



A READY ANSWER FOR EVERY MAN

VOLUME ONE

J. C. Choate

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All quotes are from the **King James Version**
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P.O. Box 72

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Phone: 662-283-1192

E-Mail: choate@WorldEvangelism.org

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Dedication

Dedicated by his wife to J.C. Choate who not only gave purpose to my life but whose vision for the souls of the world led him and his family to many faraway places to share the Gospel with the lost.

Publisher's Statement

When J.C. came to Winona in 1952 to conduct a Gospel meeting with the local church of Christ, he was in the process of writing his first book, **Sermon Outlines**. As a 12-year-old in a small congregation, I managed to convince five or six of the brothers that they needed to buy the new book when it came from the press! I could not know then that writing and printing would play such an important role in our life together.

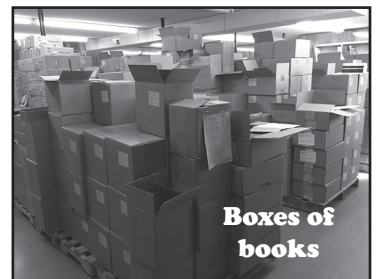
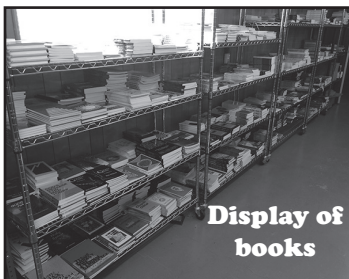
Actually, I have not kept up with numbers on how many books J.C. wrote and printed (or even of mine!), but that part of our work mushroomed through the years. When we began working overseas in Pakistan, first, then in Sri Lanka, and finally in India, J.C. immediately recognized the need for printed materials there — monthly magazines, study books, tracts, and Bible correspondence courses. With the development of radio programs and, then, TV programs in five of the major languages of India, the demand for printed materials increased. He also added South Korea, the Philippines, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal, and some African nations to the list of places where he agreed to print needed materials.

In 1994, our quarterly magazine, ***The Voice of Truth International***, was begun. Volume 93 was delivered to the office in October of 2017. It is now printed in color in India, circulated there and in neighboring countries from India; printed in Ghana and Nigeria and shared from those countries with their neighbors; and from our office in Winona we send boxes to 60 nations of the world. It is also printed in India in Tamil, Telugu, Hindi, Malayalam, Paite, and Marathi.

Tri-fold, full-color, pocket-sized tracts were added to the list of tools, with 120 titles now on hand. Approximately 250 titles of books have now been printed in the US and are shipped from our Winona office to bookstores, churches, and individuals throughout the States. “World evangelism Publications” is not actually a “business” but is a means to an end: J.C.’s rule was to print enough copies of a title to pay the printer [never be in debt to printers], and then you will have books to give away. Each year, we ship thousands of pounds of our books to various countries overseas, free of charge. Sharing the true Gospel is our reason for existence.

J.C. was a prolific writer, and not everything he wrote has been printed. **A Ready Answer for Every Man, Volumes 1 and 2** fall into that category. I am glad that he is still teaching through these new offerings.

Betty Burton Choate, Winona, MS, November 12, 2017



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Chapter 1

WHO IS GOD?

I am interested in you as a person because you have been created by God, and He placed within you a soul, and that one soul is precious, eternal, and is worth more than anything in this world, even the world itself. Did you know that? It is true, and in the course of this study we will be talking about how you may save your soul and prepare it so you can live one day with God forever and forever, for all eternity.

I Believe

I am a Christian, and therefore I believe in Christ and His teachings. But more importantly, I am a Christian because I have obeyed Him and am striving to follow Him each day of my life. Being a Christian, I also believe in God, the Father of Jesus Christ. I believe that God does exist and that there are many evidences that support His existence. I realize that many people do not believe in God. Atheism and agnosticism have grown in acceptance throughout our world. Also, in this age of “pluralism”, many believe that we cannot be judgmental, that all religions are acceptable, and that all the “gods” promoted in those religions can be worshiped. In this study, we want to consider seriously the evidences in favor of believing in God.

We Will Rely on the Bible

We will turn to the Bible for much of our information concerning God. We accept it as being the word of God. In Hebrews 1:1,2, the writer says, **“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds....”** In John 20:30,31 John says that the things written concerning Christ, (and also this would include God) have been **“...written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name..”** Then going back to Hebrews 11:6 we are told, **“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him....”**

There Is a God in Heaven

In the Old Testament, Daniel said, **“But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days”** (Daniel 2:28). In this particular case God had chosen to reveal certain future happenings to the king, through his servant Daniel, concerning events that would come to pass. While God has chosen to reveal many things to us through His word, including His will for man today, at the same time He has not seen fit to make known many other things. In the long ago Moses wrote these words: **“The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.”** (Deuteronomy 29:29).

God Is

I am speaking to you as though God exists, and I am quoting verses from the Bible that affirm His existence. As a matter of fact, although the Bible is filled with statements concerning God, as all of its readers have noted, *it makes no attempt to **prove** the existence of God*. Rather, it assumes that all accept His existence, because of the many physical and spiritual evidences that He has shown through the years since the creation of the world and man.

God Is a Spirit

The God of heaven — the one portrayed in the Bible — is not a man, nature, or some work of nature. He has no earthly form and cannot be represented by an image. Actually, He forbids this. Instead, He is said to be a Spirit. Christ, Himself, said of His Father, **“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”** (John 4:24).

God Is the Creator of All Things

God is the one who created all things. **“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth”** (Genesis 1:1). The writer goes on to show that God made all things in heaven and earth, including man, within six days, and on the seventh day He rested from His labors. Man became His crowning work when He not only gave him a physical form, but also God made him as a likeness of Himself, which is to say that He placed within man

an immortal spirit, a soul, an inner being that will never die, and a mind with the ability to think, reason, and to choose between right and wrong. Listen to these words: **“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”** (Genesis 2:7).

In the early days of Christianity, the apostle Paul visited Athens, and concerning that visit it is divinely recorded,

“Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars’ hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, To The Unknown God. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.

“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 any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood 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 also his offspring.

“Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s device. 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 17:22-31).

I could go on and on giving you statements from the Bible that exalt God as the Creator, but there is one other that I would like to mention. This one is taken from Psalm 19:1-3 when David said, **“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.”**

The God of Many Traits

The God of the Bible is without beginning and without ending. He is eternal. He said to Moses, **“... I AM WHO I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I Am hath sent me unto you”** (Exodus 3:14). Peter said, **“But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”** (2 Peter 3:8).

“Almighty God” means that God is all mighty. In Genesis 18:14, God asks the rhetorical question: **“Is anything too hard for the Lord?”** Then He answers by enabling Abraham and Sarah to have a son, Isaac, even though Sarah was far beyond the age of bearing children (Genesis 17:1; Genesis 18:14).

God is everywhere: **“Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me”** (Psalm 139:5-10).

God knows all, sees all, and hears all: **“...they say, The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it. Understand, ye brutish among the people: and ye fools, when will ye be wise? He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct? he that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?”** (Psalm 94:7-10).

“There is ... one God and Father of all...” (Ephesians 4:6). He is good, merciful, forgiving, and faithful, as we are told in Psalm 100:5: **“For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations** (Exodus 20:6; John 6:37; Matthew 6:14,15; Deuteronomy 7:9; Hebrews 10:23).

His very essence is said to be love: **“He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love”** (1 John 4:8). He cannot lie: **“In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began”** (Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18), and neither does He tempt any man to do wrong; **“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man”** (James 1:13). God would have all to repent of their sins and to be saved: **“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”** (2 Peter 3:9). To make this possible He has given His only Son to die on the cross to provide salvation for all who will believe in Him and obey Him: **“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; Hebrews 5:8,9).

God Has Spoken

I remind you again that God has spoken to reveal His will to man (Hebrews 1:1,2). He has spoken through His Son, Jesus (Matthew 17:5), and His word has been written that we might believe (John 20:30,31). **I would urge you to read and study the Bible so that you can know the depths of what is revealed about God and Christ** (Acts 22:16; Romans 6:1-6), and so that you will learn how to obey Him. Through your obedience, the Lord will save you and add you to His church (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:47). As a Christian you will be required to live the Christian life, with all of the blessings that God will have for you in this life and in the world to come (Romans 12:1,2; Ephesians 1:3; Revelation 2:10).

In Conclusion

Remember that the fool has said there is no God (Psalm 14:1), but the wise man will acknowledge his Creator and obey His will.



Chapter 2

WHO IS CHRIST?

Our desire is to present God's word, which is the truth, so that you might know God's will for yourself. With this in mind, we invite you to take your Bible and compare what we say with what it says. I refer you to the Bible because it contains God's word, which is the final authority on all religious subjects.

I Believe in God

I am a believer in God, the one and true and living God of heaven. He has spoken, and His word has been written down and left for us in what we call the Bible (Hebrews 1:1,2; John 20:30,31). I would point you to Him, and to His word, and would hope that if you do not already believe in Him, that you will become a believer (Hebrews 11:6).

I Believe in Christ

I likewise believe in Christ. Christ Himself said, "**Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.**" (John 14:1). He said to those of His day, "**I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.**" (John 8:24). It is therefore imperative that we believe in Christ, as

the Son of God. But why must we believe in *Him* rather than someone else? There are many reasons for this, and we shall be considering some of these reasons as we continue our study.

Who Is Christ?

But first of all, we need to answer this all-important question: Who is Christ? Once we identify Him, it will be easy to believe in Him. The reason the majority of the world does not believe in Him is because they have never really had Christ introduced to them.

The Bible Reveals Christ

If we want to know the truth of who Christ is, then we must go to the Bible. The first part of it, called the Old Testament, introduces Him through promises and prophecies. The last part of it, known as the New Testament, reveals Him as being sent by God in the flesh to become the Saviour of the world. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John have been written in the form of biographies, giving eyewitness accounts of Christ's life on earth. They tell of His birth, His personal ministry, His teaching and good works, His death, burial, and resurrection, and of His ascension back to the Father in heaven. Concerning all of this, John wrote, **"And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."** (John 20:30,31). The remaining books tell of the establishment of the church, and the spread of Christianity throughout the world, what the Christian life consists of, and finally, the New Testament closes out with some glimpses of the hereafter, and the eventual triumph of Christ and His people.

The First Promise of Christ

After man and woman had sinned in the garden of Eden, God in speaking to the serpent who beguiled them, made prophetic reference to Christ when He said, **"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."** (Genesis 3:15). In other words, through woman Christ would be born one day, and the serpent, or Satan in this case, would bruise His heel, or give him some minor pain, but Christ would bruise the devil's head, or would give him a heavy blow, and thus would be victorious over him in the end.

Christ Was with God in the Beginning

In the very first verse of the Bible it says, **"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth"** (Genesis 1:1). In the Hebrew language (and the Old Testament was originally written in that language), the name of God [Elohim, a plural form of the word for God] included God (the Father), the Word (Christ, the Son of God), and the Holy Spirit of God. We read again of the Godhead being involved in the creation when it says, **"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male**

and female created he them.” (Genesis 1:26,27). Please note that God said, **“Let us make man in our image...”**, which suggests that there was more than one involved in the creation — and there was, since Christ was also there, along with the Holy Spirit.

Speaking of God’s manner of communicating with man today, the Hebrew writer goes on to say, He **“... hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds”** (Hebrews 1:2). Referring to Christ, the Apostle Paul wrote the Colossian Christians, **“Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: 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:”** (Colossians 1:15,16). John said that Christ was with God in the beginning, and that He was God, and **“All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made”** (John 1:1-3).

Was Christ Also God?

There are three persons in the Godhead. Some have called this a trinity, which refers to three, namely, God, the Word, and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:18-20). Does that mean that there are three Gods? No, for the Bible says that there is but one [*united*, not the *singular form* of the word] God (Ephesians 4:6). But there are three persons in one. They have the same nature; They are spirit, They have existed from eternity, and will always exist. There is God, the Father, the Word who was born as Christ the Son, and finally the Holy Spirit of God. It is not easy for the human mind to comprehend the nature of God, how He could have always been, but He is there and all of creation is a testimony to His existence. We therefore accept these facts by faith.

Christ Is Prophesied

Many prophecies were given concerning the eventual coming of Christ. One of the more prominent ones is found in Isaiah 53. Isaiah said,

“Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.” (Isaiah 53:1-5).

In Acts 8 we have the Ethiopian eunuch reading from Isaiah 53, and when he invited Philip to explain it to him, the record says that he began at the same scripture and preached Jesus to him. Not only that, but as you read Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John you will note that concerning this prophecy, and other prophecies, the writers fill in the details concerning the coming of Christ, His life, His sufferings, and His death on the cross.

The Birth of Christ

When we turn to the book of Matthew, we read these words:

“Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.

“Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, ‘Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.’ Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: and knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name Jesus.” (Matthew 1:18-25).

Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary in the city of Bethlehem (Matthew 2:1). He had no earthly father, since he was conceived of the Holy Ghost, and since His Father was God. Therefore, He was born miraculously. He was taken to Egypt to escape the wrath of the king, and to fulfill the prophecy that God would call His Son out of Egypt (Matthew 2:11-15), and then later He was taken to Nazareth where He grew up as a carpenter’s son (Matthew 2:19-23). At about the age of 30 He began His public ministry. To prove that He was the Son of God, He performed miracles. His miracles were not for the glory of men, but to make believers (John 3:1,2).

The Twelve Apostles

Jesus called twelve men unto Himself, and taught and trained them, so that they might carry on His work. He had religious enemies because He claimed to be the Son of God. He was finally betrayed by one of His own, Judas Iscariot, and then given a false trial. He was beaten, spat upon, mocked, and was crucified between two thieves. Read Matthew 27. Christ Himself said, **“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). Christ, therefore, was sent of God on a mission, and that was to die for the sins of the world that man might be saved and have the hope of eternal life.

Christ Was Resurrected

The ultimate salvation of man was made possible, not only with the death of Christ, but even as He had promised, on the third day after His burial He arose triumphant from the grave! Shortly thereafter, He returned to His Father in heaven where He remains to this day as Lord of lords and King of kings: **“Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand**

gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven’” (Acts 1:9-11; John 20).

Christ Lives On

After Jesus’ ascension to heaven, the Holy Spirit was poured out on the apostles in order to begin the Lord’s church — His family of believers — and it spread throughout the world even in the first century (Acts 2; Colossians 1:23). It continues to exist to this very day, as the body of Christ in the world. Jesus Christ is **Lord** and **Saviour** to all mankind, to all who will believe and obey Him. But one day He will return (John 14:1-3), and at that time He will become our **judge** (Acts 17:31; John 12:48).



Chapter 3

WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

We believe that God has revealed His will to man through the Bible, and that it is possible to know what He requires of each one of us, as we study His word. That is why this study is so important.

Believe in God and Christ

I believe in God with all my heart, and I believe that Jesus Christ is His Son. I know that there are many who do not believe in either, while some believe in one, but not the other. However, if an individual will just take a look at nature itself, and ask himself where all of those things came from — the beauty, nature's perfect timing, the seasons, the cold of winter, and the heat of summer, the vast variety of forms, design, colors, and scent of flowers, the food that we eat, the water that we drink, the air that we breathe — then surely he will be humbled to acknowledge that there is a Creator, and that Creator is God.

If one will make a study of the Bible, and especially the life of Christ, and at the same time look at man in all of his sin, then surely he will recognize that man needs help, that he needs forgiveness, that he needs a saviour, and that Saviour is Christ, the Son of the

living God. If you are already a believer in God and in Christ, I hope that our studies will strengthen your faith. If you are not a believer, it will be my prayer that these studies will lead you to faith.

Belief in the Holy Spirit

I also believe in the Holy Spirit of God. I believe that He lives today, just as God and Christ live. He is misunderstood by the world — even the religious world — but still He lives and works. It will be our purpose to introduce the Holy Spirit to you in the course of this study, and at the same time, to attempt to remove some of the confusion that surrounds Him.

Who Is the Holy Spirit?

