Mankind is the offspring of the Godhead according to the scriptures. "*Forasmuch as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto silver or stone, graven by art and man's device*" (Acts 17:29). Brother H. Leo Boles wrote the following concerning that verse. "Godhead" literally means "the Divine." It comes from the Greek, "*to theion,*" and means the Divine nature like "*theiotes.*" Some think that Paul used "*to theion*" here to get back behind all their notions of various gods to the real nature of God. . The Divine nature of God cannot be like "gold, silver, or stone, graven

by art and device of man." The "Godhead" includes God the Creator, Christ the Saviour and the Holy Spirit; these cannot be represented by any material thing. ⁱⁱ

The Apostle Paul wrote further concerning the Godhead when he wrote to the Romans. "*For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse*" (Romans 1:20). Brother James W. Boyd wrote: "Paul speaks of the "invisible things of him," referring to certain unseen realities of God that have always been true and discernible even though invisible. These realities that have always been true are named as His eternal power and Godhead, having reference to His divine nature. "The things that are made" means the realm of nature and creation. Since the creation, men could have looked upon what has been created and concluded there is a Supreme Being, there is a God of power and divinity. It has also been stated and justly so: "Nature declares **God is**, and the Bible declares **Who He is.**" ⁱⁱⁱ

No, we cannot look at nature and see who God is, for we must go to God's word, the Bible, to find those answers, but we can see from nature that God does exist. How could anyone be so foolish to believe in the false theory of evolution?

The Godhead and Man's Salvation

It must be pointed out here that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are equal, and all three are Divine in nature. Sometimes it seems people have placed more importance on one member of the Godhead over the other.

This is a mistake since all three members of the Godhead are of equal importance in the salvation of man. Some religious groups such as Oneness Pentecostals have place more emphasis on Jesus than the other members of the Godhead. Others have shifted more importance on the Holy Spirit than on God the Father or Jesus Christ. We are told we must simply have the Holy Spirit in us with a direct influence on the heart of man separate and apart from the word of God in order to be saved. This has caused no small problem in the church today, let alone among the denominations. While some have put

too much emphasis on the Holy Spirit, others have almost failed to acknowledge the holy Spirit as a being (Him) of the Godhead.

Anytime we go to any extreme on the subject of the Godhead, or any other subject that pertains to God and His word, we will have problems in the religious world in general, and in the church in particular. When we read the word **God** in the Bible it can refer to any member of the Godhead (John 4:23-24; John 20:26-28; Acts 5:3-4).

Man's redemption has always been in the mind of God from the very beginning of time. Notice what Paul wrote to the Ephesians: "*To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Ephesians 3:10,11). The church which was purchased with the blood of Christ for man's salvation (Acts 20:28) was no afterthought due to the Jews' rejection of Christ, but was in the mind of God from the beginning of time. It was a plan that could only be designed by the mind of God, and it could only be carried out by God.

We see in the scriptures that the Father had a role in the salvation of man. "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*" (John 3:16). God the Father cared so much for His creation called mankind that He was willing to give His only begotten Son to set man free from the grasp that Satan had upon him. It is hard to imagine the depth of God's love. We would not want to give one of our children up to die even for a good person, let alone someone convicted of murder or rape. Yet God did send His Son who is the Saviour of the world to die in our place. Jesus Christ was the only one who could pay the price that must be paid. Should not the Father's love impress upon us to whom our loyalty belongs while we are upon this earth?

Could we not be willing to give up our own will in order to serve a Father who loved us so much? Is it so much trouble just to show up for services? Is it really hard to turn off the TV in order to study the Bible or teach our children about God and how we should live? Is it really so hard to give as we should? Is it really hard to forgive a

brother or sister who has repented? Is it really hard to admit when we have sinned and ask God and whomever else we have sinned against to forgive us? Is it really that hard to continue to preach and teach God's word because some have rejected us? Are we really so hard-pressed to find the funds to send people out to the mission fields when it is obvious that we have the funds to do whatever else we please?

Do you know why some people won't be in heaven? Oh, I know we can answer because of sin, or because they will not repent. If we do not enjoy being in the company of fellow Christians now, and if we do not want to be in the worship services where God is being worshipped now, what makes us think that God would allow us into heaven? And furthermore, why would such a person want to go to heaven? They would not like it anyway. If attending services one hour a week makes us faithful, why does it not make us faithful employees when we show up for work one day a week? That sure is strange reasoning to me. Do we not condone such actions when we allow such people to have an active part in the services when they have shown no intention of changing? The Bible says, "*For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's*" (I Corinthians 6:20). Yes, the love of God demands our loyalty. We would not be saved without that love.

The scriptures teach us that Jesus Christ had a great part in our salvation. In Luke chapter 23, you can read of Jesus being crucified. Jesus was first willing to leave the glory of heaven. When you stop and think about it, our ultimate goal is to make it to heaven. We think about heaven being a place where there will be no more sorrow, pain, trials, and tribulations; there will only be peace and happiness. We can leave all the troubles of this world behind. Yet Jesus left heaven and came to earth where He was rejected by His own people (John 1:11). Jesus came with love to save the souls of men, but some disciples turned away from Him (John 6:66). Finally, Jesus paid the ultimate price on the cross when He could have called angels to set Him free (Matthew 26:53). Jesus loved man so much and He knew the price must be paid so He gave His life on the

cross to set us free (John 19:30). The love of the Son of God that made salvation possible should cause us to humble ourselves in submission to God.

The Holy Spirit played a key role in the salvation of man. "*But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you* (John 14:26). Without the Holy Spirit the apostles would not have been able to do the preaching of the gospel. "*But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth*" (Acts 1:8). Without the work of the Holy Spirit, Peter could not have preached the first gospel sermon on the day of Pentecost, the writers of the Bible could not have penned the pages of the Bible, and man could not have the opportunity to obey God's plan of salvation.

We see from these passages that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have a part in the salvation of man.

How Does the Godhead Dwell in Man?

This subject is causing a lot of discussion today. Some are teaching (even in the Lord's church) that the Godhead works directly upon the heart of man in bringing about his salvation. This is an old teaching of Calvinism, which has been successfully refuted in the past and must be refuted in the present time, as well as the future.

The question is not whether or not God dwells in man because the Bible says very plainly that He does. "*Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him*" (John 14:23). The real question is **how** does the Godhead dwell in man. Those who attempt to use the previous verse to say that God dwells in us, must admit that the verse says that God dwells in us, but does not tell us how He does. We must look to other scriptures to show us how God dwells in us.

How can we know God does not dwell within man literally? When Jesus was teaching His disciples to pray, He told them to say, "*Our Father which art in heaven,*

Hallowed be thy name" (Matthew 6:9). If God literally dwells within us, there would have been no need to pray to the Father in heaven, if He had been in them. When we read of the prayer of Jesus in John 17, why did Jesus pray to the Father in heaven, if he was already literally in Jesus? It would make no sense.

Does Christ dwell within us? No doubt about it! We read "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27). This verse shows Christ dwells in us, but we must look elsewhere to see how He dwells in us. Let us now look at how Christ dwells in us. Notice, "That Christ may dwell within your heart **by faith**: that ye being rooted and grounded in love (Ephesians 3:17). We know that Christ does dwell in us, but that it is by faith, not a literal indwelling or emotional feeling.

Now what about the Holy Spirit? Does He dwell within the Christian? "*But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of God, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you*" (Romans 8:9-11). How does the Spirit do what it does? Notice the following chart:

The Work of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God

Holy Spirit	←How they work→	Word of God
Nehemiah 9:30	Instructs	II Timothy 3:16
John 3:5	Begets	I Corinthians 4:15
John 3:5	Birth	I Peter 1:23
John 6:63	Quickens	John 6:63
John 14:26	Teaches	John 6:45
John 16:8	Convicts	Titus 1:9
Acts 9:31	Comforts	I Thessalonians 4:18
Romans 5:5	Gives love	I John 2:5
I Corinthians 6:11	Saves	Acts 11:14
I Corinthians 6:11	Washes	Ephesians 5:26
I Peter 1:2	Sanctifies	John 17:17
Romans 8:2	Makes free	John 8:32
John 16:7-8	Converts	Psalms 19:7
Ephesians 3:16	Strengthens	Deuteronomy 11:8
Ephesians 5:18-19	Dwells	Colossians 3:16
Romans 8:14	Leads	Psalms 119:105

Some raise the question- If God only works through the word (and He does) upon the heart of a Christian why should we bother praying? It must be realized that God can answer prayer **without** directly working on the heart of a Christian. Those who correctly teach that God works through the word only are not limiting God. It is those who teach that God must work directly on the heart separate and apart from the word of God who have limited Him.

False Teaching on the Godhead

The Oneness Pentecostals have misapplied Colossians 2:9, which states, "*For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.*" They misuse this verse to teach that

since the fullness of the Godhead is in Jesus, then there is no one else in the Godhead but Jesus.

Brother Billy Bland wrote the following concerning this false teaching: "This verse (Colossians 2:9) is affirming that Christ is not lacking in the quality of the Godhood. All the fullness of the Godhead (Godhood) dwelt bodily in Jesus Christ. Paul is refuting the various erroneous philosophies (such as early Gnosticism), which affirmed that the flesh was the seat of sin. According to these false philosophies, God could not have come in the flesh, since according to them, the flesh was evil. Paul refutes such by affirming that Christ was not lacking in any quality of the Godhead. ^v

Another false teaching promotes that since the Bible says there is only one God, then there cannot be three distinct personalities in one God.

It is true that the Bible teaches there is one God, but not in the sense that the Oneness Pentecostals teach (Ephesians 4:6). God refers to Deity rather than to a number, as has been pointed out earlier in our study. There is one Divine nature, but three different persons. This can easily be seen in Matthew chapter three. Jesus had been baptized by John; He then sees the Spirit descending like a dove, and then hears the voice of the Father from heaven. We see all three of the Godhead in this Bible scene. WE can also note John 17. Jesus was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane here on earth to the Father who was in heaven. Now was he praying to Himself since there is only one God? Of course not! That would not make any sense.

I pointed out this fact to a member of the Oneness Pentecostal church during a Bible study. She responded by saying, "Well, I can be a mother and a daughter and I am still just one person. But she failed to recognize that she cannot be her **own** mother or daughter. Did God send His only begotten **Self** to die for the sins of man, or did He send His only begotten Son (John 3:16)?"

Conclusion

The last argument we will look at is the idea that we must be baptized in the name of Jesus only and not the Father, Son or Holy Spirit. When we are baptized in the name

of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; it is by the authority of Jesus (Matthew 28:19). We have never been given a word-for-word guide that the apostles used when they baptized someone. When we go back to the Bible, and the Bible only, the false arguments of mankind will be soundly defeated.

ⁱ Ted J. Clarke, Fulton County Gospel News, June 1999.

ⁱⁱ H. Leo Boles, Acts of the Apostles, Gospel Advocate Commentary Series; (Nashville, Tennessee: Gospel Advocate Company, 1941), 282.

ⁱⁱⁱ James W. Boyd, System of Salvation, Comments on Romans; (Nashville, Tennessee: Williams Printing Company, 1990), 12.

^{iv} Notes from class on the Holy Spirit. Taught by Keith Mosher, Memphis School of Preaching, 1998.

^v Billy Bland, The Godhead: A Study of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, B.J. Clarke, Lectureship Director;(Southaven, Mississippi, 1998), p. 432.

Chapter Six

CHRISTIAN DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

(Fight for the Woman, Brother!)

Darrell Broking

Introduction

The kingdom of Christ is blessed by this fine congregation and her influence toward both the lost and the saved. It is an honor and a privilege to speak on the Second Annual Greater Murfreesboro Area Lectureship. Thank you for this tremendous opportunity and for this tremendous subject.

Christianity is the most blessed way of life ever known to men. In fact, all those who lived and died before the last Pentecost of the Jewish economy could only receive salvation in prospect. But "*there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*" (Rom. 8:1). Friends, this is the greatest news even grasped by the mortal ear and preached by the mortal tongue! Paul referred to this way of life as "*so great salvation*" (Heb. 2:3). Know this dear Christian friend, "*unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required*" (Luke 12:48).

One of the deepest and most wonderful chapters of the Bible must be Revelation 12. Those who like their history boiled down and condensed to its focal point, love Revelation 12. This great chapter of the Bible has much more to say about Christian duty and responsibility than many realize. You see, the woman fled into the wilderness; she was, and is, at war with the old serpent; and, Christians now have the awesome responsibility to fight for her!

The Woman Flew Into The Wilderness (Rev. 12:1-6)

John saw a great wonder in heaven (v. 1). The word "wonder" translates a Greek word meaning, "a sign, wonder, remarkable event, wonderful appearance, extraordinary phenomenon." ⁱ That remarkable event was foretold in Genesis 3:15: "*And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*" Yes, during the starlight age there was a twinkle and glimmer of hope! This hope began to grow brighter in the moonlight age of the Jewish economy. Isaiah wrote about the "sign" and the "Wonderful" one (Isa. 7:14; 9:6). Jeremiah's prophetic scope caught a glimmer of the sign in the moon's light (Jer. 31:22).

The sign burst forth with hope in her arms, when the Sun light age of Christianity was ushered into the world. This woman must represent the covenant people of God in all ages (also see Isaiah 66:7-8). Man's only hope was, and is, in the "sign." The sign is the "seed of the woman" or "Christ" (Gal. 3:16). As hard as Satan tried, he could not devour the man child who was to rule! Through Jesus' death, burial and resurrection, Satan was given that crushing blow (Gen. 3:15; Heb. 2:12; Rom. 1:4). Jesus burst forth from the Hadean realm as the "victor of the dark domain." After Jesus had received his kingdom he could say; "*I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death*" (Rev. 1:18). Now the wounded serpent howls in bitter defeat, and seeks to destroy the woman which brought the man child into the world, God's covenant people. The church!

The Woman Was, And Is, At War With Satan (Rev. 12:12-17)

Some Christians spiritually wilt before they flourish because they can not or will not deal with persecution (Matt. 13:21). First century gospel preachers told their hearers about Christian duty in the Lord's army (Eph. 6:10-18; 2 Tim. 2:3-4). Preachers and teachers leave their work (converts) open to the devil's attacks when they fail to teach about the reality of persecution, and Christian duty in the Lord's army. Americans do not

experience the harsh physical persecutions other Christians have experienced. However, persecution manifests itself in many different forms.

Could Jesus have illustrated the seriousness of the war between Satan and the church any clearer than he did with these words: "*And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ*" (Rev. 12:17). Satan's battle is now against the remnant of God's people. Maybe brethren who never face trials because of Christ, should go back and re-study what it means to love the Lord (John 14:15; 15:14). Satan does not have to fight against those who do not keep the commandments of God.

Christians Now Have The Awesome Responsibility To Fight For The Woman -- The Church!

Basically life is good here in America. People who want to work find employment. Technology has provided many Americans with "modern conveniences" unparalleled in human history. It seems that the more America is blessed, the stronger the opposition against the church in America becomes. The serpent of old attacks the church from without and from within. Has there ever been a time in this country when loyalty to the local congregation has been weaker than today? Some Christians have become so enthralled with having and obtaining goods, and recreating, that they just do not have the time nor the desire to work with their local congregations. By weakening congregations from within, Satan leaves them open to attacks from without!

Many parents push their children to excel in school, but rarely give any thought to the essentially of Bible study. Children are taught to seek happiness through so called "secular success," and the church is forgotten. ⁱⁱ Children are taught to go to the world for "fun", and the church is forgotten. ² Children are taught to fit in and be socially acceptable to their peers, and the concept of a "peculiar" people is forgotten (1 Pet. 2:9-10). Yet, the **woman** fled into the wilderness to be nourished, not forgotten. Christians are new creatures in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). New creatures have been created to walk in

good works, which have been prepared by the Lord (Eph. 2:10). Friends, the church is to be the totem poll of the Christian's life, not just the bottom face on the poll.

"And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood" (Rev. 12:15). Water probably represents the world according to Revelation 17:1, 15. Satan's best attack against the church is always the world. Instead of being like the world, the church needs to be like Christ and rise above the flood of the world's influence. Christians who are true to their duties and responsibilities will overcome the trials of this life.

What are some of the duties of Christians so essential to being victorious with Christ? First of all, one must love, honor, praise and glorify God. This first priority can not be fulfilled outside of the church of Christ: *"Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen"* (Eph. 3:21).

