



Overseas Ministries Training Course

# The Apostles' Doctrine

BROWN • HOLLEY • REYNOLDS  
RIGDON • THOMPSON • WILLOUGHBY

# The Apostles' Doctrine

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**Sponsor's Page**  
**Reverend and Mrs.**  
**Lloyd L. Shirley**  
Mayflower, Arkansas

The Bible admonishes us to “Give honor to whom honor is due” and we will endeavor to do just that as we honor our godly, dedicated parents who faithfully served God during their lifetime here on this earth.



Nancy Shirley writes: “My mother and father, **Emmy Malles Eikamp** and **Willard Eikamp**, were introduced to the Acts 2:38 message when they were children. Mother was a schoolteacher and Dad attended business college and worked as a carpenter. After marriage, they resided in Winona, Minnesota, and then moved to Belvidere Ridge near Cochrane, Wisconsin, where they operated a dairy farm.

My parents were godly examples in their faithfulness to the house of God, their giving to the work of the Lord, love for souls, and teaching my sister Ruth and me in the paths of righteousness. Mother was a prayer warrior, an excellent Sunday school and Hobby Club teacher, a lover of children, and a blessing to all she met. Although Dad worked very hard on the farm every day, they were dedicated to church attendance and activities, and he always was available to do what he could, whether it be to serve as the Sunday school superintendent, lead song or testimony service, or serve on the church board.

When Lloyd and I married, they were very supportive of our ministry in evangelism and pastoring, even though we did not live in close proximity to them. Then when God called us to work in the Leeward Islands of the Caribbean in 1972, they again shared us and their only two grandchildren at the time with the people in the islands. They were able to come and visit on several occasions.”



Lloyd Shirley writes: “My parents, **Mary Floy Owens Shirley and Wilbur Shirley** were born in Arkansas, USA, where they resided their lifetime. They faithfully served the Lord, both having experienced the new birth more than fifty years ago. They brought four children into this world; they are presently living for the Lord. I give honor my parents for being a great Christian example in many areas of life which taught me character principles such as integrity, faith, selflessness, and loyalty.

After I graduated from high school they never questioned my decision to go to Apostolic Bible College or to take the pastorate of a church located more than nine hundred miles from them. With grandchildren living that distance, it was not easy, but they did not complain. When the Lord called our family into missions in 1972, they once again supported our call. We are happy to pay tribute to them by dedicating this study guide, which provides resources to bring men and women to a higher level of education in the Word of the Lord.”

Although Mom and Dad Shirley and Mom and Dad Eikamp have gone on to their heavenly reward, they are often in our thoughts. Their example of being steadfast, unmovable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord inspires us to continue to be faithful to the truth of God’s Word.

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## GOSPEL AND DOCTRINE

Every valid activity of the church can be placed in one of two categories: *evangelization* or *edification*. Evangelization is “getting folks saved.” Edification is “keeping folks saved.” Any activity in our churches that does not contribute to these two functions is not a valid activity.

Paul spoke of “rightly dividing the word of truth.” What divisions are we to make? The message we preach and teach fits these two categories or divisions, evangelization and edification. Our purpose is to “rightly divide” that message and relegate it to the proper categories.

Two words commonly used among us—*gospel* and *doctrine*—will make that distinction clearer. Contrary to popular usage, these words are not synonymous. *Gospel* and *doctrine* differ in the same respect as do *preaching* and *teaching*. *Gospel* and *doctrine* refer to the message. *Preaching* and *teaching* refer to the method. Generally speaking, we preach the gospel and teach doctrine (though, of course, there is some overlapping in these areas.)

*Gospel* (from the Greek word *kerygma*) refers to the “good news” that brings salvation to sinful men and women. This is the message that must be declared: “Jesus saves!” The gospel was fully proclaimed on the Day of Pentecost, and it was accepted and fully obeyed on that day by over three thousand souls. The message Peter preached that day was never amended. The people who received and obeyed his message did not receive a partial gospel or an incomplete evangel. If what Peter preached was the complete gospel and if his hearers that day received full salvation, we would do well to examine his sermon. Peter’s message, as well as all the other examples of gospel preaching in the Book of Acts, consisted of seven points:

1. Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection
2. His ascension and exaltation
3. His fulfillment of prophecy



4. Man's responsibility in repentance
5. The ministry's responsibility in baptism
6. God's responsibility in Spirit-infilling
7. The effects of this salvation

This, my friend, is the gospel!

## Chapter 1

# THE IMPORTANCE OF THE APOSTLES' DOCTRINE

### FOCUS

The apostles' doctrine was a direct extension of Christ's teaching. As such, it is the foundation of the New Testament church. Therefore, whoever refuses it will have to give account in the judgment.

### KEY VERSE

"And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42).

### SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Mark 3:13-19; Galatians 1:1-12; Matthew 4:18-25; Acts 2:37-47; Luke 24:44-53; Romans 1:13-25

### INTRODUCTION

Our first objective at the outset of this study is to understand the term *doctrine*. *Doctrine* is defined as "that which is taught; a body or system of teachings relating to a particular subject; a system of beliefs advocated."

The term *doctrine*, then, is simply to be understood as "teaching" or "that which is taught." The apostles' doctrines were their teachings.

All teaching is not of equal importance. The part of our doctrine that we distinguish as “the gospel of Jesus Christ” is of utmost importance. This portion of our teaching defines the essential elements of salvation. Other subsequent teaching of the church that deals with Christian ethics, service, and maturity also are vital.

Some areas of teaching, because of the lack of sufficient biblical evidence, are of lesser importance. Though not to be ignored (for all Scripture is profitable), these branches of theology are not as pertinent as those we refer to as *gospel* and *doctrine*.

If prominence is any indication of emphasis, the importance of doctrine is firmly established in Scripture. Again and again, the significance of doctrine emerges in one form or another. In fact, our great God and Savior Himself repeatedly emphasized the vital aspects of doctrine to His church. Later, the apostles continued to stress its worth and essentiality.

Peter's declaration of both the deity and humanity of Jesus Christ became the foundational revelation upon which the church was built (Matthew 16:16-18). Jesus then went a little further and informed Peter of His intent to give him “the keys of the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 16:19). These “keys” were the doctrinal truths the apostle would teach!

The authority that was to accompany the doctrine adds further weight to it. Heaven was clearly in support of the doctrine of the apostles (Matthew 16:19). It was not to be set forth as a “set of personal concepts” or a “branch of theological opinion.” It was binding in its authority. It was not a “set” of keys, as though one among many, but rather, “the keys of the kingdom.”

Woe to the religious teacher who suggests otherwise! It calls for full faith to accept these teachings in their full authoritative force. You and I must realize that if we differ on the plainly revealed facts of doctrine, we cannot both be right! We must humble our hearts and seek the will and intent of God as revealed in His Word. This is not to say we should become caustic and cruel toward those who would differ with us. Harshness is a sad pitfall with its own tragic results.

On the other hand, we cannot assume an attitude so near neutral that we no longer feel the urgency of finding and following truth wherever it leads us. Jesus, the embodiment of Truth, beckons to us: “Follow me.” Our following necessitates acknowledgement of the supremacy of truth. Furthermore, truth is not found apart from doctrine, for doctrine or teaching is the means by which we are confronted with truth.

So important is this matter that Jesus reemphasized it in the Great Commission: “Go . . . teach . . . them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:16-20). Unless we recognize the tenor of these words, we could fall into the

prevalent attitude that Jesus set forth a few optional suggestions rather than essential commandments. Simply stated, He put the doctrine the apostles were to teach in its proper perspective—it was absolute and authoritative.

In fact, the promise of Jesus, “I am with you always,” is a continuation of the thought. To assume we can have the promise without accepting the premise upon which it is based borders on wishful thinking. He is with us—until we depart from the doctrine. He who is Truth cannot go with us into error!

Paul observed the church and compared it to a “building fitly framed together.” It was “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Ephesians 2:19-21). The teachings (foundation) of the church are those of the apostles and prophets that were themselves based upon the teachings of Jesus Christ. If there is to be a church, it must be built according to that fundamental doctrine.

The writer of Hebrews refers to our great salvation, “which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him” (Hebrews 2:3). The Lord gave the Word of our salvation to the apostles, and they confirmed it to us. We have this ministry now. We must hold fast the foundational fundamentals and continue to teach “all things” commanded by the Lord (Matthew 28:20).

Let us consider these facts in greater detail.

## **I. APOSTLES CHOSEN BY JESUS**

First, notice that Jesus called “unto him whom he would” (Mark 3:13). The apostles were His choice. He knew each not only for what he was, but for what he was capable of becoming through His redeeming power. His will was that they come to Him. Yet, it was through the employment of their will that “they came unto him” (Mark 3:13). His choice did not override theirs; He wanted them to come by choice.

Then we observe that Jesus “ordained twelve” (Mark 3:14). The significance of this act is seen in the revealing passage in which it appears because it sets forth His purpose in choosing them. Notice the wording of the text: “And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him.”

The word *that* is translated from a Greek word that clearly implies purpose. So we recognize that His purpose, in part, was to have them continue with Him.

But, why?

Someone said, "Equally important with the question of what you shall study is the question of who shall be your teacher." The truth of this can hardly be overemphasized. For the disciples to be qualified for teaching the doctrine of Jesus Christ, they needed first of all to acquaint themselves with "The Teacher" Himself.

While some subjects can be taught by men whose lives are astray, not so with the doctrine of Christ. Even those who profess to know God are urged to conduct themselves in such a manner "that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed" (I Timothy 6:1). Many do not practice what they profess. Jesus wanted the lives of those He chose to reflect the life He lived.

It is interesting that the apostles' lives did just that. When the elders of Israel heard the apostles' defense in the matter of the lame man's healing, "they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13). Their lives propelled the doctrine rather than deterring it.

This applies to us as well. By virtue of our new birth we are one with God. That is, He is in us and we are in Him. If we will continue with Him, our carnal nature will remain subject to His will. Our mind will be the mind of Christ. This intimate relationship will enable us to "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things" (Titus 2:10). Our lives will not detract from the glory of God's Word.

Mark recorded, "And he ordained twelve . . . that he might send them forth to preach" (Mark 3:14). The ultimate purpose in having the apostles continue with Him was "that He might send them forth to preach."

Could He not send them forth immediately? Yes, He could have. But a novice can do inestimable damage while meaning to do well. So Jesus appointed (called, ordained) the Twelve for a work they were to do later. First, they had to walk with Him for a period of time and learn of Him.

Though He chose them and ordained them, He knew some areas of their lives and understanding had to be opened before they were ready to go forth to preach. For instance, James and John asked a strange thing of their Lord: "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?" Their wrong motives were prompting them to use the power of God wrongly. They were reflecting anything but "The Life!"

Jesus rebuked them, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of" (Luke 9:55). This was true! Their indignation was for a righteous cause, but their means of correcting the situation was destructive and displeasing to the One they were following.

Yes, the apostles needed training before going forth to preach! Their ministry was to be accompanied with power that would heal sicknesses and cast out devils (Mark 3:15). Such a ministry could not be placed in the hands of untrained novices.

Some have felt a need to train men today to be able to perform the miraculous and thereby secure a great following. Scripture stresses another emphasis, however, in the need for training. Invariably, the scriptural pattern is, “And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following” (Mark 16:20).

Men need to be trained to preach the Word. They, like James and John, must learn to follow God, and then God can work with them. He will confirm His Word when it is preached. So-called “specialists” who pervert the Word by taking it out of perspective are not following God. Some do feats that are as far from God’s will as James and John would have done.

Yes, there is a need for training today! There is another way of highlighting the importance of doctrine. The apostles were chosen for a great work. Therefore, they had to be indoctrinated thoroughly. Everyone who wishes to be used of God today must also be trained.

The names of the Twelve are listed in Mark 3:16-19. Each of their lives experienced a tremendous change when they were chosen to be apostles. Each had his own foibles and suffered his own failures. Each had his strong points, and as we catch a glimpse of their lives, we recognize the human tendencies with which we are all so well acquainted.

## **II. APOSTLES’ UNDERSTANDING OPENED**

Jesus’ teaching was centered around the Word—the Holy Scriptures. He reminded the apostles just before His ascension (Luke 24:44) that He had expounded to them the things written in the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms concerning Himself.

Teaching had held the center of the stage in His earthly ministry. Everything He did became a tributary that flowed into or out of that which was written. He expected them to follow the same pattern.

The lesson is clear to us. Doctrine needs to be held near and dear to our hearts. Each new convert needs to be taught the foundational truths. Therefore, doctrine is a vital necessity for the growing church.

As saints of God grow in grace and knowledge, they will develop a love for the truths they have been taught. Mature Christians join the ministry in proclaiming those precious truths by rejoicing over the preaching and teaching of them. Such ones love truth!

If our ministers and churches have substantiated their message by the Word, they will be able at the close of this life to point back to the things taught and say, "These are the words which I spake."

A vital fact must be remembered regarding the apostles being taught, because it applies to us in exactly the same way it did to them. Luke 24:45 records: "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures." Without divine illumination, no man can understand the Scriptures! Therefore, we should rely upon and put faith in God that our understanding will be opened. This does not mean we have no need for teachers in the church. It does mean we must have spiritual illumination in order to grasp fully what our ministers teach. Paul stated, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (I Corinthians 2:14).

Errors have emerged in this area, however, which have caused considerable problems. John wrote,

"But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him" (I John 2:27).

From this verse of Scripture, some have concluded that there should be no teachers and no doctrine. Of course, the passage does not imply such a thing. John was dealing with the problem of false teachers in the church. The Spirit-filled saint has no need that any unregenerate individual teach him. He needs to be taught by the Spirit who often teaches through the instrumentality of a Spirit-filled minister or teacher.

But even with Jesus Himself teaching the apostles, their understanding had to be opened. This illumination enabled them to understand Scripture. Each subsequent person to be enlightened will conform to the understanding first received by the apostles. Each can check his revelation in this manner.

Let us become as little children in the matter of asking and allowing our God to open our understanding. Moreover, it is His work to open the understanding of those to whom we witness. We do not have to force anyone to accept our view. Except their understanding be enlightened by the Lord Himself, they will never understand the Scriptures. Jesus carried the apostles a step further as He showed them why it was essential for Him to suffer, die, and rise from the dead.

Luke recorded, “Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ. . .” (Luke 24:46). From that scriptural launching pad, Luke then expounded the essential message Jesus had commissioned the apostles to preach: “And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:47).

Then Jesus charged them, “And ye are witnesses of these things.” They could do no more or no less than relate those things they were shown and taught. Their charge is ours!

1. *Doctrine must be presented with clarity.* Nothing is more damaging to the body of Christ than doctrine that is handled negligently. Perversion of the gospel (Galatians 1:7) sometimes results not from intentional deceit, but from lack of diligence in rightly dividing the Word of Truth. The result, however, is the same: confusion, error, and discord. We owe it to our generation to deliver a clear note, a certain sound. “For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?” (I Corinthians 14:8).
2. *Doctrine must be presented with charity.* We must be lovers of souls as well as lovers of truth. The love of God shed abroad in hearts by the Holy Ghost will never allow us to be harsh or bitter in the presentation of our message. Remember always that the gospel is “good news.” Such a message does not lend itself to a condemning or condescending presentation. “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal” (I Corinthians 13:1).

Lest our preaching and teaching become the clanging of empty dogma, let us pray for and earnestly seek after a perpetual baptism in the love of God. The profound secret is simply “speaking the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15). We must declare what we have seen (understood) with both charity and clarity. We can do no less!

### III. THE APOSTLES' WORD CONFIRMED

The fact that the Lord worked with the apostles and confirmed the Word assures us of His concern for the doctrine we preach. He will not confirm error. If we are to have His confirmation, we must preach and teach His Word.

Accounts of miraculous events have followed men who did not adhere to the doctrine of the apostles. This teaches us that the miraculous does not of itself establish the ministry of anyone. To point to a “miracle” as a source of authority is to err greatly. The Word—pure and unadulterated doctrine—must be the authority, and signs will follow when it is preached. However, when people attempt to validate their ministry or authority by virtue of some miracle they have the power to perform, they are out of the biblical



order. It is vital that we keep the emphasis where it belongs. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20).

The confirmation of the Word with signs following was never intended to become a sideshow-type operation. We do not operate in a corner; it is true. But neither should we attempt to put the power of God on a display that does nothing more than pander to the curiosities of a crowd. Preach the Word!

## **IV. NO OTHER DOCTRINE**

So important is the matter of doctrine that the inspired apostle Paul was outright surprised that anyone could think lightly concerning it. In fact, Paul used some of his strongest language when writing to the Galatians on this subject. An amplification of the verses under consideration reveals the depth of his concern. "I marvel," declared the astonished apostle, "that you are so soon removed from him [Jesus] that called you!"

The Galatians' attitude toward doctrine had caused this deplorable defection and Paul would not minimize it. He was alarmed that they had so quickly become renegades from Jesus Christ and the apostles' doctrine.

He reminded them of the scope of their deed. They not only were deserting Jesus Christ who had called them into the grace (unmerited favor) of the Lord Himself, but their defection was "unto another gospel." Thus, they were embracing the forces of opposition. Their deviation from truth constituted an allegiance to error, and therefore, to evil.

Let us learn the significance of adhering to the doctrine of the apostles. We cannot depart from that holy stance in even the slightest degree without risking a complete and total fall into error. Our attitude must ever be one of diligence with regard to doctrine. What we believe is as important as believing itself!

The enemy of our souls would have us feel it is Christ-like to embrace every branch of theology as though it were of equal weight with the apostolic message. He would have us gloat over a position of neutrality. But we must remind ourselves that this isn't true. As Paul reminded the Galatians who were adapting themselves to "another gospel," so must we sound the alarm. There is not another gospel! Nor indeed can there be.

The gospel (message) the apostles preached was Christ's gospel. Paul classified those who would alter that gospel in the slightest as the worst form of troublemakers. They would not only trouble the church, Paul warned, they "would pervert the gospel of Christ" (Galatians 1:7). What an indictment!

The love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost will not allow us to embrace views that would warp and twist Christ's gospel into something it absolutely is not! With ill toward none, we who have embraced the truth must continue steadfastly within its holy realm! This includes all the facets of our gospel message—the deity of Jesus Christ, the new birth message (Acts 2:38; John 3:5), the marks of holiness, and faith.

Paul then spoke of a hypothetical situation to emphasize this point. “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8). To further emphasize this vital point, the apostle repeated the statement almost verbatim. If one of the laws of emphasis is repetition, Paul certainly felt the need to emphasize this!

What did Paul mean when he said they would be accursed? The Greek word is *anathema*, which means “doomed to eternal punishment, devoted to destruction.”

What strong language! The weak in faith shudder over this. It seems they almost quote the evil serpent as they exclaim, “Surely not!” (Genesis 3:4). But even if we do not fall into the errors of doubt, disbelief, and disobedience, an inevitable end of torment awaits those who treat the doctrine of God lightly.

Of all people, we upon whom the ends of the earth are come should rejoice over the clarity with which this gospel has been preached to us. For in the clarity of an understandable message we can see the charity of a God who cared enough to leave us an uncluttered expression of His holy will.

Let us hold fast that form of doctrine that was delivered unto us. Moreover, let us aggressively share that most holy faith. Honest hearts are straining to hear a clear note sounded in love. We who have been blessed with that truth can save ourselves and those that hear us by declaring it with both clarity and charity. May we ever be found “speaking the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15).

## SUMMARY

We, who have this ministry—this gospel, this doctrine—must keep in memory the truth of the following statement: “To have and not be aware of having is sometimes worse than not having at all.” Our awareness of having the privilege and its attendant responsibilities of holding forth the Word of life will enable us to handle it with awesome respect.

This gospel came at the cost of the purest blood known to man. It was at first spoken by the Lord Himself and confirmed unto us by them that heard Him (Hebrews 2:3).

We enter into a ministry that hinges on the doctrine that was once delivered unto the saints (Jude 3). Our faith is based upon that body of doctrine that was handed down to us.

Perhaps our concept of authority is the most important factor in our handling of doctrine. In other words, one must grasp the significance of authority to comprehend fully the awesome weight of doctrine. Doctrine is only of worth if we recognize the authority behind it.

It is Christ's doctrine! That in itself makes it vital and forceful. When we teach or preach the simple, unadulterated doctrine of the apostles, all Heaven is in support of both message and messenger. It needs no props. It is perfect. The slightest addition will pollute it. The slightest omission will invalidate it.

Since God has chosen the means of preaching and teaching to save believers (I Corinthians 1:21), He wants His Word preached and taught as He gave it. When we align ourselves with Him and rely upon Him, He works with us! He delights in our faith and He will honor it as we honor Him in obedience (I Samuel 2:30).

It is written of the early church: "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42). This will be written into the eternal record of the latter day church also. The only question for us would center around whether we are in that body called the church. To retain our citizenship and lead fruitful, productive, and meaningful lives, we too must "continue in the faith [body of doctrines] grounded and settled" (Colossians 1:23).

## REFLECTIONS

- Define doctrine.
- Of what importance is doctrine to us today?
- What was the two-fold purpose of the calling of the twelve apostles?
- Why is training such a vital necessity?
- Explain the purpose and place of "signs" in the church.
- What is the significance of revelation and illumination in reference to doctrine? What is meant by the Scripture, "Then opened he their understanding?"
- What two elements must always accompany our presentation of doctrine? Why are they so important?

## Self Help Test

**Multiple Choice:** Circle the letter of the correct answer.

1. The apostles' doctrine was
  - a. what the apostles decided to teach
  - b. a direct extension of Christ's teachings
  - c. the teachings of the Pharisees
2. The term *doctrine* means
  - a. that which is taught
  - b. Bible truth
  - c. opinions
3. In the Great Commission, Jesus told the disciples to
  - a. "Go . . . teach . . . them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."
  - b. "Go . . . teach . . . them to observe what I am suggesting."
  - c. "Go . . . teach . . . them to observe whatever you think is right."
4. Jesus chose and ordained the Twelve
  - a. to hold great positions
  - b. that they should be with Him
  - c. to build earthly temples
5. A Spirit-filled saint
  - a. does not need doctrine or teaching
  - b. needs to be taught by Spirit-filled teachers
  - c. needs only to teach himself
6. Doctrine must be presented
  - a. with clarity and charity
  - b. harshly
  - c. deceitfully
7. It is often written of the early church that
  - a. they embraced every branch of theology
  - b. they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine
  - c. they didn't need doctrine, only love

## **Personal Study Notes**

## Chapter 2

# THE BIBLE—GOD'S INSPIRED WORD

### FOCUS

The Bible is superior to all other books. It is given by God, and thus is “the Word of God.” God used human instruments, “holy men of God,” to write. However, they wrote as they were “moved by the Holy Ghost.”

### KEY VERSE

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (II Timothy 3:16).

### SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Psalm 19:7-14; 119:9-16, 89-96; Acts 17:22-31; Revelation 22:12-21; II Peter 1:12-21

### INTRODUCTION

“There is a book worth all other books which were ever printed,” said Patrick Henry, the great American revolutionary patriot, in speaking of the Bible.

Do you believe the Bible is a true book? Do you believe all of it is true? Perhaps you would reply, “What foolish questions! Of course I do!” The next questions would be, “Do you know why you believe in the Bible? From whom did this Book come, and how was it given? Who wrote it, and how was it written?”

It is vitally important to a church or an individual to have the right attitude toward and appreciation for God's Word. Complete faith in the inspired and infallible revelation to man from God is a fundamental part of the apostles' doctrine.

This Book is most commonly called "The Bible" or the "Holy Bible," yet it is interesting to note that among the several names given in the Book itself, this name is not included. William Smith and Francis Nathan Peloubet state in *A Bible Dictionary* that the name Bible, (i.e., The Book,) comes from the Greek *ta biblia*, or the books. "The word is derived from a root designating the inner bark of the linden tree, on which the ancients wrote their books. . . . But the application of the word BIBLE to the collected books of the Old and New Testament is not to be traced further back than fifth century."

The Bible is the most translated work in the world. Several years ago it lost out to the works of Marx, Engels, and Lenin. They became the most translated for a time. According to a spokesman from UNESCO, "The latest figures we have are from 1972, and they show the Bible in the lead." Thus, the Bible has regained this position.