Immediately you will ask the question: “Who is the Holy Spirit?” I am glad that you would ask such a question, because it gives me an opportunity to identify Him before we proceed to discuss His work, and other matters that pertain to Him. Often a spirit is thought of as a ghost, as being an imaginary character, a blind force, and being surrounded by mystery. But when we go to the Bible, we are told that the Holy Spirit is a person. He is not an “it”, or a “thing”, but a “he”, a person, a living entity. Although the word “trinity” does not appear in God’s book, the word “Godhead” does. Paul of the Bible preached, **“Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s device”** (Acts 17:29). Christ revealed the members of the Godhead, when He spoke these words to His apostles: **“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world”** (Matthew 28:18-20). Also read Romans 15:30 and 2 Corinthians 13:14.

As you can see, the Godhead consists of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Each one is a distinct personality, but the three are essence. To illustrate, man and woman are said to be one flesh in marriage (Ephesians 5:31). The Lord’s people are many members, but one body or church (1 Corinthians 12:20). Therefore, we can understand how that two, three, or more can be one, *a united one*, and so it is with God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. We are not speaking of three Gods, but one God, who is the Father, one Christ, who is the Son, and one Holy Spirit. Paul says in Ephesians 4:4,5 that there is one of each. But all three have a divine nature, are eternal, are spirit, and are one in work and purpose.

Spoken of in the Beginning

The very first verse of the Bible, Genesis 1:1, speaks of the Godhead or God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit, as having created the heaven and the earth, and of course all things therein. The name God in Hebrew does not limit itself to God the Father, but also it denotes the presence of Christ, the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the Holy Spirit was present in the beginning and took part in the creation.

The Names of the Holy Spirit in the Bible

The Holy Spirit is spoken of in the Old Testament a total of 88 times, with 18 different names. He is referred to in the New Testament 264 times with 39 names being used. Some of His names include the Spirit of God (Genesis 1:2), the Spirit of the Lord God (Isaiah 61:1), the Spirit (Matthew 4:1), the Holy Ghost (Matthew 12:32), the Comforter (John 14:16), the Spirit of truth (John 15:26).

Characteristics of the Holy Spirit

We have already said that the Holy Spirit is a person. That means that He has definite characteristics. Please note that He has emotions. Paul said, **“And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption”** (Ephesians 4:30). He has mental capabilities. **“And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God”** (Romans 8:27). The Spirit also speaks (1 Timothy 4:1), helps with our infirmities, and makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered (Romans 8:26), forbids (Acts 16:6,7), teaches (John 14:26) and so on. Some of these things were done miraculously in the days of Christ and the apostles, but the Spirit now works through His word, as far as we are concerned, to accomplish His purposes.

The Promise of the Holy Spirit

Although the Holy Spirit was present in the beginning, and took part in the creation, and likewise in the Old Testament period, He had a definite work all the way through, but we especially want to note the role the Holy Spirit played after the coming of Christ. With Christ completing His mission, and about to leave behind twelve apostles who needed additional guidance, He promised to send the Holy Spirit to guide them into all the truth. Christ explained to them, **“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).

The Church Would Come with Power

Christ said His kingdom, or church, would come with power (Mark 9:1). Again He said to the apostles, **“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 Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth”** (Acts 1:8). John the Baptist, a forerunner of Christ, had spoken of the apostles receiving the Holy Spirit, and he described it as being the baptism of the Holy Ghost (Matthew 3:11). He meant by this that they would be fully immersed in the Spirit. Since Christ received the Spirit *without measure* (John 3:34), then it is said that the apostles would receive the *baptismal measure* of the Holy Spirit.

The Sending of the Holy Spirit

When we turn to Acts 2 we read these words, **“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there**

came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:1-4). So, the Holy Spirit came. But who received the Holy Spirit? The *apostles*, since Christ had specifically promised to send the Holy Spirit upon them. From the verses noted, and others in the New Testament, we learn that He sent the Holy Spirit upon them to guide them into all truth, to call to their remembrance all the things that Christ had taught them (John 14:26), to enable them to speak in other languages (Acts 2:8), to give them the power to perform miracles (Acts 2:43), to confirm the word, and to make believers (Mark 16:20).

The Laying on of Hands

But the apostles were few in number, and there was much to do. The Lord, therefore, gave them authority to *lay their hands on others* who were full of faith and the Holy Ghost [not a miraculous form but the filling as the result of baptism for remission of sins], of honest report, and who were wise (Acts 6:3), so that they might, as a result, have miraculous power to enable them also to have part in their work. These select ones were limited, however, to the extent that they could not pass this power on to their converts. All others received the ordinary measure of the Holy Spirit, that is, they received the indwelling Spirit, as we do today at the time of baptism, but without any miraculous power. This “measure” was also spoken of as *the gift of the Holy Spirit* (Acts 2:38).

The Miraculous Age Ends

The Holy Spirit had been given to the apostles, and those that they laid their hands on, to enable them to speak in other languages and to perform miracles to convince the people that they were of God. This was during the days before the New Testament had been given in written form. Once it was completed, however, there was no longer any need for miraculous works, so they ceased. Paul said that this would happen *when that which was perfect was come* (1 Corinthians 13:10), and he was speaking of the New Testament in its written form. James 1:25 describes it as the *perfect* law of liberty.

The Word of the Spirit and Obedience

We are now living in an age when God speaks to us through Christ (Matthew 17:5), and His words have been recorded through the guidance of the Holy Spirit in written form in the New Testament (2 Peter 1:21). When we read the word of God, we are therefore reading the word of the Spirit. The Spirit reveals God’s will to you, me, and all people. He informs us that we must believe in God (Romans 10:17; Hebrews 11:6), that we must repent of all of our sins (Acts 17:30), that we must confess Christ as the Son of God (Romans 10:10), and that we must be buried in the waters of baptism for the remission of our sins (Romans 6:3,4; Acts 2:38). When we do that, then He says that we are saved (Mark 16:16), we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38), and on the basis of our obedience and being saved, that Christ adds us to His church (Acts 2:47). Christ says that we are born of the

water and the Spirit through our obedience, and thus we enter into the kingdom, or church (John 3:3-5). Again, I want to emphasize that all of this is in keeping with the teachings of the written word. In no way are we permitted to act separate and apart from that word which completely furnishes us to all good work (2 Timothy 3:16,17), and through which we are given all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3).

Do You Have the Holy Spirit?

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit of God? Do you have the Holy Spirit? Many claim they do, when *they actually do not* because He is the gift given by God as *our seal of redemption at the time of our baptism into Christ for the remission of our sins*. The Spirit lives and works today but *not in a miraculous way*. He works, however, in harmony with the written word.

In Conclusion

Isn't that simple? There is no need to wait on the Holy Spirit to speak to you, or give you some sign apart from the written word, because He will not. He has revealed God's will to you in the words of the New Testament, and you must follow those instructions to be saved. When you do so, God saves you, and the Holy Spirit dwells in you as the earnest of your salvation (Ephesians 1:13,14). This is the work of the Holy Spirit today.



Chapter 4

WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

We Believe

We believe that there is a God in heaven, that Jesus Christ is His Son, and that the Holy Spirit of God has inspired men in years gone by to write down the Lord's word in what we call the Bible. Our teaching, therefore, is based on this book, and this book only, and we make no apologies for it. If you do not have a copy, we would like to urge you to get one as soon as possible.

What Is the Bible?

I am sure that many of you who are not familiar with the Bible are asking the question, "What is the Bible?" That is a good question and we will take some time to try to give you the type of answer that you can understand and appreciate.

The Word "Bible"

The word "Bible" is not found in the scriptures, but rather it is a descriptive term to denote all of God's word when brought together in one volume. This name came from

the Greek word “Biblos”, meaning a book. Being God’s word, His revelation to man, and therefore the most important book in all the world, then it is literally **“The Book”**.

The Writers

Although God is the author, some forty persons were inspired by the Holy Spirit of God to write the Bible. These men lived in different parts of the world, and wrote over a period of 1500 years, but still their writings fit together into one complete and harmonious volume. This was because what they wrote did not originate with them, but with God, and then they were divinely directed in writing it. For instance, Peter wrote, **“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”** (2 Peter 1:21). Then Paul wrote, **“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, thoroughly furnished unto all good works”** (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

Other Interesting Notes about the Bible

The enemies of the Bible have looked and searched for errors, contradictions, and discrepancies in its pages but none have been found. While those men have disappeared with time, the Bible lives on stronger than ever.

It is the most popular book that has ever been written. Year after year it continues to be the number one best seller. It has been translated into the major languages of the world, and also the majority of minor languages. It has even been translated into many of the lesser tribal languages and dialects.

A Book of Many Books

The Bible is actually a book of many books. It consists of the two major books, the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament has a total of 39 books and is divided into five sections with 5 books of law, 12 books of history, 5 books of poetry, 5 books of the major prophets, and 12 books of the minor prophets. The New Testament is made up of 27 books and is divided into four sections with 4 books of biography, 1 book of history, 21 books of Christian letters, and 1 book of prophecy.

The “Testaments” Explained

The word “testament” refers to will, or covenant, or an agreement between two parties. In other words, God made a will or covenant or an agreement with His people, and this lasted for hundreds of years. Then, with the coming of Christ, God made a new covenant, or a new agreement, with His people. With a new testament, or will, then that made the first covenant or testament old.

That is why we speak of the Old Testament. It was the first one, but since it was replaced, it ceased to exist or to be binding as a law. But with the giving of a second testament, it replaced the former one. We think of it, and refer to it, as being the New Testament. It is therefore binding and will stand for the remainder of time (Matthew 24:35).

The Hebrew writer explains all of this on the basis that when man makes his last will and testament it becomes binding at his death. Should he decide to make another will before he dies, then that nullifies the first will, and the last one becomes binding at his death. The same is true with the Old and New Testaments. Now listen to what he says: **“For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives”** (Hebrews 9:16,17). Speaking on the same subject, he continues, **“Then He said, Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God. He takes away the first that He may establish the second. By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all”** (Hebrews 10:9,10). Such is to say that we are no longer under the Old Testament law, but rather we are living under the New Testament which contains the law of Christ and the Christian religion. The Old Testament part of the Bible continues to represent God’s word, and there are many lessons that can be learned from it (Romans 15:4), but it is no longer binding *as a law*. Christ died on the cross to take away that law and to give a new one which is contained in the pages of the New Testament.

Three Periods of Time

When one goes through the entire Bible he will observe that there are three dispensations, periods, or laws set forth in it, and this is because the Bible covers all time from the beginning of the creation to the return of Christ. Although Christ has not reappeared to this date, the New Testament portion of the Bible will continue binding until He comes.

The three dispensations, or periods covered, include the Patriarchal Age, the Mosaic Age, and the Christian Age. The Patriarchal Age began with Adam and lasted for some 2400 years. During this time, God spoke directly to the patriarchs, or fathers, of the various households, and then they conveyed God’s will to their families.

The Mosaic Age began with Moses and the receiving of the law for the nation of Israel, and continued through the death of Christ on the cross. This age lasted for some 1500 years. God spoke to His people during this time through the law that was first written on the tables of stone, and then later written on parchments and other materials.

The third and final period of time — and this covers the time in which we live — is called the Christian Age. It began with the death of Christ on the cross, and will continue until He returns. It has been in existence for some 2000 years to date, but we have no way of knowing how long it will continue before the Lord comes again. Because this is the last major age of time, it is spoken of as being “the last days”. It is only natural, as pointed out earlier, to understand that since we were not living in the first two periods of time, or in the Old Testament age, but rather we are living now when the law of Christ is binding, then it is reasonable to conclude that the Old Testament law is not binding on us today, but rather we are to obey the law of Christ. The Hebrew writer said, **“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom**

also He made the worlds” (Hebrews 1:2). God said of Christ, **“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!”**

The Patriarchal Age has been described as the Starlight Age when there was only a small amount of light. Then the Mosaic Age is said to have been the Moonlight Age when more light was given. Finally, the Christian Age is said to be the Sunlight Age when full and complete light has been given through God’s Son, Jesus Christ (John 8:12; 1 John 1:7).

The Bible Is a Wonderful Book

The Bible is such a wonderful book. It is an education within itself. It tells how everything began (Genesis 1:1). It gives the history of God’s people. In the Old Testament especially it shows how His people were blessed when they obeyed Him, but how they were punished when they disobeyed Him (1 Corinthians 10:1-12). It tells us how Christ had been prophesied (Isaiah 53), and then it tells the story of His birth, His life, and how He died, was buried, and was resurrected that man might be saved and have the hope of eternal life (read Matthew, Mark, Luke and John for the complete story). It also tells how Christ returned to the Father in heaven (Acts 1:9-11) and how He has promised to come again (John 14:1-3).

The Bible reveals sin and its consequences (Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23). It tells of man’s lost condition and then of the hope that is to be found in heaven. It tells what man must do to be saved, and how he can be a member of the Lord’s family, the church (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:47). It tells us that all will die (Hebrews 9:27), that Christ will come again (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9), that the heavens and the earth will be destroyed (2 Peter 3:10), that judgment will take place (2 Corinthians 5:10), that we will be judged by Christ and His word (Acts 17:31; John 12:48), and that the righteous will be saved and the wicked will be destroyed (Matthew 25:46). It tells us of heaven and hell where the righteous and the wicked respectively will spend all eternity (Revelation 21:8; 22:14).

And on and on we could go, telling you the glories of the Bible, God’s wonderful book, His word. For sure it is not to be added to, subtracted from, or substituted for in any way (Revelation 22:18,19; Galatians 1:7-9). It is to be believed and obeyed as it is (James 1:22,25).

Will You Obey God?

How wonderful it is that we can know God’s will for our lives. On hearing His word (Romans 10:17), He wants us to believe it, and that means believing in Him, the author (Hebrews 11:6). Then He wants us to repent, or turn away from, all of our sins (Acts 17:30) and to confess Christ as the Son of God (Matthew 10:32). Finally, He wants us to be baptized for the forgiveness of our sins (Acts 2:38). On doing that, and on the authority of His word, He has promised to save us and to add us to His church (Acts 2:47). When I have done that, and because of that, I am a Christian and I am a member of the church of Christ. Further, I find that the Lord indeed keeps His promises, and therefore He has many good and wonderful things in store for those who obey Him. Have you obeyed Him? If not, I pray that you will.



Chapter 5

WHAT IS LOVE?

We are studying with you from the Bible, God's eternal word. This is a wonderful book, inasmuch as it contains only the word of God in all of its purity. It is a simple book that acquaints us with its author, and introduces us to Christ and the Holy Spirit.

The Bible also reveals many precious truths to us, thereby making known to us the will of God. It tells us of God's love for us, and of the love that He expects us to have for Him.

What Is Love?

It is impossible to talk about God and His will without bringing up the subject of love, and for our study at this time we are raising the question, What is love? We have asked this question because no doubt many of you have been asking yourselves the same question. With that being the case, then it gives us an opportunity to go to the Bible and answer a question that you are very much concerned about.

Many Definitions of Love

You are no doubt confused, because there are so many definitions of love, and these

answers contradict each other. It may be that you have your own definition, but the real question is, What does the Bible say?

First of all, however, let us note some of the definitions that man gives, and then we will be able to appreciate more fully what the Bible teaches. One definition that man gives for love is the “eros” type of love. As a matter of fact, this is about the only kind of love that a lot of people know anything about. But this is a sexual sort of love, and often is a carnal, base-type of love. This is a human, or fleshly, type of love. It is based on passion and the cravings of the fleshly appetite. Even in marriage it takes something more solid and pure for the relationship to last.

Second, many think of love only from the standpoint of liking someone, a somewhat of a friendship type of thing. This is something that is often very shallow and weak. It is a worldly type of love, not a deep and abiding love. It reminds us of an incident that happened in relation to Jesus and Simon Peter. The record says, **“So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these? He said to Him, Yes, Lord; You know that I love You. He said to him, Feed My lambs. He said to him again a second time, Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me? He said to Him, Yes, Lord. You know that I love You. He said to him, Tend My sheep. He said to him the third time, Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me? Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, Do you love Me? And he said to Him, Lord, You know all these things. You know that I love You. Jesus said to him, Feed My sheep”** (John 21:15-17).