Secondly, Christians are people who study God's book, the Bible. Bible study is essential to one's preparation to fight the good fight of faith. Those who do not prepared themselves for trials in life will sink in the flood (Rev. 12:15). Sinking in the flood of ungodliness has bitter consequences: *"And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes"* (Luke 12:47). It is impossible to transform as expected by the Lord, without first learning what pleases God. Paul wrote, *"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God"* (Rom. 12:2). In another place he wrote: *"Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is"* (Eph. 5:17).

In the third place, Christian duty involves purity of speech. Much of the world's ungodliness is not fit to be amplified over a Christian's vocal cords: *"For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret"* (Eph. 5:12). If one's major intellectual diet is television, his tongue will freely flow of those things which are done of them in secret. David's words are true and wise: *"I will set not wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me"* (Ps.

101:3). Jesus said, *"But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned"* (Matt. 12:36-37). If every idle word will be carried into judgment, then Christians must learn to control their tongues. Idle euphemisms are a tool of Satan, used to integrate Christians with the flood of alien sinners. These too are not fit words for the Christian's use.

In the fourth place, Christian duty and obligation involved modest dress. The world must not be allowed to set the standard of modesty. That standard was set by God in the beginning. Notice what Paul wrote to Timothy: *"In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array"* (1 Tim. 2:9). God does not have to explain why he commands a thing, and many times he does not. But this section of Scripture is complete with God's reason for its commands. The reason given for these commands is this: *"For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression"* (1 Tim. 2:13-14). You see this is what God has wanted from the beginning.

In the beginning when Adam and his wife became aware of their nakedness, *"they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons"* (Gen. 3:7). Maybe these aprons were better than our modern swim-wear. Most modern beach wear would not make a good eye patch! Interestingly, the Lord considered Adam and Eve naked, even after they were gird about with leaves. It is often said that the coverings the Lord made for Adam and his wife came down low enough to cover their thighs. One does not need a working knowledge of Hebrew to prove that this is the Lord's standard. This is true because the Lord's standard for modesty has never changed. The Lord gave this command to his Levitical priests: *"Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that they nakedness be not discovered thereon"* (Exo. 20:26). By adding one more passage to this verse, the Lord's standard for modesty in dress is revealed. Notice Exodus 28:42: *"And thou shalt make them linen breeches to cover their nakedness; from the loins even unto the thighs"*

they shall reach." The world's influence is seen almost every Lord's Day in every place. Women (men in shorts too) coming into the assembly with their thighs exposed are naked by the Lord's standard.

Christian duty and obligation also involves visitation and personal work! Congregations are not authorized to hire out their visiting and personal work obligations. Notice how the Lord will answer the righteous in judgment:

"Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? Or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto the, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethern, ye have done it unto me" (Matt. 25:37-40).

Paul wanted his readership to *"be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life"* (Phil. 2:15-16). Christians shine only when they are involved in taking God's word to a lost world. Holding forth the word of life is the same as teaching the gospel to alien sinners. Remember, *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned"* (Mark 16:16).

Finally, Christian duty and obligation will never be complete without commitment to the local church. Christian duty and obligation is wrapped up in the local church. Christian duty begins and ends right here! Those who love the Lord would never want to turn their back on the assembly (Heb. 10:25). Christian will financially support the church on a weekly basis as they prosper (1 Cor. 16:1-2). Not only this, but faithful brethren will live the "redeeming the according to the truth. Friends, Christians will keep the world on the back-burner instead of the church. When Christians do their duty, the woman is helped, Satan is repelled, and God is glorified!

Conclusion

This study of Christian duty and obligation is by no means exhaustive. Hopefully some tools may be gained from this material which will be helpful in Christian development. Revelation 12 is clear, the church is at war with Satan. Christian friends, there is only one way to overcome and stand victorious with Christ: "*And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death*" (Rev. 12:11). Remember the blood, it is essential (Rev. 1:5; Acts 22:16, 20:28; 1 Pet. 1:18). Christians who love the Lord (always demonstrated through obedience) and remember the blood will stay under the flood of blood (1 John 1:7). Know this, those who forsake the Master's high calling and will drown in the flood of the ungodly (Rev. 12:15).

ⁱ Wesley J. Perschbacher, "σημειον" in *The New Analytical Greek Lexicon*, (Peabody, MS: Hendrickson Pub., In., 1996), 368.

ⁱⁱ This statement is not contention for the church to get into the recreation business. It refers to ungodly entertainment, dancing, reveling, et al.

Chapter Seven

FELLOWSHIP

Tim Dooley

Introduction

There is no greater subject known unto man than that of the fellowship of God and His people. This topic is so essential to our salvation that it deserves our careful review and attention. Not only should the new convert diligently consider this matter, but also the most able scholar of God's word must frequently reexamine the truths laid forth in His word with regard to it. *"God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Gen. 1:27). "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 soul. And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed" (Gen. 2:7-8).* Man, the crowning glory of all God's creation, would soon leave the loving care of his Father. From the days of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden man has continued on a sinful path of self-destruction, a course that separates him from his Creator.

The Father has always extended to his children a means by which they may live in fellowship with Him. But it is man, when he seeks his own foolish and vain desires, who has left off fellowship with God. When we do this, we sin, and we separate ourselves from the fellowship of God. The prophet Isaiah spoke to this in **Isaiah 59:1-2**:

*"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save;
neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have
separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his
face from you, that he will not hear."*

Since we have separated ourselves from God the burden of responsibility rest squarely upon our own shoulders to become reunited with Him. God does not desire any man to be lost! *"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (I Tim. 2:3-4).* *"The Lord is not slack*

concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Pet. 3:9).

Seeing then that man has left his Creator, and that God desires a reunion of Himself and His children, He has provided for us the opportunity to do that which we could not do for ourselves. **John 3:16-17**, *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."*

FELLOWSHIP AND UNITY DEFINED

In any such discourse it is imperative that we define the words of the discussion. In this study of fellowship we will be using this word "fellowship" and the word "unity" interchangeably. Why? Because, despite the teachings of some, as we will talk about later, fellowship between God's people and between God and His people can not be had without unity of mind, spirit, and understanding. It is therefore necessary for us to properly define the words of this discussion in two ways. One, we need to ascertain the modern definition of the words under consideration. But secondly, and most important, we need to understand the definition of these words as they were being used at the time of their writing and the context in which they were used. By doing this we will derive a proper understanding of the topic.

The American Heritage Dictionary defines the word "fellowship" as:

"1.a. The condition of sharing similar interests, ideals, or experiences, as by reason of profession, religion, or nationality. b. The companionship of individuals in a congenial atmosphere and on equal terms. 2. A close association of friends or equals sharing similar interests. 3. Friendship; comradeship."

But then notice the definition of "unity" as cited from the same source:

"1. The state or quality of being one; singleness. 2. The state or quality of being in accord; harmony. 3.a. The combination or arrangement of parts into a whole; unification. b. A combination or union thus formed. 4. Singleness or constancy of purpose or action; continuity."

It is interesting to note that in these modern definitions we see that one could have fellowship without unity. It is from this modern definition of the word that we get such faulty theology as "Unity in Diversity" and "I'm okay, You're okay." But in the definition for unity, fellowship is implied.

Notice then the Greek word "koinonia" (koy-nohn-ee'-ah) most often translated in our New Testament as "fellowship." The Greek scholar James Strong says it is, "*partnership, i.e. (lit.) participation, or (social) intercourse, or (pecuniary) benefaction:--(to) communicate (-ation), communion, (contri-), distribution, fellowship.*" Interestingly, the Bible's use of the word fellowship implies unity. Just here we should notice a few passages of scripture so that we might understand God's understanding and expectations for us with regard to this subject.

"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:5-7).

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me" (John 17:20-23).

"God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing,

and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (I Cor. 1:9-10).

"Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you" (II Cor. 13:11).

"Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing" (Phil. 3:16).

Is it not clear from these beautiful passages of scripture, some of which we will develop further as we proceed, that God's definition of "fellowship" demands "unity" and not simply union? To the honest Bible student this will indeed be abundantly clear.

We see then how profoundly important fellowship, based upon unity, is to our Christianity. The cross of Christ and His shed blood illuminates this matter. Our salvation is dependent upon our understanding and abiding in this fellowship of unity. Those who would teach any other gospel than that which we have been taught are to be rejected (Gal. 1:8-9). Jesus told us that *"God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth"* (John 4:24). Therefore our fellowship in unity is essential to our acceptable worship unto God. Our satisfactory work for the Father in the kingdom of His dear Son is based, in part, on our understanding and abiding in proper fellowship. All this is what Paul means when he wrote the words of the Father given him by the Holy Spirit in **II Corinthians 6:14-18**,

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I

will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

IS FELLOWSHIP BASED UPON UNITY POSSIBLE?

Many individuals in both the religious world and in the church today are affirming the proposition that the fellowship of the Bible is an impossible, unattainable, and irrational goal. We should rather, according to their thinking, join all "believers" and embrace them as brothers and sisters in Christ. Even though there is not agreement among the change agents on this matter either. While some will say we should join in fellowship with all who simply proclaim Christ as their personal Savior others will say one must be a "baptized believer," although they contend that the mode, understanding, and purpose of baptism is non-essential.

First of all notice the predicament that these false teachers place themselves in. The Bible is the Word of God. Most all will agree with this, even though they themselves do not believe it. Remember Christ's prayer mentioned earlier in **John 17:20-23**? Read it again. Were Christ and the Father divided on the way a person should be saved? Were they of two minds when it came to what constituted acceptable worship? Was there an attitude of agreeing to disagree with regard to the work of the church? NO! Remember Christ prayed that we "*all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee,*" why, "*that they also may be one in us.*" Simply friends, if fellowship based upon biblical unity were not possible then Christ prayed for the impossible.

Please keep in mind the statement of Paul to the Corinthian brethren in **I Corinthians 1:9-10**? If we hope to be in fellowship with the Father and His Son we **must** speak the same things and have no divisions among us! We must be "*perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*" Friends, if it is not possible for us to be united in mind and judgement, if we can not speak the same things, then we cannot have fellowship with the Father, His Son, or each other. If what the world says is true then the Bible is not, God is not, and we have no hope at all!

Christ said in **John 8:32**, "*And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*" Can we know? If the Father is true, if the Son is true, and if their Word is true we can.

further we notice that Christ prayed to the Father, "*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth*" (**John 17:17**). Christ came to do the will of the Father and He brought with Him the words of life. "*Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work*" (**John 4:34**). "*Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works*" (**John 14:10**). Then before he ascended back into heaven to sit on the right hand of God the Father he told his disciples, "*But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you*" (**John 14:26**), and "*Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come*" (**John 16:13**).

These holy men of God then wrote the very Words of God as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (**II Peter 1:21**). Neither did they pen their own thoughts but the very words God breathed (**II Peter 1:20**; **II Timothy 3:16**). When God created Adam he was nothing but a heap of cells made from the dust of the ground until God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and that man became a living soul, the crowning glory of all God's creation. Now he has breathed into the Word life; that we may in him live, and move and have our being for eternity. Sinful man reconciled unto his Creator. Is there any validity to the plea for fellowship based solely on biblical unity? Absolutely!

TRIANGLE OF FELLOWSHIP

The apostle John wrote in **I John 1:3**, "*That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*" As we have already noticed it is through the words of the Father, spoken by His Son, and revealed unto us through the inspired pen of holy men that we have the possibility of fellowship with the Father, the Son, and each other. Our obedience to the plan and practice of Christianity revealed unto us by the Holy Spirit is imperative to developing and sustaining this triangle of fellowship.

It is God's desire that all men be united in mind and judgement, in word and understanding, and in work and worship (**I Cor. 1:9-10; John 8:32; John 4:23-24**), even as the Father and Son are one [united] (**John 17:20-23**). The beloved Apostle is telling us in **I John 1:3** that it is by the word, spoken of them by inspiration, that we are able to enter into this triangle of fellowship. This means that we must be obedient to God's revealed will for reconciliation.

Christ spoke in **John 8:12** saying, "*I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.*" The idea is further explained by Paul in **Romans 6:6** when he said concerning those who had obeyed that form of doctrine delivered unto us by the Father for reconciliation, "*Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.*" Christ commanded that we take up our cross daily and follow Him (**Luke 9:23**).

What does all this have to do with the triangle of fellowship? Everything! Notice John's exhortation beginning in **I John 1:5** and continuing through verse nine:

"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.* If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Simply put the triangle of fellowship, between us and God, between His Son and us, and between all His children, is totally dependent upon our *faithfulness* to His word. Notice, the only way to have eternal life is to be reconciled unto the Father and no man cometh unto the Father except by His only begotten Son (**John 14:6**). Hence the serious nature of our fellowship with the Father and with His Son. Also, we must remain in fellowship with the Son because it is His blood that *continues to cleanse us* from all unrighteousness. Friends, if we break that fellowship we can then in turn have no fellowship with God's people and the faithful must deny fellowship to those who will not walk in the light, the Word, the unity, and the oneness. "*And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them*" (**Eph. 5:11**).

GETTING INTO FELLOWSHIP AND STAYING THERE

It is the hope and desire of all Christians and with God that all men would come to knowledge of the truth and be saved. That is to say that those of us who are already bound in the triangle of fellowship desire those outside to come to know what they must do to become part of our fellowship and do the things necessary to achieve that end.

In order to do so one needs to understand the simple precept of coming unto something and getting into that which they have come unto. I certainly do not intend to insult the intelligence of anyone, yet men of great knowledge in the religious world seem not to understand this basic principle. When an individual goes grocery shopping they will enact the dual principle of unto/into many times over. They may go "unto" their car and get "into" it. They then may drive "unto" the property where the store is located and proceed to pull "into" the parking lot. They then will walk from the parking lot "unto" the store before entering "into" it. Then they would walk "unto" a specific aisle and proceed "into" it, . . . Redundant? Perhaps, yet the point should be well taken.

This same procedure is seen in ones salvation, their reconciliation to the Father. One must come unto Christ and then get into Him in order to access the desired reconciliation with the Father and be granted entrance "into" the triangle of fellowship. So just how does this take place?

First of all one must come to a knowledge of the truth in order to be set free (**John 8:32**). So often we hear men, even in the Lord's church, say, "Just believe that Jesus

Christ is the only begotten Son of God." While this is essential, it is not accurate. One must believe (i.e. understand) more than just that. In **Acts 2:40** we read that Peter and the Apostles taught and exhorted the men present on the Day of Pentecost "*with many other words*" before they obeyed. In **Acts 8:12** Phillip "*preached the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ*" before they were baptized. Certainly one must repent of living in sin in order to be saved (**Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 2:38; Acts 3:19; Acts 17:30**). In order to repent one must have a certain level of understanding in order to be able to do so. Lest I be misunderstood and/or misquoted I am not saying that a man must be omniscient before he can be saved. None of us would be saved if that were the case. I am saying that certain "first principles" of the gospel (i.e., the structure and oneness of the church/kingdom, the worship of the church, proper personal relationships, etc.) must be understood before an individual can have a valid baptism. We do a great disservice in telling people to believe and not instructing them in correct knowledge prior to immersing them.

Once a person has come to a knowledge of the truth and is willing to repent, turning from the darkness to the light, that individual must be willing to confess the name of Jesus. Christ said of the essentiality of confession in **Matthew 10:32-33**, "*Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.*" Is confession a necessary step of getting into Christ? Absolutely! But notice that learning the will of God, repenting of sin and confessing His name are all steps "unto" Him. We have not yet gotten "into" Him. Therefore we have not yet been reconciled to the Father and we have not yet been added to the triangle of fellowship.

At what point then does one get into Christ? Let the Bible answer that question, please. **Romans 6:3**, "*Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?*" **I Corinthians 12:13**, "*For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.*" **Galatians 3:27**, "*For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*" The honest student of the Bible will

then conclude that a proper understand of the plan God delivered in His Son is necessary in order to be saved.