Although the Bible is recognized as the world's greatest Book, there is yet an appalling ignorance of its contents. According to a public opinion poll, the average person has an extremely limited biblical knowledge. Many people could not list even twelve of its leading characters. Fewer could name all sixty-six books. They were unable to find a familiar text. Jesus said, "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God" (Matthew 22:29).

## **I. NAMES GIVEN TO THE BIBLE**

### **A. The Scriptures**

"And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures . . . All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (II Timothy 3:15-16).

*The Scriptures* means the writings or the holy writings of God. Moses said of the Ten Commandments, "And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables" (Exodus 32:16). Giving a history of Israel's sin and the cause of the Captivity, the writer of II Kings said, "And the statutes, and the ordinances, and the law, and the commandment, which he [God] wrote for you . . ." (II Kings 17:37). The prophet Hosea recorded God's testimony to His people, "I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing" (Hosea 8:12).

When Jesus walked with the two disciples to Emmaus, "he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27). Later, when the eyes of

these men were opened, they said, “Did not our heart burn within us . . . while he opened to us the scriptures?” (Luke 24:32).

## **B. The Word of God**

This title is used more than any other in the Bible. It is referred to as God’s Word or the Word of God at least forty-four times in the New Testament, fifteen times in the Book of Acts. Psalm 119 contains thirty-seven references to “thy word.” Note some of the many references in which this Book makes claim to being the Word of God:

- “Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition” (Mark 7:13).
- The people thronged Jesus “to hear the word of God” (Luke 5:1).
- The apostles “spake the word of God with boldness” (Acts 4:31).
- “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17).
- “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword” (Hebrews 4:12).

Thus, this Book makes the assertion that it is the Word of God, given and spoken by Him. One does not get very far into the Book of Genesis until he finds these definite words, “And God said. . .” (Genesis 1:3). These words occur ten times in the first chapter of Genesis. Such expressions as “the LORD said,” “the LORD spake,” and “the word of the LORD came” are found 3,808 times in the Old Testament.

Who wrote the Bible?

Bad men or devils would not have written the Bible, for it condemns them and their works. Good men or angels could not have written it and claimed it to be the word of God, for they would have been guilty of falsehood, and thus would not have been good. Adam Clarke said, “A good man could not have written the Bible, and a bad man would not have written it.” It has been said, “Man could not have written it if he would, and would not have written it, if he could.” There is, then, but one conclusion: God is the author of the Bible, just as the Word says.

And yet, though God is its author, men were selected for the actual writing of the Book. The Bible is the product of some thirty-six men—inspired men of God. This Book is unique in that it is divine in origin, yet came through human instruments. These sixty-six books passed through the minds of men, and were written by the hands of men. The word and mind of God has been given a body in the language of men. It is the only book we can rightfully say is authored by God but written by man. It is a miracle book!



## II. THE METHOD OF THE MIRACLE

How did the miracle take place? If the Bible was written by men, how can we know it is “the Word of God”? Can such claims be reasonably substantiated to the satisfaction of the thinking person? How was it to be kept from error when fallible men played a great part in its preparation?

### A. Given by Inspiration of God

The answer to the above questions was given by Paul when he wrote to Timothy, advising him to retain his faith in the Scriptures that he had been taught since childhood. In doing so, Paul revealed God’s method of giving the Word: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (II Timothy 3:16).

The word *inspired* is interesting because it comes from the Greek word, *theopneustos*, which literally means “God-breathed.” The term, “given by inspiration” means, then, that the writings are the result of a definite and certain influence of God exerted on the actual writers. Inspiration, as defined by Paul, is the strong, conscious in-breathing of God, qualifying the writer to give utterance to truth. The apostle Peter gives further explanation: “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (II Peter 1:21).

### B. The Meaning of Inspiration

Almost anyone who has any faith in the Bible at all would testify to believing that the Book was produced by inspiration. It is most important, therefore, that we know just what the individual means by his view of *inspiration*. There is an inspiration that moves an artist to paint, an author to write, or an orator to speak. Not much is done that is worthwhile without inspiration. The meaning that some convey by their view of inspiration is illustrated by the following statement:

The Bible is inspired to the same extent that the works of Spinoza and Montaigne and Goethe are inspired . . . Here and there the author of a particular chapter had an honest emotion and showed it in the vision of his writing—Hendrick William Van Loon.

This is not the claim made by the Scriptures for this Book. The Book claims for itself that it records the actual words of God 3,125 times (2,600 in the Old Testament, 525 in the New). Note a typical example. “We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed” (II Peter 1:19).

Wycliffe’s *Bible Commentary* says of this passage:

Taken with what is said in verse 21, the reference of these verses seems to be to the Old Testament Scriptures. It is an amazing assessment of the validity of holy Scripture that Peter declares it to be more dependable than a voice from Heaven heard with the natural ear.

Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost or “spake from God, being borne along by the Holy Spirit.”

Peter definitely declared that the writers penned things for us that they did not understand. They wrote of things about which they knew nothing.

“Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently . . . Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ . . . Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you” (I Peter 1:10-12).

This statement affirms that even though these writers eagerly sought to know, they could not understand the things about which they were moved upon or directed to write. They were told by the Spirit the exact things to write, things they could not have written by their own inspiration, for they knew nothing about them. The things they were writing were not for them, but for those of us who came later.

The unique combination of the Spirit and the human instrument is illustrated in Acts 1:16: “Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas.” The manner of the inspiration is shown by the phrase, “which the Holy Ghost spake by the mouth of.” This shows that the mouth of David was the instrument used by the Holy Ghost to make known the truth of God.

### **III. EVIDENCE OF INSPIRATION**

The position of the Scriptures has been given—that this is a divinely inspired Book, the Word of God. If this is true, there should be sufficient evidence to substantiate this claim.

#### **A. Unity of the Book**

Although it is “the Book,” it is also a library consisting of sixty-six books. Some of these books are quite long while others are very brief, consisting in some cases of only a short letter. It is the combined work of some thirty-six or more writers who wrote over the timespan of more than sixteen centuries. From the time of the first writer (probably

Moses) to the date of the last writer (the apostle John on the Isle of Patmos) there is a period of about 1,600 years. The Old Testament (with the exception of a few passages in Aramaic) was written in Hebrew. The New Testament was written in Greek.

The various writers had greatly varied backgrounds, personalities, and writing styles. Moses was “learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians.” Joshua was the courageous military leader, trained under Moses. David was a shepherd lad who became a king and military leader, a man after God’s own heart. Daniel was a young man of royal lineage, taken captive into Babylon, becoming a high official in the governments of Babylon and Medo-Persia. Amos was a poor herdsman of Tekoa. In the New Testament there was Matthew, the hated publican (tax collector); Peter and John, fishermen from Galilee; Luke, the beloved physician and companion of Paul; and Paul, the educated young Pharisee, probably a member of the Sanhedrin Court.

These and others wrote over the long timespan of many centuries, in various countries, and in greatly differing circumstances. Of course, it was not possible for them to have an opportunity to meet or to compare notes. The miracle is that the works of these writers, sixty-six books in all, when brought together into one book, showed perfect agreement without contradiction. We have only one Book with one message. The only answer to this miraculous result is that behind it all there was one divine intellect that moved and directed the work and the writing. This is clear evidence of divine inspiration controlling the writing of each individual.

## **B. Christ, the One Theme**

The Lord Jesus Christ and His work of redemption is the theme of both the Old and New Testaments.

A father bought a puzzle for his two preschoolers that proved to be too complicated for them to put together. Just at the point of exasperation and abandoning the project, one child noticed how much one of the pieces of the puzzle resembled a man’s nose. The other found a piece that looked remarkably like an ear. Then a hand was found, then a foot. Forgetting the picture the puzzle was supposed to make, the children excitedly tried to put the “man” together. To their amazement the pieces of the “man” fit perfectly into place, and when he was assembled, the picture that had eluded them was complete.

Many people today are frustrated over their failure to understand the Bible. The key to putting the pieces of the Bible together, however, is to acquire an understanding of the man Christ Jesus, for the entire Bible is all about Him. When He is properly taken into consideration, the varied parts of the Book fall into place.

Let us consider a few of the facts that were prophesied of Him.

- *The Seed of deliverance*—In Genesis 3:15, the first glimpse of a Coming One was given. He was to be the Seed of the woman.
- *The father of blessing*—The family from which the promised Seed who would bless all nations would come was designated in Genesis 12:3. Abraham was to become the father of the faithful.
- *The tribe of promise*—In Genesis 49:10, the tribe of the Coming One was told—Judah.
- *The family lineage*— II Samuel 7:16 states that the family of David was chosen. The Coming One was to be called the “son of David.”
- *The unusual birthplace*—The prophet Micah indicated that He would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2).
- *The virgin mother*—Isaiah prophesied that He would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14).
- *The price of betrayal*—Zechariah foretold the exact price for which He would be betrayed—thirty pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12.)
- *The parting of His garments*—The writer of Psalm 22:18 foretold that His garments would be parted among them.
- *The suffering Messiah*—In the great fifty-third chapter of his book, Isaiah clearly foretold the rejection and suffering of the Lord.

These are only nine prophecies that Jesus fulfilled. It has been said that there are 333 references or prophecies in the Old Testament related to the coming Messiah or promised One. That all of these would be fulfilled by and in one individual, with all the probabilities against it, is nothing short of miraculous. The odds against such a thing happening by chance are just too great to even make its possibility at all credible. The fact that Christ came and fulfilled these prophecies and became the sacrifice for the sins of the world, redeeming lost humanity that had fallen in Eden, is witness to the fact that this is God's Book, and that God coming to earth in flesh to redeem man is its one great theme.

No miracle which He wrought so unmistakably set on Him the seal of God as the convergence of the thousand lines of prophecy in Him, as in one burning focal point of dazzling glory. Every sacrifice presented from the hour of Abel's altar fire to the last Passover of the Passion Week, pointed as with flaming finger to Calvary's cross. Nay, all the centuries moved as in solemn procession to lay their tributes upon Golgotha—Arthur T. Pierson, *Many Infallible Proofs*.

### **C.     Fulfilled Prophecies**

The many prophecies that were made and so wondrously fulfilled in Christ have already been referred to in previous material. There are also many other direct and

detailed prophecies, many of them already fulfilled. For instance before Judah was taken captive to Babylon, Jeremiah told them they would be in captivity for seventy years before any returned: "For thus saith the Lord, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon, I will visit you . . . in causing you to return to this place" (Jeremiah 29:10).

Daniel was among the captives when the time drew near for the fulfillment of this word of Jeremiah. He studied the prophecy and believed it. He sought the Lord in prayer and fasting. (See Daniel 9.) When the seventy years were fulfilled, Cyrus the king was moved to allow the captive Jews who desired to return to Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1-11). Thus another prophecy that dared to give an exact number of years was proved true. Only God could give Jeremiah the truth and the number of years before His people would be allowed to return.

The disciples showed Jesus the beautiful Temple of Herod. Jesus made a clear and direct prophecy concerning its future—a prophecy that must have seemed at that time most improbable. He said, "There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (Matthew 24:2). Within forty years, this word of the Lord came to pass. In AD 70, the Roman armies under Titus captured the city of Jerusalem and totally destroyed the Temple. In the mad search for hidden treasure the walls were broken down, and even the foundations were torn up. A plowshare was finally driven over the debris.

So long as Babylon is in heaps, so long as Nineveh lies empty, void, and waste; so long as Egypt is the basest of kingdoms, so long as Tyre is a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea; so long as Israel is scattered among the nations, so long as Jerusalem is trodden underfoot of the Gentiles; so long as the great empires of the world march on in their predicated courses—so long we have proofs that one Omniscient mind dictated the predictions of that Book, and that prophecy came not in old time by the will of men.—H. L. Hastings, *Will the Old Book Stand?*

#### **D. Scientific Truth**

The Bible was not designed to be a textbook on science, but it agrees with the facts of science. In fact, the Bible has been far in advance in the area of scientific truths.

- The Book of Job said, "He . . . hangeth the earth upon nothing" (Job 26:7). This was written about 1600 BC. It was not until AD 1530 that Copernicus discovered that the earth was suspended in space.
- "For the life of all flesh is the blood thereof" (Leviticus 17:14). It was not until AD 1615 that the true function of the blood was discovered by William Harvey.
- The apostle Peter spoke of a strange event that would come: "The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent

heat” (II Peter 3:10). Scientists have discovered only in recent years that global destruction is possible through nuclear fission.

#### IV. THE INFLUENCE OF THE BOOK

The individual who believes the Book and follows its instructions finds a personal evidence of its truthfulness and life. It has been said that men may write a true book, but only God can write a living Book. His Book reveals salvation through Christ to all who believe and obey. One of the great prophecies is also a promise: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you . . .” (Acts 2:38-39).

Many of us have received this individual proof and blessing from God through His Word. The Word has worked to change our lives and to give us a living experience in Jesus Christ. This Book has power to save, purify, and gladden the human heart. This Book has power to lift men to God, for it came from God in a way that no other book has.

The friends and the enemies of the Bible give evidence of its good. The man who loves God, desires to serve Him, and gives himself to the best cause in the world will love the Bible. He will believe it is God’s Book. The closer we are to God, the easier it is to be confident that this is God’s inspired and infallible Word. When men drift from God, they are prone to doubt His Word.

The Bible gives comfort to the weary, lonely, and discouraged. It gives strength to the weak, light to the blind. It gives courage for life and hope for the future, both in this world and the world to come.

Some years ago, I was invited to 10 Downing Street in London by Sir Winston Churchill. It was a dark hour in Britain’s history, and the Prime Minister was deeply discouraged. He had hardly greeted me before he asked, “Young man, do you have any hope for the world?” I took a New Testament from my pocket, saying, “Mr. Prime Minister, this book is full of hope.” Quickly, he replied, “Would you read me some passages?”

For the next 30 minutes I read selections that I thought would fit his mood. As I left, he said warmly, “I thank you. You have given an old man a renewal of faith for the future.”

Billy Graham said, “I hadn’t. But the Bible had.”—“What the Bible Says to Me,” *Reader’s Digest*, May 1969.

President Woodrow Wilson and Henry Ford once decided they would read a chapter of the Bible every day, come what may! They did; they kept the pledge for thirty years. President Wilson said, "I should be afraid to go forward if I did not believe that there was, at the foundation of all our schooling and of all of our thought, this unimpeachable and incomparable Word of God."

## SUMMARY

One of the remarkable facts about the Word of God is its preservation. It has not been without its enemies in both the pagan and intellectual world. It has also often suffered in the "house of its friends," the so-called "church." There have been times in history when it was a crime merely to possess a copy of the Bible. In the Middle Ages, thousands of godly people were put to death only because they loved the Bible. Critics arose who sought to destroy the truth and the authority of the Book. They mocked its history; they referred to its accounts as folklore. Liberalism invaded the church, and much of the miraculous in the Bible was labeled as myth and tradition. But the Bible lives on, and its truths continue to bless and to guide the pilgrim on his way. The enemies pass away, but the Word survives.

## REFLECTIONS

- The Bible is the most translated book, and it is a best seller, yet there is great ignorance concerning its truths. How would you account for this?
- What does the word *Scripture* mean?
- What is meant when the Bible is referred to as "the Word of God"?
- Explain what is meant when Paul said that all Scripture was given by the inspiration of God.
- Give reason for your faith and hope that the Bible is the true and reliable Word of God.
- Has the Bible been of real blessing to you in some unusual experience of your life whether the incident was a great blessing or great trial? Give your testimony.

## Self Help Test

**True or False:** Circle the correct answer.

1. The Bible is the Word of God.  
True or False
2. The Bible was authored by some thirty-six men.  
True or False
3. The word *inspired* means “God-breathed.”  
True or False
4. The writers of the Bible penned things that they did not understand.  
True or False
5. The Old Testament, with the exception of a few passages in Aramaic, was written in Hebrew  
True or False
6. The New Testament was also written in Hebrew.  
True or False
7. The theme of both the Old and New Testaments is the Lord Jesus Christ and His work of redemption.  
True or False

**Matching:** Match the phrase with the corresponding reference.

- |                                |                    |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. The Seed of Deliverance     | a. Zechariah 11:12 |
| 2. The Tribe of Promise        | b. Genesis 3:15    |
| 3. The Unusual Birthplace      | c. Isaiah 7:14     |
| 4. The Virgin Mother           | d. Micah 5:2       |
| 5. The Price of Betrayal       | e. Psalm 22:18     |
| 6. The Parting of His Garments | f. Genesis 49:10   |
| 7. The Suffering Messiah       | g. Isaiah 53       |



**Personal Study Notes**

## Chapter 3

# THE GOD OF THE APOSTLES

### FOCUS

The apostles' concept of God was without controversy. Theirs was a clear understanding because they had walked with Him while He was here in the flesh.

### KEY VERSE

“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory” (I Timothy 3:16).

### SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

John 1:1-18; 14:6-18; Ephesians 4:1-21; Philippians 2:1-11

### INTRODUCTION

“Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD” (Deuteronomy 6:4).

It was never the purpose of Jesus or His apostles to disannul this basic Old Testament truth. Jesus, in fact, claimed that He came to fulfill the Old Testament law, to deliver to men in the fullness what they had possessed thus far only in the type and shadow. He affirmed this Old Testament doctrine by quoting it when asked one day what was the greatest commandment (Mark 12:29-30).

Monotheism was an accepted principle of truth with the apostles. Their concept of God was “without controversy.” Theirs was a clear understanding because they had walked with Him while He was here in the flesh.

Today we, however, are two thousand years removed from the times of Christ. Consequently, the terse, vivid concept of the Godhead held by the apostles has been somewhat dimmed by time for most of Christendom.

One of the greatest challenges of our day is to recapture the knowledge held by those who handled with their own hands the Word of Life (I John 1:1). Through the operation of the Spirit, this is altogether possible. In fact, it is altogether mandatory!

Our goal is not to attain accurate, correct concepts just for the sake of knowledge alone. Our actions, however, are determined by the accuracy of our knowledge. Lest our labor be in vain, we need to evaluate constantly our concepts to see that they are based on truth. Only then can we be assured that our actions are true.

Let us approach this lesson with that objective. Our purpose is not to debate the issue or to throw barbs at those who are in error. There is really nothing to debate, and to be nasty and vindictive defeats the whole purpose of God's revelation to man. Let us instead humbly submit ourselves to the spiritual school in which the Bible is our textbook, the Spirit is our teacher, and truth is our ultimate goal.

## **I. THE REVELATION**

The Bible is a book about God. It reveals His character, His nature, His power, and His purpose. The Bible was written in part by the apostles and as such portrays their concept of God.

### **A. The One True God**

Seven unique aspects of the nature of God need to be discussed at this point. These seven can be divided into three groupings: the preeminence of God, the power of God, and the position of God.

First, the preeminence of God.

“Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen” (I Timothy 1:17).

The big argument concerning the nature of God is, “Is God personal? Does He know, see, or feel? Is He aware of what is going on down here on earth? Or, is God merely a pervading idea or a principle? Or, is He all that is such as matter and energy?”

It may be that God cannot be found with a scapel or microscope, test tube or flask, telescope or galvanometer, but with these tools many students have recognized a power

beyond the scope of the human intellect, a power none other than God. These tools may reveal the traces of God, but they will never reveal much about His nature. The one source of information about the nature of God is the Bible.

Three characteristics are unique to the preeminence of God—immortality, invisibility, and infinity. These terms have no qualifications. There are no degrees or limits to them. They are absolute.

1. *The immortality of God*—That which is immortal must have existed always. Had there been a time of no existence, a period of nothingness, existence could never have begun, for from nothing, nothing can be derived. The eternal existence of God then is a fact beyond dispute; to His being there never was a beginning and there shall be no end. What God is, He always was. What God was, He always will be. Of Himself He said, “I AM.” He is the eternal self-existing One.

The Old Testament begins with the words, “In the beginning God.” Throughout the Bible the truth of God’s eternity is reaffirmed. No one who believes in God seriously questions the fact that He has always been.

“The King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see” (I Timothy 6:15-16).

God alone hath immortality. No other being possesses this attribute. Man can live forever only by imparted immortality. When Adam sinned, he relinquished his inherent immortality and became subject unto death.

2. *The invisibility of God*—In both I Timothy 1:17 and I Timothy 6:16 immortality and invisibility are linked together. The reason is that God is a Spirit (John 4:24). The Spirit of God is not now, never has been, nor ever shall be visible. The Spirit simply cannot be viewed by human eyes. The Spirit exists in an entirely different realm, incomprehensible to human physical senses (Luke 24:39).
3. *The infinity of God*—Someone said, “All good things must come to an end.” Man is a creature of limitation. All of his attributes, his span of life, and his measure of knowledge, of ability and of experience have very narrow limits. There is no good thing of life that does not end. Death always comes too soon when it takes away the fellowship of a loved one. Old age always comes before we have experienced all that we would like to experience. Man is possessed with an insatiable thirst for more—more knowledge, more things, more time.

Existing thus himself, man cannot easily comprehend the illimitable God. God has no boundaries in any sphere. He is infinite. If one took pencil and paper and simply listed all of the desirable and virtuous attributes that the language of man can depict, God would possess them all in an unlimited supply. The depths of His exquisite quality of being can never be sounded. As eternity is totally incomprehensible to the human mind, so also is the infinity of God.

“To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?” (Isaiah 40:18).

Second, we need to discuss the power of God. Four characteristics are unique to His power—His omnipotence, His omnipresence, His omniscience, and His singularity.

1. *The omnipotence of God*—The Scriptures declare that God has the ability to do all things. “God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God” (Psalm 62:11). This means all power. Consider God’s question to Abraham, “Is any thing too hard for the LORD?” (Genesis 18:14). This does not mean, however, that God does all things just because He can. It simply means He has the power to do anything if He so chooses.
2. *The omnipresence of God*—God alone has the unique ability to be everywhere at all times. “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” (Psalm 139:7-8). “Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD” (Jeremiah 23:24).

The emphasis of these Scriptures is that God has the power to be everywhere at all times. Because He is sovereign, however, there are places He can choose not to be. The Scriptures verify the fact that sometimes the “particular” presence of God departs from certain places and people (Judges 16:20; I Samuel 16:14; Ezekiel 10:18).

3. *The omniscience of God*—God has the ability to know all things. John stated, “God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things” (I John 3:20). As in the case of God’s other limitless powers, God has the power to know all things. Yet there are some things that God in His sovereignty chooses not to know. For instance, when our sins are forgiven, they are completely dismissed from the divine mind (Jeremiah 31:34; Hebrews 10:17; Isaiah 38:17; Micah 7:18-19). Many questions concerning predestination and foreknowledge are answered when we consider that just as He can choose not to know the past, so can He choose not to know the future.

What a testimony to the sovereign power of our God!

4. *The singularity of God—Unique* is a word often misused. Sometimes it is modified or qualified with words like *very* or *most*. *Unique*, however, simply means “one of a kind.” As such, it defines an absolute quality. There can be no degrees of being unique. One is not “very unique” or “most unique.” He is either “one of a kind” or he isn’t! God has declared His own singularity, His own unique position in the universe.

“I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me”  
(Isaiah 45:5).

“Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me”  
(Isaiah 43:10).

“Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any”  
(Isaiah 44:8).

## **B. The Apostles' Lord**

The Bible does not launch out to make a primary demonstration of God’s existence. It simply assumes that God is and that men believe that He is. Neither does the Word of God lash out against atheism. Such a fact leads us to believe that the tendency to doubt was not prevalent among the early peoples of the Bible. Atheism developed in some later periods.

Likewise, the apostles never wrote treatises to defend, or for that matter, even to declare monotheism. It was just an accepted fact among them. Polytheistic religion was the mark of the heathen, and tri-theistic Christianity was a development after the apostles were gone. The apostles in their association with the Lord Jesus never considered Him to be “another God.” They recognized His divinity while still holding to their Judaic concept of the “one true God.”

What exactly were the revelations they received and the confessions they made? Let’s examine a few.

- In answer to the Lord’s question, “Whom say ye that I am?” the apostle Peter said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16).
- When confronted with Jesus’ word of knowledge of Nathanael sitting under the fig tree, the apostle Nathanael exclaimed, “Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel” (John 1:49).
- The apostle Philip asked to see the Father and received this reply from the Lord: “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9).