At first glance this story may seem all that impressive, but it takes on new and significant meaning when one knows a little of the Greek language, since the New Testament was written originally in that language. Also when translated from one language to another, sometimes some of the words do not have as rich a meaning as they had in the original. That’s why we need to study the Scriptures, even looking into the original language so that we may be aware of these things, and pass the deeper truths on to others.

For instance, there are two different types of love mentioned in this story. Jesus was asking Peter if he loved Him, and He used the word “agape”, which was the highest form of love, a deep, spiritual meaning of the word. But Peter in his answer responded by saying that he did indeed love the Lord, but the word that he used for love was “philia”, just a simple shallow, friendship type of love. The two different forms of love were used in the next round of conversation. Then for the third time, instead of asking Peter to come up to His type of love, the Lord descended and asked him if he loved Him, that is, as a mere friend, and then Peter answered that he did. So when you see the two different types of love here under consideration it becomes a powerful lesson to show what genuine love is.

Third, I think most people picture love as something that God has experienced, shown, or given, but that He expects nothing much in return of them. Of course this is false, as we are going to see.

Fourth, the kind of love the Bible pictures is that high level type, that which is on a spiritual plain, that which gives and demonstrates itself for others, a strong affection that

one has for another. It is the great love that God had for man in expressing it to the extent of giving His own Son to die for the sins of the world. It is a divine love and one that serves as an example in all of man's relationships.

God Is Love

The Bible says that **God is love**. John writes, **"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love"** (1 John 4:7,8). He goes on to explain why God is said to be love: **"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."** (1 John 4:9-11).

God So Loved the World

Christ said concerning God's love for man, **"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life"** (John 3:16). Now what is He saying here? He is saying that God didn't just proclaim His love for the world, or for sinful men, or for all people of the earth of all time, but that He showed, or proved that love in being willing to give up His Son to die a terrible death on the cross. But why would He do that? Because of His love. That's the only explanation that one can come up with.

But sad to say, a lot of people will stop here and conclude that God's love covers everything, and that nothing is required of them. But this is their mistake. Although God gave His Son to die for all of mankind, still there are conditions that must be complied with before one can receive the salvation for which Christ died to provide. You will notice that He says that God gave His only begotten Son, that *whosoever believed in Him* should not perish, but have everlasting life. All are covered, all may be saved, provided they believe, and He used a form of that word here — believe — that indicates whosoever *continues* to believe in Him. Not only so, but the idea of believing in God or Christ is that if one really believes in Him he will do what God or Christ asks him to do, and from reading the scriptures we observe that the Lord has asked many things. But to be saved, He has asked that one must believe and be baptized. Listen to what He says, and see if you would not come to that conclusion.

After Christ had died on the cross, had been buried, and had been resurrected from the grave, just before He returned to the Father in heaven, He commanded the apostles, **"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned"** (Mark 16:15,16). But someone might say, "In that case, man is saved by *works*, and not by grace." That is not true. We could never do enough or obey enough commands to repay the Lord for our salvation. But the point is that God so loved us that He gave His Son that we might be saved, and then Christ loved us enough that He would die for us. Now if they loved us

that much, the question is: How much do we love God, and how much do we love Christ?

Christ Died for Us

Again to emphasize what the Lord has done for us, listen to these words: **“For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, God died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him”** (Romans 5:5-9). This being true, we are in no position to talk back to the Lord, to make demands, or to bargain for our salvation. The scriptures simply say, **“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).

We Must Love God

We know that God loved us, but the question is, do we love God? How much do we love Him? Do we love Him enough to obey Him? There is one thing about it, John says, **“If someone says, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?”** (1 John 4:20). Christ said that we must love God with all of our heart, and with all of our soul, and with all of our mind, and that we must love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:37,38).

How much love? What kind of love? Love that will trust. Love that will lead us to believe in God and Christ (Hebrews 11:6; John 8:24). Love that will lead one to repent of his sins (Acts 2; 2 Peter 3:9). Love that will lead one to confess Christ as the Son of God (Romans 10:10). Love that will lead one to be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). But why do all of that? Because God said to do it, and if you love Him, you will do it because you do love Him. If you refuse to do that, then you don't love Him enough. Furthermore, if you really love Him, you will want to be a member of His family, the church (Acts 2), you will want to worship Him (John 4:24; Acts 2:42), you will want to live for Him and serve Him (Titus 2:11,12; 1 Timothy 4:16), and you will want to go to heaven so you can live with Him forever (John 14:1-6). That is what love is all about.

Do You Love God?

Do you love God? Have you obeyed Him? He loves you, and wants to save you, but in order for you to be saved, you must love Him enough to obey Him.



Chapter 6

WHAT IS A SOUL?

I come to you as a Christian to present a lesson from God's word — not to force anything on you, but rather to study with you so that you might make a wise decision based on those facts.

What We Believe

We come to you to affirm our faith in God, in Christ, in the Holy Spirit, in the Bible as God's word, and in the many teachings that are set forth in its pages. We believe these things because we have more than sufficient evidence to justify our faith. We are, therefore, pleased to share with you the reason for the hope that is within us.

We are deeply involved in these spiritual matters because we have been created in the image of God, we have souls, and those souls need to be saved. We are also putting forth an effort to study these matters with you because you likewise have a precious soul that needs to be saved.

What Is a Soul?

With that being true, for our study at this time we want to consider an important

question: **What is a soul?** Perhaps you are not even aware of the fact that you have a soul. If you are, then maybe you do not really know what it is, or its great value. I hope we will be able to clear up these and other questions in the course of this lesson.

Man Is a Dual Being

Man is a dual being — he has a physical or fleshly body, but he also has a spirit that lives within that body. Some have emphasized that there are three parts to man: the physical body, the soul, and the spirit. Paul does mention these three in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, but it is much like Christ saying that we should love God with all of our heart, soul, and mind (Matthew 22:37). While the spirit and soul are used separately at times, at other times they are used interchangeably. So we are basically thinking of the spirit, or soul, as being the inner part of man — *the real person*, living inside the physical body.

The physical body represents the outward man, and all of us are familiar with him. He is weak, sickly, deteriorates over a period of years, then dies. The inner man is less well known. We learn about him and his nature in the Bible. He is spirit, he represents the intellect, the ability to think, reason, and choose, the spiritual part of man that will live on. The wise man said of the body and spirit, “**Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it**” (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

Man Is from God

As just indicated, man is from God. God is his creator. Going back to the creation, the Genesis record says, “**So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them**” (Genesis 1:27).

What does it mean when God said, “**Let us make man in our image**” and “**...so God created man in His own image**”? It is true that God created man physically, but when He spoke of creating him in His image, He was talking about creating him in His likeness. But God is not a physical being, but rather a Spirit (John 4:24). Therefore He must have been saying that He would create man with a spirit, or soul, that which would live on forever, just as God will live forever. There is another statement in this connection that will help us to see this. We read, “**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**” (Genesis 2:7). Please observe that God made man physically, then He gave him the breath of life, and then he is spoken of as *a living soul*. So man is more than a physical body; he is more than a living creature, like the animals; he has been made in the image of God, and therefore he has a soul, and he is said to *be* a living soul.

Cannot Kill the Soul

Christ made a distinction between the physical body and the soul when He said, “**And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell**” (Matthew 10:28). He was saying that even if the body was killed, if the soul was prepared to meet God, then all was well. He went on to warn that the one who should be feared would be that one who has the

power to destroy both the body and soul in hell, or who could kill the body and cause the soul to be lost. The scriptures speak of the soul being lost in hell as being the second death; that is, death in the sense of being separated from God (Revelation 21:8).

The Value of the Soul

Christ stresses the value of the soul when He says, **“For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”** (Matthew 16:26). The implication here is that one might gain in this life money, fame, honor, and even the whole world itself, but if he neglected his soul and lost it in the eternal fires of hell, then he has lost everything. This is why we must study and learn God’s will, so we can obey Him and prepare our souls to meet God in the world to come.

Souls Need to be Saved

The Bible teaches that the soul that sins shall die — that is, spiritually; it will be lost, or punished, for all eternity (Ezekiel 18:4). But the Bible says that all are sinners (Romans 3:23). That means that all souls are stained with sin. What can be done, then, to cleanse the soul of sin so that it will not be lost? James wrote, **“Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls”** (James 1:21). James is saying here that one must repent, or turn away from all of his sins, and then receive the word of God if he is to be saved. This is on the basis that one believes in Christ, and then obeys His teaching. The very next verse says, **“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves”** (James 1:22). Peter then shows the results of this, when he says, **“Receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls”** (1 Peter 1:9). He continues by saying, **“Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever”** (1 Peter 1:22,23). In John 3:3-5 Christ says that one must be born of the water and of the Spirit to enter into the kingdom of God.

Souls Added to the Church

Another way of explaining the new birth, or being born again spiritually, being saved and made whole and new again, is to be found in Acts 2 where Peter and the apostles preached the Gospel to a large number of people who had gathered on that day. Christ was set forth as one who had fulfilled the prophecies concerning His coming to the earth, that He had performed miracles to prove that He was from God, that He died upon the cross for the sins of the world, was buried, that three days later was resurrected from the grave and then after He had appeared before many for forty days, He had returned to the Father in heaven to sit down at the right hand of God. On hearing these things, and being convinced of their sins, the record says, **“Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said to them, Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name**

of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:37,38). Continuing, we are told, **“Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them”** (Acts 2:41). **“...And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved”** (Acts 2:47). What happened? Here were souls that were lost. They learned that Jesus had died for them so that they might be saved. They then became believers in Christ, and wanted to know what they should do. Being believers, they were told to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins. They did this, and they were saved, or their souls were cleansed and purified. This being so, those souls were added to the church by the Lord.

You Have a Soul

My friend, you have a soul. It lives within your body. It is the inner man (Romans 7:22; Ephesians 3:16). The Bible says that the body without the spirit is dead (James 2:26), but the spirit, or soul, will live forever. It will live with God in heaven, or it will be cast into hell where it will be punished for its sins forever (Matthew 25:46). Where it spends eternity will depend on your actions now in obeying God, to purify your soul and to prepare for the world to come.

Will You Obey God?

Did you know that you have a soul? Do you recognize that it is the most valuable possession in all this world? Don't you want to save it? If you do, if you will believe in Christ, repent of all of your sins, confess Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized for the remission of your sins, then Christ will save you and add your soul to His church. Then as a Christian, and as a member of the church, you can live and prepare your soul to meet God. It is urgent that you do this now, because tomorrow may be too late.



Chapter 7

WHAT IS SIN?

I trust you will take a few minutes to study with me from God's word, that we might learn of Christ and His will.

God's Word Revealed

God's word has been revealed in what we call the Bible, and this is the basis of our study each time. We attempt to speak where the Bible speaks, and to be silent where it is silent. We strive to do Bible things in Bible ways. We support all that we teach with a "thus saith the Lord".

Man Is in Sin

Man is in sin, and is therefore lost. Again, the Bible not only tells us what sin is, and the consequences of it, but it also tells us how we can be forgiven through Christ. We hope to point this out as we continue our study at this time.

What Is Sin?

The question of sin has been brought up. What is sin? Many have their own definition

of the word, but we will go to the Bible itself for the true definition.

We read in 1 John 3:4, in the New Testament part of the Bible, **“Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.”** On another occasion he said, **“All unrighteousness is sin”** (1 John 5:17). In 1 John 3:8 it is stated, **“He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning.”** It has been said that sin means *missing the mark*. One aims at a target but he misses, and therefore he sins. God requires certain things of man. When he “misses the mark” by disobeying God, he has sinned.

The First Sin

To learn of the first sin we must go all the way back to the first man and woman, Adam and Eve. The record says,

“Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die...”

“Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, Has God indeed said, You shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said to the serpent, We may eat the fruit of the garden but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die. Then the serpent said to the woman, You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

“So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

“Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, Where are you? So he said, I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked and I hid myself. And He said, Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?

“Then the man said, The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate. And the Lord God said to the woman, What is this you have done?

“The woman said, The serpent deceived me, and I ate. So the Lord God said to the serpent: Because you have done this, you are cursed more

than all cattle. And more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.

“To the woman He said, I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband. And he shall rule over you. Then to Adam He said, Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, You shall not eat of it; cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.

“And Adam called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. Also for Adam and his wife the Lord God made tunics of skin and clothed them.

“Then the Lord God said, Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever, therefore the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken.

“So He drove out the man and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life” (Genesis 2:15-17; Genesis 3).

Observations from Man’s First Sin

You will note that man and woman sinned because they disobeyed God. They were not forced to, but rather they had a choice to obey or disobey. As a result of their disobedience, they died that day spiritually, and later would die physically. And thus, sin entered into the world, and it has been here ever since.

All Have Sinned

The Apostle Paul says, “**For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God**” (Romans 3:23). How many would this include? He also said, “**They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable**” (Romans 3:12). From these verses of scripture, we conclude that all are guilty of sin, that is, all accountable beings are sinners. Infants and little children are not included here, because they were not born with sin, and therefore they are not accountable for their actions until they reach the age when they know right from wrong. Jesus taught that we must become as little children to enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18:1-3). **The gospel of Christ is directed to those who are old enough to hear the truth, to understand it, believe it, and to obey it** (Mark 16:16). But for sure, you and I, as adults, are guilty of sin, and unless we can find a way to rid ourselves of it sin will eventually destroy us.

The Wages of Sin Is Death

Paul also said, **“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord”** (Romans 6:23). What sin? He spells it out in 1 Corinthians 6:9,10 and Galatians 5:19-21, when he talks about fornication, idolatry, adultery, homosexuality, thievery, covetousness, drunkenness, lasciviousness, witchcraft, hatred, wrath, strife, envyings, murder, and such like. Then John tells us, **“But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death”** (Revelation 21:8). Religious people are included also — those who follow the teachings of men, the ignorant, and the hypocrites (Acts 17; Matthew 7:21-23; Matthew 6). Of course these are only a few of the sins that man indulges in. But whether these sins, or any of the other sins that he may be guilty of, if they are not repented of and forgiven, they will bring death. Even in this world, all of the heartbreak, sorrows, problems, troubles, wars, killings, broken homes, death, and hundreds and thousands of other problems are the result of sin.

Christ Died for the Sins of the World

Christ, coming from heaven and being the Son of God, lived a perfect life. The Hebrew writer said, **“Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin”** (Hebrews 4:14,15). We further read that Christ died for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:3) **“Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness — by whose stripes you are healed”** (1 Peter 2:24); and then we are told **“...who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father”** (Galatians 1:4). Finally, we read the words of Paul, **“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”** (Romans 5:8). So **“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life”** (John 3:16). Christ died on a cruel cross on our behalf. We were in sin. We didn’t deserve salvation, but because of love, grace and mercy, the Lord gave Himself for us that we might live.

How Can We Then Be Saved From Our Sins?

Since Christ died for us, shed His blood that we might have forgiveness for our sins, He has every right to expect us to comply with a number of conditions before we can be saved. To comply with these conditions doesn’t mean that we are *earning* our salvation, because we could never repay the Lord for all that He has done for us. But **condition one** is that **we must believe in Him**. He says if we refuse to believe in Him we will die in our sins (John 8:24). **Condition two** is that we **repent of all of our sins** or turn from them. He says that we must repent or perish (Luke 13:3). **Condition three**, we must **confess Him**

before men as being the Son of God. He says that if we will confess Him, He will confess us before the Father in heaven (Matthew 10:32). **Condition four**, we must be **baptized** to be saved or to have the forgiveness of our sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). This is a burial in water, reenacting in our obedience the Lord's burial in the grave. Through obeying these commands, one is spiritually washed in the blood of Christ, and is cleansed by His death (Romans 6). Through meeting these simple conditions, we are "born again" spiritually, we are forgiven of all of our past sins, and as we remain faithful to Him, He continues to forgive us (1 John 1:7).