I was once studying with a man who told me that he didn't think baptism would do anything for him. What he was really saying was that he didn't think baptism would keep him from sinning. I told him he was right, baptism will not make you perfect, it will only make you saved. I then asked him to turn and read the following passages and tell me what baptism would do for him: **Mark 16:16**, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*" What does baptism do for you? It enables you to be saved. **Acts 2:38**, "*Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*" What does baptism do for you? It remits your sins. **Acts 22:16**, "*And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*" What does baptism do for you? It washes away your sins. **I Peter 3:21**, "*The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:*" What does baptism do for you? It saves you! **Galatians 3:27**, "*For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*" What does baptism do for you? It puts you into Christ! It is how you put Christ on. Who would honestly contend that you could be saved without baptism in light of God's Holy Word? Who could assert that one could be in fellowship with God without a proper baptism based upon proper understanding?

But also notice, that **I John 1** tells us that once we have salvation, once we have entered into the triangle of fellowship, we must remain faithful and confess our sins when we fail and pray for forgiveness. We must serve Him and not ourselves. When we fall and confess that His blood will continue to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Also see **Acts 8:9-24** and **Revelation 2:10**.

THE VALUE OF FELLOWSHIP

Certainly the reader has already realized the value of fellowship. But I would draw your attention to **Ephesians 4:11-16**:

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

What a wonderful and comforting thought that we all have a role to play in the kingdom of God's dear Son. How great the plan of God is that we can be joined together with those of like precious faith, of one mind and judgement, and thereby be strengthened until we see Him come in glory. If this does not impress upon the reader the great value of fellowship I do not know what will.

WHAT FELLOWSHIP IS NOT AND TWO EXTREMES THAT HINDER THE UNTY OF GOD'S PEOPLE HERE ON EARTH

Fellowship (unity), as is clear from our discussion, is **not** an "audience" of people. I remember my father and grandfather taking my brother and I to see "Big Time Wrestling" matches at the Hara Arena in Dayton, Ohio when we were boys. What great audiences assembled for these events but I can assure you there was little (if any) unity and fellowship amongst the crowd. Just because groups of people get together "in the name of Christ" does not mean that there is biblical fellowship and unity.

In like manner "Biblical unity" is not achieved in the false and damnable doctrine of "Unity in Diversity." You may achieve some level of union but you will not have biblical unity! That is you will not have a group of believers united in one mind and one judgement, all speaking the same thing. If you do, and what is taught and believed is not biblical then there is no fellowship with God. Hence a broken triangle of fellowship. I

know that it is not an original idea, but I do not know of a better analogy than that of tying the tails of two alley cats together and throwing them over a fence. You may have a union my friends, but you will not have unity until one of the cats has killed the other. Do not let anyone fool you. When folks seek a unity based upon human reasoning, and not on God's Will, one party or both will die in the ensuing battle. Either one is in fellowship with God, His Son, and his people based upon hearing and obeying the will of God or he isn't. It is just that simple.

The greatest hindrance to the fellowship of God's people in the last century is the two extremes of "liberalism" and "anti-ism." I have heard many a man say that we should not label people beyond "faithful" and "unfaithful." Well I wish to God it were that simple. We need to be aware of false teaching and we need to know where a particular false teacher may be coming from so that we can combat their heresy.

Simply, first, a liberal (in the religious sense of the word) is a person who loosens where God has not loosed. A person who will say an "unbaptized believer" is included in the triangle of fellowship, and anyone who would extend a hand of fellowship to those who believe and teach such, is a liberal. A person may say that as long as a person has been baptized it "doesn't matter why" and they are in fellowship with God and his people, this person is also a liberal. For he has loosened where God has not. And anyone who would bid that man God speed (i.e., extend to him the right hand of fellowship) is a partaker of his evil deeds (**II John 1:10-11**).

Secondly, an "anti" is one who binds where God has not bound. Those who demand that a woman can under no circumstances teach a man have bound where God has not. Those who teach that it is wrong to eat a common meal within the walls of the meeting house have bound upon men that which God has not bound. Those who teach that a man who has been scripturally divorced cannot remarry have bound upon man that which God allows. These individuals are mirror images of the Pharisees of the first century. This, my friends, is as great a hindrance to the fellowship of God's people as liberalism.

To use another analogy to bring home the point. If I get in my car and drive down the road, I want to strictly adhere to the laws governing that action. This is the safest

course. I do not want to veer too far right and end up in the ditch, neither do I want to veer to far left and hit someone coming the other direction and also end up in the ditch. I want to stay where I am safe. On the road, in the proper lane, strictly adhering to the laws that will guide me safely to my destination.

THE WITHDRAWAL OF FELLOWSHIP, GOD'S CORRECTIVE DISCIPLINE (MARKING AND NOTING)

Strife, division, and heartaches are brought on in far too many congregations not because of corrective discipline but due to a lack thereof. The writer of Proverbs penned by inspiration, "*Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out; yea, strife and reproach shall cease*" (Prov. 22:10).

We have already noticed how important it is for one to be reconciled to fellowship with God through His Son. Likewise we have noticed how important it is to remain in fellowship with Christ and the Father for only in Christ can we continue to benefit from His cleansing blood. We have also realized from our study the gravity of remaining in fellowship with God's people in order to grow strong and remain ready for the coming of the Lord. In all this we have realized the fact that one cannot remain in fellowship with one who either has never submitted to the fellowship requirements of God, or with those who have turned from God and entered once again into the world from whence they came.

For us to realize the gravity of this we need to look at it from the eyes of God. He says of those who would once again turn unto the flesh:

"For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire" (II Peter 2:20-22).

We are also made aware of the force of remaining in fellowship with God when we listen to the warning given to the churches of Asia in the book of Revelation who needed to repent. In particular we are impressed with the language that the Lord uses with the church at Laodicia. He informed them that their apathy (lukewarmness) was enough to make Him sick and he would spew them forth from His mouth if they refused to repent. Friends, how can we continue to fellowship that (or those) who God refers to with such distaste? Simply put, we cannot!

The Bible gives clear instruction with regard to withdrawing fellowship from those who walk away from the fellowship with God and His people by refusing to remain obedient. Three areas need to be considered: One, private offences between brethren that cannot be resolved peaceably; two, public insubordination to God and false teaching; three, congregational withdrawal.

First of all we need to notice one of the most misunderstood, misapplied, and unkept commands of Christ. This seemingly difficult passage is found in **Matthew 18:15-17** and says:

"Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican."

One may ask, "What is so difficult about that?" Well that is what sound brethren have been asking for years. This passage simply deals with a private matter between two brethren. The trouble comes in two specific areas. One, someone is offended with his brother but does not possess the proper Christian heart to go to that brother and try to resolve their differences. Many times running off and making public the private matter and causing strife and division within the body of Christ. Secondly, someone teaches

publicly or does publicly that which is contrary to God's word and when rebuked publicly for doing so cries foul.

We the body of Christ will begin to follow Christ's directives with regard to **Matthew 18:15-17** we will see more peace, unity, and godly fellowship. This passage says nothing about public false teaching or sin. In such cases the first two steps of **Matthew 18:15-17** have been removed and the matter is immediately one of a public nature.

My friend, God is very specific with regard to those who would sin publicly in either teaching or action. Notice the gravity of this with regard to those who are elders found to have sinned or taught wrong publicly, *"Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear"* (**I Tim. 5:19-20**). If for elders, why not for all members of the body? It is indeed the case. Notice the following passages of scripture:

I Corinthians 5:11-13, *"But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that*

2 Thessalonians 3:6, *"Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us."*

2 Thessalonians 3:14-15, *"And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother."*

1 Timothy 6:5, *"Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself."*

Titus 3:10, *"A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject."*

2 John 10, *"If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed:"*

Many have equated the practice of such passages as unloving and mean-spirited. Nothing could be further from the truth. Another passage that is often misapplied and/or misunderstood in **Ephesians 4:15** which says that we are to speak the truth in love. This verse does not mean that we tickle the ears of the hearer or that we speak unto them only smooth things and that we never reprove or rebuke. This verse means that we preach and teach the truth because we love the truth, God and ourselves enough to be faithful to are being called out of this world. Preaching the truth in love includes (not excludes) both instructional and corrective discipline.

But what of this idea that one congregation cannot withdraw from another because they are autonomous and public withdrawal of fellowship would somehow infringe on their autonomy? Well, let us apply what we have already learned concerning individuals being withdrawn from by other individuals or congregations and notice how it applies to congregations withdrawing fellowship from other congregations. We have already noticed that once a person (and in this case congregation A) turns from the pattern of God for our lives, and refuses to repent, he (hence they) cease to be in fellowship with God. If (they/congregation A) are not in fellow with God the how can we (congregation B) remain in such? It is therefore our duty to mark and avoid congregation A. For a more detailed discussion of this matter I would suggest the reader study two pieces of literature. One, One Congregation May Withdraw From Another Congregation, by **Dub McClish**; 1999 Memphis School of Preaching Lectureship, *"God Has Spoken, Affirming Truth and Reproving Error."* Two, Can One Church Disfellowship Another Church?, by Dave Miller; *"A Crucial Study of a Critical Subject – Fellowship,"* by Goebel Music.

CONCLUSION

Mans life on earth begins in innocence. No one is born in sin. Our souls come from God (**Heb. 12:9**) and God does not give a man his soul already stained with sin and

ask him to return it to him clean. When a child is born, he is connected with God. If a child were born in sin he would already be separated from Him.

Even though a baby is born in a safe state, it will not remain so for long. For when that child grows and learns the difference between right and wrong, he will transgress the will of God and at that point suffer separation from Him for sin separates us from God (**Isaiah 59:1-2**). Once separated he (the man) cannot come back to God alone. He must have help and God loves us enough that He provided for us that which we could not provide for ourselves, Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Only the blood of Christ can take away our sins. Therefore when man washes away his sins in the blood of Christ, he is once again tied together with the Father and with all those who have been likewise cleansed. If we will then serve Him and remain faithful until death we will know the joys of heaven for eternity. For Christ is the author of eternal salvation to all them that **obey Him (Heb. 5:8-9)**.

Chapter Eight

OLD TESTAMENT/NEW TESTAMENT

B. J. Clarke

Introduction

The Bible is a grand volume composed of 66 individual books. Thirty-nine of these books belong to the Old Testament, while twenty-seven of the books comprise the New Testament. It is vitally important for man to comprehend the relationship that exists between the Old and New Testament. In fact, a deficiency of this basic knowledge is responsible for a multitude of misinterpreted Scriptures and denominational doctrines. Paul exhorted Timothy, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). In short, it is utterly impossible to handle the word aright if one fails to apprehend the place and purpose of the Old and New Testaments. In this lecture we will explore the relationship between the Old and New Testament.

A Variety Of Views Regarding The Value Of The Old Testament

Just how valuable is the Old Testament? Can such an ancient document possess any worth and relevance for a society rapidly approaching the 21st century? In his book, *Two Testaments, One Bible*, David Baker addresses this very issue:

One of the most fundamental questions which has faced theology and the church in every age and still demands an answer today is whether or not Christianity also needs an Old Testament. Is the Old Testament to be thrown away as obsolete, or preserved as a relic from days of yore, or treasured as a classic and read by scholars, or used occasionally as a change from the New Testament, or kept in a box in case it should be needed some day?¹

Throughout history a variety of views have been voiced regarding the value of the Old Testament. Consider a few of these views.

The view of Marcion. Not long after the church was established, a man by the name of Marcion "took out his penknife" (Cf. Jer. 36:21-23) and began to argue for the exclusion of certain inspired books from the accepted canon of Holy Scripture. Remarkably, Marcion insisted that the entire Old Testament be eliminated from the realm of Holy Scripture due to what he considered irreconcilable differences between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament. His views were rejected by almost everyone, and the Old Testament continued to occupy a general place of esteem and acceptance among the religious people of the day.²

The View Of Augustine. Far from attempting to excise the Old Testament from the Scriptures, Augustine desired instead to interpret the Old Testament as one continuous allegory. In fact, Augustine is credited with the following famous words concerning the relationship between the Two Covenants:

To the Old Testament belongs more fear,
just as to the New Testament more delight;
nevertheless in the Old Testament
the New lies hid, and in the New Testament
the Old is exposed.³

The View Of The Reformers. Martin Luther believed that the Old Testament was "to be highly regarded." He asked, "What is the New Testament but a public preaching and proclamation of Christ, set forth through the sayings of the Old Testament and fulfilled through Christ?"⁴ John Calvin and other reformers shared Luther's sentiment as well.

The View Of The 17th-19th Centuries. As man became more "enlightened," he became more apt to dismiss the sections of the Bible with which he took exception. This became particularly true of the Old Testament. Leading the way was the brash, and irreverent, Freidrich Schleiermacher, who lived from 1768-1834. Whereas Schleiermacher did not demean the Old Testament with as much vigor as Marcion of the 2nd century, neither did he mince words

concerning his attitude toward the 39 books. He dismissed them as the product of heathenism, arguing that the Old Testament scriptures do not "share the normative dignity or the inspiration of the New."⁵ He even went so far as to suggest that the Old and New Testaments be reversed in their appearance in the Bible, with the New Testament appearing first, and the Old Testament retained as an appendix.⁶

The View Of The 20th Century. A quote from the early 20th century is still quite shocking, though decades have passed since its first publication. An author by the name of Adolf von Harnack declared:

To reject the Old Testament in the second century was a mistake which the Church rightly rejected; to keep it in the sixteenth century was a fate which the Reformation could not yet avoid; but to retain it after the nineteenth century as a canonical document in Protestantism results from paralysis of religion and the Church.⁷

Before the shock of such a statement wears off, some of us would do well to ask ourselves whether we are guilty of a similar blasphemy in our neglect of the Old Covenant. Baker observes:

...There is in the church a habit of simply ignoring the Old Testament. It is thought to be difficult to understand or irrelevant to modern life and therefore it is rarely read and expounded...In many churches, relatively few sermons are preached on the Old Testament and Bible study groups spend relatively little time on Old Testament passages. It is clear therefore that the modern church, in spite of its official rejection of Marcionism and neo-Marcionism, has often allowed implicit Marcionism in practice.⁸

The View Of Holy Scripture Concerning The Value Of The Old Testament

We have looked at many of the prevailing attitudes toward the Old Testament throughout history, but "what saith the Scripture"? Does the Word of God ascribe value to the Old Covenant? Moreover, we would expect for the Old Testament to affirm its value, but what about the New Testament view of the Old Testament? How did Jesus and the apostles view the Old Covenant? We introduce our analysis of these questions with two familiar New Testament texts:

“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Rom. 15:4).

“Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come” (1 Cor. 10:11).

The apostle Paul affirms the value of the Old Covenant in both of these passages. The “things that were written aforetime” would be the things found in the Old Testament, the oracles of God committed unto the Jews (Rom. 3:2), the scriptures (John 5:39). Paul believed that these oracles of scripture still had something to offer to New Testament Christians. It is important to point out that at the time Paul wrote Romans 15:4 and 1 Corinthians 10:1-12, the Old Law had been nailed to the cross and taken out of the way (Col. 2:14-17). Yet, Paul still regarded these inspired documents as worthy of investigation and believed that such investigation would yield the blessings of patience, comfort and hope.

Though some see a contradiction in saying that we are no longer under the Old Covenant on the one hand, and saying that we ought to closely study it on the other hand, there is no contradiction in fact. Paul **did not say** that whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our *Law*; he did affirm that these things were written for our **learning**. Hence, an obvious question arises: what can we learn from the Old Testament that makes it worth our study? Since the value of the Old Covenant is demonstrated by what we can learn from it, let us proceed to examine it to capture some of the lessons from it which make it so valuable to us today. The Old Testament is valuable because it is a:

Verbal Revelation From God

It may sound simplistic, but the primary reason the Old Testament is valuable is due to the fact that it is a verbal revelation from God to man. When God talks, we should listen, and He talks to us, in part, through the pages of the Old Testament. Such being the case, it behooves us to give

proper investigation to the Truth that He has revealed therein. The Old Testament is certainly included in Paul’s affirmation of the inspiration of the scriptures in 2 Timothy 3:16-17:

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.”

The fact of the matter is that at the time Paul wrote these words, the authorship of the New Testament books had not yet been completed. Hence, the scriptures, which were most familiar to Timothy and others at the time of Paul’s writing, would have been the Old Testament writings. Paul emphatically affirmed that these Old Testament scriptures, (along with any New Testament books already in existence) were inspired, i.e., breathed out by God. This fact alone makes the Old Testament valuable.