- When struck down on the road to Damascus, the apostle Paul asked in bewilderment, “Who art thou, Lord?” The voice of God answered, “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest” (Acts 9:5).

Is it so strange then that the preaching and teaching of the apostles would be centered around the fact that Jesus was the mighty God manifested in the flesh? No, not when they could see in Jesus the fulfillment of the sevenfold character of God.

Let’s reexamine those seven unique attributes of divinity and see how Jesus is the “wheel in the wheel.”

- *Immortality*—There is no such thing as an “eternal Son of God,” for “the Word became flesh” (John 1:14) and was “made of a woman” (Galatians 4:4). But Jesus did exist before Bethlehem as the Word, which was not another god, but rather “was God” (John 1:1). Thus, Jesus was the immortal, eternal God.

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Hebrews 13:8).

- *Invisibility*—Jesus Christ the man was very much visible, being seen and handled by the disciples (I John 1:1). God had to manifest Himself in some physical way in order to be apprehended by man. This He did on numerous occasions in a variety of ways in the Old Testament. Jesus Christ, however, was the ultimate manifestation of the invisible God.

“Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature” (Colossians 1:15).

- *Infinity*—The apostles marveled at the illimitability of the Lord Jesus. Paul spoke of the “unsearchable riches of Christ” (Ephesians 3:8) and the “love of Christ, which passeth knowledge” (Ephesians 3:19). He spoke of Christ as “him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think” (Ephesians 3:20).

- *Omnipotence*—Christ declared the omnipotence of God to be His own.

“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Matthew 28:18).

- *Omnipresence*—Just as Jesus was the manifestation of the invisible God, so is He the embodiment of the omnipresent Spirit of God.

“For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell” (Colossians 1:19).

“For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9).

The Father was the omnipresence of the Son. The Son was the particular presence of the Father.

“And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all” (Ephesians 1:22-23).

- *Omniscience*—Peter recognized this attribute of divinity in the resurrected Christ.

“Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee” (John 21:17).

- *Singularity*—Jesus declared that He shared this unique position of the Almighty and “thought it not robbery to be equal with God” (Philippians 2:6).

“I and my Father are one” (John 10:30).

Thus, Jesus demonstrated Himself to be the manifestation of the mighty God. He was divine!

On two occasions, He performed miracles that according to Old Testament Scriptures could be attributed only to God.

- Jesus walked on the water (Matthew 14:25). Job declared that God “alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea” (Job 9:8).
- Jesus calmed the storm (Luke 8:24). The psalmist declared, “He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still” (Psalm 107:29).

“O LORD God of hosts, who is a strong LORD like unto thee? . . . Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them” (Psalm 89:8-9).

On the occasion of the calming of the storm, the apostles exclaimed of Jesus, “What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him” (Luke 8:25).

We know what manner of man He was. He was the God-man. He was not part man and part God. He was all man and all God!



## II. RELATIONSHIP

“For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one” (I John 5:7).

In achieving an understanding of the Godhead, we need to remember that we are dealing with a subject that is unfathomable. In our key verse, Paul said the Godhead was “without controversy,” a great mystery (I Timothy 3:16). What is a mystery? In the biblical sense, it means “any assumed truth that cannot be fully comprehended by the human mind, but must be accepted by faith.”

Jesus recognized that His deity was such a mystery.

“Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works’ sake” (John 14:11).

Though we will never be able to fathom the depths of the Godhead with our finite minds, and will always, this side of eternity, have to accept many things by faith, we have been given a wealth of revelatory information that will enable us to keep our faith founded upon truth. A basic principle unfolds for us here: All error concerning the Godhead occurs when men try to explain what God has not chosen to reveal.

The Bible reveals all we need to know concerning the subject; and we need to know all that it reveals. Consequently, we can expect to be in error only when we expand or reduce that revelation.

Spiritual matters cannot adequately be expressed in material terms; yet we, being physical beings, can understand things only in physical realm. This is the reason Jesus taught in parables and metaphors.

The church is described as a body, as a bride, and as a building. The church is, in reality, none of these things, but these three metaphors are used to help us understand various facets and functions of one spiritual entity. One metaphor would not be sufficient simply because one physical thing could never exhaust the meaning of that which is spiritual.

At some point all analogies break down. There is no perfect “type.” Therefore, some other physical object is introduced to continue the explanation of that which is spiritual. We do not, of course, think there are three churches. Body, bride, and building are just three objects that illustrate three varied facets of the one spiritual thing being examined. So Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are three expressions of the one true God, making it easier for us mortals to understand the multiple facets of His nature.

Let's examine each of these briefly.

### **A. The Father**

God is revealed to us as a Father in three ways.

- *In creation*—"Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us?" (Malachi 2:10). The writer of Hebrews called God "the Father of spirits" as in contrast to the "fathers of our flesh," meaning our earthly fathers (Hebrews 12:9). The analogy indicates both our Creator and our procreators are to be known as our fathers.
- *In provision*—"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" (Matthew 7:11). Jesus brought a revolutionary idea to the Jews of His generation. He taught that God was not a heartless tyrant, that stern and demanding Jehovah was really a loving Father who attended to all their needs.
- *In spiritual headship*—The purpose of regeneration is to give us the right to know the Father personally and intimately and call Him by that title. He is not only our Father in creation, but also in recreation (Romans 8:15-16).

### **B. The Son**

Likewise, God is revealed to us as a Son in three ways.

- *In redemption*—God requires a blood sacrifice for sin (Hebrews 9:22). He, being a Spirit, manifested Himself in the flesh to fulfill His own requirement. We have redemption through His shed blood (Hebrews 2:9-16).
- *In inheritance*—Christ declared that all the Father had was given to Him (Matthew 28:18). We share in that inheritance (Romans 8:17).
- *In Example*—"He the great example is, and pattern for me," says an old hymn. Peter said we are to follow in His steps (I Peter 2:21). Jesus promised that we could duplicate and even exceed His miraculous feats (John 14:12). He was the first human being to tabernacle the Spirit of God. He is called "the firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:29). Thus everyone born into this spiritual family (Ephesians 3:15) is called a "son of God" (I John 3:2).

### **C. The Holy Ghost**

The "Holy Ghost" and the "Spirit" are the terms used when God touches the life of man in a direct way. God is seen as the Holy Ghost in three ways.

- *In regeneration*—The work that God does directly in the heart of a man in the matter of salvation is said to be done by the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:38).
- *In out-breathing*—The Holy Spirit is the life of God or the breath of God going forth to quicken (Romans 8:11). When God moves in or on the lives of men in any way, it is done through this manifestation called the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost or the Spirit is the “out-breathing” of God to do a particular work in the lives of men (II Peter 1:21).
- *In Oneness*—The purpose of this manifestation of God is to make us one with Him. He could not do this as a remote Father or as a physical, fleshly Son. Only as an “out-breathing” Spirit can He dwell in the hearts of men and make them truly one with Himself.

### III. THE REASON

Let us reiterate that the apostles never sought in their writings to prove the oneness of God. The oneness as it pertained to the Godhead was simply an accepted fact.

The oneness of God was used throughout the New Testament as an example and an illustration of the oneness that God desires to achieve in other areas. The term *oneness* should never be restricted to discussions concerning the Godhead. The Godhead is only one facet of oneness.

The oneness of God is seen in all of creation. The harmony of the celestial bodies in the universe and the balance of nature as seen in living creatures here on earth are but two illustrations of the oneness of God. The synchronization of the stars and planets and the web of dependency of fauna and flora are both of the fabric of oneness.

True oneness, spiritual as well as physical, is God's fullest intention for marriage and is what He meant by the phrase “one flesh” in His Word.

Oneness speaks of the peace man seeks to find with himself. Just as the three manifestations of God—Father and Son and Holy Ghost—are one, so God intends our three component parts—spirit and soul and body—to be in harmony with each other (I Thessalonians 5:23).

Finally, oneness is the will of God for His church. Ephesians 4 and Philippians 2 both contain verses that are often used as proof texts for the oneness doctrine. We need to realize, however, that the oneness of the Godhead is not the subject of these passages. The oneness of the body of Christ is the subject of the context and the Godhead is simply used as an illustration to show us what quality of oneness God wants us to achieve in the church.

## SUMMARY

God exists as the supreme and unlimitable sovereign, but as such He is completely incomprehensible to the finite mind of man. Jesus Christ came and as a man fulfilled all the attributes of the mighty God. For the first time man was able to grasp the magnitude of God. Now the Holy Ghost dwells in our hearts to make real the revelation of that one true God. But knowing about that God is not an end in itself. We are to apply the revelation of oneness to our lives in a very practical way in our individual persons, in our marriage relationships, and in the church, thus fulfilling the ultimate desire of God for our lives.

“That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him” (Ephesians 1:10).

## REFLECTIONS

- What should be our attitude concerning the doctrine of the oneness of the Godhead?
- Name the seven unique attributes of God and the three divisions they fall into. How did Jesus fulfill these attributes?
- What were the apostles' revelations and confessions concerning Christ?
- What two miracles in particular proved that Jesus was indeed the mighty God?
- For what three reasons or in what three ways did God manifest Himself as the Father? as the Son? as the Holy Ghost?

## Self Help Test

**True or False:** Circle the correct answer.

1. The apostles' concept of God was questionable.  
True or False
2. The Bible declares, "Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD."  
True or False
3. The eternal existence of God is a fact beyond dispute.  
True or False
4. God is Spirit and therefore invisible.  
True or False
5. God alone has the ability to be everywhere at all times.  
True or False
6. There is no such thing as an "eternal Son of God."  
True or False
7. Jesus Christ did not exist before Bethlehem.  
True or False
8. God had to manifest Himself in some physical way in order to be apprehended by man.  
True or False
9. All error concerning the Godhead occurs when men try to explain what God has not chosen to reveal.  
True or False
10. Oneness believers deny the Father and the Holy Ghost.  
True or False
11. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are three expressions of the one true God.  
True or False
12. The apostles were continually seeking to prove the oneness of God.  
True or False

## Chapter 4

# THE APOSTLES' ATTITUDE TOWARD SIN

### FOCUS

Sin is loathsome to God. The gospel is the “good news” that man can be delivered from sin’s bondage and damnation.

### KEY VERSE

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

### SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Romans 6:1-23; 8:1-11; I John 3:1-11; 5:13- 21; James 4:1-17

### INTRODUCTION

Sin is never beautiful. The Bible pictures sin as something ugly, repulsive, and loathsome. The world dresses sin up as being pretty and attractive. With its advertisements of beer, tobacco, and the theater, the world tries to make sin desirable. The devil lied in the beginning to Eve and deceived her so that she believed sin was desirable. Today, humanity everywhere is being deceived and made to believe that sin is attractive. However, we must go to the Bible to find the truth regarding sin, for it is in God’s Word that we find exactly what God thinks of sin.

Sin is loathsome to God. In contrast, holiness and the prayers of the saints are to God a sweet-smelling perfume. The prayers of the saints are stored up in golden vials full

of odors (Revelation 5:8). After the Flood Noah built an altar and offered up burnt offerings. As a result of this the Lord smelled a sweet savor. How different this is from the stench of sin!

A true description of sin is found in the first chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah:

“From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying, sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment” (Isaiah 1:6).

Here we find sin described as wounds, bruises, and putrefying sores. These sores are deep, ugly ulcers, oozing pus. These sores contain decaying flesh that exudes a sickening odor. This putrefying flesh speaks of death that is the result of sin.

A strong man lay in a hospital bed dying of peritonitis. The doctor had failed in properly diagnosing the trouble. For a couple of days the stench of decaying flesh filled the hospital room. Finally, this man died. This is an accurate picture of sin. As in the case of this man, sin gives forth a horrible repulsive stench and ends in death.

This is a true picture of sin in the eyes of a holy God. God is holy, and in His great love He desires to grant health and eternal life to all humankind. Sin, like the disease of leprosy, maims, destroys, and finally kills. Because of this, God hates sin. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we learn to love holiness and to hate sin. In the same degree that we love righteousness, we shall hate sin. This was the apostles' attitude toward sin, which we study in this lesson.

## I. SIN DEFINED

### A. What Is Sin?

In attempting to answer this question, let us consider the definition Dr. Scofield has given for sin. In his notes he has summarized sin in a three-fold manner:

- An act
- A nature
- A state

We shall examine each of these in turn:

- *An act*—Sin is a single act or deed that violates the revealed will of God. Any act of disobedience to the will of God is sin. Since the Word of God reveals

His will, anything that is done contrary to the Bible is sin. The list of such acts that could be performed in violation to the will of God is apparently limitless. We could not attempt to catalog a list of single acts, any of which could be called sin. Let us simply recognize that any single act of adultery, fornication, drunkenness, stealing, lying, anger, backbiting, gossiping, and the like is sin. We must also recognize that disobedience is sin. When people know what the will of God is in their lives, and they deliberately refuse to obey, that lack of obedience becomes sin.

- *A nature*—Sin is deep seated, embedded in the very heart of humanity's fallen nature. This is the Adamic nature with which each human is born. This nature is enmity against God, rebellion against acknowledging His sovereignty and lordship. This nature always attempts to deify oneself and to bring God down to one's own level. Perhaps the best illustration of this nature is found in Lucifer's transgression. His besetting sin was a burning passion to usurp God's place of authority and sovereignty. Isaiah was given a prophetic insight into this insurrection.

“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High” (Isaiah 14:12-14).

Take special note of Satan's five “I wills.”

- I WILL ascend
- I WILL exalt
- I WILL sit
- I WILL ascend
- I WILL be

The enthronement of one's ego is the root of all transgression. It is the pitting of our will against God's. It is the challenging of His divine sovereignty. We will call this the “Inflated I” and will deal with it more fully later in the lesson.

This is the rebellious attitude that became instilled in our human nature at the beginning, making us enemies of God.

It is because of this fallen nature of man that we read in Romans 7 about the great battle between the flesh and the Spirit. This conflict ultimately ends in condemnation and death. Since it is a death and life struggle, terms of peace can



never be made with man's fallen nature. There can be only one means of victory and that is through death. This fallen nature of man must be slain. Then, and only then, will come victory and freedom from condemnation.

- *A state*—Darkness is simply the absence of light. Likewise, the state of sin in people's lives is the absence of righteousness. True righteousness cannot exist apart from Jesus Christ. Therefore, without the presence of the Holy Spirit in a person's life, there is no true righteousness, and his heart is in a state of sin. The only way to drive back the darkness is to turn on the light. The only way to correct the state of sin in the human heart is to be filled with the Holy Ghost.

## **B. The Apostles' Definition of Sin**

The apostles have given us clear definitions of sin in their epistles. They gave no place for compromise or indifference in their understanding of the tragic consequences of sin. Their statements were clear, concise, and accurate. Let us consider a few of these statements:

- **JOHN:**

In two verses of Scripture, the apostle John defined sin as being (a) the transgression of the law, and (b) unrighteousness.

“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law” (I John 3:4).

“There is a sin unto death . . . All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death” (I John 5:16-17).

The transgression of the Law refers to the individual act of disobedience or the lack of obedience to the known will of God. Any act of disobedience to the Word of God may be described as being the transgression of the Law. All unrighteousness is referring to the state of the human heart as being without true righteousness. John defined sin as an act violating the will of God, and a state that is void of true righteousness.

- **JAMES:**

In his definition of sin, James declared not only the act of disobedience to be sin, but also the act of refusing to obey when God's will is known.

“Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17).

In this category we must list many things: prayerlessness, lack of church attendance, lack of worship, lack of witnessing, and robbing God by not paying tithes. All of these, as well as any other act of unfaithfulness, may be classified as sin.

- **PAUL:**

It is impossible to separate unbelief from disobedience. Whenever you find unbelief, you will also find disobedience.

“For whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Romans 14:23).

Unbelief challenges the existence and sovereignty of God. Unbelief attacks the right of God to direct the lives of His creatures. It is associated with the fallen nature of man that rises in rebellion against God. Therefore, unbelief is sin.

Not only in the above stated Scriptures, but throughout their writings, the apostles supported the true definition of sin as being that which challenges and attacks the supremacy and lordship of Almighty God. If sin can be tolerated, condoned, and accepted in any capacity, then we have no God who is the supreme sovereign of the universe.

The universe was formed and framed and is now held in place and order by the supreme and sovereign authority of Almighty God. Without His law—His Word—all of creation would be thrown into utter chaos. Sin is the transgression of God’s law and threatens to disrupt the well-ordered universe if left unattended. Eventually God must eradicate sin; else the very substance that controls the universe will be rendered invalid.

“Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God” (Hebrews 11:3).

“And he is before all things, and by him all things consist” (Colossians 1:17).

For this reason, sin always has to be dealt with, and everywhere at all times the consequences of sin is death.

### **C. Sin—Rebellion against God**

It will help us considerably in our study if we clearly understand that all sin is fundamentally an attitude and an act of rebellion against God. Joseph expressed this when he asked while under temptation: “How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Genesis 39:9).

Sin is a definite attack against the sovereignty and supremacy of Almighty God. Sin is a definite attempt to deify man and to bring God down to man's level.

## **II. SIN CONDEMNED**

### **A. Sin Brings Condemnation**

Escaping the guilt and condemnation that inevitably follows sin is impossible. Wherever and whenever sin is committed, the guilty soul stands condemned in the presence of a holy God. Paul wrote in his epistle to the Romans, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Therefore, because of this fact, the whole world stands guilty before God (Romans 3:19). Jesus Christ did not come into the world to condemn the world, for the world was already condemned because of sin. Since the world was guilty and condemned, Jesus came to save the world.

"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:17).

Wherever sin is, guilt and condemnation is. It always has been and it always will be thus. There is no escape.

### **B. What Is Condemnation?**

When a man is condemned, he is pronounced guilty. This guilt may or may not be recognized. In this life the guilty man may escape the sentence of condemnation, but he will not escape forever. Judgment is certain, and the sinner certainly will hear someday the declaration of his guilt.

After the act of sin in a person's life, a deep sense of awareness of guilt may follow. This sense of guilt can make the sinner feel very miserable, depressed, and burdened to the extent that he may even hate himself as his heart is overcome with remorse and sorrow. Definite agents contribute to this awareness of wrongdoing. The Word of God, the Holy Spirit, and the sinner's own conscience that has been developed and trained by his upbringing will all unite to speak to him regarding his guilt. Undoubtedly, Adam was very much aware of his guilt after he ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. We know he was conscious of his guilt because he attempted to hide from God. Cain was conscious of his guilt, he cried out, "My punishment is greater than I can bear."

### **C. Condemnation Is Universal**

Condemnation as a result of sin is universal, for all have sinned. Apart from Jesus Christ, not one righteous person may stand guiltless in God's sight. Every human, regardless of race or nationality, whether young or old, rich or poor, male or female, experiences condemnation because of sin. The whole world is guilty in God's sight. Let us always keep clearly in mind what we have already stated in this lesson: Christ came not into the world to condemn. The world was already condemned and guilty. Jesus came to save.

### **D. Recognition of Need**

Although condemnation brings great remorse and pain to the soul that has sinned, a great blessing may follow this suffering. Let us always be aware of this and be deeply grateful to the Lord for it. There can be no remission of sins without true repentance, and there can be no true repentance without a godly sorrow that comes because of condemnation.

“For by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20).

“For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of”  
(II Corinthians 7:10).

God gave the Law that humanity might have the knowledge of sin. Every person must see himself as a sinner in need of a Savior. Without this consciousness of sin in his life, he will never turn to Jesus and call upon the name of the Lord for salvation. With the transgression of the Law, a condemnation for sin will come that will bring godly sorrow to the guilty heart.

## **III. SIN FORGIVEN**

### **A. All Sins Must Be Judged**

All sins must be judged and punished. The sovereignty of a holy God demands this. If God could accept and condone sin in the slightest manner, He would no longer be supreme.

Sin is rebellion against God, and in sinning man chooses his own will rather than God's. By so doing man becomes a law unto himself. If God could permit His honor to be attacked, He would then cease to be God.

Apart from this, sin breaks the relationship between humankind and a holy God. The only way that fellowship may be restored and maintained is for sin to be judged.

The righteousness of God demands satisfaction of the violated law; the holiness of God reacts against sin. This reaction of God against sin is described as the “wrath” of God.

### **B. The Judgment for Sin Is Death**

When we understand the nature of sin, it is possible to comprehend the reason that the judgment for sin is death. It is not just by a mere whim of God that this eternal decree has been passed against sin. The death penalty for sin is a direct result of the nature of sin. This sentence of death against sin can never be altered.

“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12).

“For the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23).

Only by clearly understanding this fact is it possible to grasp the full meaning of the Atonement. Life is in the blood and when blood is spilled, life is given. This explains the necessity of shed blood for the remission of sins.

### **C. Sin Judged at Calvary**

“And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (I John 2:2).

A sacrifice of propitiation brings people near to God and reconciles them to God by atoning for their transgressions. To propitiate is to appease the righteous wrath of God by the offering of an atoning sacrifice. This was done on Calvary’s cross where Christ paid the full penalty for the sins of every individual.

However, we must remember that having salvation provided and receiving salvation are two different things. Here lies the difference between the saved and the unsaved. The blood of Christ is fully efficacious, but is effective only where it is applied.

“Some men’s sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after” (I Timothy 5:24).

Although all men’s sins have been judged at Calvary, yet this judgment only becomes effective for the guilty, condemned sinner when he receives it through faith, repentance, and the application of the name of Jesus.

#### **D. Forgiveness of Sins in Jesus**

“Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things” (Acts 13:38-39).

Humanity's greatest need is the forgiveness of sins. Because of this, the greatest message to man is the “good news” of the gospel message. This “good news” is the message that in Jesus is the forgiveness of sins. Humanity is already guilty and condemned. They do not need more condemnation, but rather deliverance. The woman taken in adultery by the Pharisees did not need stones. She needed deliverance and forgiveness of sins. This is what Jesus brought to her. The need is the same everywhere today. Forgiveness of sins is in Jesus and in Him alone.

In the days when the West was being settled, a certain family was traveling westward in a covered wagon. One day they saw a prairie fire advancing toward them. The man stopped and started another fire in the dry prairie grass. After he had a blackened area, he drove his wagon upon the burned land. As the larger and original fire advanced toward them one of the children became frightened and started to cry. The father quieted her fears by saying, “Hush, child, you are safe where the fire has been.”

### **IV. SIN ABANDONED**

#### **A. The Command Not to Sin**

In his epistle to the Romans, Paul dealt with the matter of a Christian living free from sin. He stated that the grace of God is greater than sin. No matter how serious the sin, God's grace is sufficient, because “where sin abounds grace will much more abound.” The question is then asked, “Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” (Romans 6:1).

The answer is conclusive. The saint of God is dead to sin and cannot live any longer therein. This is Paul's reply to the question regarding whether or not the Christian should sin in order that grace should increase:

“God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”  
(Romans 6:2).

The apostle John dealt with the same matter in his first epistle and commanded the church not to sin. He said, “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not” (I John 2:1).

There can be no misunderstanding—the child of God must not sin. To this we may add the many Scriptures in the New Testament exhorting the church to holiness. In order to be saved it is necessary to have all past sins forgiven and remitted. However, this is not sufficient. There must be a deliverance from the power of sin to live victoriously above sin.

### **B. The Battle with Sin**

After their conversion, Christians may find that the battle with sin is still very real. It is not enough to know that they must live above sin; they must also know the source of their strength and the secret of victory. They must realize the hopelessness of struggling with sinful desires in their own strength. They must have help from outside themselves. If they look to themselves, they will find only defeat and discouragement.

“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not” (Romans 7:18).

Within themselves humanity only finds defeat and despair. They never can find victory in their own strength. This complete, utter despair and hopelessness is found in Paul’s cry for help. “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Romans 7:24).

### **C. Victory over Sin**

The gospel message is not one of defeat. There is victory for the child of God. It is quite possible to live a holy life free from condemnation and guilt. However, this deliverance and freedom from the power of sin is found in Jesus Christ and in Him alone. To have this victory we must be in Jesus. To be in Christ we must partake of His death, burial, and resurrection. The death to the flesh and sin must be real, and if this is so, then the resurrection power will also be real.