Have You Been Forgiven?

Have you been forgiven of your sins? If you have not obeyed Christ, then you are still in your sins, and you are lost. You cannot save yourself, and neither can any man; nor can any man-made god or doctrine save you. The only way you can be forgiven is to believe in Christ and comply with His will. Sin will finally destroy you. I would pray that our study will create within you a desire to obey Jesus who died for you that you might be saved.



Chapter 8

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

Many Great Things

The Bible is filled with great themes. It tells us of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the church, the Gospel, the Christian life, heaven, hell, and much more. Many are not aware of these, and therefore do not believe in them. We believe the Bible to be the word of God, and therefore we believe what it teaches concerning these personalities and truths, so we are attempting to share with you these truths. We believe that if you can come to know them as we do, that you, too, will want to become a part of the Lord's Family, His church.

What Is the Gospel?

In this particular study we are considering the all-important question: What is the Gospel? The Gospel is spoken of many times in God's word, and as Christians we are constantly referring to it. Therefore, we want to go to the Scriptures to see what the Gospel is all about.

The word "Gospel" means "glad tidings" or "good news". In discussing the Gospel and the importance of taking it to others, Paul said, "**How beautiful are the feet of them**

that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” (Romans 10:15). The Gospel is good news, because it is through the Gospel that we are saved and that we have the hope of eternal life.

The Facts of the Gospel

The Gospel is based on the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Christians at Corinth, **“Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you — unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received; that Christ died for our sins according to the Scripture, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scripture”** (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Please note that Paul said he had preached the Gospel to them, they had received it, or had obeyed it, that they were standing in it, and that they were saved by it, provided they had really believed it and had obeyed it from the heart. Then he reminds them that he delivered the same Gospel to them that he had received, or had obeyed himself, and that Gospel was simply the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

How Could This Be Good News?

We now ask this question: How could one’s death and burial be good news? It wouldn’t be, if it the story ended with a death and a burial. People have been dying and being buried down through the ages. But in this case we are talking about Christ. And Christ was not just another man, but He was the Son of God. His death was not just another death, since He died for the sins of the whole world. Neither was His burial just another burial. One day went by, and nothing happened. Two days went by and, still, nothing happened. Perhaps many thought that Christ was just another would-be Messiah who had come and gone, and that was the end of it. But on the third day, even as He had promised, Christ came forth from the grave. The record says,

“Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men. But the angel answered and said to the women, Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay, and go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you. So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word” (Matthew 28:1-8).

We then read in other scriptures how He appeared before many, and then some days later, He ascended back to His Father, to reign as King of kings, and Lord of lords, and there He remains to this day.

The good news was that He not only died for the sins of the world, but three days

after His burial, He came forth from the grave as our resurrected Lord, to prove that He was the Son of God, and that He was now the Saviour of mankind.

The Commands of the Gospel

There are not only the *facts* of the Gospel (the death, burial and resurrection of Christ), but the Scriptures tell us that there are also *commands* of the Gospel. Since Christ is the Son of God, He has the authority to require that man obey certain commands in order to be saved. These commands are based on the fact that man is dead in sin, and that if he wants to be saved, then he must obey all that is required. That being true, first of all the *facts* of the Gospel — the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ — must be **believed**. This means that one must believe that Christ is the Son of God and that He died for us.

There are many verses of scripture that stress the importance of believing in Christ as being the Son of God. Christ said, **“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me”** (John 14:1). He said, **“Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins”** (John 8:24).

Next, there is the command to **repent** of one’s sins. Christ said, **“I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish”** (Luke 13:3). Paul said, **“Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent”** (Acts 17:30).

The next command is that one must **confess Christ** in the hearing of others, that He is the Son of God. **“For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation”** (Romans 10:10). Christ also said, **“Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven”** (Matthew 10:32).

The last command is that one must be **baptized for the remission of sins**. Peter told a group of people on the day of Pentecost, after they had already become believers and they were asking what they should do, **“Then Peter said to them, Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”** (Acts 2:38). Christ said, **“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned”** (Mark 16:16). We are also told that this baptism was a burial in water (Acts 2:38; Colossians 2:12).

If you will read through the book of Acts, you will note that there are several cases of conversion listed there, and that in every instance, all of them did the same thing. They all heard the gospel, became believers in Christ, repented of their sins, acknowledged or confessed Christ, and were baptized to be saved. The same response is required today of all who would obey Christ.

Picturing the Death, Burial, and Resurrection of Christ

In Romans 6, Paul shows that when one obeys the Gospel, he pictures the Lord’s death, burial, and resurrection in his actions! That is, he **dies** to his sins (turns away from a

sinful life), and this pictures the Lord's death. Then he is **buried in the waters of baptism**, picturing the burial of Christ. And finally, being **raised from the water** is symbolic of the Lord's resurrection from the grave. So, every time one obeys Christ, the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection are proclaimed anew!

Obeing a Form of the Doctrine

In Romans 6:17,18 Paul says, **"But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness."** Please note that they were the servants of sin, but then they became the servants of righteousness. What happened? He says that they obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine that was delivered to them. The doctrine that he speaks of has reference to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. But he says that they had obeyed *a form* of it. What was the form? As we just pointed out: through their obedience they had pictured the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection in their actions.

Can One Obey the Gospel?

Throughout this study we have talked about obeying the Gospel, but we have done so on the basis that this is what the Bible teaches. Peter said, **"For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?"** (1 Peter 4:17). Paul says, **"... and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These are punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power"** (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

From these statements it is clear that the Lord expects us to obey the Gospel, and we do that by believing *the facts* of the Gospel — the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ — and then *obeying the commands* of the Gospel. To be sure that all know those commands, and that they have the opportunity to obey them, Christ said, **"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned"** (Mark 16:15,16). Paul declared, **"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, The just shall live by faith"** (Romans 1:16,17).

The Promises of the Gospel

Then the Gospel has promises. If one will believe the facts, obey the commands, and remains faithful to the Lord until death, he will receive the promises. These include the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38), salvation (Mark 16:16), being added to the Lord's church (Acts 2:47), enjoying all spiritual blessings in Christ (Ephesians 1:3), and the many other promises the Lord has made to His people, including eternal life.

In Conclusion

The Gospel of Christ is such good and wonderful news to those who are lost. It means that through Christ we can be saved and have the hope of eternal life. Do you believe in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ? Have you obeyed the commands of the Gospel? I pray that if you have not, that you will do so, that you may be saved, and have all the blessings God can give you.



Chapter 9

WHAT IS FAITH?

Jesus said that we should search the Scriptures (John 5:39). Paul said that we must study if we are to know how to be approved of God (2 Timothy 2:15). He went on to say that faith comes by hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17). In other words, as we study the Scriptures, we are led to believe in God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and all of the many truths that are set forth therein.

We can see that our study of the word of God is very important. We also can see how necessary belief or faith is in all of this. Because of the importance of faith, we want to consider this question at this time: What is faith? I am anxious for us to see what *Bible faith* is because so many misunderstand it. The faith that the Bible produces, and the faith that men talk about are often two different things.

Faith Defined

The Hebrew writer defines faith as follows: **“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”** (Hebrews 11:1). It is also defined as trust and confidence that one has in another. For instance, we have faith in God’s existence. We

have never seen God, but we believe He exists because of all of the evidence that prove His existence. To illustrate further, I might tell you that it was never my privilege to see George Washington, the first President of the United States, and yet I believe that he lived and that he was indeed the first President of our country. Why do I believe that? Because I have confidence and trust in the records that have been left that say that this was true. Hence, faith is not based on seeing something with our own eyes, for then it would not be *faith*, it would be *knowledge*, but faith is based on testimonies, factual evidences, and proofs that something is true, and we therefore accept it.

We Have God's Word

Besides God's creation that is all around us to convince us of His existence, He has revealed Himself through His word. Paul says, **"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"** (Romans 10:17). Concerning Christ, we read, **"And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life through His name"** (John 20:30,31).

Must Believe in God

Speaking of God, the Hebrew writer says, **"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him"** (Hebrews 11:6). Christ said, **"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned, but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God"** (John 3:16-18). As you can see from the foregoing statements, one must believe in both God, the Father, and Christ as the Son, in order to be saved. The New Testament is full of similar statements that would likewise demand faith or belief in God and Christ.

What About "Faith Only"?

The sad part is that most religious people believe in *faith only*. That is, they read such verses as we have just quoted and other such verses that stress faith, and they conclude that all one must do to please God and to have salvation is to believe *only*. The faith that they speak of is *mental* faith, or acceptance that God is, and that Jesus Christ is His Son. They reason that this is sufficient, and that on the spot, and the very minute or second that one believes, then the Lord saves him. Nothing else is necessary. Does the Bible teach this?

"Faith Only" Is Not Enough

It is true that one must believe, or have faith in God. We fully agree with that, and all of the Scriptures teaching the necessity of faith make that as plain as it could possibly be. But what about the many other verses that show just as plain and clear that there are

other things God requires one to do to be saved? Of course the basis of our obedience is our foundational faith, but what does the obedience involve?

Turn with me now to James 2 and listen to the words of this inspired man of God: **“What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, Depart in peace, be warned and filled, but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, You have faith, and I have works. Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe — and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the alter? Do you see that *faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?* And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. And he was called the friend of God. You see then that a man is justified by works, and *not by faith only.* Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? For *as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also*”** (James 2:14-26).

Now in that rather lengthy reading, what is James saying? He is making his point clear, time after time, with one example after another, that “faith only” does not save. The only time that “faith only” is ever used in the New Testament is in James 2:24, when he says that man is justified by works, and not by faith only! But what does James mean when he says that man is justified by *works*? He means that *by faith* one is to *obey* God, and when he does so, he is saved by his works of obedience. This is illustrated in the story of Abraham’s obedience to God, and also in Rahab’s works. As far as “faith only” is concerned, if it could save, then the devils would be saved, because they believe and tremble — but they don’t **obey**! So the devils have more faith than a lot of people have, and yet people say they are saved before they do anything in obedience to God. Of course, they are not.

Faith Moves One to Obey

The scriptures make it very emphatic that when one has faith in God, or when one truly believes, he will obey God. Faith will lead one to do that. If one’s faith isn’t strong enough to lead him to do what the Lord has asked him to do, surely his faith is dead. Jesus put it this way, **“If you love Me, keep My commandments”** (John 14:15).

Christ commanded the apostles, **“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned”** (Mark 16:15,16). In this scripture the Lord tells one what to do to be saved, that is, he must believe and be baptized. Then He explains what the results will be if one is not willing to do that. He says that if you refuse to believe, you will be condemned. It is obvious in this case that if one refuses to believe, he certainly will not do

what the Lord asked him to do, and so therefore he cannot be saved.

Again in Mark 16:16 Jesus says that, **“He who believes and is baptized will be saved...”** This means that one must continue to believe, and so as he continues to believe, then he will be led by his faith to do any and everything the Lord has asked him to do. If he refuses, then his faith is not strong enough to save him.

A genuine saving faith will lead one not only to believe that God is, that Christ is the Son of God, as we read in Acts 8:37 where the Ethiopian Eunuch confessed his faith in Christ as being the Son of God, but that same faith will lead one to repent of his sins for the simple reason that Christ has asked him to repent of his sins (Luke 13:3). That same faith will lead him to acknowledge and confess Christ as the Son of God (Matthew 10:32; Romans 10:10). And finally, that same faith will lead one to be baptized to be saved, or to have the forgiveness of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16). The baptism here is a burial in water (Acts 8:26-39; Romans 6:3,4). As a result of one's obedience, it can be said that he has been saved by faith — not a dead, inactive faith, but by a living faith, a faith that prompted him to obey the words of Jesus. Surely if one believes in Christ he will do what He teaches.

Faith Leads One On

That same faith will lead one to worship God, and to live the Christian life. The Scripture says that we are to add the Christian graces to our faith (2 Peter 1:5-11). We are told that we are to *walk* by faith and to *live* by faith. We are also told that faith is the victory, that *by* our faith, and *through* our faith — being faithful to the Lord unto death, that is, by obeying His commandments, we will finally receive a crown of life (Revelation 2:10; 22:14).

What kind of faith do you have? I pray that you will believe in the Lord and obey Him so that you may be saved.



Chapter 10

WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

I remind you that the Bible is our textbook in these studies, and it is our only source of authority. We believe that it is the inspired word of God and that God is speaking to us through its pages. He tells us everything that He wants us to know, and in turn we are to read it, study it, learn what He wants us to do, and respect Him enough to obey His will.

What Is Repentance?

In our studies we are considering some of the great themes of the Bible. Let us now consider the subject of repentance. But what is repentance? That is what we want to find out. We not only want to learn what repentance is, but we also want to see how it relates to us and our salvation.

Repentance Defined by Men

As might be expected, repentance has been defined in different ways. Or perhaps a better way of putting it, some have misunderstood repentance and have defined the term to suit their own situation. Some have said that repentance means *feeling sorry* for one's sins.

It is true that one must feel sorry for his sins, but at the same time he might feel sorry but still not repent. The classic example of that is the thief who gets caught for his robbery. He may be sitting in jail feeling very sorry for what he did, but not repenting in the sense of being willing to quit his robbing and stealing; rather, he simply feels sorry that he got caught. The same could be said of so many others who end up in having to suffer the consequences of their wrong doing. The Bible does talk about sorrow, or godly sorrow, being related to repentance, but it is the kind of sorrow that *leads to* repentance. The Apostle Paul said, **“For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted, but the sorrow of the world produces death”** (2 Corinthians 7:10).

Other Ideas about Repentance

Others have the concept of repentance that would permit them to indulge in sin, such as to divorce and remarry without a scriptural cause, and thus to live in adultery, but then for the couple to “repent” — to be “sorry” for their decision to be in an unscriptural marriage — and be baptized, but then to continue to live together. The only problem is, this is not *repentance*. To repent of adultery — to turn away from the sin — would necessitate the couple giving up their adultery, and to do that they would have to quit living together in a marriage relationship. It would be like a man who committed murder. He could not repent of murder and then continue to commit murder. For him to repent of murder, he would have to quit killing people.

The Bible Definition of Repentance

The Bible definition for repentance is to make a change, to turn around, to leave off sin, to give up or quit sin, to no longer engage in those things that are sinful and bad. It has been further defined to mean a change of mind, a change of life and, of course, when one enters Christ and His church through obedience, then it carries with it also the idea of a change of state. Christ illustrated repentance like this: **“But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, Son, go, work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not, but afterward he regretted it and went. Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir, but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father? They said to Him, The first. Jesus said to them, Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him, and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him”** (Matthew 21:28-32).

Repentance at Work

I think one of the best examples to show what repentance involves is found in Paul’s writings to the Christians at Ephesus. Listen to what he says: **“...that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore, putting away lying, let each one of you speak truth with his**

neighbor, for we are members of one another. Be angry, and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:22-32). You will notice that he talks about putting away certain sins and then replacing them with good deeds. For instance, **“Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.”** Again, **“Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.”** Now that is what repentance is all about.

One Must Repent or Perish

Christ taught, **“I tell you, nay; but, except you repent, you shall all likewise perish.”** This is directed to the sinner, or one who is involved in wrong doing. Please note here and throughout the Scriptures, that the Lord requires one to repent, or turn away from those things that are bad. The Lord is not asking anyone to give up any good thing, but only that which will finally destroy. Furthermore, He requires one to repent of his sins as a condition for forgiveness, in order that he may follow Him and live the Christian life.

Children Are Not Included

Little children are not included in the command to repent, because they are not held accountable for their actions until they have reached the age of knowing right from wrong. Paul said that all have sinned (Romans 3:23), but in the same chapter he depicts those who were sinners as being adults who spoke lies, were guilty of shedding innocent blood, etc. Naturally, this would not include infants and children. Christ spoke of little children being **“of the kingdom of heaven”**, and He stated that we must become like little children in order to enter the kingdom or the church. Why? Because little children are not guilty of sin, and they have the qualities that one must have to be a Christian. The command for repentance, then, is directed to the adult, to the one who knows right from wrong, to the one who knows that he is in sin and that he needs to be saved.