Like Paul, the apostle Peter did not ignore the writings of the Old Testament, but rather declared that “the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:20-21). At various times and in different ways God spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets (Heb. 1:1). His revelation to these prophets was verbal. In other words, God didn’t just give a thought to the prophets and then set them free to merely use their natural faculties to communicate it. Rather, He supernaturally revealed Himself and His Will in words which the speakers and writers of Scripture faithfully declared and recorded. David declared, “The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and **his word** (emphasis mine-BJC) was in my tongue” (2 Sam. 23:2). Jeremiah revealed that God touched his tongue and said, “Behold, I have put **my words** (emphasis mine-BJC) in thy mouth” (Jer. 1:9). If God cared enough to reveal His will to the prophets of old, and if God cared enough to providentially preserve these inspired writings for the successive generations to come, shouldn’t we care enough to read His verbal communication? Can you imagine receiving a letter from a loved one and never taking the time to read it? To ignore the 39 books of the Old Testament is to ignore communication from the One who ought to be our most precious loved one.

The Old Testament is also valuable because it evidences the:

Vastness Of God’s Power

While there are New Testament passages and events that vividly demonstrate the power of God, a knowledge of the Old Testament enhances our appreciation thereof. For example, the New Testament speaks of the creation of the world by God. Consider the following texts:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:1-3).

“For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him” (Col. 1:15).

As marvelous as these passages are, they fall short of giving the detailed, day by day chronology of creation as provided in Genesis 1. Eliminate the Old Testament and you have eliminated the only definitive explanation of the origin of the universe. Even the New Testament does not grant us detailed insight concerning how God exercised His awesome power to create the world. One will never find in the New Testament that which God reveals about His work in creation as recorded in Job chapters 38-40. This is not to suggest that the New Testament is inferior to the Old Testament. Rather, it is to suggest that we recognize that the Old Testament possesses valuable information that is available to us nowhere else.

Furthermore, the vastness of God’s power is not only evidenced in the Old Testament in the act of creation. Think of how He preserved Noah and his family from the worldwide flood (Gen. 6-9). This Old Testament story teaches us that God’s power was used both to vindicate the righteous and wreak vengeance on the wicked. This pattern is repeated again and again throughout the pages of the Old Covenant: (1) The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the preservation of Lot (Gen. 18-19); (2) the defeat of the Egyptian armies and the deliverance of His chosen people through the avenue of the 10 plagues (Exod. 5-15); (3) the fall of Jericho and the victory of reaching the promised land (Josh. 6); (4) the defeat of the five kings of the Amorites

while the sun stood still (Josh. 10:12-15); (5) David's defeat of Goliath and the Philistine armies (1 Sam. 17); (6) the humiliating failure of the prophets of Baal, their "god," and the awesome display of power sent from heaven; (7) the massacre of 185,000 Assyrian soldiers while God's people were preserved without firing a shot (2 Kings 19:35-36); (8) the slaying of the men throwing Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into the fire while they escaped unharmed and burn free (Dan. 3); and (9) the accusers of Daniel having their bones crushed and devoured by the lions before they ever hit the floor of the den, while Daniel escaped unscathed and unharmed, though spending an entire night with the lions (Dan. 6). Add to these examples such marvels as the resurrection of the widow's son in 1 Kings 17:17-24, and the cleansing of Naaman the leper in 2 Kings 5, and it is abundantly clear that our God is an awesome God. If it were not for our acquaintance with these stories of the Old Testament, our knowledge of the vastness of God's power would be greatly diminished.

A third reason that the Old Covenant is so valuable is because it:

Validates God's Faithfulness

The writer of Hebrews, speaking of God, declared that "he is faithful that promised" (Heb. 10:23). A study of the Old Testament and its relationship to the New Testament establishes the veracity of this claim. Where is the promise, made by God in the Old Testament, that has failed to come to pass? There is not one promise of God that has ever failed, no, not one. He is faithful to keep His word. Two passages from the Old Testament demonstrate the importance of God being able to keep His promises:

"But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken?"

“When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him” (Deut. 18:20-22).

“Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them. Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any” (Isa. 44:6-8).

“Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me” (Isa. 45:21).

In these passages, God stakes His very integrity upon His ability to see the future, predict the future, and bring to pass what He predicted. Let us remember that the events of the New Testament are made all the more impressive when we consider the fact that God foretold that these events would occur hundreds of years in advance of the time that they actually transpired. Thus, the Old Covenant is valuable in that it affords us the opportunity to see that what God promised in the Old Testament, He delivered in the New Testament. The significance of this is seen by merely noting the number of times a New Testament writer wrote that a particular event occurred “that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet.” Hence, a knowledge of the prophecies God made in the Old Testament, and the recognition of the fulfillment of these prophecies in the New Testament, validates the faithfulness of God in the mind of the reader.

But yet a further proof of the value of the Old Covenant is seen in its:

Vivid Examples

Who among us has not been inspired to loftier heights of service by reading the description of the great men and women of faith described for us in Hebrews 11? Yet, all of the personalities mentioned in this great passage lived prior to the establishment of the New Covenant! Therefore, to eliminate the Old Testament entirely would be to eliminate the very stories of courage referred to by the writer of Hebrews!

But wasn't the writer of Hebrews afraid that reference to these men and women of the Old Testament could be misconstrued by his readers to mean that the Old Testament was still in force? Obviously not! The very aim of the Hebrews writer was to encourage his readers not to go back to the Old Testament, because to do so would eliminate any sacrifice for their sin (Heb. 8-10). Why, then, did he focus upon Old Testament characters in Hebrews 11? He did so in order to demonstrate the principle and quality of a faith that endures. This is clearly evidenced by taking the time to consider the context leading up to Hebrews chapter 11:

"Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul" (Hebrews 10:35-39).

The book of Hebrews was written to implore Christians not to leave Christianity to return again to Judaism and its ordinances. Thus, the writer of Hebrews would never have sought to leave the impression that the ordinances of Old Covenant were somehow still binding upon Christians under the New Covenant. But neither would the writer of Hebrews "throw the baby out with the bath water" and avoid referring to the Old Testament altogether.

Likewise, it is not at all out of place for gospel preachers today to preach on one hand that we are no longer under the Law of Moses, while on the other hand occasionally appealing to the Law of Moses for a vivid and valid principle from which we can learn. The same apostle Paul who acknowledged that the Law had been nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14), and had been done away (2

Cor. 3:7-11; Rom. 7:1-4), also referred to an event recorded in the Law as a means of teaching the Corinthians a valuable lesson about the danger and consequences of lust (1 Cor. 10:1-13). Please read the following passage and observe how an inspired apostle, living under the New Covenant, handled the Old Covenant. Speaking of the children of Israel, Paul wrote:

"But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:5-12).

May Old Testament examples be used to teach New Covenant people? Obviously so, for Paul does that very thing in 1 Corinthians 10! Yet, some would ridicule preachers for appealing to the account of the sinful worship of Nadab and Abihu in Leviticus 10 and making application of the principle of this story to how we are to worship under the New Covenant. It is one thing to insist that Leviticus 10:1-2 authorizes us to offer fire in worship to God and quite another to argue that the principle of Leviticus 10 still has application to folks living under the New Covenant today. It would be entirely unacceptable for a preacher to appeal to Leviticus 10 for authority to offer sacrifices of fire to God in New Testament worship today. On the other hand, it is wholly acceptable for a gospel preacher to utilize Leviticus 10 in a sermon to demonstrate the principle that it matters to God as to how we worship Him, and whether we follow the specified pattern He has put in place. Hence, the value of the Old Testament is seen in the vivid examples of the Old Covenant which show us the vanity of disobedience (1 Cor. 10) and the rewards of faithful endurance (Heb. 11).

Finally, the value of the Old Covenant is seen when we recognize that it is the:

Vehicle Which Brings Us To Christ

The Old Covenant has been compared to a school bus that drives us to Christ. Paul's language is a bit more familiar:

"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:24-29).

The central theme of Old Testament scripture focuses upon how God's plan of redemption was accomplished. The Old Testament is God's invitation to hear the story of how He planned to accomplish His eternal purpose to save man (Eph. 3:10-11; Rev. 13:8; 1 Pet. 1:18-20).

But before man could be saved, he would first have to be convinced that he was lost. The Old Testament law served as a vehicle to drive men to this realization (Rom. 7:5, 7-11). Men and women under the Law of Moses soon learned that they would be cursed if they violated the Law in even one point, and continued not in all things written in the book of the law to do them (Jas. 2:10-11; Gal. 3:10). They also learned that the blood of bulls and goats was not sufficient to remove their guilt (Heb. 9:11-14; 10:1-4). The Old Testament was designed by God to create within man a recognition of the fact that he was lost and needed a Savior.

Someone has written that the predominant theme of the Old Testament is: "He is coming." Though they did not always grasp the full meaning and significance of what they were writing, the Old Testament prophets gave witness to the fact that One was coming:

"Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto

themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into” (1 Pet 1:10-12).

The New Testament repeatedly emphasizes the connection between these prophecies and Jesus of Nazareth. The first four chapters of the book of Matthew demonstrate the close relationship of the message of the Old Testament to that of the New Testament. In fact, the very first verse of the book of Matthew presupposes a knowledge of the Old Testament, “The book of the generation of the Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matt. 1:1). Without the Old Testament, the very first verse of the New Testament would make no sense.

On the other hand, prior knowledge of the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 12:1-3) and God’s promises to David (2 Sam. 7:12-13) prepare us for Matthew’s account. Familiarity with Isaiah’s prediction of the virgin birth of Immanuel also gives us a grasp of Matthew 1:18-25. In short, the very first chapter of the New Testament is predicated upon the teaching and prophecies of the Old Testament (Matt. 1:22). Just five verses into Matthew chapter 2, we are confronted with another Old Testament prophecy concerning the birthplace of Christ. In Matthew 3:3, we find a quotation from Isaiah chapter 40 concerning the work of John the Immerser. In chapter 4, Jesus conquers the devil by repeatedly quoting Old Testament scripture. Furthermore, His departure from Nazareth into Capernaum is said by Matthew to be in harmony with the prophecy of Isaiah (Matt. 4:13-17). In chapter 5, Jesus said that He did not come to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfill them (Matt. 5:17-20). In chapter 6, He refers to the Old Testament character Solomon (Matt. 6:29) In chapter 7, He speaks of the law and the prophets (Matt. 7:12). In fact, every one of the first 13 chapters of the book of Matthew either mentions directly, or alludes to, the Old Testament. Excluding chapter 14, almost every other chapter in the book contains some allusion to the Old Covenant. Mark, Luke and John also give similar emphasis to the first covenant in their writings.

Jesus Himself employed the writings of the Old Testament as a vehicle to lead men unto Him. On the road to Emmaus he said:

"Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself...And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?"
(Luke 24:25-27; Luke 24:32).

The inspired preachers and apostles of the first century church also saw the value of using the Old Covenant as a vehicle to lead men and women to Jesus. Consider the following examples:

*"But those things, which **God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled. Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be forgiven...For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you ...Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed"** (Acts 3:18,19, 22-25).*

*"Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent. For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the **voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him.** And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre. But God raised him from the dead:"* (Acts 13:26-30).

The point of the foregoing passages is to demonstrate that preachers and members of the Lord's church in the first century did not ignore the Old Covenant **altogether** simply because a better covenant with better promises had been established. Rather, they viewed it as the natural means

and vehicle by which to lead people to the Christ of the New Covenant. For example, Stephen’s sermon in Acts 7 evidences a masterful use of the Old Testament as a vehicle to lead men to Christ.

Conclusion

We have observed that the Old Covenant is valuable because (1) it is the **verbal** revelation of God to man; (2) it exhibits the **vastness** of God’s power; (3) it **validates** God’s faithfulness by predicting in advance the events of the future; (4) it provides **vivid** examples of both obedience and disobedience whereby we may learn; and (5) it is a **vehicle** to lead men unto Christ. However, as we close this lesson we want to doubly emphasize that we are under the New Testament today (Rom. 7:1-4; Col. 2:14; Heb. 8:6-13; 9:15-17; 10:9). Understanding this one point would do away with arguments such as turning to the thief on the cross as an example of salvation, or trying to justify instrumental music by citing Old Testament texts. Let us appreciate the continuing value of the Old Testament and the principles that can be learned therefrom. But let us also understand that we are under the New Testament and that we will be judged on the last day by it (John 12:48).

ENDNOTES

¹ David L. Baker, **Two Testaments, One Bible** (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1991), p. 19.

² *Ibid.*, p. 35.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52.

Chapter Nine

THE SECOND COMING

Steven E. Yeatts

Introduction

"And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have see him go into heaven (Acts 1:9-11).

The only event that can be appropriately compared to the first coming of Jesus regarding its magnitude is the glorious fact that He is coming again. The promise of the angels made in Acts 1:11 only echo the promise of Jesus Christ as He comforted his disciples in John 14:3 where He said, *"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also."* Jesus is coming! Are we ready?

His First Coming

The prophet Isaiah uttered these powerful words seven centuries before Christ came; *"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel"* (Isaiah 7:14). Isaiah also expressed by inspiration of the Holy Ghost that this son would live a sinless life by refusing the evil and choosing the good (Isaiah 7:15-16). In Isaiah chapter nine, the prophet continued to speak of Jesus as he penned, *"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The might God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David,*

and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."

The Lord of hosts did indeed perform this as we learn in Matthew 1:18-25. Mary, the mother of Jesus "*was found with child of the Holy Ghost.*" Mary was one of sexual purity as was verified by the angel who spoke to Joseph in Matthew 1:20. The name of this son was to be "*JESUS; for he shall save his people from their sins.*"

To understand why Christ must and will come again, we have to understand His purpose and mission during His first coming. If one does not understand the mission, purpose and fulfillment of Christ's first coming, then they cannot comprehend the terms and conditions of His second coming. Such is the case today in the religious world at large. They have failed to accept the scriptures regarding Christ's time on earth, so they have created imaginary scenarios as to what will happen when He comes again.

In order for us to evaluate the life of Christ, we must ask a simple question- "What saith the scripture?" We learn from Luke's gospel account that Christ from a young age (12 years old) was already responding to His mission. In Luke 2:40-52 we read of an instance where Joseph, Mary and Jesus had traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover. At the end of Passover, as Joseph and Mary were traveling back home, after a full day's journey they noticed that Jesus was not with them. Upon returning to Jerusalem they found Him in the temple amongst the teachers of the law and "all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers (Luke 2:47). When confronted by His concerned mother as to His whereabouts, Jesus uttered these profound words in verse 49, "*How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?*"

The Father's business is what Jesus came to do, but He did not at this young age rebel against His earthly parents. He went back to Nazareth with them. "*And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man (Luke 2:52).*" Christ had a mission and a will to fulfill. The Father's business had to be attended to first and

foremost in the life of Christ. God has always had a plan for His people and that plan was revealed through the life of His Son, Jesus Christ.

The Message of Jesus

In Matthew 4:17 as Jesus began to preach, His message was very basic. *“Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”* This message was parallel to what John the Baptist spoke of in Matthew 3:2, and the message that Christ would later commission the seventy (Luke 10:11) to proclaim, as well as His 12 apostles which He called and commissioned in Matthew 10. What was this kingdom that was taught and preached? From what source was its origin? By what authority was it preached? Again- what saith the scripture?

In Isaiah 2 we read of the coming of Christ’s kingdom. *“And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow into it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem”* (Isaiah 2:2-3).

In the book of Daniel we read of the coming of Christ’s kingdom. In Daniel chapter two, as Daniel interpreted the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar, he spoke of four earthly kingdoms; Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Grecian and Roman (Daniel 2:36-40). These were all earthly kingdoms with earthly leaders. However, Daniel spoke of a kingdom that was coming that would supersede **all** of these kingdoms, not measured by the boundaries of physical triumph, but would be a complete spiritual victory for the cause of God. *“And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever”* (Daniel 2:44).

The last earthly kingdom to be mentioned by Daniel was the Roman Empire (2:40). Then Daniel said it would be in the days of this kingdom (Rome) that an eternal kingdom would be established. This kingdom that Daniel spoke of was 600 plus years away at the time he uttered those words. It was not "at hand" or "nigh" at that time, but Christ spoke of the kingdom as being nigh when He preached. So let us put this prophet Daniel to the test to see if His prophecy came true (Deuteronomy 18:22).