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me” (Galatians 2:20).

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:1).

The secret for a victorious holy life is clear. There must be a complete dying out to the world and sin, and a complete surrender to Jesus. The self-life must be crucified and the Holy Spirit must be in complete control. Legalism is wholly powerless to combat the forces of sin, but the Holy Spirit can give glorious victory.

“But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Corinthians 15:57).

## SUMMARY

In illustrating what Jesus did for us on Calvary's cross, we might think of a drowning man who is unconscious and going down for the last time. Let us list the conditions affecting this man that must be considered in his rescue.

- He is wholly unable to help himself. He must receive help from some other source.
- He must be taken out of the water and the water must be taken out of him.
- He must be revived and start breathing again. So it is with the sinner going down to a lost eternity. In his lost condition he may not even realize his need.
- The sin question has to be dealt with by someone other than himself. Salvation was purchased for him at Calvary.
- He must be taken out of sin and sin must be taken out of him. This is accomplished by the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- Through repentance he dies to sin and then the resurrected life of Christ gives him victory through the breath of the Holy Spirit.

## REFLECTIONS

- What is it about sin that makes it so serious?
- Discuss why the just penalty of sin is death.
- Why did blood have to be shed in order to atone for sin?
- Since Jesus died for all men, why aren't all men saved?
- What is the secret of a victorious life over sin?



## Self Help Test

**Give brief answers.**

1. "For the wages of sin is \_\_\_\_\_; but the gift of God is \_\_\_\_\_ through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).
2. Sin is described in Isaiah 1:6 as \_\_\_\_\_
3. When we are filled with the Holy Ghost, we learn to love \_\_\_\_\_ and to hate \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Sin has been summarized in this three-fold manner:
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
5. The apostle John defined sin as being
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
6. James declared not only the act of disobedience to be sin, but also the act of \_\_\_\_\_ when God's will is known.
7. The apostle Paul declared, "Whatsoever is not of \_\_\_\_\_ is sin."
8. Sin is a definite attempt to \_\_\_\_\_ man and to bring God down to man's level.

**True or False:** Circle the correct answer.

1. Jesus Christ came into the world to condemn the world.  
True or False
2. God gave the law that man might have the knowledge of sin.  
True or False
3. There can be no fellowship between sinful man and a holy God.  
True or False

4. Having salvation provided and receiving salvation are two different things.  
True or False
5. The blood of Christ is effective only where it is applied.  
True or False
6. The “good news” of the gospel message is that man is guilty of sin and condemned.  
True or False
7. The child of God cannot sin.  
True or False
8. After his conversion the Christian will never battle with sin.  
True or False
9. The deliverance and freedom from the power of sin is found in Jesus Christ.  
True or False

**Personal Study Notes**

## Chapter 5

# REPENTANCE

### FOCUS

The wages of sin is death. This grim paycheck awaits all those who do not turn from their wicked ways. The Lord has commanded sinful men and women to repent. However, He is merciful and anxious to forgive. It is through repentance that humanity finds forgiveness.

### KEY VERSE

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19).

### SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Luke 13:1-10; 15:1-10; Acts 17:22-34; II Corinthians 7:1-11; Hebrews 12:14-24; Revelation 2:18-29

### INTRODUCTION

The doctrine of repentance is fundamental in the Christian system and should be carefully studied in the light of God's Word. Both John the Baptist and Jesus preached repentance as a basic condition of entrance into the kingdom of God (Matthew 3:2, 8; 4:17). God seeks to lead men and women to repentance by encouragement (Romans 2:4; II Timothy 2:25; Revelation 2, 3), and by judgment (Revelation 9:20-21; 16:9).

Repentance constituted a major theme of preaching in the early Christian church. Peter preached it (Acts 2:38; 3:19; II Peter 3:9), and Paul testified concerning

it (Acts 20:21). As John the Baptist preceded the ministry of Jesus, even so repentance precedes salvation.

## **I. THE COMMAND TO REPENT**

### **A. Need for the Command**

The fact that sin lies embedded in human hearts necessitates God's command to repent. Sin and all of its horrible effects result in the greatest of all human tragedies. In these last days, just prior to the Lord's return, we are witnessing "sin's spectacular." A panoramic view of sinful man's misery would show us broken homes, wrecked bodies, troubled minds, alcoholic parents, dope-addicted teens, crying children, and warped characters.

"The way of the transgressors is hard" (Proverbs 13:15).

Sooner or later, an individual must reap that which he or she has sown. It is the law of the harvest (Galatians 6:7-8). Those who sow to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption. Not only does sin cause one to be bruised and beaten, but it is also the assassin when death comes.

"As righteousness tendeth to life: so he that pursueth evil pursueth it to his own death" (Proverbs 11:19).

To live in sin throughout life is moral insanity. To do so is to actually be guilty of spiritual suicide. James said, "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:15). Why work for someone when you know that as soon as the job is completed you will be stabbed in the back and killed for your wage?

"For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:19-21).

### **B. Weight of the Command**

Jesus said, "Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise

perish” (Luke 13:2-3). This is not an arbitrary requirement, for it arises from the very nature of sin itself. Sin is rebellion against God. Until there is a deep feeling of the awfulness of sin and an utter renunciation of it, the soul is unprepared for spiritual blessing.

The self-righteous Israelites were cruelly harsh in their judgment of others. They looked with disdain on the Galileans who suffered in the midst of a great calamity. They thought to themselves, “These Galileans must have been wretched sinners of the first magnitude to deserve such a pitiful misfortune.” But Jesus knew their thoughts and their hearts. He knew the real truth.

The nation of Israel had been delivered over to the rule of the Pharisees, who told the people of Israel they were righteous because they were the children of Abraham and that God would deliver any child of Abraham from going down to the pit. The Pharisees’ system was strictly one of works. If the Jews observed the 365 negative commandments and the 250 positive commandments—as the Pharisees summarized the Law—then the Pharisees assured them they were safe.

Our Lord denied that there was any righteousness in works and demanded that the people turn to God to receive righteousness from Him. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:20).

These people were trusting themselves for righteousness; they were trusting the law of Moses for righteousness. Jesus said that if they were ever to be made righteous, they must change their minds as to the source and means of righteousness. Righteousness is in Christ Jesus, who offers it to “whosoever will.”

Then came the rebuke from Jesus. He told them the Galileans were no worse than anyone else living in Israel at that time. Those who had been killed were no more sinful than those with whom Jesus spoke, but were used as an illustration of what happens when sin is not repented of. The words of the Lord Jesus were indeed weighty: repent or perish! The only alternative to repentance was destruction.

### **C. Scope of the Command**

The command to repent is universal simply because sin (rebellion against God) is universal. Sin has, at one time or another, touched every human life. Sin entered the world through the fall of Adam and he died. Death has reigned ever since because men and women have sinned after the similitude of Adam (Romans 5:12). Paul stated, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

It is for this reason that repentance is absolutely essential to salvation. "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent" (Acts 17:30).

According to Paul's discourse on Mars' Hill directed to the Greek intellectuals, there was a time when God overlooked the ignorance of mankind such as in nations far removed from Israel, to whom the oracles of God were delivered. But now the Sun of Righteousness has arisen with healing in His wings. A dispensation of illumination and enlightenment has come and men everywhere are without excuse, their own conscience bearing them witness. All men now stand guilty before God, with blood on their hands. God has commanded all men everywhere to repent.

In considering the scope of the message of repentance, we find that it has its place in the life and experience of the child of God. Seven churches are mentioned in Revelation 2-3. Out of these seven churches, five are told directly to repent: Ephesus, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, and Laodicea.

In one of his epistles, John, the writer of Revelation, said, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). The word *repentance* is not in this verse, yet its concept is, for the word *confess* comes from the Greek word that means to "acknowledge" (tell it like it is!). True confession is when we say the same thing about our sins that God says about them. Repentance is involved in this act, for one must turn from his own evaluation of his conduct to accept God's evaluation of his conduct before he acknowledges that what he did was sin. And so in the believer's experience there is a place for repentance if we are to know the blessed experience of restoration to fellowship through confession of sin.

#### **D. Position of the Command**

Obedience to the command of repentance in itself does not constitute salvation, but it prepares one to receive salvation. John, being the forerunner of Jesus, preached repentance to prepare the hearts of the people for the yet-to-come ministry of Jesus Christ, Jehovah-salvation. John said, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). This bears witness to the world today that repentance is still the forerunner of salvation. It sets the stage for God to move. It constitutes the first step toward a complete born-again experience through the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the door into God's kingdom.

Repentance is a crucial, preparatory step in the plan of salvation. Peter, with the keys to the kingdom, preached on the Day of Pentecost to the thronging multitude of Jews. His message fell heavy on their hearts. In conviction they cried, "What shall we do?" Without faltering or hesitating, Peter spoke: "Repent, and. . . ." Repentance is the primary and necessary step in order to obtain full access to God.

## II. THE NATURE OF REPENTANCE

The King James Version of the New Testament renders two Greek words as *repent*. One of these denotes the soul sorrowfully recollecting its own actions and desiring to make amends. This word is *metanoeo* and represents a change of heart and mind. The second word, *metamellomai*, which is translated “repent,” refers more properly to contrition and signifies a godly sorrow.

God is the author of repentance. Since repentance is the turning away from sin and the changing of attitudes and ideas, it follows that complete repentance is humanly impossible. In other words, if man is capable of turning from and living free from sin or if he can of his own volition transform his attitudes and spirit, then he doesn't need a Savior. Man, however, is not capable of such control over his own life; therefore, God grants repentance unto him.

“The servant of the Lord must . . . be gentle unto all men . . . In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth” (II Timothy 2:24-25).

“When they heard these things, they . . . glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life” (Acts 11:18).

When man presents himself before the Lord in earnest contrition and with a sincere desire for a change of life, God will empower him to repent. Without this enabling, man's efforts at reform are so futile. We often refer to this enabling as “conviction.” It is the power of God leading us to repentance. Hear the words of Jesus. “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him” (John 6:44) and “No man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

Paul pleaded with the early church that they would understand their dependency on God in this matter. He stated, “Despiseth thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?” (Romans 2:4).

Repentance is akin to faith in this respect. Though faith is an action on man's part, man's ability in this area is inadequate. Therefore, God provides the gift of faith (I Corinthians 12:9). Paul said, “God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith” (Romans 12:3).

Paul also spoke of how we can be active in the realm of the Spirit, “according to the proportion of faith” (Romans 12:6). In like manner God grants repentance. “For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation” (II Corinthians 7:10).



In repentance, the whole man is affected: the emotions are aroused (godly sorrow), the intellect functions (a change of mind), and the will acts (a forsaking of all sin). Repentance involves the whole man's make-up: emotions, intellect, and will.

### **A. Godly Sorrow**

An emotional element is necessarily involved in repentance. While feeling is not the equivalent of repentance, it nevertheless may be a powerful impulse leading to a genuine turning from sin. A penitent one cannot, from the nature of the case, be indifferent and stolid. The emotional attitude must be altered if New Testament repentance is experienced.

Perhaps this is understood best by distinguishing between two similar words: *repentance* and *penitence*. Repentance is an act; penitence is a state of the soul consequent upon that act. Penitence is the godly sorrow that results in repentance. True repentance results in lasting change in the entire personality that has undergone an "inner revolution." The continuance of the state of penitence makes possible the reception of further benefits and an abiding communion with the Lord.

One type of grief circulates in repentance and another plunges into despair. There is a godly sorrow and also a sorrow of the world. The former brings life; the latter works death (Matthew 27:3; Luke 18:23; II Corinthians 7:9-10). There must be a consciousness of sin in its effect on man and in its relation to God before there can be a hearty turning away from sin. The feeling of sorrow that naturally accompanies repentance implies a conviction of personal sin and sinfulness, and an earnest appeal to God to forgive according to His mercy (Psalm 51:1-2, 10-14).

Paul stated, "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (II Corinthians 7:10). He showed the relationship between worldly sorrow and repentance. He said that a godly sorrow—that is, a sorrow that is produced because the individual views his sin as God views it—will lead to a change of mind toward that sin. What he loved, he now hates; what he grasped after, he now repudiates; what governed and controlled his life, he now abandons, so that as he confesses his sin he receives forgiveness from God. Godly sorrow is sincere contrition for sin committed. Worldly sorrow is only regret over being caught in sin and having to pay the penalty. "Godly sorrow worketh repentance."

### **B. A Change of Heart and Mind**

Repentance is a change of attitude toward the revealed truth of God that produces faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. God desires that all should come to this change of mind; which supplants unbelief with faith. The following parable of the Lord gives us a clear scriptural concept of a change of mind involved in repentance.

“A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not” (Matthew 21:28-30).

In this parable the first son, who had been commanded to go and work in the vineyard, said, “I will not,” and afterward he repented. What did he do? He changed his mind. At first he mocked at his father’s request, but then conformed to it. A change of mind produces a change of direction. That change of mind is repentance. True repentance always includes a change of heart.

“Therefore also now, saith the LORD, Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil” (Joel 2:12-13).

The message of John the Baptist, as it is recorded in Matthew 3, is a scathing denunciation of sin and sinners. John was not merely calling upon them to be sorry for their sins, or to weep because their sins were being uncovered. John was calling upon them to change their mind concerning sin, concerning righteousness, and concerning their need for a Savior.

### **C. Confess and Forsake**

Repentance involves a new moral consciousness of sin in which the sinner identifies himself with God’s thoughts about it. True repentance implies an abhorrence of all sin and recognizes it as being rebellion against a holy God. The penitent one hates sin, and from the center of his being, detests it. Repentance involves (a) confession of sin, and (b) forsaking of those sins.

- *Confession of sin*—When a person is truly sorry for their sins, they will naturally want to confess because “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Matthew 12:34).
- *Forsaking of sin*—Repentance is not merely a superficial sorrow. It means more than a hollow confession. Repentance is a turning away from all sin. It is, in reality, a turning point in your life. It is an “about-face.” You are turning from sin unto the Lord.

“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I

hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land” (II Chronicles 7:14).

This outstanding promise of the Bible is not to those who confess only, but notice that it is to those who “turn from their wicked ways.” Repentance involves action. James admonished us to “be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only” (James 1:22).

#### **D. A Type of Death**

Finally, in our examination of the very nature of repentance, we see that it is a type of death.

Death must precede burial. It is contrary to the laws of man to bury someone alive. Even so must genuine repentance precede water baptism. Likewise, it is also against the laws of God to bury someone alive. In our desire to get men baptized, we should not sidestep repentance. An individual must certainly die the death before he can adequately live the life.

The Tabernacle in the Old Testament illustrates this basic principle of man's access to God. God's Spirit, symbolized by the Ark of the Covenant, dwelt in the innermost chamber of the Tabernacle, the Holy of Holies. To reach a place of intimate communion with God, one must first progress through the gate of the outer court. This symbolizes an acknowledgement of God.

“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” (Hebrews 11:6).

A sacrificial offering must then be made at the brazen altar. This speaks of repentance, a dying out to carnal motives, evil desires, and worldly ambition. It is a crucifixion of the sin nature. It means death to self. Paul said, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Romans 12:1) and “I am crucified with Christ” (Galatians 2:20).

Subsequent lessons will cover other activities connected with the Tabernacle. Briefly reviewing, they are the brazen laver (symbolizing water baptism), the Holy Place (symbolizing Spirit infilling), and the Holy of Holies (symbolizing intimate fellowship). From this illustration, the importance of repentance is readily apparent. Repentance is a place of death. Sinful flesh cannot stand in the presence of a holy God. The old man must die and be left at the altar of sacrifice.

Though the Old Testament sacrifice was a form of penance, that is, a payment for sins, this is not its significance to us today. It is a type of repentance, not penance. We could never pay for our sins. Christ did that on Calvary. He wants us to turn from our sin (repent).

### **III. THE BLESSINGS OF REPENTANCE**

#### **A. Sins Forgiven**

Many wonderful blessings await those who repent. One of the greatest things that happens is that sins are forgiven. Heavy burdens, which have oppressed for years, are now lifted. Thank God for the fair jewel of divine forgiveness. The psalmist said, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered" (Psalm 32:1).

The burden of sin is heavy. It takes a great toll on the mind, body, and soul. Over time, all human faculties are taxed to their limit. However, this whole picture is greatly altered when a man repents. The entire complexion of things changes. Instead of serving sin and the devil, he now serves the gentle Master, Jesus Christ. His yoke is easy and His burden is light (Matthew 11:29-30).

"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:7).

#### **B. God Draws Near**

Another blessed aspect of repentance is that repentance humbles an individual and allows God to draw near. Consider Luke 18:10-14. The publican recognized that he was a sinner and openly confessed it. He sought mercy from God. He repented and went down to his house justified, because he that "humbleth himself shall be exalted." The high and lofty God, who inhabits eternity, whose name is holy, dwells with those who are of a contrite heart and of a humble spirit.

"Draw nigh to God [repent], and he will draw nigh to you" (James 4:8).

#### **C. Heaven Rejoices**

"I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance" (Luke 15:7).

In the evening time as the good shepherd counted his sheep coming in from pasture, he was alarmed. One was missing. There should have been one hundred. He only

counted ninety-nine. With the ninety and nine safe in the fold, he went out into the darkness of night and searched diligently for that one lost sheep because he was a good shepherd. He was not willing that any should perish. He searched until he found him; then with love bands he bound him. The shepherd rejoiced in spirit. His countenance changed. He was happy! Why? He found his one lost sheep.

“And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing”  
(Luke 15:5).

When a sinner repents, Heaven rejoices! There is joy in Heaven on a grand scale: the angels have a victory march, Heaven's celestial orchestra plays gleefully, and the angelic choir sings swelling anthems of praise to the Lord as He, in His tender mercy, forgives.

## SUMMARY

Repentance is a principle doctrine of God's Word for God's church. Repentance is the first phase of the precious saving gospel truth. It is the forerunner of salvation. The populace of the entire world lies in sin right now and the command to repent is universal in scope. It is not optional, but rather, a must if one expects to escape eternal damnation. It is a matter of repent or perish! Repentance is godly sorrow, a change of heart, a turning point. It involves confessing and forsaking all sin, and also speaks death to the carnal man.

A penitent heart is the seedbed of divine forgiveness. When a sinner repents, God Himself draws near and all Heaven rejoices!

## REFLECTIONS

- Discuss the significance and relevance of repentance.
- What is the only other alternative if a person will not repent?
- How does repentance relate to the other steps to salvation?
- How is its essentiality proven?
- How does God “grant” repentance?
- What is the difference between the terms repentance and penance?
- Repentance is of two parts. What are they?
- Review the blessings of repentance.

## Self Help Test

**Give brief answers.**

1. Both John the Baptist and Jesus preached \_\_\_\_\_ as a basic condition of entrance into the kingdom of God.
2. "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth \_\_\_\_\_" (James 1:15).
3. Until there is a deep feeling of the \_\_\_\_\_ of sin, and an utter \_\_\_\_\_ of it, the soul is unprepared for spiritual blessings.
4. Repentance is absolutely \_\_\_\_\_ to salvation.
5. Out of the seven churches of Revelation 3 and 4, \_\_\_\_\_ are told to repent.
6. True \_\_\_\_\_ is when we say the same thing about our sins that God says about them.
7. The author of repentance is \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Repentance involves the whole man's make-up:
  - a. emotions
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
9. Godly sorrow is sincere \_\_\_\_\_ for sin committed. Worldly sorrow is only \_\_\_\_\_ over being caught in sin and having to pay the penalty.
10. Repentance involves confession of sin and \_\_\_\_\_
11. There is joy in Heaven over \_\_\_\_\_ that repents.

## **Personal Study Notes**

## Chapter 6

# WATER BAPTISM

### FOCUS

Water baptism is a test of obedience. It is the circumcision of the heart that takes away our spiritual uncleanness.

### KEY VERSE

“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38).

### SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Acts 2:37-47; 8:26-39; 10:34-48; 19:1-10; Romans 6:1-14; Colossians 2:6-17

### INTRODUCTION

A study of early church history reveals just how important water baptism is in the plan of salvation. The Book of the Acts of the Apostles documents case histories of four individuals and four groups of people being saved—eight examples of how salvation was received in the apostolic church. These historical examples are as follows:

- GROUPS OF PEOPLE:
  - Jews (chapter 2)
  - Samaritans (chapter 8)
  - Gentiles (chapter 10)
  - Ephesians (chapter 19)



- **INDIVIDUALS:**
  - Ethiopian Eunuch (chapter 8)
  - Saul of Tarsus (chapter 9)
  - Lydia (chapter 16)
  - Philippian Jailer (chapter 16)

It is most interesting to study these examples of New Testament salvation. The matter of importance to us in this lesson as we study the subject of water baptism is to note that in these eight instances repentance is mentioned two times, faith is mentioned four times, and spirit infilling is mentioned five times. Water baptism, however, is mentioned all eight times. This fact should convince every honest heart regarding the importance of water baptism in the plan of salvation. No one would ever try to argue that repentance, faith, and the Holy Ghost are not essential elements to salvation. However, if these are mentioned only two, four, and five times out of eight, and water baptism is mentioned the entire eight times, how important water baptism must be!

## **I. ESSENTIALITY OF WATER BAPTISM**

### **A. The Command to Be Baptized**

The phenomenon that took place on the Day of Pentecost attracted a great crowd. When Peter preached to the multitude the message of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, the people were convicted and cried out, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). The apostle gave them clear, explicit instructions: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38).

We should note well that these instructions were given to “every one.” Peter did not say that some of them should be baptized and that others did not have to obey. The commandment to repent and to be baptized was given to “every one of you.” No one was given an option in the matter.

### **B. Jesus' Teachings on Baptism**

In giving the commission to the apostles, Jesus clearly stated that in order to be saved a man would have to believe and be baptized. Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16).

In this positive statement, Jesus left no room for doubt. Salvation has two essential elements: faith and water baptism. (If one has genuine faith, then he will repent and receive the Holy Ghost.) There is no place for argument and the seeking soul has no choice. If he desires to be saved, he must believe and be baptized. In John 3, we read that

Jesus said water baptism was essential in order to enter the kingdom of God. In the incident recorded here Jesus was dealing with Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. Jesus told Nicodemus that he would have to be born of water and of the Spirit. "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

Being "born of water" is water baptism in the name of Jesus Christ. Much argument has been presented against this truth. However, the testimony of the Scripture proves conclusively that the birth of water is water baptism. This may be compared with the natural birth when a child enters the world. It is at this time that the child is named and takes upon himself the family name. Thus it is with water baptism, for it is at this time that the new convert takes upon himself the name of Jesus.

### **C. Water—An Element of Salvation**

"But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water" (John 19:34).

"This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood" (I John 5:6).

Even as Eve was made from a rib taken from the side of Adam next to his heart, so the church is born of blood and water that flowed from Jesus' pierced side. Three elements are in salvation: blood, water, and Spirit. These are not in conflict, but rather, they complement one another. In the plan of salvation they are found in Jesus Christ and are made available to the sinner through His name.

"For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one" (I John 5:7-8).

## **II. MANNER OF WATER BAPTISM**

### **A. The Element to Be Used**

"And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized" (John 3:23).

This Scripture in John's Gospel tells us that John the Baptist baptized where there was much water. There are two truths that we may learn from this:

1. Baptism is administered by immersion. Any other mode of baptism such as sprinkling or pouring would not need much water.
2. The element used in baptism is water. When a person is baptized he must be buried in water. No other fluid such as milk or wine may be used. It must be water. It may be the flowing water of a river, the salty water of the sea, or the still water of a baptistery, as long as it is water.

## **B. The Mode of Baptism**

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:3-4).

In order to atone for the sins of humanity, it was necessary for Christ to suffer death, be buried, and rise again. If we are to be saved, we must be “in Christ” (I Corinthians 15:22). This means that the penitent sinner must experience death, burial, and resurrection. In repentance, he experiences a death to sin and the world. Burial must follow death, for a dead man is never left unburied. Water baptism is this burial. Even as burial follows death, so does water baptism (immersion in water) follow repentance.

The Bible makes it very clear that the proper mode of baptism is by a single immersion in water. It is foolish to try to argue otherwise. The Greek verb *baptizo* means to “dip, plunge, immerse.” The word *baptism* properly and literally means “immersion.” Only by being immersed in water in the name of Jesus Christ can a person be identified with Christ in burial and be biblically and properly baptized.