All Accountable People Are Commanded to Repent

Paul told the people of Athens, **“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commands *all men everywhere to repent*”** (Acts 17:30). Not even one human is so good that he does not need to repent. All accountable beings, whether good moral people or hardened sinners, are sinners in the eyes of God. All are lost, and therefore, all need to repent, and *must* repent, to obey God. At one time God may have overlooked certain things because the message of the Gospel had not yet been fully written, but now He

commands all men everywhere to turn from their sins by following the commands of the New Testament. Peter said that the Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

A Command of the Gospel

God teaches that one must obey the Gospel to be saved (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; 1 Peter 4:17). To obey the Gospel, one must believe that Christ is the Son of God, repent of all of his sins, confess Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized for the remission of sins. On the day of Pentecost, after the apostles had preached the Gospel to a large crowd, the record says that they were cut to the heart, they believed what they heard, and then they asked what they should do. **“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 you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”** (Acts 2:38). Those who did so were saved and were added to the Lord’s church (Acts 2:47). But you will note that one of the commands included repentance.

Repentance Means Death to Sin

In Romans 6, Paul shows that when one obeys the Gospel, in his action he pictures the Lord’s death, burial, and resurrection. That is, he dies to his sins, which is repentance, and he is buried in the waters of baptism, and then he is raised from that watery grave to walk a new life in Christ.

Repentance is Necessary for All

Although one may become a Christian, it is still possible for him to turn back, or to sin. In that case, he must repent of his sins, or turn from them, if he expects the Lord to forgive him. We read of such cases in Luke 15 and Acts 8. Even as we strive to live the faithful Christian life, we may still make mistakes from time to time. Again there must be repentance, but with repentance and obedience, the Lord is willing to forgive one of all his sins. **“...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”** (1 John 1:7).

If you are not a Christian I would urge that you obey God today. The consequences of sin is death (Romans 6:23).



Chapter 11

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

God is speaking today through His word, as recorded in the pages of the Bible. It is wonderful that He made all of the arrangements so that we can know His will, and we are blessed to be able to read and study His word. In these studies, we are stressing the existence of God, that Christ is His Son, and that the Holy Spirit was sent to inspire and guide a chosen group of men to write down the Lord's word.

In our studies we are also observing some of the great themes of the Bible that have to do with man and his salvation. We have found that for man to be saved he must believe in God with all of his heart, and that he must repent of all of his sins. In this particular lesson, we are going to consider the subject of baptism. The question is: What is baptism?

Different Ideas about Baptism

A little later we will notice what the Bible says that baptism *is*, and its teaching concerning its importance, but just now, I want to tell you what baptism *is not*, so that you will better appreciate what the Bible says about it. Of course, what I am going to tell you

is what man says about baptism. That within itself should be enough to tell you why these definitions are contrary to the word of God. **First, man says that baptism is the sprinkling, or pouring of water over one's head, for the purpose of joining some church. Second, man says that baptism is evidence that one was been saved when he invited Jesus into his heart;** that is, he was saved, and now he is being immersed in water, or sprinkled, to tell the world that he has been saved. His baptism is also for the purpose of being accepted into the fellowship of some particular church. These are the major teachings on baptism in our day. As we will see, they are completely false.

Baptism Defined

The Bible clearly teaches that baptism is a burial or an immersion. This is the meaning of baptism in the Greek language. The Apostle Paul says, **“Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life”** (Romans 6:3,4). Again, he says, **“Buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead”** (Colossians 2:12). Now, does this sound like sprinkling or pouring of water over one's head?

Baptism is a Burial in Water

In Acts 8 we have the story of the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch. To get the full picture, let's read that story: **“Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. This is desert. So he arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had come to Jerusalem to worship, was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet. Then the Spirit said to Philip, Go near and overtake this chariot. So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, Do you understand what you are reading? And he said, How can I, unless someone guides me? And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him.**

“The place in the Scripture which he read was this: He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so He opened not His mouth. In His humiliation His justice was taken away, and who will declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth. So the eunuch answered Philip and said, I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.

“Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized? Then Philip said, If you believe with all your heart, you may. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so

that the eunuch saw him no more, and he went on his way rejoicing” (Acts 8:26-39).

Some Observations

Please notice several things about the foregoing story. How did the Eunuch know anything about baptism? How did he know that it was a burial in water? Well, Philip preached *Christ* to him, and in doing so, he evidently preached *the commands of Christ*. That is the only way he could have known. In the beginning he didn’t even know who Isaiah was speaking about. Also, observe that when he asked about being baptized, Philip required first that he confess his faith in Christ as the Son of God. After his confession, the Scriptures say that they both went down into the water and Philip baptized the Eunuch. This proves that baptism was a burial, or an immersion in water, necessitating that both of them go down into the water and then they both came up out of the water. Baptism, as set forth in God’s word, is a burial! How could anyone ever misunderstand baptism after reading how the Eunuch was baptized?

It was only after his baptism that he went of his way rejoicing. Why? Because he had obeyed God and the Lord has saved him and added him to the church.

There Is But One Baptism

In Ephesians 4:1-6, the inspired writer lists several individuals and items of which he said there was only one. He said there was but one God, one Lord, one Spirit, one body or church, one faith, one hope, and he also said that there was but one baptism. There had been other baptisms — John’s baptism and the baptism of the Holy Spirit — but by the time this portion of Scripture was written Paul said that there was only *one* baptism. Which one was that? The one that we have just been discussing. It was a burial, a burial in water for the forgiveness of sins. We will further identify this as we continue our study, but right now I want you to remember that he says that there is just *one* baptism.

Baptism is a Condition of Salvation

From the story of the conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch, and other conversions that are listed in the book of Acts, we learn that baptism is a condition of salvation. That is, baptism is one of those commands that one must comply with in order to be saved. Before one can be baptized scripturally, however, he must **hear** God’s word, because faith comes by hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17). As just suggested, then one must **believe**. He must believe in God and he must believe in Christ as the Son of God (Romans 10:10). He must **repent** of all of his sins (Acts 17:30). Next, he must **confess Christ** as being the Son of God. This is brought out in Romans 10:10, and other verses.

But one is still not saved. What else does the Lord require? Finally, one must be **baptized** for the remission of his sins. After the apostles had preached the Gospel to the people on the day of Pentecost, and after they had been brought to the point of faith, they wanted to know what else they should do. **“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 you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”** (Acts 2:38). The record continues, **“Then**

they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41). Acts 2:47 says that the Lord added the saved to His church. What had happened? These people were lost. Then they heard the Gospel. They believe it and were baptized. What baptism was it? The one baptism, a burial in water as the Lord was buried in the grave. What was the result? They received the remission of their sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the Lord added them to His church. What must one do today to be saved? The same thing. What will he receive? The same thing.

Baptism Saves

Another time Peter was showing how the people of Noah’s time were saved by water, as the water bore up the ark, and he said, **“There is also an antitype which now saves us — baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ”** (1 Peter 3:21). He likewise shows that we are not baptized to wash away the literal filth from our bodies, but to obey the Lord, washing away the guilt from our souls and thereby having a good conscience.

Other Statements

In Acts 22:16 we read how Saul was told to arise and be baptized to wash away his sins. Christ commanded the apostles to take the Gospel into all the world, and **“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned”** (Mark 16:16). Which had you rather do? Believe and be baptized and be saved, or refuse to believe and be condemned?

Baptism and the New Birth

Baptism is the water of the New Birth, as recorded in John 3:3-5. When one obeys the Gospel by believing, repenting of his sins, confessing Christ, and being buried in the water, then on coming forth, he has been born again of water and the Spirit.

Baptism Pictures the Death, Burial and Resurrection

Baptism also portrays the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ as one dies to his sins, is buried in the water, and then comes forth from the water to walk in newness of life (Romans 6).

Baptism Puts One into Christ and into the Church

Finally, baptism is the door into Christ and His church (Romans 6:3,4; Galatians 3:26,27; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Corinthians 12:13). One must be baptized to enter Christ and His church, because there is no other way to enter.

In Conclusion

Have you been baptized according to the teaching of God’s word? I hope you will think seriously about these matters, because they are vital for your salvation.



Chapter 12

WHO IS A CHRISTIAN?

Stating Our Belief

In these studies with you, we are affirming our faith in God, in Christ as being the Son of God, in the Holy Spirit of God, and in the Bible which is the word of God. We are not ashamed to make known our faith. Rather, we are thrilled with the opportunity to tell you of our faith, and why we believe what we do. We want to so convince you that you will likewise believe.

The Teachings of God's Word

In studying the Bible, we learn about sin and how it destroys. Being human, and weak in the flesh, we know that we are sinners, and unless we rid ourselves of it, then it will destroy us. But thanks be unto God, our Father loved us, gave His Son to die for us, and now we have the good news of the Gospel, which makes it possible to obey the Lord's will and to be saved, added to the church, and thereby be Christians with the hope of eternal life.

Who Is a Christian?

That brings us to this question: Who is a Christian? Since we are always talking about being a Christian, and the need for being a Christian, we need to explain what we mean. By going to the word of God we may easily come to know.

A Christian Is One Who Is Like Christ

It is only natural to conclude that the name “Christian” has something to do with the name Christ, and that is very true. Without Christ, the name Christian would be meaningless. As it is, every time the name Christian is spoken, the name of Christ is likewise spoken, so it denotes who the individual is. He is a follower of Christ. He is attempting to be *like Christ* in all the things that he says and does. He is *in Christ* and Christ is *in him*. He is a member of His church. He is a child of God. He has the mind of Christ. His hope is in Christ.

A New Name

Let’s go back and see where this name came from. God spoke through His prophet in the long ago to reveal that the day would come when He would give His people a new name. Isaiah said, **“For Zion’s sake I will not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burns. The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory. You shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord will name”** (Isaiah 62:1,2). Please notice carefully that the man of God said that, **number one**, from Jerusalem would go salvation; **number two**, that God’s people would be called by a new name; and **number three**, that the Lord Himself would give that name. Now, what is the prophet talking about? From what is said, it is obvious that he was not talking about something that would take place in his lifetime, or even in the near future. Rather, it would happen later.

The Coming of Christ

As we go through the Bible we come to the day that Christ was born into the world. During the little time that He had on the earth, He spent it with His apostles in teaching and preparing them for the work they should do after His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension back to the Father. To be sure that it was done right, He sent the Holy Spirit upon them to guide them in their preaching and work. Thus in Acts 2 we read of the establishment, or beginning, of the church. What was “the church”? It was the new Family belonging to Christ, made up of those who had been taught about Christ, who had come to believe in Him, who had obeyed His teaching to be saved, and to be made a part of the church. The church then was simply made up of people who had chosen to follow Christ.

Salvation Is in the Name of Christ

The name of Christ takes on prominence, as Peter says concerning Him, **“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved”** (Acts 4:12). On the occasion of Saul’s conversion,

the record says that the Lord appeared to Ananias, to ask that he go to Saul to assist him in his obedience to the gospel. At first, Ananias didn't want to go, because he had heard so many bad things about Saul. Then we read, **"But the Lord said to him, Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel, for I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake"** (Acts 9:15,16). Now what name would he bear? As the Apostle Paul, he went forth preaching Christ, saying that Christ's name was above every name (Ephesians 1:21), and teaching, **"...that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"** (Philippians 2:10,11). Again he said, **"For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named"** (Ephesians 3:14,15).

The Lord's Name Honored Individually and Collectively

Paul preached Christ to the Jews, and took His name to the Gentiles of his day. He taught that everything should be done in the name of Christ (Colossians 3:17). He preached Christ to King Agrippa, **"Then Agrippa said to Paul, You almost persuade me to become a Christian"** (Acts 26:28). In speaking to a group of Christians, for instance, the church at Corinth, he spoke of it as the body of Christ, or the church belonging Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27). In speaking of a number of congregations, and in sending their greetings to the church in Rome, he said, **"...the churches of Christ salute you"** (Romans 16:16). From all of these statements, we can clearly see that the Lord was going to give His people a new name, and that name was Christian, and gathered together into a group, being the Lord's family, the church, they were known as the church of Christ. Individually and collectively, they wore the name of Christ, and honored Him by so doing. They distinguished themselves from all others by wearing His name, and thus declaring by the name that they wore that they were the followers of Christ.

First Called Christians in Antioch

When exactly was that name given? We read that after Saul's conversion (who, later, was known as the Apostle Paul) that Barnabas brought him to Antioch, and the record says, **"And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch"** (Acts 11:26). Now does that mean that there were no Christians before this time? No, that is not true. Those who had obeyed Christ back in Jerusalem, as recorded in Acts 2, were also Christians. And all others who had obeyed Christ up to this time were likewise Christians. Just because they were not yet called Christians, that does not mean that they were not. But it was at Antioch where the name Christian first began to be used and it has been used ever since.

The Disciples Were Called Christians

A disciple is a learner and, in relation to Christ, he is a learner of Christ. Not only

so, but the disciples at Antioch were Christians which meant that they were followers of Christ. They were believers in Christ and they had obeyed Him. Christ had said long before, **“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me”** (Luke 9:23).

Other Marks of a Christian

Also, the Christians there at Antioch were members of the Lord’s church. In other words, there were a number of Christians in that city, and as a group they were the church, or the local congregation. As a congregation, along with all of the other congregations that existed at that time, they not only made up the church of Christ, but through their worship and work, they represented the religion of Christ, or Christianity, to the people of Antioch.

According to the teaching of the New Testament, a Christian is not only one who believes in Christ, one who has obeyed Christ, one who is a member of the Lord’s church, one who wears His name, but he is also one that meets with other Christians every first day of the week to worship God (John 4:24; Acts 2:42; Acts 20:7). A Christian lives daily for the Lord, believing the teaching of Christ, and practicing it in all that he says or does. He is a good family member, a good neighbor, a good worker, a good citizen. He has the forgiveness of sins and the hope of eternal life.

Who Are Christians Today?

Christians today are like those you read about in the New Testament. All who obey the Lord’s word have become Christians. A Christian today is a believer in Christ, one who follows Him, obeys Him, is a member of the church of Christ, is a Christian only, worships according to the teaching of the New Testament, and lives for Christ in his daily life. Those who follow the teachings of men, who become members of denominational groups, who wear names not found in the scripture, etc., are not true Christians.

Will You Become a Christian?

You can become a Christian by believing in Christ, and in obeying His teachings. He asks you to have faith in Him; He asks that you repent of your sins; that you confess Him as the Son of God; and that you be baptized to wash your sins away. If you will do this He will save you and add you to His church. Read Mark 16:16 and Acts 2. As you continue to follow Him, remaining faithful to Him, He will finally save you in heaven. It’s great to be a Christian, and I would encourage you to become one.

In Conclusion

Please ponder these great truths, and may your faith grow in Christ. If you are not a Christian may you become one. If you have been deceived by the doctrines and denominations of men, please repent and obey Christ and be just a Christian, choosing to be a part of His church. If you are a Christian, take courage, and go and tell others about Christ and their need for Him.



Chapter 13

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

In this lesson we want to think about some very serious matters. These involve you and your soul, and what the God of heaven expects of you. My sole purpose in this study is for us to go to the Bible together to learn what God would have us to do. The Bible contains God's word and God's word is truth.

The Godhead

The Bible reveals God, Christ and the Holy Spirit, their relationship to each other, and their respective works. To know about Them is to believe in Them. To know about Them makes us conscious of our duties and responsibilities to Them.

The Bible Reveals God's Plan

The Bible contains the mind of God, His message to mankind. Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, inspired men of God have written that message, and it has been given to man in written form. It tells us of sin, what sin is, and the consequences of sin. It tells us that we are sinners, and that without God we are hopelessly lost and doomed to eternal damnation. It tells of God's great sacrifice in the giving of His Son that men might

be saved. It tells the conditions that man must meet to be saved, and to become a part of the Lord's family, the church. It tells the kind of life that we are to live, and where we will spend eternity. This being true, there is no excuse for us to be ignorant of God's will, and of what He expects of us.