Christ was born at a time of Roman rule. Luke 2:1 states, "*And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed.*" Caesar Augustus was the first Roman Emperor who ruled from 27 BC-AD 14. That takes care of the early years of Christ's life, but what about his adulthood? Was Roman rule still in effect? In Matthew 22, as the Pharisees and Herodians tried to entrap Jesus with their doubletalk, a question was raised about tribute to Caesar (Matthew 22:17). Yes, Roman rule was still in effect as Jesus was only a short time away from His death on the cross.

As Jesus was apprehended and delivered up to be crucified before whom did He appear? It was none other than Pontius Pilate, the 5th Roman procurator of Judea. The Roman government was in place and ruling all of Palestine, just as Daniel had predicted over six centuries earlier. Now that we know that Daniel was accurate in his prophecies, we need to look more closely at whether or not Jesus succeeded in His mission. Jesus, John the Baptist, the 70 disciples and the 12 apostles all preached concerning the kingdom that was close to being established. What was/is this kingdom?

In Matthew 16:18, Jesus said that His church would be established at a future time. He then told Peter in verse 19, "*And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*" Later in Matthew 16, in verse 28, Jesus said, "*There be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.*" The kingdom was referred to as coming at a

future, but near time as we saw from the messages preached by the aforementioned 84 individuals. The church was referred to as coming at a future time as well.

Go to Jerusalem

In Luke 24:49, following His resurrection from the dead, Jesus told His disciples, *"And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high."* Following that statement, Jesus ascended back to heaven. The disciples did just what Christ had commanded (Acts 1:12), and it was in Jerusalem *"when the day of Pentecost was fully come"* that the apostles received the power (Holy Spirit), the gospel was preached, souls obeyed and were added to the church (Acts 2:1, 14-47). The Lord promised He would build His church. He promised the disciples that some would see the kingdom come in their lifetimes. Therefore, we can logically and honestly conclude that the kingdom and the church are the same glorious, blood-bought institution and Christ succeeded in laying the groundwork for His church, which is the kingdom (Ephesians 2:20; Colossians 1:18)

The reason that type of understanding is crucial is that when Christ comes again He will not have an incomplete mission to renew as so many in the religious world purport today. His mission was **completed** the first time and His second coming will not result in the bringing down of a kingdom, but will instead result in the delivering up of the kingdom that is already in existence (John 19:30; I Corinthians 15:24-26).

"Shall So Come in Like Manner"

The following chart gives the how, when, where and why regarding the Second Coming of Christ.

LITERALLY- JUST AS HE WENT AWAY	Acts 1:11
EVERY EYE SHALL SEE HIM	Revelation 1:7
AT AN UNEXPECTED TIME	Matthew 24:44
SUDDENLY- AS A THIEF	I Thess. 5:2
THE EARTH WILL BE BURNED UP	II Peter 3:10
COMING IN FIRE TAKING VENGEANCE	II Thess. 1:7-9
LIVING SAINTS WILL MEET HIM	I Thess. 4:16
ANNOUNCED BY THE TRUMP OF GOD	I Thess. 4:16
COMING TO EXECUTE JUDGMENT	Jude 14
RESURRECTION OF ALL	I Cor. 15:50-58
DEATH WILL BE DESTROYED	I Cor. 15:24-26
SAINTS WILL BE LIKE HIM	I John 3:2
SAINTS WILL BE WITH HIM	I Thess. 4:17
HE WILL JUDGE BOTH LIVING AND DEAD	II Tim. 4:1
ALL SAINTS WILL BE REWARDED	II Tim. 4:6-8
CHRIST WILL DELIVER KINGDOM TO GOD	I Cor. 15:24-26

Chart by Maurice Tisdell (Star Publications, Fort Worth, Texas)

The ecumenical, premillennial religious world believes in a snatching up of the saints unbeknownst to everyone else, in what is referred to as "The Rapture." I was reared believing in the rapture of the saints, which promotes the idea that the unsaved remain here on earth to face a seven-year period of tribulation. According to Premillennialism, the first three and a half years of this tribulations will be a time of relative peace, while the second three and a half years will consist of intense persecution and lawlessness, until such time that Jesus comes a **third** time to rule on a literal physical throne in literal physical Jerusalem for a 1,00 year period. Sound unbelievable? Well, sadly many believe it, but it is certainly contrary to the word of God.

The only aspect of the Second Coming of Christ that is not revealed for us in scripture is the **TIME** at which he will return. As you can see from the chart, which will be the basis for the remainder of our study, there are many aspects of His coming again which are clearly identified for us in the pages of God's Holy Word.

The angels' message from Acts 1:11 who affirmed to the apostles that Christ would "*so come again in like manner*" is perfectly parallel to the Apostle John's statement by Holy Ghost inspiration in Revelation 1:7. It was there that John wrote, "*Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye (emp. SY) shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.*" John knew nothing of a private disappearance of the saints as the Premillennialist promulgate. One would have to try very hard to ignore the plain fact that "every eye" shall indeed see Him when He returns, both the good and the bad.

Will the Earth be Renovated or Dissolved?

Another aspect of the Premillennialists' and other false religious organizations' beliefs is that the earth on which we live is headed for a renovation. Those who believe in "The Rapture" have to have a literal earth, since they believe that Christ will literally be reigning in Jerusalem, so again, what saith the scripture?

The Apostle Peter knew nothing of a renovated earth as he wrote by inspiration of the Holy Ghost in II Peter 3. It is there in verses 10-13 that he recorded, "*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with a fervent heat, the earth also and the works therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of person ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God; wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with a fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness?"*

Even my three young daughters understand what the word **dissolved** means. I recall during the Summer months that we occasionally will go outside to blow bubbles.

As you either blow on the wand or wave it through the air, scores of bubbles fly from it and take flight. However that flight is very short-lived and soon the bubbles burst, evaporate or dissolve and are no longer there. So it will be with this old earth. Just as the word of God ("same word" II Peter 3:7) keeps the earth in existence, it will be the word of God as Christ is sent forth, that will cause the heavens and the earth as we know it to be destroyed or dissolved.

Yes, we do look for "new heavens" and a "new earth", but my friends, something new is not something renovated or refurbished. Remember, if Christ fulfilled His original mission (and we have proven from the scriptures that He did), then there is no need to have the earth when He comes again, not even a spruced-up one.

Judgment of the Righteous and the Unrighteous

The rapture seekers also have bifurcated the judgment of all (both good and evil) by Christ into two separate occurrences. It is indeed amazing that all of the theories concerning each form of Premillennialism are soundly defeated by a careful review of the scriptures, yet so many refuse to accept the truth, preferring rather the wild ideas of so-called religious experts. When Christ returns it will be simultaneously a fearful and wonderful time, depending upon whether one is in Christ or outside of His fold.

"And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels. In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power:" (II Thessalonians 1:7-9)

At this coming of Christ, both rest and wrath will be delivered. Rest to the faithful saints and wrath upon the disobedient. Jesus said in John 5:28, 29, *"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice. And shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life: and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."* An hour is an appointed time,

not an arbitrary, vague reference that leaves room for hiatuses and second chances, as the Rapture-promoters indicate.

In Matthew 25, again I submit to you proof that the judgment of Christ will consist of **all** people. Christ said in Matthew 25:31-33:

“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the hole angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.”

Later in this chapter we learn of the destiny of the sheep and the goats. To the the sheep, the Saviour will say, *“Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:”* (Matthew 25:34). To the goats, our the Righteous Judge will utter, *“Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels”* (Matthew 25:41).

There will be no second chance at salvation for the wicked during that fairytale-like tribulation period as the Premillennialists teach. God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34,35; Romans 2:11; Ephesians 6:9) and when Christ returns it is ready or not.

“Ye Know Not When the Time is...”

The issue of such importance to us is that Christ’s coming will be at a time unknown to anyone. So many have prognosticated down through the years regarding the return of Christ and have set dates warning people to prepare. The warning to prepare is valid, but the setting of dates is blasphemy. Christ said in Mark 13:32,33, in regard to His Second Coming, *“But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father: Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.”*

There will be no tangible signs preceding the return of Christ as the majority of the ecumenical religious world pronounces. Christ spoke of clear signs preceding the

destruction of Jerusalem in Matthew 24: 5-34, but He stated in verse 36 of that chapter regarding His return- "*But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.*"

Both Christ and Paul paralleled the Second Coming to the visit of a thief who provides no warning before he strikes (Matthew 24:42-44; I Thessalonians 5:2). The parable of the virgins in Matthew 25 gives us a powerful example concerning the state of our readiness. If we are found wise and not foolish, prepared and not caught off-guard, faithfully following Christ and not forsaking and forgetting Him, then we will truly be able to enter the feast of heaven for an eternity.

How and Where Shall We Meet the Lord?

Paul wrote the epistles to the Thessalonians to comfort them. They were under the impression that the Second Coming was soon to occur and they had a high level of consternation regarding those saints who had passed on before them. Would the deceased lose their reward? How and where will the Second Coming occur? Paul spent nearly one-third of the 136 verses in these two letters writing about the return of Christ.

"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (I Thessalonians 4:13-18)

The trumpet will sound announcing the return of Christ and the saved who have died in Christ shall precede the living. The place of our meeting Christ will be in the air. Paul continued to address the Second Coming in chapter five of I Thessalonians as he spoke of the wicked and unprepared as those who would be saying, "*peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape*" (I Thessalonians 5:3).

Conclusion

Christ's Second Coming will be glorious and awesome. There will be no escaping judgment. The Hebrew writer profoundly asks, "*How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation...*" (Hebrews 2:3). Christ will deliver His kingdom up to God. The saints will be rewarded and the wicked shall be punished. Reward will last just as long for the saved, as will punishment for the unsaved- it will be everlasting. Are we ready?

Chapter Ten

A LOOK AT THE HADEAN REALM**(Between Time and Eternity)***Gilbert Gough***Time**

When God created the heaven and the earth, He created TIME. By the revolution of the earth around the sun, the moon around the earth, and the earth rotating on its axis we understand time. Man, that is born into this world, lives on the earth while there is time. Children are born innocent; should one die before becoming accountable to God the same would be safe - *"And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 18:3).

When one is old enough to know sin, he is LOST in darkness. James 1:14, 15 - *"But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."* *"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law"* (I John 3:4). If one dies without obedience to the gospel he is lost.

By hearing the gospel and believing it, repenting of sins, confessing Christ, and being buried with Christ in baptism one enters the KINGDOM OF CHRIST: he is IN CHRIST where all spiritual blessings are located (Romans 10:17; Mark 16:16; Acts 17 30-31; Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:26, 27; Ephesians 1:3).

By obedience to this simple plan one is translated out of darkness into the kingdom of Christ - *"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son"* (Colossians 1:13). Once in Christ, translated into His kingdom, we are "new creatures - *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new"* (II Corinthians 5:17).

After primary obedience we have the responsibility to grow and develop as a Christian. Ephesians 4:14-16 informs us, *"That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."*

II Peter 1:5-11 - *"And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."*

A Christian then is either FAITHFUL OR UNFAITHFUL. The unfaithful will be lost; the faithful will be saved. Alien sinners (those who never obeyed the plan of salvation) will be lost - *"And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance*

on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (II Thessalonians 1:7-9).

Death

Death is the result of separation. When the spirit is apart from the body we say the body is dead - "*For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also*" (James 2:26). Death is not a ceasing to exist. The spirit continues to live. When one dies the body is buried, as the wise man wrote, "*Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it*" (Ecclesiastes 12:7). When one dies the body is buried but the spirit (sometimes called soul, Acts 2:27, 31) goes into the control of God.

The Hadean Realm

The spirit does not go immediately to HEAVEN or HELL, but to HADES. The word "hell" in the King James Version of the New Testament is translated from three different Greek words: HADES, TARTARUS, GEHENNA. At the time of the translation of the KJV (1611), the word "hell" did not carry the same meaning it holds today. The old English word "hell" (the hole) simply meant an unseen place, or a place that was covered. In England today, one who covers a house is called a hellier and helling (covers) is what the hellier does. In our language today, hell is always designated as the final abode of the wicked.

Hades means the place to which all spirits go, regardless of their moral character. Hades primarily means "the unseen, or invisible world." The place of departed souls, though unseen to people on earth is not unseen to God. Always, in the New Testament, Hades signifies only the region of disembodied spirits. The grave denotes only the receptacle of the body. Thayer defines Hades as "the common receptacle of disembodied spirits" (Gr.-Eng. Lex., p. 11).

By the use of the American Standard Version or a good concordance one may distinguish these words. HADES is equivalent to the Hebrew "SHEOL" and is the realm of the unseen; the place where the spirit goes when the body dies. (In the American Standard Version the Greek word Hades is never translated hell.)

The word Hades is used in the following places:

Matthew 11:23 - *"And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day."*

Matthew 16:18 - *"And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."*

Luke 10:15 - *"And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell."*

Luke 16:23 - *"And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom."*

Acts 2:27, 31 - *"Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption...He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption."*

I Corinthians 15:55 (translated "grave") - *"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"*

Revelation 1:18 - *"I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."*

Revelation 6:8 - *"And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth."*

Revelation 20:13, 14 - *"And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death."*

SHEOL is used in Psalms 16:10, et.al. - "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" (Acts 2:27 quotes this verse).

Sheol is translated "the grave" (KJV) thirty-one times: Genesis 37:35; 42:38; 44:29, 31; I Samuel 2:6; I Kings 2:6,9; Job 7:9; 14:13; 17:13; 21:13; 24:19; Psalms 6:5; 30:3; 31:17; 49:14--twice, 15; 88:3; 89:48; 141:7; Proverbs 1:12; 30:16; Ecclesiastes 9:10; Song of Solomon 8:6; Isaiah 14:11; 38:10, 18; Ezekiel 31:15; Hosea 13:14--twice.

Sheol is translated "hell" (KJV) thirty-one times: Deuteronomy 32:22; II Samuel 22:6; Job 11:8; 26:6; Psalms 9:17; 16:10; 18:5; 55:15; 86:13; 116:3; 139:8; Proverbs 5:5; 7:27; 9:18; 15:11, 24; 23:14; 27:20; Isaiah 5:14; 14:9, 15; 28:15, 18; 57:9; Ezekiel 31:16, 17; 32:21, 27; Amos 9:2; Jonah 2:2; Habakkuk 2:5. Sheol is translated "the pit" (KJV) three times: Numbers 16:30, 33; Job 17:16.

TARTARUS is translated "hell" in II Peter 2:4 - "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment."

It is a place where angels (that sinned) and all unrighteous are kept till the judgment - *"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished"* (II Peter 2:9).

Some think it is an assumption to say that these "angels" (as Jude 6 also) are heavenly beings; they may simply be earthly messengers who sinned - *"And the angels*

which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6).

Tartarus is obviously equivalent to the place of TORMENT in which the Rich Man found himself - *"And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom...For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment" (Luke 16:23, 28).*

GEHENNA is found 12 times in the New Testament. The word is used 11 times by Jesus (Matthew 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 12:5.

Matthew 10:28 - *"And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."*

Matthew 23:33 - *"Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"*

The word is used once by James in James 3:6 - *"And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell."* It is always translated "HELL" in the American Standard Version. It refers to the place of eternal punishment.

Hades Divided

There are two sections in HADES. One is called PARADISE, and described by the term ABRAHAM'S BOSOM. The other is called TARTARUS, and described as a place of TORMENT. A GREAT GULF separates the two. *"And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence" (Luke 16:26).* Crossing in either direction is impossible. This truth makes ridiculous the doctrine of a

second chance after death. At death the spirit leaves the body and maintains a separate, conscious existence.

The soul is neither asleep with the body in the grave, nor does it hover near the grave; nor has it entered some other body, as some suppose. Any idea of reincarnation of souls is at odds with Biblical teaching. The Bible says the spirit at death returns unto God who gave it (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Where, then, do souls go at death to await the resurrection? Is it to the ultimate destination, either heaven or hell, that shall be theirs after the judgment; or to an intermediate abode? At the day of final judgment, when Christ comes again, the Lord will say to the redeemed: "*Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*" (Matthew 25:34).

To the wicked he will say: "*Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil, and his angels*" (Matthew 25:41). "*And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal*" (Matthew 25:46). At that day the followers of Christ will receive their crown of righteousness (II Timothy 4:8; I Peter 5:4).