When Philip baptized the Ethiopian eunuch, they both went down into the water (Acts 8:38). If Philip had been using any ordinance other than immersion, it would not have been necessary for him to go into the water. In fact, if it had been by sprinkling, they both could have remained in the chariot. Sprinkling or pouring can never have the significance of burial. Only immersion is able to meet the requirement for baptism according to the Bible. Therefore, we may properly reach the true conclusion that a person is not baptized unless he has been immersed in water.

## **C. The Manner and Place of Baptism**

New converts must be baptized according to the mode and formula given in the Bible. They may have preferences about other things, but here they have no other choice but to obey. Obedience to the scriptural plan is essential. This calls for immersion in water in the name of Jesus. Otherwise, the candidate is not baptized.

We must note well here that baptism is administered by one immersion. The Bible does not teach three immersions; a person is only being immersed needlessly two of the three times.

However, certain things about baptism are optional. The convert may be baptized in the sea, in a river, or in the baptistery in the church building. Many a convert has been baptized in the bathtub in a home. The place is not important because the Bible contains no command concerning this matter.

Whether or not a candidate is baptized face down or face up is not important. He may be seated in the baptistery and be baptized face forward, or the minister may lay him flat upon his back in the water. These various places and manners of baptism are not important since the Bible does not give us any directive. Let us always remember that baptism must be administered by one immersion in Jesus' name. We must obey the Bible, but where the Bible gives no explicit instructions, we may follow our own choice.

The writer was once building a baptistery in a new church building. I discovered that there was a strong sentiment in the congregation against the baptistery since they had previously been baptizing either in the sea or a river. I left the matter with the Lord, knowing that the Lord could take care of the issue. This happened in a remarkable fashion. The first man to be baptized in the new baptistery came up out of the water speaking in tongues. He received a glorious baptism of the Holy Spirit.

This settled the matter of whether or not it was right to baptize in a baptistery, for everyone saw just how the Lord had placed His confirmation upon baptizing in the baptistery by filling the first candidate with the Holy Ghost.

### **III. FORMULA FOR WATER BAPTISM**

#### **A. The Apostles' Baptisms**

Both the record of the Bible and church history verify the fact that the early church always, without exception, baptized in the name of Jesus. There is an abundance of material in various church histories and encyclopedias to prove this fact. Let us examine the biblical record:

- **JERUSALEM:** It was in Jerusalem that the apostle Peter used the keys of the kingdom for the first time and about three thousand souls entered the kingdom. We should remember that the other eleven apostles stood up with Peter, confirming and agreeing with the message that Peter preached (Acts 2:14). "Then

Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38).

- **SAMARIA:** When Philip preached Christ to Samaria, the Samaritans believed the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. Because of their obedience to the gospel message there was great joy in Samaria. “Only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 8:16).
- **DAMASCUS:** Here we have the record regarding the baptism of Saul of Tarsus. The mighty apostle Paul was baptized in the name of Jesus. Ananias said to Paul, “Arise, and be baptised, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).
- **CAESAREA:** The Gentiles in the home of Cornelius were baptized in the name of the Lord. Peter did not give them any choice, but commanded them. “And he [Peter] commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord” (Acts 10:48).
- **EPHESUS:** At Ephesus the apostle Paul found disciples who had been baptized unto John’s baptism. This was a baptism unto repentance only and it was necessary for them to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. “When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 19:5). This proves the fact that a person must be baptized according to the biblical plan. If he is not baptized according to the Scriptures, he is still not baptized.

## **B. Jesus Is the Name**

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28:19).

In giving the Great Commission, Jesus commanded His disciples to go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. It is very important that we understand this command, for it calls for explicit obedience. It is not left to our own whim or desire.

Let us note that it is possible to repeat these words without obeying them. In order to obey we must understand what the name is. The terms, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are titles, not names. What is the name of the Father? What is the name of the Son? What is the name of the Holy Ghost? The answer is the same in each instance. There can only be one answer: JESUS. Obedience to the Great Commission will demand that each one is baptized in the name of Jesus.

### **C. Remission of Sins in the Name**

“Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

“And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:47).

Jesus is the saving name of our God. There is no other name whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12). Remission of sins is in the name of Jesus (Luke 24:47). How then can any other term, title, or name be used? Many reasons may be given for water baptism to always be in the name of Jesus. Whatever we do in word or deed, we are to do in the name of Jesus (Colossians 3:17). Water baptism is both word and deed. We may conclude without fear of successful contradiction that a person who has never been baptized in the name of Jesus is not properly baptized.

## **IV. PURPOSE OF WATER BAPTISM**

### **A. Water Baptism—Acknowledgement**

Water baptism is the means God has chosen by which we identify with Him. It is a test of our obedience. On the basis of the work that God has begun in us in repentance, we present ourselves to the ministry as a candidate for water baptism. When we are immersed in water, we take on His name and acknowledge His lordship over our lives.

“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. (Galatians 3:27).

This is also a public acknowledgement or testimony to the world that we have chosen to be identified with the followers of Christ. It is an outward sign or symbol that demonstrates God is doing an inward work in our lives.

### **B. Water Baptism—Burial**

Water baptism is more than just an outward sign of an inward work. If baptism were nothing more than this, then Mark 16:16 would read: “He that believeth and is saved shall be baptized.” This Scripture shows, however, that salvation is a product of water baptism. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). A dynamic spiritual work takes place during baptism. It is through this ordinance that God gives us power over the sinful human nature.

“How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?” (Romans 6:2-3).

In water baptism we bury the old nature, our “old man” (Romans 6:6).

“Buried with him in baptism . . .” (Colossians 2:12).

### **C. Water Baptism—Circumcision**

God wants to perform a spiritual operation on us in water baptism. He wants to cut away the old nature of enmity against Him. This operation—circumcision of the heart—is really the purpose of the ordinance of baptism.

“In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ. Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses” (Colossians 2:11-13).

The “old man” is to be cut away and left buried in the waters of baptism. This is what makes the forgiving of our trespasses (Colossians 2:13) or the remission of sins (Acts 2:38) possible.

A most interesting point concerning circumcision is found in the account of the circumcision of the Christ Child. Luke records, “And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS” (Luke 2:21).

The Christ Child was not named until He was eight days old. In the stable He was not “baby Jesus.” He was just a babe, period. He received His name at the time of His circumcision according to Jewish custom. So we also do not receive our spiritual name, the name of the heavenly family (Ephesians 3:15), the beautiful name of JESUS, until we are baptized in water in that name, for this is our spiritual circumcision.

## **SUMMARY**

In the new birth God has ordained three who must take an active part: the individual being born again, the church, and Jesus Christ. The individual repents and believes, and Jesus forgives and remits sin. The church’s part is in travelling prayer, preaching the Word, and in administering water baptism. The church’s work in giving

birth to a babe in Christ is very important, and one of the important acts of the church is baptizing the new convert in Jesus' name. The purpose of water baptism has already been outlined in this lesson, but let us consider a few final points and attempt to sum it all up.

- In the Old Testament God used water as a figure of salvation. God saved Noah and his family by water.

“While the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water” (I Peter 3:20).

God also saved the nation of Israel by water.

“And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea” (I Corinthians 10:2).

- Water baptism is symbolized by the brazen laver in the Old Testament Tabernacle. The sequence of salvation is seen in this beautiful symbol. After the brazen altar (repentance) comes the brazen laver (water baptism) which precedes the Holy Place (Spirit infilling). At the brazen laver the priest went through a ritual that made him ceremonially clean. Saul of Tarsus was told: “Arise, and be baptised, and wash away thy sins” (Acts 22:16).
- In order to enter the kingdom of God one must be born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5).
- In salvation the new convert must be identified with Jesus in death, burial, and resurrection. It is in obedience to the command to be baptized that one is identified with Christ in burial.
- Remission of sins is in the name of Jesus. It is in water baptism that the new convert takes on the name of Jesus and receives remission of sins.
- The rite of circumcision was given to Abraham as the mark of separation from the idolatrous nations around him. In the New Testament water baptism is given as this mark of separation and the putting off of the sins of the flesh. Water baptism is given as the outward sign of the inner circumcision of the heart.
- In the plan of salvation obedience is essential. It was through disobedience and unbelief that sin came to the human race; it must be through obedience and faith that salvation can come to humanity. God has used water baptism as a real test of obedience to the soul seeking pardon and eternal life. Through faith in the finished work of Calvary and obedience to the gospel (water baptism), a person may enter the kingdom of God.



- The church is the betrothed bride of Christ. The bride always takes the name of her husband. Jesus is soon coming for His bride and that bride must bear His name.

“Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name” (Acts 15:14).

It seems quite clear that in order to be in the bride of Christ one must have taken on the name of Jesus in water baptism.

“One Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Ephesians 4:5).

“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures: and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (I Corinthians 15:3-4).

## REFLECTIONS

- Show how there is no contradiction between Matthew 28:19 and Acts 2:38.
- How is a new convert identified with Christ in death, burial, and resurrection?
- Name the three elements of salvation. Why is water important?
- Name several reasons why baptism must be administered in Jesus' name.
- Name all the essentials of water baptism. Name some nonessentials.
- Discuss the “ABCs” of water baptism.
- What is the relation between baptism in Jesus' name and being ready for the return of Jesus?

## Self Help Test

**True or False:** Circle the correct answer.

1. A study of the history of the early church shows that water baptism is not essential for salvation.  
True or False
2. Jesus clearly stated that in order to be saved a man would have to believe and be baptized.  
True or False
3. Jesus told Nicodemus that he would have to be born of water and of the Spirit.  
True or False
4. The Bible makes it very clear that baptism properly and literally means “sprinkling.”  
True or False
5. A person is not baptized unless he has been immersed in water.  
True or False

**Matching:** Match the statement on the left with the corresponding reference on the right

- |   |               |
|---|---------------|
| ___ 1. Peter used the keys of the kingdom for the first time        | a. Acts 19:5  |
| ___ 2. Baptism of Saul of Tarsus                                    | b. Acts 2:38  |
| ___ 3. Gentiles commanded to be baptized in the name of the Lord    | c. Acts 22:16 |
| ___ 4. Rebaptism of those who had been baptized unto John's baptism | d. Acts 8:16  |
| ___ 5. Samaritans baptized in the name of Jesus                     | e. Acts 10:48 |

**Give brief answers.**

1. The name of the Father, the name of the Son, and the name of the Holy Ghost is \_\_\_\_\_.
2. When we are immersed in water, we take on His \_\_\_\_\_ and acknowledge His \_\_\_\_\_ over us.

3. Water baptism is more than just an outward sign of an inward work. In water baptism we \_\_\_\_\_ the old nature.
4. The operation of the \_\_\_\_\_ is really the purpose of baptism.

## Chapter 7

# BAPTISM OF THE HOLY GHOST

### FOCUS

In water baptism, we are baptized into Christ. In the baptism of the Holy Ghost, Christ is baptized into us. Spirit infilling is a real experience for all believers.

### KEY VERSE

“And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:4).

### SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Matthew 3:1-12; Joel 2:21-32; Acts 1:1-14; 2:1-40; 19:1-10

### INTRODUCTION

“And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 22:18).

At least two things are quite clear in God's promise to Abraham. First, it was to be in (or through) Abraham's seed that the blessings would come. Then, the promised blessing would be for “all the nations of the earth”—a universal blessing. A third factor is not so clear. Little or no information concerning the type of blessing is provided in the promise itself. With the passage of time that factor was revealed incrementally. The principle of progressive revelation is seen here as elsewhere in the Word of God. “For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little” (Isaiah 28:10).

Through the prophet Joel, God promised: “I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh . . . and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit” (Joel 2:28-29). Isaiah described the experience itself with a little more detail: “For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing” (Isaiah 28:11-12).

Jesus instructed His disciples to remain in Jerusalem and “wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me” (Acts 1:4). Then, He promised plainly, “Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence” (Acts 1:5). They waited and finally, on the Day of Pentecost, the blessing promised to Abraham became a reality!

The inspired apostle Peter explained the amazing phenomenon by declaring, “This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel” (Acts 2:16). They were speaking in “other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:4). They were behaving in such a manner that the astonished observers thought them to be drunk! But, as Peter explained, the believers were not drunk as the scoffers supposed. This was that!

Moreover, the promise was for all people. God’s promise was not limited. Peter verified this with the assurance that “the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call” (Acts 2:39). That which was promised to Abraham had finally come, exactly as promised!

Paul added another significant detail to this beautiful prophecy and its fulfillment.

“Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ” (Galatians 3:16).

Paul had just explained that Jesus had been “made a curse for us . . . that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ.” In explaining what he meant by “blessing of Abraham,” he said, “That we might receive [actually experience] the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Galatians 3:13-14).

There it is! The blessing for all nations is the Spirit—the Holy Ghost. And the baptism of the Holy Ghost came through “the seed,” which is Christ. As Jesus explained it: “Except a corn of wheat [seed] fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit” (John 12:24).

So the blessing that was promised to Abraham was the baptism of the Holy Ghost. It came through the sacrificial work of Calvary. The Seed was sown in death. Then the blessing sprang forth on the Day of Pentecost in Jerusalem with “much fruit.” It was to all people everywhere.

It is ours to experience, enjoy, and share! Our experience and enjoyment will be limited unless we share. To share we need to study to show ourselves approved unto God as effective witnesses. Then we can convey the meaning and necessity of this great baptism, as well as its benefits. We can share! In this lesson we will examine the gift that has come to us by God's grace—the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

## **I. DEFINITION OF THIS BAPTISM**

As is so often the case, misconceptions in spiritual matters become veritable roadblocks to understanding. Preconceived notions are especially difficult barriers that must be overcome before a person can accurately comprehend this vital subject. From the beginning it has been so.

### **A. What This Baptism Is Not**

Peter first explained what the baptism of the Holy Ghost was not, in order to better clarify the true nature of the experience. The supposition of the mocking crowd was not without support: the disciples did appear to be drunk! The apostle reasoned with them that their hasty conclusion could not be accurate “seeing it is but the third hour of the day” (Acts 2:15).

Paul drove away some mists of misconception on the subject also. Before he declared the kingdom of God to be “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Romans 14:17), he first explained it was “not meat and drink.” Strange as these misconceptions may seem to us, we note that the apostles dealt with them in a logical and reasonable manner. Such an attitude is essential if such errors are to be dispelled.

Today, we face many equally strange—and sometimes even ridiculous—concepts regarding the baptism of the Holy Ghost. To many, this baptism comes at some point in a prescribed religious exercise, such as water baptism, confirmation, or at being accepted by the congregation. For most religious professions, it is hardly mentioned. The prevalent idea is that the baptism received by the early church is no longer available.

Oddly enough, another aspect of human opinion that becomes warped is the direct result of those who claim to have had the experience. In fact, some of the most formidable enemies of the baptism of the Holy Ghost are those who claim the experience and whose preposterous assertions tend to glorify the individual.

We will do well to follow the scriptural pattern and dispel misconceptions before explaining what the baptism of the Holy Ghost is. Moreover, we need to go further than succumbing to the temptation of relying on catchy platitudes regarding the experience. While it is “better felt than told,” God commands us to tell about it!

## **B. What This Baptism Is**

The baptism of the Holy Ghost is a work of God whereby an individual is totally immersed in the Spirit. According to John the Baptist, it is Jesus who baptizes believers in His Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11). This is, of course, a spiritual operation that cannot be visualized or illustrated adequately by materialistic terms.

This operation enables the Spirit to become “one” with the individual believer. Jesus prayed, “That they all may be one.” How? “As thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they [each individual] also may be one in us . . . that they may be one, even as we are one” (John 17:21-22). Through the baptism of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit becomes one with the believer! Thus, each believer has the eternal Spirit in his temporal being—even as the Spirit indwelt Jesus Christ.

When one is baptized (overwhelmed) by the Holy Ghost, there is an immediate evidence of speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance (Acts 2:4; 10:44-46; 19:6). We will study that amazing experience in the next lesson. For the present, we simply note that this was the normal Christian experience in the early church. If anyone receives the baptism of the Holy Ghost, it will be as the early church received it—with the accompanying sign of speaking with tongues. To fail to receive this baptism as the early church did is to fail to receive the same gift as they!

Beyond that initial experience, the baptism of the Holy Ghost endows believers with an added dimension to their lives. They do not cease to be as human as they have ever been. They simply become new creatures (II Corinthians 5:17) by virtue of the Holy Spirit coming into their lives.

Men and women are born with a dual nature—flesh and spirit. Through the baptism of the Holy Ghost, God’s Spirit becomes fused with their spirit and they become a partaker of the divine nature (II Peter 1:4), and of holiness (Hebrews 12:10). They still must battle against the flesh (Romans 7:18-24), but through the baptism of the Holy Ghost the believers are given an inner power (Acts 1:8) that enables them to do what they ought. Moreover, this experience equips the believers so they can understand the things of the Spirit (I Corinthians 2:11-12). It also means believers can become carnal if they fail to follow the guidance of God’s Word. Therefore, believers are urged to “walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16).

Obviously, this baptism serves to equip an individual for service in the kingdom. Without the instructions provided in God’s Word, however, the power can become as detrimental as beneficial. Each saint of God must be taught in the Christian walk in order to utilize the experience properly. With proper training and leadership every child of God can become a powerful dynamo in the kingdom!

The baptism of the Holy Ghost will so change a person that all will notice it. It seems to neutralize the acids of envy, hatred, and strife. Then, with Bible teaching, a baptized believer becomes a genuine reflector of the image of his or her Savior. It is not the convert, but the Converter living in him!

## **II. THE NECESSITY OF THIS BAPTISM**

It seems a bit unusual that one should insist upon the necessity of such a phenomenal experience. But given the carnality of human nature, it becomes necessary to stress the essentiality of the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Though told of the marvelous blessings of the experience, men and women tend to procrastinate and hesitate in their personal responses. Thus God loves us enough to bring the truth of the matter to our attention in a more forcible manner.

### **A. Every Man's Need**

Humanity at its best is depraved and without hope in the world. When we say humankind is depraved, we do not mean humanity is as bad as it can become. In fact, we are not referring to deeds at all. We are talking about individuals' condition before God, rather than their behavior. Simply stated, an unregenerate people have absolutely nothing in their own right that can commend them to a holy and righteous God. This means that every person is on an equal footing with every other one. In this matter, none can help the other. If they are to be saved, it must be by the work of the Savior. Let's consider that work. People cannot even come to God unless they are drawn. This is the work of the Spirit.

Jesus said, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John 6:44). This means God initiates the work of salvation. Let none of us think we found God by our own initiative. He found us! The Spirit guides us into all truth (John 16:13). Without that work we would wander aimlessly through the maze of man-made ways. Through the baptism of the Spirit, we are endowed with the mind of Christ, which enables us to understand the things of the Spirit (I Corinthians 2:10-16). The Spirit and the Word do not differ, for they are one and the same. As Jesus said, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63).

### **B. The Key to Oneness**

These and many other proofs show the necessity of the baptism of the Holy Ghost. But perhaps the strongest evidence lies in the words of Paul: "There is one body, and one Spirit" (Ephesians 4:4). Then he informed us, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body . . . and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (I Corinthians 12:13).



Since we must be in the body of Christ—the church—to be saved, and since we are baptized into that body by one Spirit, it remains that the baptism of the Holy Ghost is essential to salvation. Paul pointed out in his letter to the Romans that the weakness of the Law was in the flesh of man (Romans 8:3). He went on to draw a sharp distinction between minding the things of the flesh and the things of the Spirit. “The carnal mind,” he concluded, “is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Romans 8:7). So it is impossible for those who are “in the flesh” to please God (Romans 8:8). Are we to give up, then, in the face of this impossibility?

Absolutely not!

“But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ [the ‘one Spirit’ by which we are baptized into one body], he is none of his” (Romans 8:9).

The text offers its own exposition. It would take someone bent on his own destruction to attempt any other meaning. Clearly, the necessity of the baptism of the Holy Ghost is beyond question. In verse eleven we read, “But if the Spirit of him that raised up Christ from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”

The baptism of the Holy Ghost is essential to salvation!

### **III. BENEFITS OF THIS BAPTISM**

The bargain-seeker will never make this baptism the object of his search. Nor will those who think in terms of self-aggrandizement. The last person to seek the baptism of the Holy Ghost would be the status-seeker, for Jesus promised little in the way of earthly rewards. He who would seek the kingdom of God will not be a seeker of “loaves and fishes.”

On the other hand, the rewards are too numerous to catalog! The fellowship of the body, the rest for the soul, the comfort of His presence, the protection and stabilization of life, the teaching and guidance provided—the list would be limitless! But when we seek God (the baptism of the Holy Ghost), it is not for a specific benefit—it is for life itself! Our souls yearns for Him, the Life above all else. The longing is not for His benefits or blessings—it is for Him!

To the soul’s delight, He comes! If there were no other thing to know or receive, there would be no complaint. He is all in all. He is what the soul cries for and will not be content without. What more could the human heart desire?

When we learn the truth of this great salvation, there are ample blessings, untold benefits—and they are ours! It will take eternity to evaluate properly the unsearchable riches of Christ that have become ours by inheritance. We are heirs to immeasurable wealth!

Let us survey a portion of that inheritance. When we receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit begins a productive work in our lives. And herein lies one of life's greatest benefits—the blessing of being productive for God. The carnal mind associates “benefits” with receiving, but the spiritual mind recognizes the truth that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

### **A. The Fruit of the Spirit**

The Spirit in our lives begins to bear fruit. It is a singular fruit, but composed of several parts. If any part is lacking, the fruit becomes degenerate to that degree.

This fruit with its component parts is described by Paul in his letter to the Galatians. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (Galatians 5:22-23).

Paul then sets forth the key to producing full, wholesome, acceptable fruit. “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:25).

The point is a vital one. We must not rely on being in the Spirit positionally (which came about as a result of our being baptized in the Holy Ghost). We must actively “walk” (mobilize our faith with deeds, move and be moved) in the Spirit! Thank God for our past experience because it has continuing results in our lives!

Those results are the greatest benefits of this baptism, in this writer's opinion. They enable us to see the outworking (fruit-bearing) of the divine Spirit from within our own being!

### **B. The Old Testament Tabernacle**

Another listing of benefits is seen by examining the articles of furniture in the Old Testament Tabernacle. The Tabernacle proper was in two sections and contained several articles of furniture. These depict the blessings of the Spirit-filled life.

- *The Holy Place*—The Tabernacle proper in general and the Holy Place in particular symbolize Spirit infilling. In previous lessons we learned that the brazen altar symbolized repentance and the brazen laver symbolized water baptism.

- *The Golden Candlestick*—The “light of the glorious gospel” (II Corinthians 4:4) to the Spirit-filled believer becomes a veritable beacon for Christian navigation. The psalmist said, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119:105).

The Holy Ghost is the light that makes the Bible an open book to Spirit-filled believers. “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13).

- *Table of Shewbread*—Jesus declared of Himself: “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35). The Spirit-filled believer has the distinct blessing of feasting upon Jesus, the Bread. “O taste and see that the LORD is good” (Psalm 34:8). It is through this nourishment that we “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord” (II Peter 3:18).
- *Altar of Incense*—True worship must be done “in spirit” (John 4:24). This is a beautiful fragrance that ascends to the very throne of God. Paul told us, however, that this worship is to be made with “holy hands” (I Timothy 2:8). Holy hands can only be the result of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Our attempts at righteousness are as “filthy rags” to God (Isaiah 6). To be holy we must abandon our futile works and rest in His Spirit. Then, and only then, can we find the joy of true worship.
- *The Holy of Holies and the Ark of the Covenant*—This section of the Tabernacle and this article of furniture must be discussed together. For the Spirit-filled believer they represent the same thing: intimate communion with God. This area of the Tabernacle housed the particular presence of the Almighty. We too can have His particular presence in our lives.

## SUMMARY

This great baptism of the Holy Ghost is for all believers (John 7:39). After receiving the experience, we learn of the far-reaching benefits and blessings to our lives and wonder why more are not attracted to it. The grim fact of the essentiality of the experience to salvation grips our hearts. Of all people, we must share this experience with others. Witness we must! Then, as we do, we learn another rewarding fact about the baptism we have received. The more we “give it away,” the more we acquire. Unsearchable riches!