The Church in God's Plan

In studying the Bible one will observe the prominence the church plays in God's plans. It is there for a reason, for a purpose, and one cannot ignore that. Man today is confused about the church because he has heard so many conflicting things about it. The wise thing to do, however, is to forget what the world is saying about it, and turn to the Bible to see what God Himself says in His word.

What Is the Church?

You are probably asking the question right now: What is the church? The Bible does not define the church as the world does. The world pictures the church as being a meeting place or a church building. It may also define the church as being a denomination, or a group of denominations. These are sects, or religious bodies of men, that supposedly represent Christ but that, in reality, reject Him. The Bible tells us that the church is a group of people. In the case of the Lord's church, it is a saved group of people, those who have obeyed Christ by being buried with Him in baptism. The church has many marks of identification, and we will be noticing these throughout this lesson.

The Pre-Existence of the Church

The church of the Bible had its beginning in the mind of God, even before the foundation of the world. Speaking to the Christians at Ephesus, Paul said, **"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved"** (Ephesians 1:3-6). What is he saying here? He is saying that even before God created man He decided that at the end of time He would save the righteous eternally, and destroy the wicked. He predetermined that. Then He gave man the opportunity to choose which group he would be in: with the righteous, or with the wicked. Those who chose to be counted with the righteous were able to do so through obeying Christ, becoming Christians, and members of the church. God was speaking to Christians and members of the church at Ephesus, and that was true of them, and moreover, it is true of the church today. But the point here is, that God planned this **even before the creation of the world**, and this within itself shows the great emphasis God was going to place on the church.

The Church in Prophecy

Next, we read of the church, or the kingdom as it was identified in prophecy. Prophets like Isaiah, Joel, Daniel, and others said that God was going to set up a kingdom, a spir-

itual kingdom, if you please, that it would be established in Jerusalem, that it would come with power, that people from all nations would flow into it, that its message would go forth from there to all parts of the world, and that it would never be destroyed, but that it would stand forever (Daniel 2:44).

The Church Was Promised

John the Baptist was a forerunner of Christ, and he came preaching that **the kingdom of heaven was at hand** (Matthew 3:1,2). That just simply meant that the kingdom of heaven, or the church of God, was near, or that it would soon be established. Christ said to the disciples, **“Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power”** (Mark 9:1). Christ was saying that the kingdom of God, or the church of God, would come in the lifetime of some of those that were present on that occasion. He further said that it would come with power, and according to Acts 1:8, that just simply meant that it would come with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Christ promised Peter and the apostles, when they confessed Him to be the Christ the Son of the living God, **“And I say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it”** (Matthew 16:18). The *rock* here was the foundational fact that Jesus was the Son of God. In other words, He was saying that He would build the church upon the truth that He was the Son of God. We read later where it was said that Christ was the rock, the chief corner stone, the sure foundation of the church (1 Corinthians 3:11). Not only was that true then, but to this day the church rests upon that fact.

The Church Was Established

When we turn to Acts 2, we are able to read of the establishment, or the beginning of the kingdom of God, or the Lord’s church — His Family that has been called out of the world to a life of holiness. It came into existence on the day of Pentecost, a Jewish feast day that would bring Jews together from all parts of the world. This took place in Jerusalem, as had been prophesied, in approximately A.D. 33. The apostles of Christ had been asked to remain there until they received the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). The Spirit was sent upon them to guide them into all truth so that no mistake would be made in their teachings. With the coming of the Holy Spirit, they were empowered to speak in other languages, and to do miraculous deeds to prove their authorization by God (Acts 2:43).

With such power they began to preach the Gospel to a great crowd of people, explaining the good news of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The record says, **“Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said to them, Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”** (Acts 2:37,38). Continuing, **“Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them”** (Acts 2:41). Then it says, **“And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved”** (Acts 2:47).

Other Facts About The Church

As we read through the New Testament, we are able to see many things about this church. For example: It was established by Christ through the apostles, and therefore it belongs to Him (Matthew 16:18). He died for it and, in so doing, He purchased it with His blood (Ephesians 5:25; Acts 20:28). It wore the name of Christ (Romans 16:16), and its members were known as Christians (Acts 11:26). Christ was said to be the Saviour of it (Ephesians 5:23), the head of it (Colossians 1:18), and its foundation (1 Corinthians 3:11). There was but one church (Ephesians 4:4), and to be a member, as indicated in the story of its establishment, one had to believe in God and Christ, repent of his sins, and be baptized for the remission of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). Its members were to assemble together on each first day of the week to worship God in Spirit and in truth, and this included singing, praying, studying God's word, partaking of the Lord's Supper, and giving of their money (Acts 2:42; Colossians 3:16).

There was but one church, but it consisted of many congregations, and each congregation was composed of individual members, or Christians. Each congregation was independent of all others, but all were bound together by love, had fellowship with each other, cooperated in God's work, and recognized and followed the same divine pattern, with Christ as its sole head. Each congregation, where it had qualified men, had elders and deacons, preachers and teachers (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1). Its work was to spread the cause of Christ throughout the whole world (Mark 16:15,16). It had no earthly headquarters, nor did it exalt any man as its earthly head or spokesman.

That Church Exists Today

But what about today? Does that church still exist? Yes, it does. The pattern for it is found in God's word and anywhere there are people who will read and study the Bible, and do what it teaches, the Lord saves them and adds them to His church. That means that they are a local congregation of the church of Christ in their city or town.

There is but **one true church** in the world today. That church is the church of Christ, and it is the church of Christ *only* when it is patterned in every detail after the teachings of the New Testament. Our plea is, "Let's just go back to the New Testament and be the church that you read about there, following the Scriptures in every way, adding nothing and subtracting no teaching of the biblical doctrine."

In Conclusion

I would hope that you will be encouraged to learn more about this church, and to become a member of it. It is not *my church*, or *any man's church*, but it is the church that belongs to Christ. The church is not the saviour but, if one is actually saved, God has added him to that church about which he has learned and that he has chosen to be a part of, to the exclusion of the entire denominational world. Please think on these things.



Chapter 14

WHAT IS WORSHIP?

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15). This is what we are trying to do in these studies, and we hope that in doing so we will be able to answer many of your questions.

Faith Building

We are attempting to build faith in the fact that there is a God in heaven, that Jesus Christ is His Son, and that the Holy Spirit guided a number of men to write down God’s word in the book known as the Bible, and that through that book we may know God’s will for us today.

These same scriptures introduce us to the church of our Lord, the Gospel of Christ, what it means to be a Christian, how we are to worship, and many other subjects.

The Importance of Worship

In talking about worship, God tells us what it is, who is to be worshiped, who is to worship, and many other such things. This is very important, since man is inherently a worshipful being, and *all people everywhere throughout time* have worshiped **something**.

This being true, it is important to learn about the kind of worship God wants, and then to worship according to His instructions.

Worship Defined

With these thoughts in mind, we come to this all-important question: **What is worship?** I think all of us know that worship is generally defined as being praise, adoration, honor, and reverence that is offered by one to another, as the human bows down, offering himself through certain specified acts in adoration to his “god”. But what does the Bible say about worship?

Three Kinds of Worship

First we will note that the Scriptures mention three kinds of worship. Naturally, all three are not authorized by God, or even two of them, but we will take a look at each so that we may see what God wants and what He doesn’t want. At the same time, we need to compare our own worship with these to see if our worship is the kind that God will accept. Once we know the type of worship God demands, we can be on guard against those types that do not measure up to His standard.

Number one, there is ignorant worship. The Apostle Paul was visiting in Athens on a particular occasion, and the record says, **“Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: To The Unknown God. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you”** (Acts 17:22,23). Now here were people who were worshipping, but they were doing so in *ignorance*. Why? Because they weren’t even sure about the “god”, or “gods” they were worshipping! Next, they were not worshipping the One who had created them. Consequently, their worship was useless. But the sad part is that after all of these hundreds of years, still millions of people are worshipping in ignorance. They do not know the God of heaven. Instead, they worship the creature instead of the creator. They bow to material things and to nature. They bow to idols they have carved and shaped themselves, and they are held captive by superstitions. As a result, in spite of all the worship, the religious activity, the sacrifices — sometimes even the sacrifices of human beings — , and everything that goes into their worship, no one is there to receive it and accept it. Therefore it is baseless, needless, and useless.

Number two, there is vain worship. Christ Himself said about some people of His day, **“But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men”** (Matthew 15:9). The word “vain” means empty and void. Why would worship to God be so described? Because He says that it was *according to the doctrines and commandments of men*. In other words, what they were doing was not what God had asked, but it was according to the teachings of men. Therefore it was rejected. Again, it is sad to know that most of the worship that is directed to God today is not what He has directed, but it is solely according to the inventions and teachings of men. That is, men have devised their own ways of worship, and then they expect God to accept it. God has not authorized such worship and He will not accept it when it is offered to Him. It matters not how honest and sincere the worshippers

may be, how reverently they may offer their worship, unauthorized worship is vain worship.

Number three, there is true worship. Christ said, **“God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth”** (John 4:24). Of the three types of worship that we are listing, this is the kind of worship God wants. Because of that, we want to give some additional attention to it. To begin with, God is to be the object of our worship. David, in the long ago said, **“...holy and reverend is His name”** (Psalm 111:9). God is a Spirit. He is not a human, or in the form of a human, so He forbids the making of images and then worshipping them as “god”. God is our creator, the One who is above all, knows all, hears all, sees all, and even knows the thoughts of our hearts. He has always been, and will always be. He is all powerful. From Him flows all blessings, physically and spiritually. Therefore, we honor Him, praise Him, and worship Him. This God should be worshiped by all of His creatures, but this is not the case. As we have already noticed, many worship out of ignorance, or their worship is in vain because it is a corruption of what He has asked for. Those who worship must worship God as He has directed. There is no other way.

To worship God’s way, we must approach Him in spirit and in truth. To worship God *in spirit* means to worship from the heart, with understanding, with all sincerity, with humility. We are to know who we are worshipping, and why, and we are to keep our minds on that. Paul said, **“What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit and I will also sing with the understanding”** (1 Corinthians 14:15).

Then we are to worship God *in truth*, or according to what is written in the New Testament. We read that **His word is truth** (John 17:17), and therefore we must do only those things in worship that He has asked us to do. If we do something He has not authorized, that would not be according to the truth. This is the *only type of worship that is acceptable to God*.

Men have devised doing all kinds of things in their “dreamed up” forms of worship. It seems that they have decided that God is a beggar and that He eagerly accepts whatever is offered to Him. Contrarily, there are not *many ways* to worship, as some would have us to believe. There is **one** God, and there is but **one way** to worship Him, to have His approval.

The Acts of Worship

As we go through God’s word, we observe that there are **five acts, or avenues, of worship**. These are clearly stated in His word, and they are very simple. Christians cannot acceptably worship God without including these acts in their service.

Christians are required to assemble each first day of the week, and as a congregation of people — two or more — they are to worship God through: **singing, praying, studying, partaking of the Lord’s Supper, and giving of their means**.

Please observe closely:

1. Christians are to worship through their singing. Christianity is a unique religion inasmuch as its members are asked to sing praises to God. **“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord”** (Ephesians 5:19). **“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly**

in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16). The scriptures further indicate that our singing is to be separate and apart from mechanical instruments. That is, we are asked of God to *sing only*; He accepts vocal music only. Why? The Lord wants *His creation* to praise Him, rather than for man to praise Him through *his own inventions*. In addition, the verses we have noted show that we are to teach each other through the words we are singing. Not only do mechanical instruments not "teach", but their noise can prevent others from understanding the words of the hymns. We must not change or add to what God has specified. To question God on this subject is but to reject and overrule Him. We cannot be audacious enough to place our thinking above the specifications of the God of the Universe. Therefore, in churches of Christ, we sing only.

2. Christians are to worship through their prayers. In praying we speak or talk to God. We are told that the first century Christians **"...continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers"** (Acts 2:42). Since sinful humans have no right, on their own, to come into the presence of our Creator God, we must approach Him through our Brother: **"Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you"** (John 16:23).

3. Christians are to worship through a study of God's word. Through reading and studying the scriptures, God speaks to us today. We are commanded to study. **"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth"** (2 Timothy 2:15).

4. Christians are to worship through partaking of the Lord's Supper. This is to be done each first day of the week (Acts 20:7). The Lord's Supper consists of the unleavened bread, which represents the body of Christ, and the cup, or fruit of the vine, which reminds one of His blood that was shed for us. Paul wrote the Christians at Corinth, **"For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, Take, eat, this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me. In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes"** (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

5. Christians are to worship through giving. **"Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also; on the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come"** (1 Corinthians 16:1,2).

How Do You Worship?

So, this is the kind of worship God requires of His people. If you are not worshipping according to God's wishes, He is not pleased with you. I hope this will encourage you to give further thought to these matters, so that you, too, may obey God, and worship Him in spirit and in truth.



Chapter 15

WHAT IS THE DAY OF WORSHIP?

Our textbook is the Bible, the inspired word of God. In its pages we read about God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. We read, too, about the church and the Gospel, as well as many other spiritual things.

Worship Is Directed to God

Through all of these studies, our desire is to know God's will so that we can obey Him, and worship and honor Him as the God in heaven. Surely our Creator wants us to know His will, and He has taken every step possible to make known His laws concerning salvation, worship, and all things that pertain to life and godliness.

The Day of Worship

Inasmuch as the Bible teaches that we are to worship God, and has specified the kind of worship that He wants, the next question would be: What is the day of worship? This is a good question, and we will give some thought to that in this particular lesson.

The Sabbath Day Ceased

Under the law of Moses, the Sabbath Day, or the Seventh Day of the Week, was the day of worship. In giving the Ten Commandments law to Moses, God said to Israel, **“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy”** (Exodus 20:8). The law of Moses, along with the Sabbath Day, continued to be binding until Christ died on the cross. Christ said that He had not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it. He said that no part of it would pass until everything was fulfilled (Matthew 5:17,18). He further stated in Luke 24:44 that He had come to fulfill all the things written concerning Him in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms. So when He died on the cross, He fulfilled the Law and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross: **“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”** (Colossians 2:14). He then replaced it with a new law, His law. Read also Hebrews 10:9,10.

Some still try to hold on to the old law, and the Sabbath Day, but in doing so they reject Christ and His teaching (2 Corinthians 3).

The First Day of the Week

As we read through the New Testament — the part of the Bible that applies to us today as Christians — we observe the importance of **the first day of the week, or the Lord’s Day, or as we call it, Sunday.**

Jesus Was Resurrected on the First Day of the Week

To begin with, it is significant to note that Jesus Christ arose from the grave on the first day of the week. There are several references made to it, but I especially call your attention to this one in Matthew 28:1: **“Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb.”** The passage continues on to tell of the Lord’s resurrection, but I want you to pay attention to the fact that both the Sabbath Day, and the first day of the week are mentioned in this verse. You can see that the Sabbath had ended, and that it was in the early hours of the first day of the week when these ladies came to the tomb of Jesus. So from this setting we are led to say emphatically that Jesus was resurrected on **the first day of the week.** Other verses likewise support this. Please keep this in mind as we continue.

The Church Began on the First Day of the Week

Next, we read in Acts 2 how the Lord’s church had its beginning on the day of Pentecost. But what does this have to do with the first day of the week? Everything, since the day of Pentecost always came fifty days after the Passover, so Pentecost itself always fell on **the first day of the week.** That means that the church had its beginning on **the first day of the week.** Not only that, but also **the Holy Spirit was poured out on that day, and the Gospel was preached for the first time in fact on that day,** as well as other important events. There must have been some significance to this, and I believe that was to emphasize the importance now of **the first day of the week** as being **the Lord’s day and the day of worship.**

Christians Met on the First Day of the Week to Worship

After the church was established, we read these words concerning those who had just obeyed God: **“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers”** (Acts 2:42). This sounds like they continued in the teaching that the apostles were giving, and at the same time assembled for worship on a regular basis. On what day of the week would they assemble to do this? You might conclude that it might be any day, or every day. But that particular day is identified when we read of Paul meeting with Christians in Troas. It says, **“And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight”** (Acts 20:7). In reading the context, we observe that Paul was passing through by ship, and he and his companions arrived almost a week before the day appointed for worship. Rather than to go on, and possibly miss the opportunity to worship there with the Lord’s people, Paul decided to stay until he could meet with them the following **Lord’s day**. Also, notice that in waiting over to **the first day of the week**, it was necessary to go past **the seventh day of the week** — the sabbath day of the old law! Evidently, Paul knew that the Christians did not assemble on that day to break bread, but rather that they met on **the first day of the week**. Note, also, that just as soon as **the first day of the week** was over, Paul continued his journey. So it is very obvious that the recognized day for Christians to meet to worship God was **the first day of the week**.