Christ said: "*Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also*" (John 14:1-3).

Even the saints who lived under the Old Testament are still waiting for entrance into the eternal home of the righteous. Peter, on Pentecost, referring to David, declared: "*David is not ascended into the heavens*" (Acts 2:34). Hence, souls do not enter their eternal state, either heaven or hell, at the moment of death, but will after the judgment.

The place prepared by the Lord where all disembodied spirits dwell between death and the resurrection is an intermediate abode called Hades. Two passages in the New Testament Scriptures state this fact:

Luke 16:23 (ASV) - *"And in Hades [hell, KJV] he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." The spirits of both the rich man and of Lazarus were in Hades after death.*

Of the rich man Jesus said, *"And in Hades he lifted up his eyes."* Of Lazarus Jesus said He saw Him in Abraham's bosom.

Acts 2:27, 31 (ASV) - *"Because thou wilt not leave my soul unto Hades [hell, KJV], Neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption...He foreseeing this spake of the resurrection of the Christ, that neither was he left unto Hades [hell, KJV], nor did his flesh see corruption."*

The spirit of Jesus went to Hades when He died. Peter, on Pentecost, referring to a prophecy David, said: *"For David saith concerning him [Christ]...Thou wilt not leave my soul unto Hades"* (Acts 2:25, 27). And he later added: *"Neither was he left unto Hades"* (vs. 31). When man dies, the spirit goes to Hades, and the body goes to the tomb. To further show Hades is divided into two compartments, Paradise, the abode of the righteous, and Tartarus, the abode of the wicked; we turn to the thief on the cross.

By comparing Christ's reply to the robber (*"Today shalt thou be with me in paradise,"* Luke 23:43) with Peter's statement about Christ (*"Neither was he left unto Hades,"* Acts 2:31 ASV), a person sees then that Paradise is a compartment of Hades. Christ went to Hades. Christ also went to Paradise. Therefore, Paradise is in Hades. Although both the good and bad go to Hades at death, their condition there is not the same; some are in a state of happiness, others in a state of misery.

The word Paradise is also applied to the eternal home of the redeemed, which they will inherit in their resurrected immortal bodies after the judgment (Revelation 2:7; cf. II Corinthians 12:4). The word "paradise" primarily means "a pleasure garden, a place of delight." The word is used in the Scriptures in the following senses:

- 1) The Garden of Eden (See the Septuagint Version of Genesis 2 and 3),
- 2) The place of rest for the righteous spirits after death.
- 3) Heaven (Revelation 22:1-5).

Paradise is any place prepared for enjoyment. It also signifies a condition of enjoyment. Thus, "Paradise" may be used properly to describe man's original home, or the place where righteous spirits go at death to await the resurrection, or their final home after judgment--i.e., heaven. When Christ said to the thief on the cross that both He and the thief would be together that day in Paradise, He referred to the place of rest for disembodied spirits (Cf. Job. 3:17; Revelation 14:13). If Jesus and the penitent robber were together in Paradise, and following His death on the cross if Jesus went to Hades (Acts 2:27, 31), therefore Paradise is in Hades, and Jesus and the robber were together in Hades while they were together in Paradise. Hence, Paradise in Luke 23:43 does not refer to heaven, the eternal abode of the saved, for Christ did not go to heaven when He died.

On the third day after His crucifixion, Christ's spirit came out of Hades, and His body was raised from the dead. The spirit of the thief, on the other hand, did not come from Hades, and his body remained in the grave. Until the day of resurrection, his spirit will remain in Hades and his body in his tomb. In like manner, all disembodied spirits remain in Hades until the resurrection of their bodies. To affirm, therefore, as many do, that at death the departing spirit goes immediately to heaven (if he be righteous) or to hell (if wicked) is not in harmony with many plain Scriptures.

Some teach that since the ascension of Christ, righteous souls now go immediately to heaven. The idea that Paradise has now been transferred to heaven is not supported by the Scriptures (Cf. Acts 2:34 - "*David is not ascended into the heavens*"). Thus, both the rich man and Lazarus were in Hades; but they were not in the same compartment; for one was "comforted," the other "tormented," and a "great gulf" was between them (Luke 16:23-26). Lazarus was in "Abraham's bosom." This surely means a place of rest, equivalent to the "Paradise" in Luke 23:43.

Souls of believers at death pass into a state of blessedness. They remain in that state until the resurrection, at which time they will be exalted to a state of final bliss. Souls of unbelievers at death pass into a place of torment in Hades. The rich man went to Hades at death, and in that place he suffered torment. Although he was in anguish, he was not in Gehenna. Both good and bad spirits are in Hades: the rich man, tormented in Tartarus; Lazarus, comforted in Abraham's bosom. The punishment of the ungodly precedes as well as follows the final judgment. *"The Lord knoweth how ...to keep the unrighteous under punishment unto the day of judgment"* (II Peter 2:9 ASV).

Emphasizing judgment and eternity, the word of God says comparatively little about the interim state of disembodied souls. There is no Biblical record of a report from this spirit-land. Lazarus said nothing about the conditions there after he returned to life (John 11); nor did Paul say anything about what he saw in "the third heaven" (II Corinthians 12:3, 4), for it was not lawful for him to reveal those things. It is important to note that after death there is no opportunity for one to change his life's record. When death comes and the spirit enters into Hades, the "gulf" between the saved and the lost is "fixed" (Luke 16:26. Cf. Acts 1:25; Proverbs 14:32; Ecclesiastes 11:3; Revelation 22:11).

As one lives on earth determines where he/she will spend eternity. Upon death the spirit immediately goes either to Paradise or Tartarus, both in Hades, to await the resurrection and judgment. At the resurrection righteous souls will leave Paradise, and wicked souls will leave Tartarus. Then, after the judgment the righteous will dwell in heaven and the wicked will exist in hell forever.

The End

When Jesus returns all the dead will be raised and those yet alive will be changed. The world will end and the judgment will take place. The judgment will be the formal pronouncement of the eternal destiny of every soul. At that time the Lord will CONVICT (convince, KJV) (Jude 15) the ungodly of their sin. Every knee will bow to the Lord and every tongue will confess (Romans 14:11). The unrighteous will depart into HELL (GEHENNA).

This is described as an eternal fire; a lake (Revelation 20:14-15); a furnace (Matthew 13:42, 50); unquenchable (Mark 9:43, 47, 48; everlasting, prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41). The eternal punishment is also described as Outer Darkness (Matthew 22:13; 25:30). There will be torment day and night forever. There is no night in Heaven (Revelation 21:25) and no day in Gehenna (Matthew 25:30), thus there is a day continually in Heaven and night continually in Gehenna. The punishment of the wicked is as long as the reward of the righteous. The godly will enter into the everlasting kingdom; Jesus Christ will deliver up the kingdom to God and will be subject unto Him, "that God may be all in all" (I Corinthians 15:20-28).

In heaven the righteous will serve God throughout eternity. *"When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun, we've no less days to sing God's praise than when we've first begun."*

Chapter Eleven

SOCIAL AND MORAL ISSUES

Eric Owens

Introduction

It is a delight to speak on this wonderful lectureship. I appreciate Steve so much and his love for God and his church. I pray that this lectureship and church will grow in God's grace in the years ahead. The saints at Bethlehem are among the warmest and friendliest

I know. It is always a joy for my family and I to be among you.

Our subject for this hour is, "Social and Moral Issues." This is a subject that must ever be kept before us. More than ever this is true as America becomes more and more immoral. Our nation was once known as a "Christian" nation. Most would not refer to it that way today. We will notice three things in our discussion: (1) God is the author of morality; (2) The plot of Satan; (3) A plea to Christians.

GOD IS THE AUTHOR OF MORALITY

There is a God. The very existence of the world demands such. Life begets life. Design demands a designer. In order for anything to be good, there must be an absolute good. The Bible says, "*The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handywork*" (Psm. 19:1). "*For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God*" (Heb. 3:4). "*For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse*" (Rom. 1:20).

Paul preaching on Mar's Hill said,

"God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things, And hath made of one blood of all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they

might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us; For in him we live and move, and have our being, as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are his offspring" (Acts 17:24-28).

"*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*" (Gen. 1:1). Many more scriptures could be given to demonstrate both the claim of and evidence for the existence of God.

We must begin with the existence of God. His existence determines whether or not there is such a thing as morality. This is where the battle is waged. If there is a God, morality must concern every accountable person. However, if God does not exist, in reality neither does morality. Thomas Warren stated the issue well when he said, "The history of man is actually the history of the struggle between (1) the view which regards God as supreme and (2) the view which regards man as supreme."ⁱ

The accuracy of this statement is clear when we compare the words of the Bible with those of the Humanist Manifestos. The Bible declares that there is a God. The Bible affirms that He created man and the world. The Bible declares that man sinned by disobeying God. The Bible declares that man is need of a savior. The Bible declares that Jesus the Christ is that Savior. The Bible declares that there is a heaven and there is a hell. The Bible declares that man has an immortal soul. The Bible declares that God will judge man for the deeds done in this life. The Bible declares that God's word is truth. The Bible declares that there is right and wrong, good and evil, light and darkness, morality and immorality. If one believes these things this belief will determine his behavior. He will live in view of eternity. This belief will determine his morality.

In contrast note some of the words in the Humanist Manifesto I. It is affirmed in this document that the universe is self-existent and denies that it was created. It affirms that man has evolved by purely natural means. It affirms that man is totally physical, thus denying that man has a soul. It affirms that all religion is the result of social evolution. It affirms that the ultimate end of man's life is to be found in the here and now. It affirms that man must learn do depend upon science and must discourage hopes of Heaven (which involves wishful thinking).

In the Humanist Manifesto II, it is affirmed that traditional theism (with faith in the prayer-hearing God) is an out-modeled faith. It affirms that traditional religions actually do a disservice to mankind. While we not only admit, but insist that all humanly originated religions do a disservice to mankind, we emphatically affirm that true Christianity is the most valuable "thing" in which any person can be involved.

A humanist is one who substitutes devotion to man for devotion for God. He rejects God as the creator of the world. He rejects the existence of the soul of man. He rejects heaven and hell. It should be clear to all that one's view of morality is directly connected to his view of God.

Put simply, one atheist said, "If there is no God, then anything is permitted." Again the words of Thomas Warren are very helpful he said,

"This is true, because, if there is no God, there is no value, if there is no God nothing is any *better* or *worse* than anything else. If there is no God, then it would have been no worse for the Nazis to have murdered six million Jewish men, women, and children than it would have been for them to have killed six million cockroaches, or to have chopped down six million trees, or to have crushed six million rocks. If atheism is true, then no act is really (objectively) right or wrong. If nothing exists but matter, then nothing really matters."ⁱⁱⁱ

God placed man upon the earth to prepare for eternity. He provided a world suitable for the needs of man. God also communicated with man. Giving us a blue print on how to live in an acceptable way to him. The Bible is the blueprint. It is the word of God, not the thoughts of men (II Tim. 3:16-17, II Pet. 1:20-21). The word of God is the standard by which man must gauge his actions.

God will judge us by his word (Jn. 12:48). Since the Bible is the word of God, it is the only authoritative, objective standard on the subject of morality. In order to find out what is right or wrong, we must seek counsel of God. Man on his own will destroy himself. Jeremiah said, "*O Lord I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps*" (Jer. 10:23).

Man is in need of guidance. Man is in need of God. Jesus said, "*If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth and the truth will set you free*" (Jn. 8:31-32). Later he would pray, "*Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth*" (Jn. 17:17). Therefore, the truth on morality is the word of God. We can know it. We must live by it. There is a God. He is the author of morality. The Bible is his word. Human wisdom notwithstanding, one day his word will judge us.

THE PLOT OF SATAN

The phrase, "by any means necessary," well sums up the work of Satan. He has and will continue to try to defeat the plans of Almighty God. Though defeated at Calvary, Satan, nevertheless, continues to walk about seeking whom he may devour. He has used the same schemes to overthrow countless millions.

His first plan is always the same—deny God. If he can get man to deny the reality of God, he has won. It should be noted, not everyone will fall for this tactic. In fact, "*The fool hath said, in his heart there is no God*" (Psm. 14:1). One of the reasons for denying God's existence is to be free from moral restraints. One atheist said, "Belief in God, and viewing the world as having meaning are hindrances to my sexual freedom." Satan's first ploy is to deceive man into a denial of God.

Satan doesn't need everyone to deny God, just the "wise" ones. He can then move easily to his next plan. Next, Satan will attempt to convince man to reject the word of God. These people proclaim belief in God, yet reject his word. In their mind, they have the best of both worlds. They have a meaningful relationship with God, without all of the restraints of God. They may bend to the pressures of society or their own desires. Either way, the results are the same because to reject God's word is to reject God.

It must be understood that in order for one to please God, he must obey God. The Bible states that, "Jesus Christ is the author of eternal salvation unto all them that **obey** him" (Heb. 5:9). Again Jesus said, "*If ye love me, keep my commandments*" (Jn. 14:15). The Lord also said, "*he that rejecteth me and receiveth not my words hath one that judgeth him, the words that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day*" (Jn.

12:48). Contrary to popular belief, God does require obedience.

Sadly, many people act as if Christianity is American. They have been taught that because our society attempts political correctness, God does also. God's law is neither changed nor altered because Americans desire choice. While choice is a wonderful privilege in America, it is not so with God. God is sovereign. His decrees are absolute. His word cannot be changed or comprised. Around the world, Satan has had his greatest successes in this area.

Having convinced many to deny God, and more to reject his word, Satan has but one step left. Building on the first two, Satan will now convince man to replace God's will on morality. This is a natural progression. For when man denies God and rejects God's word, he will replace God's morality with his immorality. Secular history bears this out, but more importantly inspiration shows it to be true. Paul in the first chapter of Romans makes this point:

"Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lust of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. A-men. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all

unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable" (Rom. 1:21-31).

These words read very much like a modern day newspaper. This condition was not only prevalent among the Gentiles, it prevailed among God's people.

Hosea prophesied,

"Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel: for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out and blood toucheth blood . . . "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:1-3,6).

Please note that once the knowledge of God left the land, immorality prevailed.

How applicable is that to America? Look around and you will see that the amount of immorality in this country is proportionate to the absence of God. More and more, America is attempting to deny God. Those who do claim belief reject his word lest they be viewed as intolerant? Is it any wonder then that in this country homosexuality is preached at every chance the world gets. For people who preach tolerance, they sure aren't tolerant about my desire not to see it or hear it everywhere I turn.

The world has replaced the idea of right and wrong with situations and "autonomous morals (though such is a self contradiction)." There is no situation for one to lie acceptably. Can you imagine the situation in which it would be right for someone to come to your house at night and take your car? Can you imagine the situation in which it would be right for one to murder your child or rape your wife? Would anyone advocate that there could ever be a situation for such atrocities to be right? It is very unlikely that those who hold this position would apply their reasoning to their own families.

The world has replaced purity with pleasure. Children are no longer taught about the birds and the bees by their parents. They are now shown films and given books in sex education. Did you ever think you would live to see the day that condoms would be given out at school? Children are shown films, read books, given condoms and then some are surprised by the teenage pregnancy rate. However this is not a problem for some they will simply convince the child to abort the baby. Over a million babies are murdered in this country a year by abortion.