## REFLECTIONS

- How were the promises of the Abrahamic covenant fulfilled?
- How do we share in that covenant?
- Name some things that the baptism of the Holy Ghost is not. Explain what it is.
- How can we know this baptism is essential? Discuss which is the better attitude concerning this experience: “to have to get it” or “to get to have it.”
- Discuss the benefits of this baptism as seen in the fruit of the Spirit and the Old Testament Tabernacle.

## Self Help Test

**True or False:** Circle the correct answer.

1. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is no longer available.  
True or False
2. The baptism of the Holy Ghost is a work of God whereby an individual is totally immersed in the Spirit.  
True or False
3. When one is baptized by the Holy Ghost, there is an immediate evidence of speaking in tongues as the Spirit gives utterance.  
True or False
4. Beyond that initial experience, the baptism of the Holy Spirit endows a believer with an added dimension to his life.  
True or False
5. The baptism of the Holy Ghost is essential to salvation.  
True or False
6. When we receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit begins a productive work in our lives.  
True or False
7. The baptism of the Holy Ghost is limited to certain believers.  
True or False

## Chapter 8

# SPEAKING WITH TONGUES

### FOCUS

This miracle of God's grace and power is for all who receive and obey Him. It is one of the tools of the Spirit to promote the great work of God.

### KEY VERSE

"For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God" (Acts 10:46).

### SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Acts 2:1-16; 10:34-48; I Corinthians 14:1-39; Isaiah 28:10-13; James 3:1-18

### INTRODUCTION

Of all people, Pentecostals should be acquainted with this subject "speaking with tongues"! And of all religious subjects this should be a subject on which Pentecostals are well versed. It is a doctrine—and more. Speaking with tongues is a practice, a spiritual experience.

As a practice among us, this marvelous expression of the Spirit is precious and vital. Therefore, we must thoroughly acquaint ourselves with the experience. Such a precious aspect of worship and spiritual blessing must never be neglected. Neither should it be misused or abused. To keep it, to retain its blessings, we must acquaint ourselves with its functions and purposes. Then for the sake of those who ask, "What meaneth this?" we need to be able to give an answer. Often an inadequate reply nullifies the effect of the gift itself. Then to try to cover our ignorance is also quite futile. Our Savior wants us to be effective witnesses! We want to be effective witnesses!

In order to acquaint ourselves with such a vital subject, we must examine the scriptural record. The practice was described in prophetic promise. Then when it finally came to pass, the holy apostles of the Lamb recognized it as fulfillment of that promise. The experience was an amazing one! Finally, the need for instructions became apparent with the misuse of the gift by some of the believers in Corinth. From these areas of Scripture, we learn of the practice and purpose of tongues.

## **I. THE PROMISE**

### **A. Old Testament Prophecy**

Certain prophecies were regarding circumstances of the immediate future, but their primary purpose was for our admonition and learning. In such cases, neither the prophet nor the people realized that the event had happened for any purpose other than the apparent one of the moment. In it all, God achieved His purpose in having it recorded for us.

For instance, when Isaiah pointed out that the reformation Hezekiah had affected was only partial, the religious leaders scornfully mocked the prophet's teaching. They charged that his doctrine was no more than an accumulation of precepts. According to them, he had a tendency to dwell on minute detail.

God inspired the prophet's reply:

"For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear" (Isaiah 28:11-12).

The immediate application of the prophetic utterance concerned the situation at hand. If Isaiah's doctrine seemed to be child's speech, they would really find the language of their next "teacher" difficult to understand. Their Assyrian captors would speak, but the lesson they would learn would be from God. In captivity the Jews would remember the "rest" and the "refreshing" that could have been theirs if they had heard.

The prophecy was fulfilled in that limited sense. It could have been like many other prophecies—given and fulfilled, never to be more than a lesson of the past. But this prophecy was destined to have a greater interpretation. In fact, the primary purpose of this utterance was to be revealed centuries later by an inspired apostle!

"In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the

Lord. Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not" (I Corinthians 14:21-22).

"Wherefore tongues are for a sign." The word *wherefore* connects the interpretation that follows to the preceding prophecy.

This means that the Holy Ghost inspired Paul to see the real primary purpose and the full meaning of the prophecy. That which had been all but obscure now became of paramount importance. The prophecy was first of all a promise of a rest and a refreshing that was to come. This rest was to be accompanied by an experience, though little understood then, of "stammering lips and another tongue." The experience was to be inseparably identified with that "rest." In fact, the prophet declared of the experience, "This Holy Ghost is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest." Not only was "stammering lips and another tongue" to accompany the "rest," the speaker was to be the Lord Himself! Paul, inspired and enlightened, pointed this out when he made reference to this prophecy: "With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people . . . saith the Lord" (I Corinthians 14:21). The Lord speaking through the instrumentality of men in a language not their own would be the "rest."

## **B. The Promises of Our Lord**

Jesus urged all men, "Come unto me . . . I will give you rest . . . and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matthew 11:28-29). This is another promise of the rest Isaiah predicted would come with "stammering lips and another tongue." On another occasion, Jesus gave the same basic promise.

"He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive" (John 7:38-39).

Regarding the experience these who received the Spirit should have, He restated the promise on still another occasion.

"And these signs shall follow them that believe . . . they shall speak with new tongues" (Mark 16:17).

Again and again, this experience of speaking in other tongues was promised. The Lord Himself—the eternal Spirit—would speak through men and women! It would be a sign that would follow believers. And it does!

In fact, each sign prophesied to follow believers does so according to scriptural pattern. No true believer will be foolish enough to tempt God by trying to prove his faith



by drinking any deadly substance or handling serpents. In the scriptural pattern, these signs follow believers; yet, true believers never follow signs!

### **C. The Promises Received**

The scriptural pattern for speaking with tongues (other than one's own vernacular) is clearly established in the New Testament. The experience came as Scripture promised. It must always be so. Moreover, our practice regarding the experience must remain in compliance with the scriptural pattern. Let us consider the experience as it occurred in the early church.

## **II. THE PRACTICE**

### **A. The Appearance**

"Suddenly," Scripture asserts, "there came a sound from heaven" (Acts 2:2). It was amazing! The writer of the Book of Acts described the occurrence with clarity. The sound was "as of (similar to) a rushing mighty wind." No actual movement of wind is recorded there; the sound resembled such a noise. Then Luke noted, "There appeared unto them cloven tongues" (Acts 2:3). To them it appeared; that is, the writer is describing a very unusual event as it appeared unto them. Tongues "like as of fire" were in evidence. Not "tongues of fire," but it appeared "like as of fire."

How could it be explained any better? The writer described the experience as to sound and sight. If we get the same experience they did, it will be like theirs. If we didn't get that experience exactly as they did, what right do we have to insist someone else get an experience like the one we received?

All of us must experience the gift as they did in order to know we have what they had. There was no rushing mighty wind—only a sound similar to that. There were no tongues of fire—their tongues flickered like fire and the experience came upon (rested, sat) on each of them!

Everyone who has ever witnessed another receive the Holy Ghost immediately recognizes the accuracy of that scriptural description. No "tongues of fire" sitting on the head—no gales of mighty wind. But the sound of a number of people speaking in tongues and the sight of such an event could not be described better than Luke did in Acts 2.

### **B. The Utterance**

"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4).

Notice who was giving the utterance! The Lord said He would speak to this people—and He did! He spoke through and to them with other tongues.

Why?

Was it the only way the Jews who were out of every nation under Heaven could have the gospel preached to them? Apparently not. Each Jew knew his mother tongue as well as the language of the land of his residence. They were bilingual. Tongues would not be needed for that purpose.

Then, why?

It was in fulfillment of the prophecy. It was an amazing phenomenon that had no explanation apart from Scripture. Clearly, those speaking in at least seventeen different dialects were all Galileans (Acts 2:7). Yet, they were speaking of the wonderful works of God in languages they had never learned!

God's great plan of redemption was designed to return to humanity all that it had lost through sin. The perfection and innocence of Eden, along with the Tree of Life and restored intimacy with God, is the ultimate end of this great design (Revelation 21:22). A more immediate restoration is that of the reuniting of the divided nations and races. This division, along with its attendant strife and chaos, was brought about by humanity's arrogance and pride in the building of the Tower of Babel. God judged this sin by confusing their languages and scattering the nations.

Pentecost was a restoration of this lost community. People from seventeen nations were gathered in Jerusalem when the Holy Ghost fell. The 120 receiving believers spoke in all these tongues, witnessing to the fact that God was restoring what had been lost at Babel. Micah prophesied of this great effect upon the people of the earth.

“But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Micah 4:1-2).

What was the reason for tongues? Its purpose was to bring those from every kindred and race, who were at odds with each other because of sin, back into harmony through the unity of God's indwelling Spirit. Just as people lost this harmony and community and were scattered because of an earthly tower (Babel), so were they to be gathered together again, this time around a spiritual tower, the Lord Jesus Christ.

“The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe” (Proverbs 18:10).

Tongues accomplished what it was intended to do. The startled onlookers asked, “What meaneth this?” to which Peter replied (in one language that the entire multitude understood!), “These are not drunken, as ye suppose . . . But this [which you see and hear] is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel” (Acts 2:14-16).

Could it be that this experience was for the twelve only, or perhaps limited to the 120 who received the Holy Ghost in the upper room on the Day of Pentecost? Again, this must be ruled out if we accept the scriptural account. Peter assured the multitude that “the promise [of the baptism of the Holy Ghost] is unto you, and to your children [posterity], and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call” (Acts 2:39). So the experience wasn’t limited—nor is it now! If God is still calling people, the promise is unto them!

### **C. The Evidence**

Now, notice the incident that occurred at Cornelius’ house (Acts 10). When Peter began to preach, “the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word” (Acts 10:44). The Jews who had come with Peter were astonished because of this. Their amazement stemmed from the fact “that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 10:45).

How did they know this had occurred?

“For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God” (Acts 10:46).

This was the norm! Anyone on whom the Holy Ghost fell would certainly speak with tongues. The prophets had predicted it. Jesus had declared it would be so, and it is!

But did these Gentiles receive the same experience those on the Day of Pentecost received? Peter answered that question when he explained the event to the apostolic brethren later. After explaining how God had arranged his being at Cornelius’ house, he told how the Gentiles had received the Holy Ghost. “Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us . . . what was I, that I could withstand God?” (Acts 11:17).

The word *like* could be more accurately translated “equal.” This is the full meaning of the Greek word. Peter said the Gentiles had received an experience “equal” to that which the apostles and disciples had received at the beginning. Moreover, all believers—from that day until this—have received the same experience, if they have received what God provided through His death, burial, and resurrection!

Those presented with these truths should recognize that God put the experience of speaking in other tongues in the church. It is His choice of a means of speaking through and to humanity. To acknowledge His gift is to acknowledge the Giver. To reject the gift is to reject the Giver!

### **III. THE PURPOSE**

To understand the value of anything one must determine its purpose. Of what value would a fishing boat be in the middle of the Sahara Desert? Or we might inquire, “How many air conditioners are needed to cool an igloo during the winter months in the Arctic Circle?”

Carrying the thought a step further, we can easily understand how the employment of a thing will contribute to its worth—or diminish it. The finest thoroughbred racehorse alive would be a terrific liability if you had to keep him in your bedroom. If that were the only way you could keep him, each passing day would lessen the horse’s value to you.

If you tried to comb your hair with a garden rake, it wouldn’t take long to determine that the results were not worth the effort. And if that were the only use you could find for a garden rake, its value would diminish accordingly.

That principle also can apply to spiritual gifts. The most prized gift of the Spirit can become a tremendous liability if it is improperly employed. And unless we understand its purpose, we can make the mistake of misusing a gift of God. This need not be done since we have full directions regarding the purpose and functions of the gifts of the Spirit.

Tongues is first of all the initial evidence of Spirit infilling, as we have already seen. We are made to understand, however, that in addition to this experience, there are “divers kinds of tongues”—manifestations of the Spirit of God that operate in the life of the born again believer (I Corinthians 12:10). These manifestations, commonly called “the gift of tongues,” divide themselves into two categories—personal and public.

Before we discuss the personal and public use of tongues, let’s consider their proper use.

#### **A. Proper Use**

First, note the emphasis Paul placed on charity—Christian love (I Corinthians 13). He wasn’t making it a matter of “either charity or spiritual gifts,” but rather placing an emphasis on both. Without the vital ingredient of Christian love nothing else could

function properly. So he concluded: "Follow [eagerly pursue] after charity, and desire spiritual gifts" (I Corinthians 14:1).

Then he compared speaking with tongues and prophecy. His purpose was not to disparage or belittle in any way either gift. Rather, it was intended to clarify the value of each by an examination of its purpose. Clearly, to attempt to use either gift to do what the other was intended for would constitute misuse.

Tongues were not meant to be a means of teaching a congregation. To try to use the gift for that purpose would be futile. As Paul pointed out, "He that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries" (I Corinthians 14:2). If the purpose is to edify, exhort, or comfort the congregation, then tongues would not be appropriate. Prophecy would fill that need (I Corinthians 14:3). The distinction is further clarified in verse 4: "He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church."

One gift provides edification limited to the one exercising it while the other provides an edification on a wider scale. Moreover, there is a distinction between the different modes of edification.

The word *edify* means "to build up, to construct." This word can be used in several ways. One can be "built up" through instruction; he increases his store of knowledge. Inspiration can edify one as he is "built up" emotionally. Then one can be "built up" physically as the muscles develop. Finally, through experience one can be "built up"—edified—in what he knows theoretically.

So the individual believer is edified as he speaks in tongues in a way he cannot be through prophecy. Conversely, he is edified through prophecy in a way he cannot be by speaking in tongues. To attempt to accomplish with either gift the results that can only come from the other is not only futile—it is detrimental and dangerous. When Paul said, "Greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues," he was comparing the scope of their function. Obviously, prophecy would edify a greater number of people than speaking in tongues; therefore, that gift is greater. But only in scope is it greater. That is, more people benefit.

This is proven by the remainder of the verse under consideration. Paul stated, "Greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying" (I Corinthians 14:5).

Plainly, the difference between the benefits of the two gifts is primarily one of scope. If a message in tongues is interpreted, then it is as "great" as prophecy in its scope.

Another point we must remember is that the edification derived from speaking in tongues is different from that which comes from prophecy. Tongues strengthen the “spiritual fiber” through the experience itself—similar to “building up” the physical muscle through exercise. But prophecy builds up the intellect and thereby strengthens one spiritually as well.

Neither gift can replace the other!

### **B. Personal Use**

As we have seen, one purpose for speaking in tongues is to edify oneself (I Corinthians 14:4). This is further clarified in Jude 20: “But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost.”

While we do not necessarily speak in tongues every time we pray “in the Holy Ghost,” we certainly are praying in the Holy Ghost when we do! In that practice we are building up ourselves in a way that can be done through no other means.

This personal use of the gift of tongues can, of course, be experienced in one’s own private devotion, but its use is not to be restricted to this realm. While in a public worship service, one can enter into a spiritual “closet” of prayer and be edified by worshiping in tongues. This is not to be done in such a way as to disrupt the worship of others. Neither is it to be confused with the other uses of tongues in public. In error many have attempted to give a “message” in tongues when the tongues they were speaking were simply for personal edification.

“Let all things be done decently and in order” (I Corinthians 14:40).

### **C. Public Use**

As we mentioned earlier, tongues were to be for a sign to unbelievers. Paul made this very clear in I Corinthians 14:21-22. Moreover, he gave explicit instructions for the proper employment of the gift.

Paul’s question, “Do all speak with tongues?” has given rise to much discussion (I Corinthians 12:30). Some have felt this constitutes an exception to the prophecies regarding tongues being for all believers (Isaiah 28:11-12; Mark 16:17), or for tongues being the accepted sign of the baptism of the Holy Ghost after the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4; 10:46; 19:6).

Consistency would not permit that interpretation. Jesus made no exceptions when He declared, “These signs shall follow them that believe” (Mark 16:17). All believers are included there. It was the accepted norm after the church was established.

What then did Paul's question mean? It meant that giving a message in tongues is reserved for those whom God chooses to use in that way. In other words, no man decides on his own either to employ the gift of tongues in a public meeting or to interpret. Paul was illustrating what he had said earlier:

“But all these [gifts] worketh that one and selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will” (I Corinthians 12:11).

As the different needs arise in the church, the Spirit “divides” or distributes the gifts as He purposes.

The gift of tongues is essentially the same in expression as the experience of speaking with tongues at the baptism of the Holy Ghost. But its function and purpose are somewhat different. In private, speaking in tongues is a means of spiritual intercession (I Corinthians 14:14), and in public it may be interpreted with its message blessing all those who hear and understand (I Corinthians 14:5). In this function, the gift can and must be controlled by the individual (I Corinthians 14:27-28).

## **SUMMARY**

God in His wisdom chose the medium of speaking with tongues to accompany the baptism of His Holy Spirit. He spoke through the lips of men and women in tongues (dialects that they had not learned). The sign is phenomenal and universally miraculous. For all it is the same! It all began in Jerusalem.

This experience has been shared by millions since that great birthday of the church. Even this generation has seen millions receive the same experience. The continuing practice has been attacked by many segments of society, but none have fought it as extensively as religious leaders themselves.

Some of the worst enemies of speaking in tongues have been those who claimed to be its greatest friends—those who experience it. Either through ignorance or outright rebellion, these have so abused and misused the practice as to bring reproach of the worst kind.

Yet, speaking in tongues is a true—and glorious—experience and there are those who revere God and want to use “what God hath wrought” properly. Therefore, the cause of God is furthered through the proper use of each of His gifts.

Speaking in tongues will continue among Bible-believing Christians until the church is raptured! Let us be among that number. And let us so exercise this precious gift that God may be glorified in it all.

## REFLECTIONS

- What Old Testament prophecy foretold of speaking in tongues? What promises did Jesus give concerning this gift?
- Explain what is meant by Luke's descriptions, "a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind" and "tongues like as of fire."
- Who is responsible for speaking in tongues, the speaker or the Spirit? Give this question some consideration before answering.
- Can we be assured that tongues is the initial evidence of the Holy Ghost? How?
- Are there other evidences of Spirit infilling and indwelling? How do they compare with tongues in importance?
- Discuss the popularity of speaking in tongues in the world today.



## Self Help Test

**Give brief answers to the following questions.**

1. What Old Testament prophet prophesied of a rest and a refreshing to come accompanied by “stammering lips and another tongue”? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What reference shows that Paul saw the primary purpose of the prophecy mentioned in question 1? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Who gave the utterance for tongues according to Acts 2:4? \_\_\_\_\_
4. On the Day of Pentecost \_\_\_\_\_ receiving believers spoke with other tongues.
5. To whom did Peter say that the promise of the baptism of the Holy Spirit was given? \_\_\_\_\_
6. How did the Jews know that the gift of the Holy Ghost was poured out also on the Gentiles? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Speaking with tongues in the church was not meant to be a means of \_\_\_\_\_ a congregation. An individual believer is \_\_\_\_\_ as he speaks in tongues.
8. If a message in tongues is \_\_\_\_\_, then it is as great as prophecy in its scope.
9. In private, tongues are a means of \_\_\_\_\_  
In public, it may be \_\_\_\_\_ with its message blessing others.
10. Since the birthday of the church, \_\_\_\_\_ have received the same experience of the baptism of the Holy Ghost with the initial evidence of speaking with other tongues.

## Chapter 9

# TRUE HOLINESS

### FOCUS

Since our God is a holy God, and since Heaven is a holy place, it is reasonable to expect that God's people who plan to go to Heaven must be holy.

### KEY VERSE

“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14).

### SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Romans 12:1-17; I Corinthians 3:9-19; Titus 2:1-15; I John 2:15-29; I Peter 2:1-12; Leviticus 20:7-8, 22-26

### INTRODUCTION

Holiness is a fundamental principle of the New Testament church. It is a concept closely akin to righteousness. The whole purpose of religion is to bring man into a right relationship with God. Most all Christian sects acknowledge righteousness and holiness as basic concepts of the Christian faith. The differences occur when applications of these concepts are made, and the reason many reject the basic concept is because of the way that the principle of holiness has been misapplied on occasion.

Once a man, tired of hearing about holiness, decided he would tear from his Bible every reference to that subject. Sitting before the fire, he began to read and one by one he tore the pages from his Bible. Hours later he sat dejectedly, holding a few fragments of paper and the binding of what had

once been his Bible. Suddenly, he took closer notice of the binding and there on the cover he read, "Holy Bible." In disgust, he threw that in the fire too.

That holiness is basic to New Testament salvation is irrefutable. Hear what Paul said about our conversion.

"Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:24).

We would do well to approach this lesson with sincerity and honesty, with prayer and soul-searching. It is imperative that we have a proper perspective on a subject this vital. Take particular note of apostle Paul's mention of true holiness. Only once does this particular phrase appear in the Scriptures, but it serves to prevent us from casually and indifferently purporting the first opinions that come to mind. Rather it calls us to a conscientious study of the Word of God. It is with a sincere desire to discover true holiness that we now raise the questions about which this lesson revolves.

## I. HOLINESS . . . WHAT?

If something is distinctly known as true holiness, the inference naturally follows that there is holiness that is not true. Sometimes the best way to define a subject is to tell what it is not. As a hillbilly philosopher put it on one occasion, "I don't know what it is, but I shore know what it ain't!"

### A. What Holiness Is Not

- *Holiness is not human morality.* Morality is defined as the relative right or wrong of an action. It is predicated on the opinions of men and is subject to the changing whims of a fickle society. The "old morality" is no more right than the "new morality." Both are the products of human conscience. Situation ethics is the only reasonable philosophy when men are governed solely by standards of conduct of their own making. Holiness is much more than the feeble standards of mortals. We need to beware lest our "standards" be found to be nothing more than a code of conduct concocted by fallible men.

"But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9).

- *Holiness is not personal purity.* Whereas human morality is the quality of conduct of a society, personal purity is the moral attainment of the individual. The Bible declares that it is futile for humankind to attempt to cleanse or purify itself. Even if one should exceed the righteousness of all others, the

Scriptures still declare, “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3:10). And again, “But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6). Holiness is much more than our futile attempts at perfection. We must ever be careful that our holiness is not mere self-righteousness.

- *Holiness is not sacred formality.* Much that comes under the banner of holiness is nothing more than a “form of godliness.” Mere imitation of godly examples falls far short of true holiness. The word *form* suggests that which is external. It is altogether possible to be immaculate and irreproachable as far as the outward appearance is concerned and yet be millions of miles removed from any degree of true holiness. True holiness is of the heart. “Standards” can only judge, measure, and regulate the external. There is no criterion that can be devised to measure the contents or attainment of the heart, for this is the domain that God has reserved for Himself alone.

“The LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart” (I Samuel 16:7).

Holiness is much more than lining up with a set of rules by trying to duplicate the example of another, however godly it may be. We must take particular caution that we do not become so preoccupied with externals that our holiness degenerates to mere powerless formality. True holiness preaching and teaching will always concern itself more with the heart than with the clothesline. We must focus our attention on the working of the Spirit in the inner man, else we will come to rely on our religious fashions and modes to make us acceptable before God. Despite their conspicuous orthodoxy and earnestness, the Pharisees of Jesus’ day did not find favor with God. Modern Pharisees can hope for no better reception.

## **B. What Holiness Is**

*Holiness*, in its broadest sense, is that which belongs to or comes from God. To be holy a thing must have a direct association with God. In contrast, the word *sacred* is applied to things that man associates with God. It is easy to see then why the things mentioned above—human morality, personal purity, and sacred formality—fall short of true holiness. They are things produced by human effort. True holiness is of God alone.

Holiness is the very essence of the nature of God. Consequently, no other word is completely synonymous with it. Holiness is not even to be equated with *sinlessness*, for even the sinless seraphims hide their faces while hovering about the throne of the Holy One (Isaiah 6:2). So conscious are they of His holiness that while in His presence they cease not to cry, “Holy, holy, holy!” (Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8). As an attribute, however, holiness

is not restricted to God only. Being a holy God, He requires that things acceptable to Him be holy also. In this way holiness as a Christian concept applies to all men.