Please notice also some of the things done on the first day of the week. The disciples — learners of Christ, or Christians — met on this day. When they came together, they “broke bread”, meaning they partook of the Lord’s Supper. This seems to have been the point of emphasis, their primary reason for gathering. One other thing is mentioned, and that is that on this occasion Paul preached to them. Although nothing is said about praying, singing, and giving, these must surely have formed a part of their worship inasmuch as other passages of Scripture specifically mention these as being items of worship. But the main thing we wanted to stress in this verse is the fact that it was on **the first day of the week** that they met for worship.

Giving to be Done on the First Day of the Week

Giving, or our contribution to the Lord, is also tied in with **the first day of the week**. Paul wrote the Christians at Corinth these instructions, **“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come”** (1 Corinthians 16:1,2). Please answer this question for me: Why would the Lord in His word specify that their giving was to be done on **the first day of the week**, instead of some other day? Evidently it came down to the fact that **the first day of the week** was the day that the Lord had chosen for His people to assemble for worship, and while gathered for that purpose, and as a part of the worship, they were asked to give of their means. There can be no doubt about this because **the first day of the week** is plainly mentioned.

We Have No Choice

Although some would argue that Christians may *choose* to make the appointed day of worship as Saturday, Thursday, or perhaps some other day of the week, rather than **the first day of the week**, they are absolutely wrong. The Lord has specified in one example after another that *He* has chosen **the first day of the week** as being the day that He wants us to assemble for worship. Christ hallowed it by coming forth from the grave on that day. It was glorified with the establishment of the Lord's church on that day, and we have the example of Christians meeting on that day to worship, as well as the command for us to give of our money on that day.

Not to Forsake the Assembly

Finally, we are told that we are not to forsake the assembly on this day, when the Hebrew writer warns, “**...not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching**” (Hebrews 10:25). The inspired man of God said that the assembling of ourselves together on this day must not be neglected. He further said that it was a day that one could see approaching, that some had forsaken it, and that we should not forsake that assembly — affirming that it is *possible* to forsake it. Obviously, he was not talking about **the judgment day**, but rather he was talking about **the first day of the week**, a day on which Christians gathered, an assembly that they could encourage others to attend.

The First Day of the Week Continues

Christians to this day assemble on **the first day of the week** to worship God by singing, praying, studying the word of God, partaking of the Lord's Supper, and giving as they have been prospered. Faithful Christians do this every **first day of the week** — not the **last** day of the week but the **first** day! This is the day the Lord has chosen for His people to gather for the purpose of worshipping Him. It is only by respecting His wishes, and worshipping Him accordingly, that we can please Him.

On What Day Do You Worship?

Do you worship God? On what day do you worship Him? How often do you worship Him? I hope you will become a Christian by believing in Jesus Christ, repenting of your sins, confessing Christ as the Son of God, and being baptized for the remission of your sins, so the Lord will save you and add you to His church (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:47). Then you will be able to worship Him on **the first day of the week** according to His wishes.



Chapter 16

WILL CHRIST COME AGAIN?

The Bible is our guide book in these studies, and we would like to stress the fact that it is God's only means of revealing His will to man today. That is why it is so important that we study so that we may know His will for us and all mankind.

When we come to the New Testament portion of the Bible, one thing stands out, and this is that Christ — God's Son — came into the world. We read of His miraculous birth in Bethlehem to the virgin Mary, how He was worshiped, then how He was taken to Egypt to escape the wicked king.

Then the Scriptures tell us that He was taken to Nazareth where He grew up as a carpenter's son. Not much is said of His youth until He enters into His public ministry, but then we are told of His good works, His miracles, His teachings, and finally how He was betrayed, was given a false trial, was then crucified on a cruel cross, was buried, and then after three days and nights, He was resurrected. Our Lord then appeared before the apostles, and many others, to prove to them that He had conquered death. After forty days He ascended back to His Father in heaven to sit down at the right hand of God, to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. And there He remains to this day.

But that was the Lord's first coming. The Scriptures tell us that He will come again. He himself said that He will come again. **Will He come again?** This is what we want to consider at this time.

Christ Said He Would Come

Christ Himself promised that He will come again. Listen to what He said to the disciples: **"Let not your heart be troubled; you 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 to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also"** (John 14:1-3). When was the promise made? About two thousand years ago. Would that promise still hold true? We would say *most definitely*, since we believe that Christ spoke the truth, and therefore we believe that He will keep His promise.

How Will He Come?

On the occasion of His ascension back to the Father in heaven, the record says, **"Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven"** (Acts 1:9-11). From these statements we learn several things. First, Christ *will* come again. Second, He will come *in the clouds*. Third, nothing is said here or in the rest of the Bible that would indicate that Christ will ever *set foot on this literal earth again*. Many are deceived into thinking that He will come to this old earth, and in Jerusalem that He will set up His kingdom, and there reign with the righteous for 1,000 years. This is a false assumption. He was on earth once, and was crucified, completing His part in the work of our salvation. Why would He come back? Furthermore, He established His kingdom, according to the prophecies and the promises made, and His church is in existence at this very time. The Hebrew writer declares, **"Wherefore we having received a kingdom..."** (Hebrews 12:28). So be not deceived into thinking that Christ will come to this earth again to reign here. He is coming, but He is coming in the clouds.

Christ will be coming as a thief in the night. Paul said to the Thessalonian Christians, **"For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night"** (1 Thessalonians 5:2). Peter backed this up with a statement of his own when he said, **"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up"** (2 Peter 3:10). What does it mean when it says that Christ will come as a thief? That is, He will come at a time when He is not expected. The time of His coming will not be announced. Why not? Because the Lord wants to show how many really believe in Him, and how much they believe in Him by being prepared for His coming. He has already told us that He will return.

John says that when He comes every eye shall see Him. **“Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him”** (Revelation 1:7).

After saying that He will come as a thief in the night, Paul goes on to say, **“For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction comes upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape”** (1 Thessalonians 5:3). In these words he is warning that the Lord will come in a startling manner. He will shock the masses, by coming at a time that they thought that all was well.

Finally, He will come without warning. Christ Himself said, **“Likewise as it was also in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man. They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built, but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed”** (Luke 17:26-30).

Why is Christ Coming?

Christ is coming again to receive His people, His kingdom, the church. Paul said, **“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”** (1 Thessalonians 4:6,17).

At the time of the Lord’s coming, He will send forth His angels to gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and do iniquity, and they will be destroyed (Matthew 13:41,42). Also, Paul says that He is coming to take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

When Will Christ Come Again?

As indicated by the fact that He is coming as a thief in the night, no one knows the day or the hour of His coming. Christ Himself said, **“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only”** (Matthew 24:36). From the Lord’s own statement we conclude that no human being knows the time of His coming. Those false teachers who arrogantly try to set a date for His return are only showing the world that they are speaking lies. How would any human being know the time when the angels do not know, and when even Christ Himself said that He does not know, but only God Himself? If someone, today, claims to be able to predict the date, don’t believe a word they say.

What Will Happen When He Comes?

All will be resurrected from the grave (John 5:28,29). The heavens and the earth will be destroyed and burned up (2 Peter 3). The judgment will take place (2 Corinthians

5:10). Earthly time will be no more, and the righteous will go to live with the Lord while the wicked will be cast into hell where they will be eternally punished (Matthew 25:46).

What About Scoffers?

In 2 Peter 3 we read about some people who were questioning the Lord's coming, but Peter assured them that the Lord is not slack concerning His promise (2 Peter 3:9). Also, he reminds us that just because Christ has not returned, that does not mean that He will never come. He says, **"But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as a day"** (2 Peter 3:8). In other words, time means nothing to someone who has always been and will always exist. We therefore should not deceive ourselves into thinking that it might be that the Lord will not come, because at that moment He might come!

How Can We Prepare For His Coming?

Since the Lord has said that He is coming, how can we prepare for it? First of all, we need to obey His Gospel and become members of His church. Then as Christians, we must be faithful. We need to keep ourselves pure and holy. We need to watch and pray. We need to stay busy in the Lord's work, carrying His Gospel to the world. Only by doing so can we be prepared for His return.

In Conclusion

Are you a Christian? Are you ready to meet Jesus? As sure as you are living now, He will come again. If you have not already done so, I would encourage you to believe in Christ, repent of your sins, confess Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized that you might be saved and added to the Lord's church (Mark 16:15,16; Acts 2:47).



Chapter 17

WHAT IS THE JUDGMENT?

All Authority

Jesus said to His apostles, **“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore, and teach...”** (Matthew 28:18,19). That means that Jesus had all authority to speak, to teach, and to command. I personally have no spiritual authority, other than the fact that the Lord has also commanded me to go and teach. I am authorized to teach only His word. I am not authorized to give my opinions and ideas and to bind them on you or anyone else. That is why in these lessons we are going to the Bible for a **“thus saith the Lord”** on all of the matters we discuss. That is why also I often give a scriptural reference after making a statement. I do that to show that what I have just said is backed up and supported by the word of the Lord.

What is the Judgment?

In these studies we are devoting our time to considering some of the great themes of the Bible. We have talked about God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Bible, the church, the Gospel, etc. A number of times we have spoken of the second coming of Christ, and the

judgment that will follow. Some may be wondering about the judgment. Therefore, we are faced with this question: **What is the judgment?** Since this question is on the minds of many people, we will go to the word of God for a Bible answer.

First of all, we need to define the term “judgment”. It means a final decision given after hearing and considering fairly all the facts involved in the case. The judging, then, is based on the fact that there is a law, and on whether that law has been kept or not. The judge has the power to grant grace and mercy, depending on the circumstances. We are all familiar, more or less, with the courts of the land and we know how necessary it is to maintain justice for all citizens. Human courts, judgments, and so on, can be influenced in various ways to reach a desired verdict. At best, those who make up the courts are humans, and are subject to errors and mistakes.

The spiritual judgment we are considering will be done by our Lord. Every human who has ever lived, and reached the age of knowing right from wrong will be standing before the great Judge to have their final sentence passed. Where they will spend eternity will be decided on the basis of their birth into the Family of God, their life, their thoughts and deeds, whether good or bad, in relation to God’s law. There will be no exceptions made, no bribing, no escaping. The pronouncement will be just and final.

Events Leading up to the Judgment

Several things will precede the judgment. Presently, we and all of the world’s population are living in a situation where we have the time and the opportunity to learn of God, to know His will, and to obey Him. We are warned to take advantage of these opportunities today, right now, because we are here for only a short time. James wrote, **“Come now, you who say, Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit, whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away”** (James 4:13,14).

Today, tomorrow, sometime, we will die or Christ will come again. Concerning His first coming, although He had been promised and spoken of in prophecy as one who would come as the Messiah, Christ was born in the flesh some 4,000 years after man was created. It has now been about 2,000 years since He returned to the Father in heaven, with the promise of His return. Just because He has not come yet, don’t assume that He will not keep His word. He said, **“I will come again”** (John 14:3), and we can count on that. When this old world gets so wicked, when there are so few of His people left to represent Him, when not another soul is searching for the truth, He will bring things to a halt and He will come again.

But before that happens we will die, or else we will put off the flesh when His people are caught up to meet Him in the air. The Hebrew writer says that it is appointed to man to die (Hebrews 9:27). We know that this is going on all around us all the time. Of course the Christian lives in hope of the resurrection and going to live with the Lord in heaven forevermore. But what about all the others? There is not much to look forward to, is there?

At the time of the Lord's return all who have died will be resurrected. Christ said, **"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"** (John 5:28,29). When will they hear His voice? When He comes again.

With the coming of Christ, the heavens and the earth will be destroyed. Peter said that the Lord is not slack concerning His promise, **"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 fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up"** (2 Peter 3:10).

"After this the Judgment"

After all of these things have happened, then the judgment will take place. We read these words by the Hebrew writer, **"And it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment"** (Hebrews 9:27). We are told that when Paul went before Felix to explain why he had been imprisoned, **"Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you"** (Acts 24:25). Likewise, many people today don't believe that there will be a judgment, or else they don't want to hear about it, so they refuse to make preparation for that day.

Where Will The Judgment Take Place?

The Bible says that the Lord's people will meet Him in the clouds (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17). Then we are told: **"I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom"** (2 Timothy 4:1). We also read in 2 Corinthians 5:10: **"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."** The thing that we must think about is the fact that judgment *will* take place, and that we will be present for it. The question is, will we be prepared for it?

Who Will Be There?

Again, the scriptures say that all will be there, the righteous and the unrighteous, the educated and the illiterate, the great and the small. All people who have ever lived, or who will live in the future, will be there. All nations will be there. All religious people will be there. All unbelievers will be there. And you and I will also be there. But you might wonder how all of this could be possible. Remember that we are dealing with God, and that with Him *all things* are possible. Christ tells us that, **"When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy 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 the right hand, but the goats on the left"** (Matthew 25:31-33).

Paul says that the quick (the living) and the dead shall be judged (2 Timothy 4:1).

Peter says that even the angels will be judged since, **“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”** (2 Peter 2:4). The Hebrew writer says, **“Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge”** (Hebrews 13:4). To sum it all up, Paul again reminds us of that great day with these statements: **“For it is written, As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then each of us shall give account of himself to God”** (Romans 14:11,12).

Who Will be the Judge?

Speaking of the coming day of judgment, the inspired writer said, **“Because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance to this to all by raising Him from the dead”** (Acts 17:31). He is speaking here of Christ. This same thought is also brought out in Acts 10:42. Paul said there is a crown of righteousness laid up for him whom the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give him in the last day (2 Timothy 4:8). In John 12:48 we read, **“He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.”**

If we already have the “test questions” for the judgment, written clearly for us in the Bible, we have no excuse for not following what our Lord has commanded so that at the conclusion of our time standing before Him in judgment, He will say, **“Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord”** (Matthew 25:23).

What Will Be Judged?

The scriptures tell us that we will be responsible to the great Judge for our works and deeds (Romans 2:6), for the hidden things of our heart (1 Corinthians 4:5), that we will have to give an account for every idle word (Matthew 12:36); and that all things done in the body, good or bad, will be judged (2 Corinthians 5:10).

What Will be the Final Outcome?

All will be judged, and all will be sentenced. The righteous will go to live with the Lord forevermore, and the wicked shall enter into everlasting punishment: **“And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal”** (Matthew 25:46).

Are you prepared to meet God? Are you a Christian? As a Christian and a member of the church of Christ, be faithful in obeying Christ in worship and service so that you can live with Him throughout all eternity.



Chapter 18

WHAT IS HEAVEN?

The Bible teaches that God's word is truth (John 17:17) and that truth makes one free (John 8:32). At the same time, ignorance or the lack of knowledge destroys (Hosea 4:6). That is why we are studying God's word. We do not want to be destroyed, but we want to know the truth and we want the freedom that it can bring to us.

What the Truth Reveals

God's word, the truth, makes known the God of heaven, and His Son, Jesus Christ. It reveals the Holy Spirit and His work in inspiring chosen men to write the truth down, so that it might be preserved and kept for us even to this day. That truth also tells us about the church, the plan of salvation, what it means to be a Christian and to live a faithful life, of the worship the Lord expects, of the second coming of Christ, and what the future holds.

What is Heaven?