Once people were convinced that it was ok to murder unborn babes, it was a short step to killing or helping to kill the senior citizens. Given this thinking it will not be long before babies are killed outside of the womb. As this and other stories illustrate:

On April 9, 1982, A BABY IDENTIFIED ONLY AS, "Infant Doe," was born at the Bloomington, Indiana, hospital. Living only one week, Infant Doe died at 10:30 P.M., on the night of April 15. Taken alone, his death would not have been terribly remarkable. Infants do die within a week of being born. What made Infant Doe's case different, however, was that an operation which could have been performed to correct defect that closed off his esophagus and would not allow food to pass into this stomach was refused by the child's parents, in consultation with the medical team. There was another important factor: The child also had Down's syndrome. Even if one believes that abortion is morally permissible *before* a defective fetus is actually born, a giant step must be taken beyond that point in order to justify the taking of human life *after* it is born. And, make no mistake about it, the parent's refusal to authorize lifesaving treatment in this case was just as much a *taking* of life as if they had starved their son to death. For that is how he died.ⁱⁱⁱ

Some of the pro-choice advocates are accepting the conclusion of their positions, but this time in support of infanticide. James Watson, is one of the discoverers of the double helix structure of DNA, seriously proposed in 1973 that infants should not be

"declared alive until three days after birth," in order to allow parents the choice of disposing of their defective newborn! ^{iv}

In his book, "When choice becomes God" F. Legard Smith writes,

"Doctors Raymond Duff and A.G.M. Campbell give us reason to believe that someone is listening to Watson. In October 1973 they reported in New England Journal of Medicine that more than 40 defective infants had been purposely allowed to die in the Yale-New Haven Hospital." ^v

In the same book he records these words,

Peter Singer in the New York Review of Books in 1984 wrote:

"The pro-life groups were right about one thing: the location of the baby inside or outside of the womb cannot make such a moral difference. We can't coherently hold that it is all right to kill a fetus before birth, but as soon as the baby is born everything must be done to keep it alive. The solution, however, is not to accept the pro-life view that the fetus is a human being with the same moral status as yours or mine. The solution is the very opposite: to abandon the idea that all human life is of equal worth." ^{vi}

The decay of the home is another great work of Satan. A man and a woman - a male and a female - married for life is not "traditional." It is right. God made them male and female and said therefore shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife and they shall be one flesh. As in all things, Satan's deceptions and the self-will of men are attempting to destroy God's order. The result, of course, is the decay of our society. Suppose everyone practiced homosexuality, what would happen to the world?

We are told that it is an alternate life style. Sadly when we were told something enough we begin to believe it. The only alternative to morality is immorality. The only alternative to right is wrong. The cry is different, but the end is the same - I want to live my life my way. I refuse to be accountable to anyone. I don't want to serve a God, who is so judgmental. Friends, the only choice we have when it comes to serving God is

whether or not we will. Once our choice has been made, we either receive his gracious blessings, or await his righteous judgment. We must not fall prey to the plot of Satan.

A PLEA TO CHRISTIANS

Today more than ever Christians must arm themselves with the mind of Christ. We must gird up the loins of our mind. We must be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

WE MUST HAVE GOOD INFLUENCE

The Lord's admonition must be heeded. *"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven"* (Mt. 5:13-16).

If being a Christian means anything, it means we change our lives. Baptism is the line of demarcation. The Bible uses such words as "were" and "walked" to describe or past. Having been called out of the world, we dare not as children of God, behave like we are still in it.

How does a Christians, "in moderation" differ from the world's approach to a designated driver? We cannot save the world if we behave like the world. If we go where they go - smoke like they smoke - drink like they drink - dance how they dance - and gamble with them - how are we any different from them? (Eph. 4:17-32, 5:11-16).

WE MUST THINK DIFFERENTLY

The truth is, in order for me to live like Jesus, I must think like Jesus. Paul writes, *"I beseech you therefore, brethren by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not*

conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God"

(Rom. 12:1-2).

Our thinking determines our actions. Jesus taught that one is not defiled by that which comes out of him, but by what goes in (Mark 7:20-23). We cannot then sit at the world's table and continue to feed upon a diet of human wisdom.

WE MUST STUDY GOD'S WORD

In a world where sin appears to be winning the day, Christians must study God's word. The Bible is the only source of morality. It alone can equip man unto every good work. With religious error within and gross immorality without, Christians need to know God's word. The words of Jesus are bread and water. His word is life! In order to navigate ones way safely through this world of darkness. I need the guiding light of God's word (Psm. 119:105).

WE NEED HOMES APPROVED OF GOD

Parents need desperately to know God's word. Parents need desperately to teach God's word to their children (Deut. 6:4-10). This is not the responsibility of the church, it is has always been the responsibility of the parents. Fathers need to study God's word to know how to lead their families. Mothers need to study God's word to know how to be a help meet. Children need to be taught and to study for themselves. They need to develop and grow their own faith in God and not that of their parents.

We do not need prayer back in the schools, we need prayer back in the home. Here is God's school for children. The home is the place where morality is taught. The world is not taking our children from us. So often we are giving them away without much of a fight.

Children need to be taught right and wrong at home. Children need to be taught good and evil at home. Children need to be taught truth and error at home. They need to be taught to be accountable for their actions. They need to be taught to admit when they make mistakes and then strive to do better. They need to be taught

about sex at home by parents who care about them. They need to be taught to have respect for those in authority. They need to see Christianity in practice from their parents, not from the preacher on Sunday. God has always intended for parents to teach these things. Parenting is a 24 hour a day – 7 day a week – 365 day a year job. It is time for us to give our children the time, energy, effort, discipline, guidance, morality, and love they need. To withstand the attacks of the world we must fortify our homes!

WE MUST WITHSTAND ERROR

The Bible makes it clear that we are not defensive as Christians, but offensive. We are to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them (Eph. 5:11). We cannot adopt the philosophy of live and let live. We must be courageous enough to teach others the truth even when it is difficult or unpopular. Homosexuality is wrong. Fornication is wrong, and must never be once named among us. Abortion is wrong - it is murder. Adultery is wrong. We cannot go into a shell and hide in our buildings because the world says these things are OK. In spite of the shame or hardship, we must withstand error.

WE MUST RESIST SATAN

One of Satan's greatest tools is time. If he can't get us today then he will try tomorrow. So it is with the immorality in the world. Things that were once unspeakable are now spoken of everywhere and in every place. As in Jeremiah's day, there is no shame and neither can they blush. As saints, we must not bow down to the pressure of the world. We must not be made to fit into their mold. We must set our minds on things above and not on things on the earth (Col. 3:1-3). We must draw closer to God and submit to his will (Jms. 4:1-10). We must live like this world is not our home. We are just passing through.

WE MUST REMAIN PURE

Holiness is the attribute that God first impressed upon the mind of Moses.

Through every act with his people this attribute was shown. The animal sacrifices point out God's holiness. The clothes of the priest demonstrate God's holiness. The ground on which he stood was holy. The mount they couldn't approach was holy. The law they received was holy. The tabernacle where they met God was holy.

The book of Leviticus, like no other points us to the holiness of God. Little wonder then, those who have a relationship with God are called upon to be holy. Peter writes, "*As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation. Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy*" (I. Pet. 1:14-16).

CONCLUSION

In spite of all the advances in the world, man remains the same. Many refuse to have God in their knowledge. As a result, they invent their own systems of "morality" to their own hurt. Evolution and atheism have nothing in them to suggest the need for, or existence of morality. As brother Warren said, "if every thing is matter, then nothing matters."

Only God can furnish man with the needs of life. Only God can furnish man with morality, for God is good. As Christians, we must continue to shine as lights in the world. We must ever stand for truth and exhibit it in our lives. We must ever resist the Devil, that he might flee. We must never yield to the pressures of the world to call wrong right, and evil good. By studying God's word, by living the life, we can live moral lives in an immoral world.

ⁱ Warren, Thomas B. *Morals in an Immoral Age* (Forth Worth, TX. Christian Supply Center, 1985), p.122.

ⁱⁱ Warren, Thomas B. *The Spiritual Sword* (Memphis, TN. Getwell Church of Christ, 1978), editorial.

ⁱⁱⁱ Smith, LaGard F. *When Choice Becomes God* (Eugene, OR. Harvest House Publishers, 1990), p. 163.

^{iv} *Ibid.* p.168

^v *Ibid.*

^{vi} *Ibid.* p. 171.

Chapter Twelve

KINGDOM/CHURCH

Gary Colley

Introduction

When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am? And they said, Some say thou art John the Baptist: some Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven"
(Matthew 16:13-19).

We should always rejoice in having God's Word, the Bible, in our midst. It gives those who are seekers the answers to all of life's problems, whether in needed principles of living daily, in our homes, or in religious matters (II Peter 1:3).

We especially need to know about the kingdom or church of Christ, since it is in this institution that all of the spiritual blessings and promises of God are located (Ephesians 1:3; II Corinthians 1:20). Entrance into Christ comes with the new birth or baptism into Christ (John 3:3-5; Romans 6:3,4; Galatians 3:26,27). In our text, Jesus uses both terms, church and kingdom, to refer to one and the same institution, and so should all today use the term. The term "church" refers to the body of Christ in a family sense (I Timothy 3:14,15), over which God is the Father and Christ is the head (Ephesians 1:22,23). The term "kingdom" has reference to the

same institution, but is a governmental term proclaiming Christ as King in His kingdom (I Timothy 6:15).

Preparation for the Kingdom or Church

Preparation for the kingdom began 600 years before it became a reality on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Daniel 2 gives the first reference by name to the kingdom (Daniel 2:44). Many other references are given by the prophets, to the fact that Christ would reign and be a priest on His throne in His kingdom. Peter said on Pentecost that Christ was reigning that day, while other Bible passages show that He would reign to the end of the world (Acts 2:33-36; I Corinthians 15:24). 84 inspired witnesses gave testimony during the personal ministry of Jesus that the kingdom was near (Matthew 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; Luke 10:9), and Jesus said it would come in the lifetime of many of those standing and listening to Him (Mark 9:1).

The Church and the Kingdom are the Same

Since some deny today that the church and the kingdom are the same, let us examine the matter. Please consider some clear evidence to prove the fact that the church and the kingdom are the same:

Same Keys of Entrance

As we have already shown from our text, Jesus referred to one institution by two descriptive terms, church/kingdom, therefore we conclude that they are the same. If the church and the kingdom were not the same, Peter and the other apostles would have no right to use **the same keys** of the kingdom on the church (Acts 2:38-41).

Same Conditions of Entrance

The church and the kingdom must be the same since they are entered on **the same conditions** (John 3:5; Acts 2:38-41, 47).

Same Head

Proof is seen clearly also, in the fact that the church and the kingdom have **the same Head**, therefore, they are the same institution (Colossians 1:18; Revelation 1:5).

Same Laws

The church and the kingdom have **the same laws**, and therefore are the same institution (II Peter 1:3).

Same Subjects

The kingdom and the church have **the same subjects**, Christians (Colossians 1:13).

Same Seed

The church and the kingdom have **the same seed** (Luke 8:11; I Corinthians 15:1-3).

Same Lord's Supper

The kingdom and the church have **the same Lord's Supper** to partake of each Lord's Day (Luke 22:30; Acts 20:7).

Conclusion

We must conclude that no premillennial theory can change these facts! Jesus did what He came to do and promised to do. He built His church and became King in His kingdom. The Bible does not speak of the "rapture", Christ "reigning on a literal throne in Jerusalem for a thousand literal years," "The Great Tribulation" brought on by Jesus and the saints, or the "earth renewed" to contain the "overflow of Heaven." So many have been the false calculations resulting from the figments of the imaginations of puny men! May we appeal to honest hearts to receive the message of the kingdom and enter the church of Christ today!

Chapter Thirteen

CHRIST, OUR PERFECT EXAMPLE*James Cossey***Introduction**

I believe teaching by example to be one of the greatest methods that we can use. Especially when it concerns religious matters. Webster says that the word example means “ One that serves as a pattern to be imitated or not to be imitated.” In the Greek New Testament we have the word, u`pod,eigma {hoop-od'-igue-mah} which is translated 8xs example, 1x as ensample, and 1x as pattern all of which suggest the idea of a sign suggested of anything, a delineation of a thing, representation, figure or copy. ⁱ Individuals can either imitate the pattern Christ provided for us by his life and teaching or reject it. There is a grand old hymn that Churches of Christ down through the years have used and some of the words of it are worth repeating; *“Sweet are the promises kind is the word; dearer far than any message man ever heard; pure was the mind of Christ sinless I see; he the great example is an pattern for me; sweet is the tender love Jesus hath shown, sweeter far than any love that mortals have known; kind to the erring one, faithful is he; he the great example is an pattern for me.”*

Jesus no doubt, during his brief time on this earth left us with some of the greatest examples or patterns that we can ever hope to follow. We want to examine some of these great patterns Christ left for us. While this will in no wise be an exhaustive study, it is our prayer that these few examples will stir your appetite to study about the savior in a way you never have before.

Christ Our Great Example in Humility

In the thirteenth chapter of John we see Jesus setting forth the pattern for Humility. While Jesus and the disciples were eating the Passover supper, Christ knew full well that the cruelest death known to man was now upon him because "the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him." Likewise according to John 13: 3, Christ was fully aware of his three fold eminence i.e., 1. He had all authority (Matt 28:18), 2. He was divine in his nature (John 1:1, 14) and, 3. That he was about to return to His throne on the right hand of God, which for you and I he put aside so unselfishly (Phil. 2:5-11). Although we see Jesus with all these supreme and divine attributes and being well aware of them, he was still willing to be clothed with the robe of humility. Just think of it, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, God in the flesh, now girded with a towel about to wash the disciple's feet! Peter reacted somewhat like most of us would today if a King were to want to wash our feet; "Lord, do you wash my feet?" This in the Greek construction indicates an emphatic contrast; "Peter, we may suppose, drew his feet up, as he spoke, in his impulsive humility." ⁱⁱ However, when Jesus explained to Peter the significance of his actions he quickly changed his tune; "Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also *my* hands and *my* head." Once Jesus had completed this humble act he uttered these words, "Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, *your* Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

(John 13:13-17). Christ truly was a servant and to be a servant one must be of a humble heart. Christians are to be servants of God; Rom. 6:18, 22, 1 Peter 2:16 et al. As servants we must have a humble heart and be willing to do whatever it takes to carry out God's holy and divine plan. It would do all Christian servants a great deal of good to study the Lord's perfect example concerning humility and then apply. There is simply no way on earth that we can be pleasing to God unless we first are willing to humble our hearts before him. "Ye adulterers and adulteresses know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? (James 4:4-But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the **humble**. (Emp. jc) "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *ye* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *ye* double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and *your* joy to heaviness. **Humble yourselves** (emp. jc) in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." (James 4:4-10) I believe there is a great misconception about humility. One might think that to be of a humble heart that he would have to be a spiritual wimp or a pushover; however, this is not the case at all! Jesus again left us a great example pertaining to this; "And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but

ye have made it a den of thieves. (Matt. 21:12-13) Let us all put on the robe of humility and serve, as did our Lord.

Jesus Our Perfect Example as Teacher

We learn that from a very early stage in the Life of the Lord, that he fully understood the concept of teaching. After Joseph and Mary had been to Jerusalem to worship they were on their way home and somehow in the shuffle of things, Christ was left behind. When his parents discovered his absence, they frantically turned back in search of him and after three days they found him. But, it is where they found him and what he was doing that is so significant. They didn't find him playing games or just wasting his time, the way a lot of twelve-year-olds would be doing. No, they found him in the temple teaching! When ask by his astonished mother, why he had stayed behind and caused them so much sorrow he said; "How is it that you sought me? Wist you not that I must be about my father's business? This scene shows us that God gave Jesus divine ability in extraordinary conditions. "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him." (Luke 2:40) "And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions" (Luke 2:46) "And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers." (Luke 2:47) Jesus was not taught these things from his parents (although they taught him many things pertaining to the Old Testament as all faithful Jews did). In fact, at this particular time, Jesus had to instruct his mother; "wist ye not that I must be about my father's business" She had made a charge of neglect of the home but Jesus made it clear that he had been fulfilling a much higher

obligation to the heavenly father. “We are not sure as to what extent Jesus understood his mission at this time but we can be sure that he did not learn these things from school from Mary or Joseph. They came from God.”ⁱⁱⁱ From that time until we are introduced to the Lord and his ministry, the Bible is silent about his life. However, we learn that this was a characteristic that he did not lose. We find in Matthew chapters 5-7, Jesus preaching to a multitude of people at Mount Olivet, a beautiful discourse concerning what we know as the beatitudes which simply means perfect blessedness or happiness. At the request of the disciples Jesus taught them how to pray. (Luke 11:1 ff) “He taught daily in the temple” and “all the people were very attentive (literally they hung on his every word^{iv}) to hear him”. (Luke 19:47-48) We see Jesus going into Capernaum teaching in the synagogue “as one having authority.” (Mark 1:21-22). Jesus taught as one having authority because he had authority. The Bible has much to say about the authority of Christ. In the Old Testament we read; “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou *art* my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give *thee* the heathen *for* thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth *for* thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.” (Psalms 2:6-9). Again we read; “Also I will make him *my* firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth. (Psalm 89:27) And in Daniel 7:14, “And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom *that* which shall not

be destroyed. There are hundreds of passages that one could sight to show what authority Jesus had from the Old Testament but I believe these will suffice. In the New Testament, we also have several passages that teach us of the authority of Christ; “The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.” (John 3:35), “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.” (Matt. 28:18) “All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and *he* to whom the Son will reveal *him*. (Luke 10:22) “Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; (John 13:3) (John 5:22-27, John 17:2, Acts 2:36, Acts 10:36, Rom. 14:9, et. al.) When Jesus gave the great commission in Matt. 28:18-20 to the disciples he authorized us to teach with the same authority. Christians have the God given authority to teach the plan of salvation to the entire world just as the first century Church did! We have God’s written word for our authority in all that we do and teach; “And whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to the father by him.” (Col. 3:17) What a wonderful blessing and opportunity we have today! Jesus gave his all to reach as many as possible with the good news of his coming. He was a relentless teacher and he understood his mission. “For the son of man has come to seek and save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:10) The apostles followed Christ’ pattern in preaching and teaching. After the conversion of Saul, I can think of none that tried any harder to follow the example that Christ gave on teaching than he. Study the book of Acts and learn of one of the greatest gospel preachers that ever lived this side of Christ in the Apostle Paul. Indeed, he followed the pattern set forth

by our Lord and had the same burning zeal for the lost. "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." (1Cor. 11:1) If all teachers and preachers would follow the perfect example that Christ left, I believe we would see some great advances in church growth as well as a much stronger brotherhood today.