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy” (Leviticus 19:1-2).

Holiness, as it applies to man, is godliness, that is, godlikeness. Man who was created in the image of God shared in God's holiness while he existed in his state of innocence. While in such a state God could freely commune with man. Holiness was then common to God and man alike. Sin, however, destroyed man's holiness and shattered his state of innocence. The drama of redemption was then staged to bring man back into a state of holiness and to make holiness an attainable attribute in the life of man.

### **C. Holiness vs. Worldliness**

Probably the simplest understanding of holiness is to see it as the absence of worldliness. This, of course, calls for a definition of *worldliness*. And, of course, to understand worldliness we need to know what is meant by the expression, “the world.” In the Bible, “the world” is used in reference to three different things. First, it is used to denote a planet, that is, Earth. Used in this respect, everything on the planet Earth—mountains, trees, rivers, air—would be considered worldly. Second, “the world” is used to denote a population, and in this sense everything pertaining to people would be worldly. Third, “the world” is an expression used to speak of priorities. More specifically it speaks of the misplaced priorities of a world system.

This is the biblical meaning of *worldliness*: misplaced values in our lives.

The story is told of two thieves who broke into a clothing store. After rifling the safe and looting the clothes racks of all articles they could either use or sell, they decided to have a bit of fun. After stripping the price tags from the remaining merchandise, they then “repriced” everything in the store. Expensive suits became give-away bargains. Handkerchiefs and hatpins increased in value a thousandfold. For months after the burglars were gone, confusion reigned.

Satan, the god of this world, is the thief who has established a system in this world in which all the price tags have been switched. Like the clothing store thieves, he could not change the value of the merchandise. He could and did, however, change the price tags. Thus, men treasure or disdain the elements of life according to warped priorities. That which is most valuable is so often refused because the price tag is so ridiculously low that the articles seem absolutely undesirable. And that which is

worthless in God's economy is inflated beyond imagination so that the entire population stampedes in its efforts to obtain it.

We are guilty of worldliness when we cooperate with this audacious rearranging of life's values by the god of this world. Our priorities have been warped and misconstrued in three key areas. In light of the thorough and complete accomplishments of Satan, it should not seem strange that these areas encompass every facet of human activity and endeavor.

- *Pleasure*—"For they that are after the flesh do mind [attend to and obey] the things of the flesh" (Romans 8:5). We are all, more than we would like to admit, flesh-conscious. We all, even if not consciously, are constantly pursuing pleasure. If it looks good, smells good, sounds good, feels good, or tastes good, we have an ardent human interest in it.

The pleasure-crazed society in which we live tries less and less to disguise its mad hunger for the sensuous. The popular bumper sticker slogan, "If It Feels Good . . . Do It!" speaks the sentiments of fun-seeking millions. Practically all advertising is based on human lust. We are unceasingly bombarded with the message that if we will only use a certain toothpaste or mouthwash, we too can be like the beautiful, young, vitally alive people in the ad. Even products not directly related to the flesh are given a sensuous appeal. Question: What does a bikini-clad blonde have to do with a fishing lure or a stereo? Answer: Nothing, but it sells the merchandise! So intense has been the message that people feel if they are not young, golden-tanned Nordic gods and goddesses, they have no chance at all of being accepted by a flesh-oriented society.

*Time* magazine reports that the latest craze is "sex rock" and that at least 15 percent of all AM broadcasting time is devoted to it. Of 1000 unwed teenage mothers interviewed in Florida high schools, 984 admitted to becoming pregnant while listening to pop songs.

The new-found liberation that so many are "discovering" is nothing more than ancient Greek and Roman hedonism revived. The god of this world didn't start switching price tags yesterday! We need to be reminded, however, that Hugh Hefner, the lust lord of *Playboy* fame, did not invent sex. Our male-femaleness, as well as all five of our senses, are endowments of the Creator. We are not to try to become sensually numb; we are just supposed to keep the price tags straight!

- *Possessions*—Knowing man's basic tendency toward greed and avarice, God gave two of the Ten Commandments to deal directly with this aspect of man's nature. The eighth commandment forbade anyone to take the possessions that

rightfully belonged to another. The tenth commandment went deeper and dealt with the basic motivation of the eighth: covetousness. It forbade man to even look upon another's possessions with a desire for them.

Obsession with material possessions is still a tendency of man's nature, making it so easy for Satan to bring delusion concerning true values. The Scriptures are replete with warnings against investing and trusting in temporal things. We are warned that Satan has hiked the price "sky high" on things temporal. Yet, if we are honest, we will admit that materialism is a besetting sin of us all to some degree.

Also in this area, modern advertising methods of the mass media point out man's basic human weaknesses. The ads that do not appeal to our sensuality appeal to our covetousness, and many appeal to both. Product presentations are designed to make us dissatisfied with our present possessions. Cosmetic changes in automobile design make last year's model, though still functional, obsolete as far as our desires are concerned. We are told repeatedly by the mass media that our happiness is totally dependent upon our ability to acquire the newest innovations of modern technology.

But the precepts of the Bible are diametrically opposed to such a philosophy. Jesus said, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15).

We live in a plastic, disposable, artificial world. The perfect climate has been created by the god of this world to make our natural desires fester and mushroom into cancerous greed. We are all victims of a vicious "rat race" in which we are forced to clamor for greater wealth just to exist in a red-tape, insurance, tax-burdened world. We are constantly reminded we are to "keep up with the Joneses." But just when we begin to think we have arrived, the Joneses refinance and the mad race plunges on.

But God has a better way. Someone has said that to win the "rat race" only makes you the "number one rat!" God's better way is a life of holiness, which helps us to keep our priorities straight. Jesus said, "But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Luke 12:31).

- *Position*—The third general area in which our inherent selfishness is manifested is our concern for a proper self-image. Ours is a status-conscious world. This relates very closely to the area of material possessions just discussed (in fact, all three areas are interrelated), for many possessions are recognized status symbols. But the world's clamor for position goes beyond mere pride in earthly possessions.

We are creatures made in the image of a God who desires worship and love from His creation. Consequently, a desire for approval, for admiration, and even for adoration is basic to our nature. This need can become accentuated by misplaced priorities, however, until a lust for status and power becomes a driving obsession in our lives.

No creature can be quite so pompous, can preen himself so conceitedly, can become so involved in political maneuverings as can man. His hunger for recognition and plaudits drives him mercilessly. How desperately he seeks to be noticed, yet with what dignity he displays his false modesty. Pride takes such subtle forms. It even parades as religious piety. It corrodes the pure metal of holiness into a rust-ridden “holier than thou” posture of spiritual conceit.

“There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man . . . For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man” (Mark 7:15, 21-23).

Jesus listed pride among all the other evils that are generated in the hearts of mankind. All these evils are the products of natural human inclinations, the basic nature given by God. These drives are made evil when they are perverted by the misplaced values of Satan’s world system. Thus simple pleasure becomes sensuous perversions of the flesh, acquisition of basic necessities of life becomes greedy grabbing for earthly gain, and the innocent desire for approval and love becomes a proud hunger for power and position.

This is what the Bible calls “the world,” and to be drawn into the madness of its perversion is worldliness. More familiar to us, perhaps, is the way John expressed it: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world” (I John 2:15-16).

The “lust of the flesh” is the perversion of sensual pleasure; the “lust of the eyes” is the inflation of the value of material possessions; the “pride of life” is the unnatural obsession for status and position. Satan’s system is so subtle. We are compelled by our own natures and the very scheme of things to be active in each of these areas. Our tremendous challenge is to keep our values and priorities in proper perspective. Holiness is the attribute that enables us to keep in check our human drives and motives and free ourselves from worldliness. Holiness, however, is more than just the absence of



wickedness and worldliness. God does not leave us empty; He replaces the evil with His nature . . . and that is holiness.

Colors in the light spectrum teach a great lesson about holiness. Black is the absence of all light. White, on the other hand, is the presence of all light. White is achieved not so much by the taking away of the black as it is the adding and combining of all the basic colors. So holiness is not so much the removal of sin as it is the addition of God's attributes to one's life.

## II. HOLINESS . . . WHY?

We will now examine the necessity of holiness in the life and character of men. In doing so we will see holiness as a command, as a commission, and as a calling.

### A. The Command to Be Holy

"Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the LORD your God" (Leviticus 20:7).

God's word to His church in the Old Testament was an unequivocal command to be separated from that which was unclean. All the laws and ordinances of Leviticus 11-22 were God's specific instructions for Israel's cleanliness. They were all expressed, however, in the one statement: "Be ye holy!"

The Mosaic law was much concerned with sanitation and hygiene, but Israel's observance of these regulations was not based upon a sense of the value of physical health. They obeyed because of a far higher conception that God is a holy God and that all material uncleanness is offensive in His sight. It was fear of displeasing God, not the dread of disease and dirt that made the Jews such a sanitary nation.

"The LORD thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp . . . therefore shall thy camp be holy: that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee" (Deuteronomy 23:14).

The command to holiness today is no less strict than in Old Testament times. The writer of Hebrews stated, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14).

The word *follow* is much stronger in the original Greek than it is in English. The Greek word is *dioko*, which literally means "to pursue, as one would a calling." In Philippians 3:14 it is translated "press toward." It is not, therefore, just a passive acknowledgment of the concepts of peace and holiness, but rather an ardent pursuit of

them. Jesus said that blessings were reserved not for mere followers of peace, but rather, “Blessed are the peacemakers” (Matthew 5:9).

So holiness, too, must not be merely followed passively, but rather diligently and enthusiastically striven for. In fact, we are to press toward holiness in the same proportions that we have received the promises of God.

“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (II Corinthians 7:1).

Let us consider the command to holiness in these three ways:

- *Holiness is possible.* It is only natural after surveying God’s holiness to assume that to attain such a state of humanly impossible. And if we have any difficulty coming to such a conclusion on our own, Satan is ever ready to assure us that such is certainly the case. Let us be reassured, however, that God does not mock us by demanding the impossible. What we cannot attain or produce within ourselves, He has made provision to enable us to achieve. Holiness is just such an attribute. We cannot produce it. Our best efforts are rejected because they are that God-hated commodity, self-righteousness. The truth of the matter is that God does not want us to “produce” holiness at all, but rather “follow after” or pursue His holiness. He wants to manifest His holiness in us and through us. Holiness is possible through God’s enablement.
- *Holiness is prerequisite*—If we are not convinced that holiness is possible, then we naturally conclude that it is unnecessary. One line of reasoning says that if we enjoy the forgiveness of sins, we need not worry about overcoming sin. But the Scriptures oppose this philosophy. Paul wrote to the Romans, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid” (Romans 6:1-2).

Many content themselves with the justification, “I don’t pretend to be a saint. I’m just an ordinary Christian.” What they fail to realize is that holiness is the norm for the Christian. Holiness is not an elective; it is the required course. Why are we to seek and strive for holiness so earnestly? The answer is simple. The nature of God demands it. The writer of Hebrews tells us that holiness is a prerequisite to pleasing God (Hebrews 12:14). The unclean thing cannot enter His presence. It must first be made holy.

- *Holiness is practical*—Holiness is not just the subject of theological rhetoric. It is intended to be actualized in the daily life of the child of God. One of the Bible’s synonyms for holiness is spirituality. To be spiritual is more than to be

moral; it is to be led and energized by the Spirit. Holiness then is most practical, for it allows the Spirit to do for us what we are unable to do for ourselves. Peter said that we should “be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason” (I Peter 3:15). It is comforting to know that the life of the Christian is based upon reason. There is a reason, a Bible reason, why we live and conduct ourselves as we do. And if we cannot give a reason for our behavior, perhaps we need to re-examine our actions! Obeying the command to holiness makes sense!

## **B. The Commission to Be Holy**

We are all familiar with the various renderings of the Great Commission. We know we are to go, to preach, to teach, to baptize. Many times, however, we overlook Peter's admonitions and commands that he gave in his letter to the church.

“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. . . . Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul, having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that . . . they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God” (I Peter 2:9, 11-12).

Not only are we to preach it and teach it, we are to show it! “That we should shew forth the praises of Him,” Peter said. Holiness is our witness to the world. Our transformed lives, our abstinence from worldliness, our good works brought about by our life of holiness will be a call to the sinner to believe in the reality of salvation.

Hear Christ as He gives the marching orders to His church:

“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).

This is not a suggestion; this is our commission. The only way the world will ever know about the holiness of God is to see it manifested in His church. Paul stated, “Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in the fleshy tables of the heart” (II Corinthians 3:2-3).

### C. The Call to Be Holy

“For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness” (I Thessalonians 4:7).

More than a command or a commission, the life of holiness is a calling. Let us consider two aspects of this calling.

First, it is a calling in the sense of being that which a man works at and by which he is distinguished from others who have a different calling. Christianity is the distinctive vocation of holy living. The tragedy is that so many have ceased to work at their calling. To these Paul directed the question, “Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?” (Galatians 5:7).

Second, we are called to holiness in the sense that it is an invitation. God bids us to be intimate with Him. Wonder of wonders! The mortal has been asked to commune with the Eternal, the finite has been bidden to sit with the Infinite, weakness has been invited into concord with the Almighty. Ah, but to stand in His presence one must be sanctified. It is a holy calling; it is a call to holiness.

## III. HOLINESS . . . HOW?

“Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it” (I Thessalonians 5:24).

This verse of Scripture tells us three things. First, it tells us what God is: “Faithful is he.” Second, it tells us what God has done: “He . . . calleth you.” Third, it tells us what God will do: “Who also will do it.”

We have already learned the very essence of God’s nature is holiness. His faithfulness is a result of that holy nature. We have also learned that God has called us to holiness. This is the calling spoken of in I Thessalonians 5:24.

Now comes the profound truth: *He will do it!* He has called us unto holiness—His holiness. The total work is His alone. God’s fullest intention for man is that he be brought into a state in which God’s nature is fully imparted to him. From conversion to the second coming of Christ, this is the work the Holy Spirit is doing in the hearts of men.

“The Lord make you to increase and abound . . . To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints” (I Thessalonians 3:12-13).

Holiness is the work of God. How then is He doing it?

### **A. Holiness and Forgiveness**

Holiness is not a condition of forgiveness; it is a consequence of forgiveness. After our sins are forgiven, the power of the Holy Ghost enables us to remain free from sin. It is not, "If you are holy, God will forgive you." That would not be forgiveness at all, but rather a reward for our efforts. It is rather, "You cannot be holy until you are forgiven, and you will be holy only after you are forgiven."

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Notice that cleansing follows forgiveness. In Psalm 51, David first prayed, "Hide thy face from my sins." This was a petition for forgiveness. Then he prayed, "Create in me a clean heart." This was a prayer for holiness.

### **B. Holiness and Redemption**

"We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:10).

The preaching of grace always brings about the human line of reasoning that if sin abounds and grace much more abounds, then we need to sin more and more so there will be more grace. Paul answered this reasoning in Romans 6:1-2, a passage we dealt with earlier in the lesson. "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"

Paul did not threaten the church in this Scripture. He did not say, "You had better not sin or you will forfeit grace!" He rather appealed to spiritual reasoning. In effect he said, "Remember the cross and the shed blood of Jesus Christ and you will not be able to continue in sin." Holiness in man is a direct result of Calvary and the shed blood of the Holy One.

### **C. Holiness and Grace**

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:11-12).

Grace is not only the mercy God has shown toward undeserving sinners. It is also the enabling power He gives them to make them capable of fulfilling His lofty requisites.

- Justification is what grace does for us.
- Sanctification is what grace does in us.

Salvation is a continuing work of grace. Grace teaches us and progressively perfects us. Sanctification is not an instantaneous trip to perfection. It is rather a progressive work that brings us to maturity. “To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness” (I Thessalonians 3:13). Paul spoke of “perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (II Corinthians 7:1); that is, eventually bringing holiness to its ultimate end. It speaks of spiritual maturation (healthy growth) rather than spiritual maturity (finished perfection).

“Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world” (I John 4:17).

#### **D. Holiness and Faith**

The Lord Jesus declared to the apostle Paul (then Saul) during his Damascus road experience that we “are sanctified by faith that is in me [Christ]” (Acts 26:18). True holiness is the righteousness of God that is imparted to us by faith and not by works.

We are sanctified by faith when we realize we have no holiness of our own, nothing that is fit for the presence of God, nothing that meets His stringent demands. We then accept Christ as our sanctification and receive from Him the Holy Ghost that gives us inward righteousness of disposition and an inward power to maintain that right relationship. Holiness is of faith because holiness is of Christ and Christ dwells in our hearts by faith (Ephesians 3:17).

### **SUMMARY**

True holiness is of the spirit as well as of the flesh. It is the fruit of the Spirit, not the product of human effort. Holiness is not a human imitation of the example of Christ. Rather it is the supernatural reproduction of the mind and disposition of Christ in our hearts by the power of the Holy Ghost.

### **REFLECTIONS**

- What is meant by “true” holiness?
- Name some things that holiness is not. Tell what holiness is.
- In what three ways is the word *world* used in the Scriptures? What, according to the Scriptures, is *worldliness*?
- Discuss holiness as a command, as a commission, as a calling.

- On the basis of what three reasons does God command us to be holy?
- How is holiness attained by the child of God? What provisions has God made for holiness in His master plan?

## Self Help Test

**Multiple Choice:** Circle the letter of the correct answer.

1. Holiness can be best defined as
  - a. human morality
  - b. personal purity
  - c. sacred formality
  - d. that which belongs to or comes from God
2. True holiness preaching and teaching will always concern itself more with
  - a. what a person wears
  - b. duplicating the example of another
  - c. lining up with a set of rules
  - d. the heart
3. The biblical meaning of *worldliness* is
  - a. referring to the planet earth
  - b. denoting a population
  - c. misplaced values in our lives
  - d. none of the above
4. When it comes to holiness, what God desires is that we
  - a. produce holiness
  - b. endeavor to mimic the holiness of others
  - c. pursue His holiness
  - d. all of the above

**Give brief answers.**

1. Give a reference showing that God has called us to holiness. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Holiness is not a condition of forgiveness; it is a \_\_\_\_\_ of forgiveness.
3. David's prayer for holiness is found in \_\_\_\_\_
4. Holiness in man is a direct result of \_\_\_\_\_
5. True holiness is of the \_\_\_\_\_ as well as of the flesh.



## **Personal Study Notes**

## Chapter 10

# DIVINE HEALING

### FOCUS

Divine healing is one of the benefits purchased by Jesus' suffering and death, which shows forth His mercy, compassion, and power and brings glory to His name.

### KEY VERSE

"There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one" (Acts 5:16).

### SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Luke 9:1-10; Acts 5:12-16; 19:11-12; James 5:13-20; Isaiah 53:1-12; John 9:1-11; Matthew 8:5-17.

### INTRODUCTION

The doctrine of divine healing is not an unimportant option; it is not a religious luxury. It is a most basic element to an understanding of the Christian faith. The entire drama of redemption is designed to reinstate fallen humanity to the state of perfection in which we were created. Physical healing for our broken bodies is a part, a very vital part, of that restoration.

Of course, the most important aspect of God's dealings with mankind is the salvation of the soul and the recreation of the spirit. But to ignore the needs of the body would not fit the divine pattern and the work of redemption would be incomplete. By the same token, to emphasize physical healing to the neglect of mankind's spiritual needs is a

frustration of the grace of God. Placed in proper perspective, however, divine healing plays a vital role in the church today.

Jesus approached the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda with the question, “Wilt thou be made whole?” (John 5:6). A more direct question, considering the fact he had been afflicted thirty-eight years, would have been, “Would you like to be healed of your sickness?” But Christ’s interest in the man was not restricted to the realm of the physical. He was interested in something more than healing the man’s disease. He wanted the man to be whole!

Physical healing is part of being made whole! Spiritual healing is also part of being made whole! Jesus Christ wants to heal the total man!

Why?

Christ explained His purpose on earth as being the Bringer of Life: “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). As the Life-bringer, He came to do combat with everything that opposes life. Adam lost for us all the gift of life in the Garden of Eden. Death was the just punishment for the sin committed there. Jesus Christ came to set aright and restore what Adam had fouled and forfeited.

“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12).

“For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (I Corinthians 15:21-22).

When we view sickness as *incipient* (beginning, commencing, first stages) death, then we readily understand why God has made such abundant provision to remedy it. Just as death was caused by sin, so is sickness brought to man by sin—Adam’s sin.

Through the finished work of Calvary, Christ Jesus conquered death along with Hell and the grave. Because sickness is a rudimentary stage of death, the finished work of Calvary made provision for that also.

Divine healing, then, is part and parcel of the redemptive process. It cannot be separated from God’s concern for man’s spiritual needs. It is not a realm of divine activity separate and apart from all else that God is doing to be accepted or ignored according to human whim.

If we cannot accept God's work in divine healing, then we cannot expect to appropriate His provision for the soul and spirit.

If we are unconcerned about what God will do in our lives spiritually, then we have no right to expect divine healing for our bodies.

These two concepts complete each other, for they stem from the same source. They each meet the basic human need. They each display God's basic power and purpose.

Thus, we see the two inseparably linked in Scripture. For example, the psalmist said, "Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases" (Psalm 103:1-3).

Jesus declared Himself to be the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy that spelled out this two-fold purpose. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised" (Luke 4:18).

James showed that God's provision for the sick was not restricted to the realm of the physical. James wrote, "And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him" (James 5:15).

Armed with this knowledge that divine healing is not just an optional by-product of God's provision, but rather finds its basis at the very core of the redemptive process, let us proceed to examine some of the specific reasons why healing has been provided for mankind.

## **I. REASONS FOR HEALING**

### **A. Fulfillment of Prophecy**

Many argue that since Jesus fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy during His earthly ministry (Matthew 8:16-17), healing is, therefore, not in the atoning work of Calvary. We need to view Christ's earthly ministry as a whole, however.

Luke, in his second letter to Theophilus, spoke of "all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up" (Acts 1:1-2). We infer from this expression that the ministry of Christ is to be viewed as one element extending from the time He "began" (His baptism) until He was "taken up" (His ascension). Between these two events stands the drama of His crucifixion. On the cross, Christ pronounced the

benediction on His own ministry: "It is finished" (John 19:30). Thus, we see His life's work divided into three phases: preparation, consummation, and explanation.

The preparation was His preaching of the gospel of the kingdom, the spiritual kingdom to be instituted later at Pentecost. During this time He tried to prepare the disciples for Calvary. The consummation was the finished work of Calvary when the price was paid and the provision was made for the promised kingdom. The explanation was the final teaching and instruction given the disciples after His resurrection by opening their understanding (Luke 24:45) and helping them to grasp the purpose and extent of the work of Calvary. Thus, we see Christ in the healing of the sick during His earthly ministry beginning the work of Calvary. What a testimony to the faithfulness of God!

"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 53:4-5).

The present tense verb in the last sentence of Isaiah's prophecy reveals God's faithfulness. Though its fulfillment was 750 years into the distant future, still the prophet wrote by inspiration, "With his stripes we are healed." Isaiah claimed healing for his generation on the faithfulness of God's promised atonement.

Peter, when referring to this same prophecy, showed further the power of God's faithfulness in the tense of a verb. He said, "By whose stripes ye were healed"! (I Peter 2:24). God's faithful provision for our healing purchased by Christ's blood is so effectual that we can consider it past and finished. We are already healed! We "were" healed at Calvary!

Moffatt's rendering of Isaiah 53:3-5 is especially beautiful:

"He was despised and shunned by men, a man of pain, who knew what sickness was, like one from whom men turn with shuddering, he was despised, we took no heed of him. And yet ours was the pain he bore, the sorrow he endured! We thought him suffering from a stroke at God's own hand, yet he was wounded because we had sinned. 'Twas our misdeeds that crushed him; 'twas for our welfare that he was chastised, the blows that fell on him have brought us healing."

A preacher once told of a vision he received from the Lord in which he saw the Lord strung up against a stone wall, suspended with cruel straps so that His toes barely touched the floor. A Roman soldier was lacing His bare back with a cat-o-nine-tails. The bone and metal braided into the

leather sliced and bit out huge chunks of flesh with each stinging blow. The sight of blood and mangled flesh and exposed bones was nauseating.