I am sure that all of us are interested not only in the things of the past, of what is going on with us in the present world itself, but we are also interested in the future, and

how it will affect each one of us. That being true, we want to deal with this all important question: What is heaven?

I think all religious people are interested in heaven. Even the non-religious often swear by it, which is to their own shame. But first let's point out *what heaven is not*. The heaven that we are talking about is not merely the sky or space. It is not necessarily straight up. Sometimes in talking about heaven, the individual will point upwards, or toward the sky, as though that is the "heaven" promised to the righteous. Heaven is not just an imaginary place, or a fable, or a myth. It is not a made-up story or a place of the "gods". It is not just a place of moral bliss where all go when they die. Instead, the heaven that I am speaking about is spoken of many times in the scriptures. It is a real place, it is genuine, it is a spiritual place. Flesh and blood cannot inherit it (1 Corinthians 15:50). It is a place prepared for God's people, according to Christ in John 14:1-3. It is said to be a city, the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:2).

Who is There?

Christ said, **"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven"** (Matthew 5:16). The angels of God are there in heaven. Speaking of the time of the Lord's return, He said, **"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only"** (Matthew 24:36). Continuing, **"Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other"** (Matthew 24:30,31). In Matthew 22:30, He says, **"For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven."**

Christ is there in heaven now at the right hand of God. Peter and the apostles preached, **"This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear"** (Acts 2:32,33). On the occasion of Stephen's stoning as a result of his preaching the truth, we read, **"But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!"** (Acts 7:55,56).

Also, John wrote of two books being there. He said, **"And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books"** (Revelation 20:12). One book represented God's word by which all would be judged. The other book contained the names of the righteous (Revelation 20:15; 22:19).

What is Heaven Like?

Heaven is a beautiful and wonderful place. It will not be a material place, although

when John was permitted to have a glimpse of heaven so he could describe what he saw, the only way he could explain it was to put it in language that man could understand. Therefore, he talked about it as being a city that has streets paved with gold, a place of precious jewels. He spoke of it as being a place where there were no physical woes, problems, and troubles. He described it as being without sin. Listen to some of his description: **“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.**

Did you notice that, while we talk about “going to heaven”, this passage says that not only will there be a new heaven, but there will be **a new earth**, and that “the New Jerusalem”, “the tabernacle of God” will come down out of heaven and that God will dwell with His people! Of course there is much figurative language in the book of Revelation, so what that “new earth” will be like, we don’t know. The important thing that we do know, though, is that we will be with God in that new world, and we will never die.

Continuing, **“And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away. Then He who sat on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And He said to me, Write, for these words are true and faithful. And He said to me, It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death”** (Revelation 21:1-8).

As we continue to read what heaven is like, John says, **“But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life”** (Revelation 21:22-27).

Continuing, **“And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations”** (Revelation 22:1,2). He goes on to say more, but keep in mind that he is writing about spiritual matters to human beings, and therefore, he has put what he has seen in lan-

guage that we can somewhat understand. From what he says, though — and this is nothing in comparison to what it will really be like — it will indeed be heaven, a place of wonder, beauty, and perfection.

Heaven is the place Christ has gone to prepare for His people: **“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 14:1,2).

What Will Take Place There?

God and the Lamb, or Christ, will be there, and all that shall be there shall praise and honor and serve Him (Revelation 22:3). As you read through the book of Revelation, as well as through the Bible, you will note that it will be a place of singing, worshipping, and praising the Lord forevermore. Whatever the Lord has in store for His people, it will be for their good. They will not grow weary or tired or bored. They will not be lonely or sad. It will be a place of joy and happiness.

But how long will it last? It will be a place of eternal rest and happiness for God’s people (Matthew 25:46).

Who Will Go To Heaven?

First, all infants and all children who have died before reaching the age of accountability will be there. Christ said of such is the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18:1-3). Those who are not accountable for their actions, such as the retarded or mentally sick, will go to heaven. Finally, the church of Christ, God’s people, Christians, the righteous, those who are faithful to the Lord, will be so blessed. Christ said, **“...Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life”** (Revelation 2:10). He also said, **“Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city”** (Revelation 22:14).

Wouldn’t you like to go to heaven? Sure you would. All sensible people would. But to go you must obey God and prepare yourself for life in that new world. The Lord requires that you believe in Him, repent of your sins, confess Him before men, and be baptized for the remission of your sins (Acts 2:38). He will then add you to His church so you can live for Him, be faithful to Him, and go to heaven when you die (Acts 2:47; Revelation 14:13).



Chapter 19

WHAT IS HELL?

The Apostle Peter said in the long ago, **“If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever”** (1 Peter 4:11). That is what we are trying to do in these lessons. We are attempting to speak only as the oracles of God. It is not what we say that is of importance, but it is what God says that matters. To be more exact, we are forbidden to give our own opinions and ideas on matters about which God has spoken. We must present only what He has said.

A Variety of Themes

God has spoken on many subjects. We believe in Him as being the creator of all things, and we believe Christ to be the Son of God and our Saviour. We believe that the Holy Spirit guided a select number of men to write the word of God, and so we are now blessed with the inspired message as it is revealed in the Bible. That book tells us about the church, the Gospel of Christ, what to do to be saved, the Christian life, the return of Christ, heaven and hell, and where man shall spend all eternity.

What is Hell?

In this particular study we want to ask the question: What is hell? This question, along with its answer, should be of interest to everyone. I am saying this on the basis that unless we know what hell is, and make every effort possible to avoid going there, we could very easily spend eternity in a devil's hell.

Many people use the word "hell" as a by-word, a slang or curse word. Some use it without even realizing what they are saying, or without knowing how ugly it sounds.

Many think of hell only as a mythical place. Others don't like to hear about it because it frightens them. Even some so-called Christians find fault with those who preach hell-fire and damnation for the wicked.

In the religious world, there have been those who have attempted to define hell as simply meaning a place where the evil are spiritually annihilated, or instantly destroyed. That is, once they go to hell, their souls are blotted out, and they cease to exist. But this is not true, as we are going to see.

Hell, as set forth in the Bible, has reference to a place, or state, of eternal punishment for the wicked and the ungodly after death. It is a place that was prepared for the devil and his angels. It is said to be a lake of fire, eternal or everlasting.

Hell is a Real Place

Hell is spoken of in the scriptures as a real place. Christ said, **"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell"** (Matthew 10:28). Speaking of a city which had rejected the Lord, Christ said, **"And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades"** (Luke 10:15). To some who were religious, but who were in error, the Lord rebuked them by saying, **"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves"** (Matthew 23:15). That is, they had taught people error, and once they had accepted those false beliefs, it would be more difficult to lead them to the truth, in spite of the fact that error would result in their being lost in hell. Going on further in the chapter, Christ added, **"Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?"** (Matthew 23:33). Now it is true that the word hell was sometimes used to refer to death, as in the case of the Lord saying that the gates of hell or Hades would not keep Him from building His church (Matthew 16:18). The Lord was saying that even death itself would not keep Him from bringing the church into existence. But in the verses that we have been referring to, the term hell has reference to a place of eternal damnation. There are many other such verses, but be assured that the Bible talks about a literal hell, a place where the wicked will be punished forever and forever.

Who is There?

Let us go to the Bible and see who will actually be in hell.

We are told that the devil's angels are there. Showing how God dealt with the wick-

ed, Peter said, **“For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment...”** (2 Peter 2:4). Jude joins in by saying, **“And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day”** (Jude 6).

The wicked angels include the chief angel, known as the Devil, or Satan. He is referred to in Revelation 12 where it says that Michael and his angels fought against “the dragon” and his angels. As a result of the war, the dragon (or Satan), and his angels were defeated and were cast out of heaven. Continuing, we read this statement: **“So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world: he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him”** (Revelation 12:9). Why was there a war in heaven between the angels, in the first place? Although they were created by God as heavenly spiritual beings, it seems that the one we refer to as the Devil, or Satan, led a rebellion against God and the other angels. Perhaps the reason for this was pride. We are not sure, but consider Isaiah 14:12-15 and Ezekiel 28:12-19. Since the one being addressed is described as being perfect and in Eden, the Garden of God, this would seem to be a description of the background of Satan when he was **“the anointed cherub”**, before he rebelled against God. The Bible does not give all of the details, but it does teach that the Devil is real, and that he has been in the world since Adam and Eve. We know also that he and his cohorts were defeated and cast out of heaven, evidently even before the creation of man. Satan is a spiritual force, the personification of evil, and he is constantly working on man to lead him to a devil’s hell. Christ taught concerning the wicked and their reward on the day of judgment: **“Then He will also say to those on the left hand, Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels”** (Matthew 25:41).

In Luke 16:19-31 Christ told the story of the rich man and the poor man. Some have tried to pass this story off as only a parable, but even if it were a parable, it teaches the same truths. I am convinced, however, because people described in parables were never named as was done in this passage, that it was a true life happening. But in this story the rich man died and the record says that he was buried, **“And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom”** (Luke 16:23). But if hell is yet to come, why did the rich man go to hell when he died? The fact is that when the wicked die, they enter a state of the dead where they are in torment. Although they have not appeared before the judge for final sentencing, still they are tormented. To illustrate it, think of a murderer who has been jailed. His final sentence has not been handed down, but still he is in jail, and he is suffering the consequences of his crime.

What is Hell Like?

It is a place where the wicked will be punished forever and forever. Paul says that the Lord is coming back to take vengeance on those who know not God and obey not the Gospel and that they will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the

Lord and from the glory of His power (2 Thessalonian 1:7-9). It is called the second death, which means a place of eternal separation from God. it is said to be a “**...lake which burns with fire and brimstone**” (Revelation 21:8). It is a place where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 25:30).

Who Will be Sent to Hell?

Speaking of those who are going to hell, John writes, “**But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death**” (Revelation 2:18). He also says, “**For outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie**” (Revelation 22:15). Some others who will be sent to hell will be those who do the works of the flesh, the sinful, the ungodly, unbelievers in God and Christ, people who are trying to be saved by their own righteousness, the hypocrites, religious people who are in error, and on and on the list goes. These are people who are lost and are not prepared to meet God, because they have not obeyed Him

Do You Want to Go to Hell?

If not, you must obey God. The Lord has made it possible for you to be saved so you will not have to be lost. But to escape certain destruction you must believe in God, repent of your sins, confess Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized for the remission of your sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). Having done so, the Lord will save you, and add you to His church. Then, as a faithful Christian, and a member of the Lord’s family, you will be blessed and protected and kept, so that one day you may live with Him forever (Ephesians 1:3; 1 John 1:7; Revelation 22:14).

In Conclusion

My prayer is that you will obey the Lord while you have the time and the opportunity. Remember, God’s word says, “**Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him**” (Hebrews 2:1-3).



Chapter 20

WHAT IS ETERNITY?

We are so blessed to have the Bible, which is the word of God. It is called the sword of the Spirit, and the perfect law of liberty. It is inspired by God, and completely furnishes man to every good work. It reveals to us all things that pertain to life and godliness. By obeying its teachings, we will be saved. By being faithful to its teachings, an entrance will be made for us into that new heaven and new earth.

God tells us in His word that **we are not to add to it, or subtract from it, or change it in any way.** One day that Book will judge us. Therefore, we must be very careful how we deal with it. If we refuse it or fail to follow its instructions, we will have to meet it again one day as our judge. It informs us of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the church, the Gospel of Christ, the Christian life, the return of Christ, and of heaven and hell. Therefore, when we face the Lord at the judgment, we will not be able to plead for mercy on the basis of ignorance.

Actually, ignorance will not be an excuse for anyone because man is an intelligent being and he should recognize the existence of God even through seeing His creation.

Likewise, with man's intelligence, and with as much information as is available in our present day, there should be no real problem for most of us to come to know the teachings of the Bible, and thereby be challenged and encouraged to obey Him, to prepare our souls to meet the Lord, and to live with Him for all eternity.

Beyond that, those of us who know God's will, who are Christians, are commanded by the Lord to take the Gospel into all the world, and to preach it to every creature. This means that He wants all humans to know His will so that we can make an informed choice concerning where we will spend eternity.

What is Eternity?

Since we have souls, and since those souls will live for all eternity, we want to consider this question: **What is eternity?** Historically, it seems that most people have believed that after they die there will be a future life. But for how long? Where? And what will be involved?

As we go through the scriptures we note that indeed there will be a future life for every human being. Solomon says, concerning man's physical death, **"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return to God who gave it"** (Ecclesiastes 12:7). When man dies, as far as he is concerned, eternity begins. He has lived his life, and there will be no way for him to change his destiny. Finally, on the great judgment day, he will be blessed with eternal life with the Lord, or he will be cast into hell to be punished for eternity.

For the world as a whole, eternity will begin with the return of Christ, the destruction of the current heavens and the earth, the resurrection of all humans, and the judgment day. Before God began the creation, there was no such thing as time. There was only eternity. Then with the creation of all things, time began. In Genesis, chapters one and two, the Scriptures even refer to the creation in terms of time, that is, each day was used to create specific things, through a six-day period, and then on the seventh day God rested from His labors. This is the first measuring of time but, for us, time is basically our way of measuring a life span. There are seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, and years. This is very meaningful to us since his existence on earth is so short. With God, however, time is meaningless since He has always been and will always be. Peter said, **"But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day"** (2 Peter 3:8). After all things are brought to an end, as far as time is concerned, there will be the beginning of eternity for us. Of course, as far as God is concerned there has never been anything but eternity but, as already pointed out, for man's benefit God created a system by which man could measure his stay on earth.

Eternity then is something that goes on and on forever and forever. It is never ending. It is something that the mind of man cannot fully understand or grasp. There have been many stories told to illustrate the meaning of eternity, but none of them ever seem to really do the job. But let's try one. Suppose a small bird took one grain of sand and flew with it all the way to the moon and left it there. Then suppose that bird continued making

those trips back and forth until the entire earth had been transferred to the moon. Even when that was done, eternity would be just beginning. Can you imagine such a thing?

The Bible Teaches That There Will Be An Eternity

There are many passages of scripture that show that the righteous will live forever with God. Here are some of them:

Titus 1:2: **“In hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began.”**

1 John 2:25: **“And this is the promise that He has promised us — eternal life.”**

Romans 6:23: **“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”**

1 John 5:11: **“And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.”**

Romans 6:22: **“But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.”**

There are also many verses of scripture that tells us that those who are not of God will be lost for all eternity. Please note some of them:

Matthew 25:46: **“And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.”**

2 Thessalonians 1:7-9: **“And to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.”**

Revelation 21:8: **“But the fearful, and unbelieving and abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”** (The second death mentioned here has reference to being separated from God for eternity.)

Revelation 20:10: **“And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”**

I think you can see from these verses that eternity is for ever and ever and that all mankind will spend eternity either in heaven with God, or in hell with the devil. One group will be blessed forever, and the other will be punished for the same period.

Where Will You Spend Eternity?

My friend, where will you spend eternity? Oh yes, you *will* spend eternity somewhere, just like all other human beings. Are you prepared to meet God? If you had to depart this world right now, what would be your destiny? You need to think about that seriously. And you need to make up your mind where you want to live when you die.

Jesus said, **“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it”** (Matthew 7:13,14).

The Lord died for you that you might be saved and that you might go to heaven and be blessed for eternity. Even though He loves you that much, He will not force you to accept Him and to obey Him. It is up to you. He invites you, but you must respond.

I pray that you will become a Christian so that you may spend eternity with God. To do so, you must believe in Him and believe that Christ is His Son. You must repent of all of your sin, confess your faith in Christ, and be baptized to have the forgiveness of your sins. The Lord said, **“He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned”** (Mark 16:16). Upon being saved, He will add you to His church, where you can live for the Him and prepare your soul to meet God (Acts 2:47; James 1:12; Revelation 2:10).

Again, I pray that you will obey God. There is no other way to prepare your soul for eternity. Jesus invites you to come to Him in these words: **“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light”** (Matthew 11:28-30), We also read these words: **“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come! And let him who hears say, Come! And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely”** (Revelation 22:17).