Christ Our Perfect Example in Obedience

"Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, suffer *it to be so* now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matt. 3:13-16) Jesus walked nearly 30 miles to be baptized by John the Baptizer thus, as he stated himself "fulfilling all righteousness." Most folks today would not even drive their cars 5 miles to a Bible study on Sunday morning, much less walk anywhere to obey the commandments of God. Jesus' only desire was to be obedient to the Father's will. While in the garden of Gethsemane Jesus prayed; "Oh my Father if it be possible, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." Jesus, knowing that the cup that he was about to sup was the cup of death, was still willing to be obedient even if it meant going to the cross. The Apostle Paul instructed the brethren at Philippi concerning the obedience of Christ; "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself

of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Phil. 2:5-8) "Let this mind be in you" literally means "Keep on thinking this in you which was in Christ." What is that? Humility.

This was a voluntary humiliation on the part of Christ. Stemming from this act of humility was: "and became obedient" which means, "giving ear, obedient, subject." ^v especially to God! (see Phil.2:9) This teaches us that before we can truly be obedient to God we must first bend our knees! We also can learn from this text that there will be sacrifices made. Jesus: "Thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, took upon himself the form of a servant." "In his preincarnate state Christ possessed the attributes of God and so appeared to those in heaven who saw him. Here is a clear statement by Paul of the deity of Christ." He took upon himself limitations of place (space) and of knowledge and of power, though still on earth retaining more of these than any mere man. It is here that men should show restraint and modesty, though it is hard to believe that Jesus limited himself by error of knowledge and certainly not by error of conduct. He was without sin, though tempted as we are. "He stripped himself of the insignia of majesty" (Lightfoot). ^{vi}

Jesus taught obedience; "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that **doeth** the will (EMP j.c.) of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful

works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matt. 7:21-23) Many in the religious realm today claim to be doers of God's will and at the same time, say that baptism is not essential to salvation. However, we can read; "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." We have in Mark the sixteenth chapter a passage that unequivocally refutes any false ideas about baptism. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." We learn from the Greek construction of this sentence that the words "he that believeth and is baptized" are aorist participles. The rules of Greek grammar teach us that that the aorist participle antecedes the main verb of the sentence and the main verb of this sentence is "shall be saved". This very elementary rule of grammar strikes a deathblow to many denominational churches and doctrines. Being obedient to God means that we are subject to his law (The New Testament) in every respect not leaving out a jot or adding a tittle! (Rev. 22:18-19) Being obedient means that we must put God first; "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matt. 6:33) Being a doer of God's will mean that sometimes we will have to do things that are not too popular with some people. At one point Jesus said, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? (Matt. 23:33) if you think he was popular for this utterance think again! This type of teaching and obedience to God led to his crucifixion. Being a "doer of his will" may mean that you will have to tell someone that he or she must get out of and unscriptural marriage. (Matt. 5:32, 19:9) Being a "doer of his will" may mean that you will not have the support of your family or friends. "Think not that I am come to

send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes *shall be* they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." (Matt. 10:34-39) Being a "doer of his will" could leave you destitute and without a place to lay your head. "And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air *have* nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay *his* head." (Matt. 8:18-19) Although we may see trials and tribulations before we leave for worlds unknown, we can rest assured that "heaven will surely be worth it all." Thank God for his only begotten son and the great examples he left us! It is my prayer that you can utter the same words as did the apostle Paul "I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." And we can if we follow the pattern Christ left for us!

ⁱ Strong's Concordance

ⁱⁱ A T Robertson's Word Pictures

ⁱⁱⁱ See Studies in the life of Christ by Foster

^{iv} The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised

^v G.Abbott-Smith Greek Lexicon

^{vi} A T Robertson's Word Pictures

Chapter Fourteen

THE SYSTEM OF SALVATION

James W. Boyd

Introduction

There are some very sobering words found in the Bible. *"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy that he cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you."* (Isa. 59:1,2).

What is sin? John tells us it is the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4), meaning the law of God. It is a violation of the law of God under which we live and to which we are accountable and answerable unto him. Furthermore, Paul writes, *"For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."* (Rom. 3:23). What difference does that make? *"The wages of sin is death..."* (Rom. 6:23). This refers to spiritual death, separation from God and His favor.

Somewhat in contrast to these sentiments, and to offset the tragic results of sin, we read, *"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners..."* (1 Tim. 1:15). It is evident that man is in sin and God wants to save him from its wages. It is equally evident that God intends to save man through His Son, Jesus Christ. How does God save through Christ?

Once a Mystery

When reading Ephesians 3:1-7, Paul informs us that *"by revelation he (God) made known unto me the mystery, (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge of the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."* Please take note of the word "mystery." In the New Testament it refers to a battle plan, a scheme, a design by which something is to be accomplished. Here it refers to God's plan for redeeming man, His system of salvation through Jesus

Christ. Once it was hidden, in the sense that it was not yet revealed and was unknown. It was gradually unfolded as God designed it before the foundation of the world. But now it is revealed. Now it is no longer a mystery of unknown. As Colossians 1:26 reads, "...*hath been hid from ages and generations, but now is made manifest to his saints.*"

What is involved and included in God's system of salvation? As we begin our investigation, may we be impressed that if we are to be saved we must know and follow God's plan. It is not left to man to devise his own plan of salvation. So you can see that we are really concerned with the most important matter our minds can consider, whether we realize it or not.

System of Grace, Mercy, and Love

Salvation is by a system of grace. Romans 3:24, "*Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*" Ephesians 2:8,9, "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast.*" Titus 3:4-6, "*But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior.*" The Bible leaves no room for doubt but the plan of God for the saving of man is a plan that involved and includes the grace, mercy, and love of God. But there are questions that must be considered, such as, how does God save by His grace, and when does God save by His mercy?

First, we must understand what is meant by the grace of God. It has reference to an attitude and action of God on behalf of mankind. God has done something for us that we could never merit, never earn, nor deserve. Instead of dealing with us in our sins according to justice, God has determined to offer man His mercy. As Psalm 103:110 reads, "*He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.*" How thankful we can be for this because if justice had been the measure, none could be saved because none are righteous (Rom. 3:10). Without the grace, mercy,

and love of God we could close the subject of salvation right here. There would be no salvation.

But we are not saved by grace alone. No such statement or insinuation is to be found in Scripture to that conclusion. Just consider for a moment. If salvation is by grace alone, and God wants all to be saved (2 Pet. 3:9), and since the grace of God has appeared unto all men (Tit. 2:11), none would be lost. But who can read the Bible and conclude that all shall be saved? Furthermore, if any were lost, it would be God's fault. If any were saved, He would be a respecter of persons to save some and not everyone, the very quality of God that Paul and Peter deny (Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11; 1 Pet. 1:17). If salvation is by grace alone and any were lost, would it be because God's grace was insufficient to save? Paul denied the inadequacy of the grace of God to save (Rom. 5:20). If salvation were by grace alone, it would remove man's accountability to God and leave the matter entirely up to God.

Salvation is by grace, mercy, and the love of God, but not by these alone, regardless of who says otherwise. There are other components in God's plan for saving man revealed in Scripture.

System of Blood

God's system to save is a system of blood. Christ tasted of death of every man (Heb. 2:9). In the death of Christ where he shed His blood we see the manifestation, the demonstration of the grace of God. Ephesians 1:7, "*In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.*" Jesus said He shed His blood "*for the remission of sins*" (Matt. 26:28). "*Without the shedding of blood there is no remission*" (Heb. 9:22). But the blood of animals would not suffice (Heb. 10:4). It was "by his own blood" that He "obtained eternal salvation for us" (Heb. 9:12). "*Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him*" (Rom. 5:9). In this way God commended His love toward us (Rom. 5:8). Our reconciliation to God is accomplished by the death of Christ on the cross (Eph. 2:16). As

surely as salvation is by grace, mercy, and the love of God, it is also by blood. How shameful that some today are ashamed of the blood of Christ and are repulsed by the doctrine of salvation by blood! The blood of Christ is the cleansing agent for our sin-stained souls. But as with all agents of cleaning, it must be applied. We must learn how and when the blood of Christ is applied.

Thus far it ought be obvious that the love, mercy, and grace of God is such that by the sacrifice of Jesus, divine provision has been made for the salvation of man. The system of salvation is made possible by the unmerited favor of God toward sinful man and demonstrated by the death of Christ on the cross where His blood was shed.

The role of God in saving man was completed when Christ was raised from the tomb and thereby declared by this momentous evidence to be the Son of God (Rom. 1:4). How could a dead Savior offer eternal life to anyone? Paul wrote of the resurrection in First Corinthians 15 and listed a number of dire and deadly consequences if Christ had not risen. But he emphatically declares, verse 20, "*But now is Christ risen...*" This, too, was a part of God's part in saving man.

But man has his part to play in God's scheme for redeeming man. Peter preached Christ on Pentecost, informing his hearers of what God had done and what God expected them to do. He urged, "*Save yourselves...*" (Acts 2:40). He did not tell them to save themselves by themselves, because they could never do that. That would have been contrary to what he had preached about what God had done. There is no salvation for man by himself. But there is man's part. In that great invitation that Jesus extended in Matthew 11:28-30 He commanded men to come, take, and learn. There was that which Christ had done. There was that which man must do. Whatever it is that man must do, he must do it. Unless man does man's part of God's plan, he cannot be saved. Without what God has done there would be no man's part. But since God has provided the way, and designed man's part, man is expected to do what God commands.

System of Faith

Therefore, we see that the system of salvation is a system of faith. Romans 1:16, "*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*" Note the need to believe. Jesus said as recorded in John 8:24, "*Except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.*" John 3:16 stressed the essentially of faith. In fact, "*Without faith it is impossible to please him*" (Heb. 11:6). As surely as the system of salvation involves grace, mercy, love, blood, and the resurrection of Christ, it involves man's faith. We appropriate to ourselves the benefits of God grace by faith. "*For by grace are ye saved through faith*" (Eph. 2:8). We have access to God's grace by faith (Rom. 5:2).

But what kind of faith? The Bible speaks of different kinds of faith. There is weak faith, strong faith, dead faith, and faith that works through love (Gal. 5:6). Jesus taught, "*Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven*" (Matt. 7:21). Can there be any doubt that man has something to do? Hebrews chapter eleven has been called the "Hall of Faith" because many Old Testament characters are held before us as examples of acceptable faith. Notice as you read that in each instance of that chapter the faith was an active, obedient faith. Mere mental assent to certain things was not sufficient faith. There is a faith that saves and a faith that will not save. James 2:24 specifically teaches that one is not justified by faith only. We have seen we are justified by grace, mercy, love, blood, the resurrection, and here we see we are justified by faith (Rom. 5:1). Never does Scripture teach salvation by faith only, unfortunately, a prominent false doctrine among nearly every denomination. The kind of faith Paul mentions is the "obedience of faith" in Romans 1:5 and 16:26.

John 12:42,43 tells of some who believed on Jesus but would not confess Him. Their faith would not save. It took more than faith like that. Agrippa believed (Acts 26) but as far as the record shows he was never saved. Faith only would have saved them all if salvation were by faith only. The Bible makes plain that salvation is by faith. It is

equally plain that salvation is not by faith only. There is no more misleading and deceptive doctrine, one that dominates the denominational world, than the doctrine that salvation is by faith alone.

System of Works

From James 2:20-24 we learn that we are justified by works. This may at first seem to contradict Ephesians 2:8,9 where we read that we are not saved by works. But inspired men do not contradict each other. Obviously the writers have different works in mind. There are works that will not save, such as works of which we can boast (Eph. 2:8,9), works of the Mosaic law (Gal. 2:16; Rom. 3:20,28), or works of our own righteousness (Tit. 3:3-5). But there are works in God's system of salvation that are essential to being saved. We must discern between the kinds of works. But have we not learned that we are saved by faith? Let us also learn that Jesus called faith a work (John 6:29), a work of God. It is a work of God because God commands man to believe. But man is the one that must do the believing. Believe is something man does.

System of Obedience

There are works of obedience by which faith is made perfect, whole, and complete (Jas. 2:20-24,26). Works of obedience are what made the faith of Abraham an acceptable faith. Without his obedience his faith would have availed nothing. The faith that saves is the faith that obeys. Works of obedience are the kind of works that makes faith a saving faith, without which we remain lost. Even so, when we obey, we have earned nothing, deserve nothing, merited nothing, but still we must believe and obey.

System of Law

What does one obey? One must obey God's law. The system of salvation includes law. Romans 8:21, "*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*" What is the law of sin and death? It simply says, "You sin; you die." As Romans 6:23 teaches, "*The wages of sin is death...*" The law of Moses

could not deliver us from that law. But we can be free from that law of sin and death because there is a law by which we are freed. It is the law of God after the inward man (Rom. 7:22). It is not a law of meritorious works, but the law of faith (Rom. 3:27). Jesus calls it the "perfect law of liberty" (Jas. 1:25). It is the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2).

Sometimes false teachers will tell people we are under grace and not law. We are under grace. But grace is not incompatible or inconsistent with law just as faith is not incompatible or inconsistent with works of obedience. The system that God devised and delivered involved all these things. The very fact that there is a system of salvation at all proves there is a law because a law is a rule established by proper authority. God has established a rule by which we are saved, and that is His law. In that law there are commandments we must obey. Christ is the author of salvation to the obedient (Heb. 5:9). Can we be friends of Him if we disobey (John 15:14)? Do not we show our love by our obedience (John 14:15; I John 2:3)?

Keep in mind, even as man obeys he is not earning his way to heaven, nor attempting to do so. When we obey we are doing nothing more than what we ought to do (Lk. 17:10). Salvation is a gift (Rom. 6:23). But as with all gifts, there is a giver and a receiver. God gives and man receives. We receive the gift that God offers by meeting the conditions stipulated in the law that God has given and made possible by His grace, love, mercy, blood and resurrection of Christ.

It is when we obey the law, therefore, that we are saved by grace. It is when we obey the law that we enjoy the application of the blood. It is when we obey that our faith becomes saving faith. It is by obedience that we are justified by works of obedience to the law of the gospel.

Summary

God's mystery, His plan, His scheme, to save mankind is one of grace, mercy, love, blood, and Christ's resurrection, and man receives God's benefits by faith and obedience to God's law. It is not one thing without the others. Such will avail nothing.

When man, in faith that comes from hearing the word (Rom. 10:17), obeys the law of Christ, God applies that saving blood of His only begotten Son.

That law includes the commands to hear the Word (Rom. 10:17); believe in Christ (John 8:24); repent of sins (Lk. 13:3); and be baptized into Christ for the remission of sin, into Christ where salvation is, and into the body which is the church (Acts 2:38; Gal. 3:27; 2 Tim. 2:10; 1 Cor. 10:13; Eph. 1:22,23).

Jesus said, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me*" (John 14:6).