The preacher stood it all as long as he could, and finally rushed forward to stop the tormentor. Grasping the soldier's shoulder, the preacher roughly swung him around, and then stopped still in utter amazement. The face of the Roman soldier was his own!

We can expect God to heal today because of His faithfulness in fulfilling His Word.

## **B. Destruction of Satan's Works**

"That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him" (Acts 10:37-38).

All sickness and disease are either directly (by oppression) or indirectly (because of original sin) the result of satanic powers. Christ came to break the yoke of sin's bondage. He conquered death, Hell, and the grave. On the basis of that victory, Paul wrote this challenge of triumph:

"Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 15:54-57).

Though men still taste of death, we know by faith in the victory of the Lord Jesus that death has been totally conquered and therefore holds no fears for the child of God. Mark recorded a typical example for us in the story of the man sick of the palsy. The house where Jesus was ministering became so crowded until no one else could get inside. The sick man was borne by friends to the housetop where he was let down through a hole in the roof. Jesus acknowledged the faith of the man's friends and said to the sick man, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee" (Mark 2:5). The sick man and his friends were drawn to Jesus because of His ability to heal. Once in His presence, however, the man's spiritual needs were ministered to as well.

## II. AVENUES TO HEALING

“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” (Hebrews 11:6).

Our first step of action is to contact the Healer, and we do that through faith. We must get our thinking straight until we know that God is! We must quiet our emotions through this assurance. The psalmist said, “Be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10).

On the basis of that simple faith, we call and ask. God delights in supplying our needs, but in ministering to us He will not smother us or take away our initiative and character. That independence He gave us at creation through the breath of life, He will not take away. He waits for us to ask. He knows our needs before we ask, but for our sakes He waits for us to ask. He does not demand. He does not force or coerce. But when we call on Him in faith, He responds!

### A. The Source of Healing

The source of healing is two-fold. First, as we have just discussed, healing comes through faith. This, of course, leads quite naturally to the second element, the Word of God, for “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17).

God has a recipe for life and health. Life comes through His Word. Jesus said, “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63). The written Word was given to us to reveal unto us the living Word, Jesus Christ.

“My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings. Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart. For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh” (Proverbs 4:20-22).

Life is in the Word. Healing is in the Word. Health is in the Word.

Someone asked a preacher who had been used mightily of God in divine healing, “Brother, do you ever feel bad or get sick?” “Yes, once in a while,” he answered. “What do you do?” “Well, first I double up on my Bible reading because those words are ‘life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh.’”

## **B. Gifts of Healing**

In enumerating the various gifts of the Spirit in I Corinthians 12, healing is the only one that is noted as a plurality. It is not the gift of healing, but rather the gifts (plural) of healing. Perhaps one of the reasons for this designation is that divine healing can take place in so many different ways. Let's consider at least three.

- *Nature*—The laws of healing are written into the universe. The human body was created by the eternal Life-giver. His beautiful design was an out breathing of His own nature; therefore, He made the human body capable of repairing itself.

A professor at a medical college addressed his class of incoming freshmen with these opening remarks: "Gentlemen, always remember, most folks will get better no matter what you do to them! Nature is always on the side of the medical profession!"

You can imagine the shock these young men, intent upon healing all the world's diseases, must have felt whether they studied or not, whether they graduated or not, whether they set up a practice or not, most folks would get well anyway. What a tribute to divine healing!

When we cut our finger and within a few days the wound has mended itself, we are apt to remark, "Well, nature took its course," or "Ole Mother Nature had her way." But wait a minute! Nature, despite popular opinion to the contrary, is not feminine in gender. Nature is masculine in gender and His title is God the Father! When our natural bodily functions cause us to mend and improve in health, we can express our gratitude to the divine design of the Healer. This is not supernatural healing, but it is divine!

- *Recovery*—Often a malady exists that if left to run its course, however, will end in death. Divine intervention is essential in such a case. God, through the gifts of His Spirit, has made provision for removing whatever obstacle stands in the way of natural recovery. Once removed the body then has the power to mend itself. We call this progressive supernatural healing.

The apostolic power of loosing and binding (Matthew 16:19) should be utilized in this realm of divine healing. Often we hear people when praying for the sick say something on this order: "In the name of Jesus, I bind this affliction in this body!" This is proper, but it is incomplete. We not only need to bind the affliction, we need to loose the power of healing in that body. By doing so, we bind the obstacles that prevent health and then we free the



natural functions that were divinely designed and placed in that body. Recovery is then possible because of divine intervention.

- *Miracles*—On other occasions God not only intervenes, but He speeds up the recovery process as well. When that happens we call it *instantaneous supernatural healing*. It's a miracle! What would take six months to accomplish naturally, He does in six seconds! On the other hand, there are those cases that by nature would neither mend nor recover. What we need in those instances is a *creative miracle*. The power of the Word, the creative Word, that brought the worlds into being (Hebrews 11:3) can also create and re-create life and organs in the human body! How great is our God!

## IV. ROADBLOCKS TO HEALING

### A. Wrong Relation to God

The principles discussed thus far in the lesson illustrate that healing can be obstructed by a wrong condition of spirit on our part. Such things as unconfessed sin, an unrepentant heart, an attitude of pride, or the harboring of fears, doubts, and guilt will stop the flow of healing virtue. A lack of faith, in many cases, either to *receive* healing or to *retain* healing after it has been received is a prime cause for many people being sick. In other instances, God sometimes waits until we attain to certain areas of spirituality before He releases healing for us. He wants to heal, but even more He wants to see us attain spirituality.

Many times striving for spiritual heights, focusing our attention on the kingdom instead of self, is the key that unlocks healing and health in our lives.

### B. Wrong Relation to the Body

“For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak” (I Corinthians 11:29-30).

The sacrament symbolizes the Lord's body, the church. Wrong relations between brothers in the church—resentments, strife, envyings, backbitings, unforgiving spirits, and even open malice—are the cause of much anxiety that actually results in physical sickness or even premature death. To be a healthy member of a healthy body, we need to “follow peace with all men” (Hebrews 12:14), “especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10).

## B. Wrong Concepts and Beliefs

Ignorance in the matter of divine healing probably robs God's people of that blessing more than anything. Let's briefly examine some common errors in concept.

- *"I didn't feel anything. God must not have healed me!"* Many come for prayer expecting only a miracle and when God does not heal them instantaneously they give up hope for anything from God. We need to come, in most cases, expecting a healing of recovery; then when God sovereignly moves to give a miracle, what a glorious blessing that will be!
- *"God sends sickness on His people."* God does not create sickness. Sometimes He allows it or permits it because of man's disobedience. God is not the author of death, but of life.
- *"The devil made me sick."* Demonic oppression is certainly a cause of sickness many times, but this is only through the pressure that is brought to bear upon a person. The pressure and anxiety actually causes the physical disorder. Before Satan can make you sick or afflict you *directly*, he must go before the throne of God and ask special permission. This is what happened in the case of Job. God permitted Satan to afflict Job directly with boils. But this is the only time that the Scripture records this sort of an agreement between Satan and God, and that was to prove a special issue. We have no reason to believe God has ever permitted that to happen again!
- *"My healing may not be God's will."* Jesus Christ is the Healer who "Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses" (Matthew 8:17). That means *all* our infirmities and *all* our sicknesses for *all* of us. Healing is basic to His nature. It is His will to heal just as much as it is to save. When He doesn't, we can look for some reason other than His will.
- *"There were sick Christians in the Bible who weren't healed."* Yes, there were some such as Trophimus in II Timothy 4:20 who apparently was not healed. However, Paul preached to thousands who were never saved, but this does not invalidate the Word that says the Lord is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9). Sick Christians do not prove God's will any more than unsaved heathens do. Now, the Lord in His sovereignty may decide not to heal, but we should never, because of doubt and fear, "decide" for Him!
- *"This affliction is my thorn in the flesh."* There is no proof whatever that Paul's "thorn in the flesh" was a physical disorder. Rather, Paul very plainly says that the thorn was a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him (II Corinthians

12:7). Later in verse 10 he listed five things that were associated with this “thorn.” Only one is “infirmities.” The other are “reproaches,” “necessities,” “persecutions,” and “distresses.” Satan’s buffeting consists of deception and accusations (Revelation 12:9-10). Probably in Paul’s case, his thorn was the persistent, tormenting accusations concerning his extreme difficulties in spreading the gospel.

- *“I am suffering for the glory of God.”* Based on misinterpretations of John 9:3 and 11:4, many believe they are glorifying God through their sickness. Though it is possible to glorify God through suffering for the gospel as discussed above in II Corinthians 12:7-10, there is nothing about a disease or sickness that is common to all men that glorifies God just because a Christian has it. God is glorified through healing, not through sickness!

## SUMMARY

Since the Lord has so willingly and sacrificially paid the price for our healing, we ought to be bold in claiming these promises while at the same time being humble in receiving them. The Bible’s instructions are very explicit regarding the prerequisites to healing. There is no reason why we should be robbed of this bounty from God’s hand. Just as surely as God wants to mend broken lives and hearts through His magnificent salvation plan, so He also wants to mend broken bodies through divine healing. “But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings” (Malachi 4:2). We can be healed, thanks to the “back side of Calvary.”

## REFLECTIONS

- Discuss the importance of divine healing. How does it relate to salvation?
- Name at least three reasons why God has provided divine healing for the New Testament church.
- How do we prepare ourselves for healing?
- What is the two-fold source of healing?
- What did Paul mean by “gifts” of healing?
- Discuss some roadblocks to healing. Have you ever failed to receive healing because of one of these obstacles?
- Share your testimony of a divine healing in your Christian experience.

## Self Help Test

**Give brief answers.**

1. The most important aspect of God's dealing with man is the\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
2. When Jesus asked the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, "Wilt thou be made whole?" Jesus was interested in more than healing the man's disease. He wanted \_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
3. Part and parcel of the redemptive process of Calvary is\_\_\_\_\_.
4. How does Psalm 103:1-3 show that God has made provision for the soul and body?  
\_\_\_\_\_.
5. How does James show that God's provision for the sick was not restricted to the physical body? \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Isaiah claimed healing for his generation on the faithfulness of \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Our first step in obtaining healing is to \_\_\_\_\_.
8. The second element in obtaining healing is \_\_\_\_\_.
9. In enumerating the various gifts of the Spirit, the only one that is noted as a plurality is healing. Perhaps one of the reasons for this is \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

## **Personal Study Notes**

## Chapter 11

# SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

### FOCUS

Our Lord Jesus will one day appear to deliver His church from the wrath to come. His Second Coming is the hope and comfort of the church.

### KEY VERSE

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (I John 3:2).

### SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Matthew 24:27-31, 44-51; I Thessalonians 5:1-10; Luke 12:37-44; 21:25-36; Titus 2:11-14

### INTRODUCTION

The second personal coming of Christ for His church is the next most important event in a long series involving Christ and His people. Now, more than at any time, the eyes of all Christendom are turned toward the promise of the Master when He said, “I will come again” (John 14:3, 28). His coming is imminent. It is just a matter of time. To say it is at hand is to say it could happen this very moment.

Like all other prophecies that foretell of a coming event, the prophecy of the Second Coming has had its “time of waiting.” The parable of the virgins reveals a period of waiting on the part of the bride and a period of tarrying on the part of the bridegroom.

Without foreboding, the church must wait for the summons, “Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him” (Matthew 25:6). It is also to be understood that Christ, the heavenly Bridegroom, is tarrying, for the exact time of His coming is in the Father’s hands. (See Mark 13:32.) However, when the time clock strikes the hour, “he that shall come will come, and will not tarry” (Hebrews 10:37).

Although the one grand purpose of Christ’s coming is to catch away His church, other important things will take place that will unmistakably change the course of human existence. The economical, political, and religious scenes will change drastically. God’s “pattern of things to come” will become more obvious as the “home-going” of the church grows closer.

The exodus of the church will end the dispensation of grace and God shall change His course of action in dealing with humanity. His dealings will be by the guidelines of wrath and not love.

When Jesus appears the second time, it will be without sin unto salvation. The writer of Hebrews stated, “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall be appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Hebrews 9:28).

His first advent was marked by sin—not His own, but in His identification with sin for the purpose of our salvation. As Paul wrote to the Romans, “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh”(Romans 8:3).

Jesus’ second advent will be marked with the voice of victory for Himself and those who are ready at His coming. “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” (I Thessalonians 4:16).

## **I. THE PROMISE OF HIS COMING**

The promises of God are irrevocable. The very fact that it is impossible for God to lie gives us the utmost confidence in all the promises He has made, including the promise of His second coming. “For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us” (II Corinthians 1:20).

You will note the conspicuous absence of the negative *nay* when the promises of Christ are preached. They are all “yea and amen.” Paul verified this by writing, “But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay” (II Corinthians 1:18).

How beautiful and assuring are the promises of God, for they are all positive. We can believe in the second coming of Christ on the basis of His promise alone. And when He comes again it will be but the reflection of the will of God for us as it was in His first advent.

#### **A. The Promise of Christ**

When Christ was on earth He commended His disciples for believing in God, but He encouraged them to believe in Him as well:

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

In this comforting passage Jesus, first of all, was eager to get His disciples to believe what He had told them. He wanted to eliminate any fear of discrepancies that might exist between God’s promises and His own. In fact, Christ wanted them to understand that all the promises of God were now through Him. He had come to unveil the hidden mysteries as to their destiny and rewards for their believing and obeying the Word of God.

We also observe with great satisfaction the honesty of Christ. He said, “If it were not so, I would have told you.” He was so true and trustworthy He would not leave His disciples clinging helplessly to false hopes. He would not allow them to have “vain imaginations” regarding the future. If there were no Heaven, no mansions, no immortality, He would not allow them to have deceitful expectation. But because it is true, what trust, what confidence we can now have in His second coming!

A certain rabbi, speaking of Jesus, said, “Let us forget the man but accept His teachings, especially those practical and ethical teachings. If observed by society it would create a much grander place to live.”

Jesus never intended for His teachings, however, to be restricted to the making of better societies or for the betterment of living conditions in this world. Does not the Scripture correct such misleading thoughts when it says, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (I Corinthians 15:19). We err greatly when we estrange the thought of living for Christ in this world from the thought of living with Him in the next world.



## **B. The Promise of the Angels**

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

Angels were created for the purpose of ministering to the needs of humans, to have charge over them, and to keep them in all their ways. (See Psalm 91:11; Hebrews 1:14.) In our lesson text, the account of the ascension of Christ reveals the presence of two angels. No doubt the angels were on hand to continue the encouragement and admonishment of Christ when He said, “Let not your heart be troubled.”

Wherever there was an action on the part of Jesus, there was a reaction on the part of His disciples. These reactions often were disturbing. Such was the case involving the ascension of Christ. When He was taken up from among those present, they seemed to be filled with anxiety and fear that they would never see Him again. However, the angels comforted them with these words, “This same Jesus, which is taken up from among you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.”

The disciples, who now had received the witness of both Christ and the angels that Christ would come again, left their place of watching and went to their place of tarrying. After receiving their promise of the Spirit, it would then become their turn to comfort others with the message of Christ's returning.

Do not the Scriptures teach, “In the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established” (Matthew 18:16)? Christ spoke of His coming again, the angels reaffirmed it, and men picked up the message and carried it around the world.

## **C. The Promises of Men**

Men, like angels, are used to affirm the promises of God. Paul and other ministers of his time, kept the message of Christ's coming alive and fresh in the early church.

It is still a vital message! It must be preached often and referred to frequently. All other messages will have greater meaning to those who are stirred about His coming. It is a message that purifies the heart. John penned, “When he shall appear, we shall be like him . . . And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (I John 3:2-3).

Paul, the preacher, used the message of Jesus' coming as a springboard to warn the Thessalonians of deception:

“Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, . . . Let no man deceive you by any means” (II Thessalonians 2:1-3).

How wonderful is the message of Christ's coming! The Word of God is true and authentic only if the message of His coming is true and authentic. Paul was so sure of Christ's second coming that he used it as a test in favor of all other scriptural teachings. Paul, like Christ and the angels, used the message of Christ's coming to quell troubled hearts. He wrote to the Thessalonians, “For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?” (I Thessalonians 2:19).

We are to comfort one another with these words.

## **II. THE PURPOSE OF HIS COMING**

The purposes of God are like a deep flowing river. They are like the waters that begin as a stream and finally swell the lakes and the seas. Christ's Second Coming for His bride is the ultimate of all His desires and purposes. In writing to the Ephesian church, Paul explained the whole purpose of creation and God's dealing with mankind:

“According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world . . . having predestinated us unto the adoption of children . . . wherein he has made us accepted in the beloved . . . Having made known unto us the mystery of his will . . . That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ . . . being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will” (Ephesians 1:4-6, 9-11).

The purposes for which Christ came into the world become a rebirth of purpose to us who believe, who had no reason for living, without God and without hope in this world. To serve Christ for only the “loaves and fishes” is but to die a despairing and wanton soul. To fulfill the whole purpose of God for us, we must be ready for the Lord's return. This is surely the “rapture generation” and many now living, like Enoch and Elijah, may never taste of death, but shall see the Son of Man coming with power and great glory.

## **A. The Rapture**

The word *rapture* is never used in the Scripture as defining an act of God or an experience of His people. However, the word can be significantly used to describe the catching away of the bride of Christ. According to Webster, *rapture* describes the “carrying away of a body or spirit; to be caught up in ecstasy and joy.”

When the church is raptured, it will become an immortal church, destined to live forever. Jesus never spoke of immortality in His ministry, but eternal life is spoken of at least seventy times in the New Testament. This is the leading purpose of the Rapture: to give eternal life to those who are worthy. To be in the Rapture is to be changed and have a body like unto Christ's own body. John stated, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (I John 3:2).

We are well aware of our present position in our relationship with God. We are His sons. However, trying to conceive what we shall be in the Rapture would be mere speculation. Nothing we can see in any form in the natural will unfold the mystery of the likeness we shall have in our glorified state. The Rapture alone will clear up this mystery.

A part of our Scripture lesson is from Paul's letter to the Thessalonians. Being a very young church, the believers had fallen into some tragic errors concerning the doctrine of Christ's return. To combat these errors, Paul revealed to them the various mysteries on the subject of the Second Coming.

The Thessalonians were concerned about those who were asleep in Christ and where they would be positioned in the resurrection. Paul explained by writing, “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him” (I Thessalonians 4:14).

Should we think it incredible with Christ that He could raise others up from the dead and glorify them when He performed this miracle for Himself? No! Our remaining alive unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them that are asleep.

Paul's writings to the Thessalonians bear witness to what the angels told the disciples of Christ at the Mount of Olives. They had said, “This same Jesus . . . shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” Now Paul wrote, “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout.” What a glorious revelation!

## **B. The Ending of an Era**

The rapture of the church will terminate the age of gospel preaching. The end of this age was foretold by Christ Himself in Matthew 24:14: “And this gospel of the

kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations: and then shall the end come.”

In remarkable contrast it is significant to note the long span of time known as the church age as compared to the short time of the outpouring of God’s wrath. It is revealed in the Scripture that unless those days be shortened, there would be no flesh saved. When we compare the grace of God with His wrath, we begin to understand both the goodness and severity of the Lord (Romans 11:22). God lengthens the days of His goodness to humanity, whereas in His severity He shortens the days.

In the days of Noah, God’s goodness allowed men 120 years in which to be saved, but swept them all away in a few short days. We need to behold both the “goodness and severity of God.” We have the glorious promise, however, that if we obey the gospel and live faithfully for the Lord, we will escape the terrible wrath that is to come. As Paul said, “For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Thessalonians 5:9).

### **III. PREPARATION FOR HIS COMING**

One of the great signs of fulfillment in our present day is the rapidity with which God is putting the finishing touches on His church. “For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness” (Romans 9:28).

The great ingathering of souls and the preaching of the gospel in new areas of the world is another evident sign of the end of this age.

In addition to these signs is the anxiousness on the part of God’s people for His return. More and more people are saying, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

The greatest sign, however, is the preparation that is now being made for the next age. This occurred many times in the past when there was a moving from one dispensation to another. When this happens, we can only expect the concluding of the existing age and the transition into another.

#### **A. History Repeats Itself**

In His ministry, Jesus did not leave us without witnesses as to how we could correlate existing spiritual conditions with past historical happenings. Generally speaking, the conditions that exist before a judgment are due to the human depravity.

Jesus said, “But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (Matthew 24:37). In the days before the Flood men and women were corrupting

themselves with the sin of excessiveness. Like millions today, they were taking the legal patterns of life and turning them into sinful perversions. They were eating excessively, drinking to their shame, and marrying beyond the limits of God's law. The sin of intemperance will be judged and will cause many to be left behind at the coming of the Lord.

The predictions of Christ have come true. On this side of the judgment, we find the same conditions existing in our modern civilization. To compare Noah's day and our own is to see two civilizations with similar sinful behavior patterns. Such likeness, according to Jesus, should cause us to know the Son of Man shall soon appear. In this account, another sign appears as a terrible tragedy. It is the unawareness of the people of an impending judgment. Jesus reflected upon this lack of preparation: "And [they] knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matthew 24:39).

History is repeating itself. Noah, the first preacher of righteousness, preached for over 100 years. He pleaded and warned people to prepare for the Flood and with his own hands built the ark for the saving of his house. Likewise, Jesus warned His own and this generation: "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come . . . Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matthew 24:42, 44).

Many people today are not sensitive to the unusual happenings that are taking place. They are asking the very questions predicted by Peter: "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation" (II Peter 3:4). Peter connected the present day sayings of men with the doubts of the antediluvians regarding the possibility of a Flood. But just as sure as there was an ark and a Flood, there is a church and there will be a catching away of that church.

### **B. Jesus Is Getting Us Ready**

"Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people."

Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you." John the Revelator witnessed that place. He said, "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Revelation 21:2).

Three things constitute a preparedness for the coming of the Lord:

- We must believe and accept the gospel.
- We must diligently seek for a knowledge of the Scriptures and abide by that understanding until we come to the perfect man in Christ Jesus.
- We must endure to the end, for the same shall be saved.

To accept the gospel is to accept the “born again” experience. No one is prepared for the second coming of Christ unless they have repented of their sins, been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and received the baptism of the Holy Ghost, evidenced by speaking with other tongues.

To have just had the “new birth” experience, however, is not enough to insure a preparedness for the coming of Christ. At every opportunity we must learn and apply the Scriptures. Many reject knowledge by refusing to attend Bible studies. God will also reject them at His coming. Perfection in this life can be reached only by living up to all the knowledge we have been privileged to acquire and understand.

Then, we must endure to the end, whether it is the end of our natural lives or the end of the gospel age. The Bible does not teach “once in grace, always in grace.” It does not teach a second chance after death. Preparation must be made in this life. “It is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27).

May we all be reminded as we go out to meet the Bridegroom to make preparation for the journey, for it may be longer than we think and sooner than we believe. May we always remember that the same door that shut the five wise virgins in is the same door that shut the five foolish virgins out, and all for the want of a little more oil. Unpreparedness is foolishness, indeed. It is imperative that we make our preparation for eternity now! “And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed” (Romans 13:11).

If Paul could admonish his hearers over nineteen hundred years ago with such urgency, how much more ought we, who are so much closer to the Lord’s return, to heed that warning.

Paul’s use of the expression “high time” is most interesting. It could be that his conversion at “high noon” led him to use this metaphor. On the other hand, it may be an indirect reference to Jesus’ parable of the ten virgins whose call to meet the Bridegroom came at midnight.

Both are applicable in our preaching to the lost today. It is high time, “high noon,” in that we are told that “now is the day of salvation” (II Corinthians 6:2). As in Paul’s experience on the Damascus road, the “light of the glorious gospel” (II Corinthians 4:4) is shining brightly into the lives of rebellious men. On the other hand, it is high time, “midnight,” in that we are experiencing the darkest hours of sin that man has ever known. Our ears ache longingly for the cry to cut the thick darkness, “Behold, the Bridegroom cometh! Go ye out to meet Him!” Our time of darkness will soon be terminated with the dawn of a new and glorious day, a day without a night in which the Lamb is the light (Revelation 21:23). The Sun of righteousness is about to arise with healing in His wings (Malachi 4:2)!

## SUMMARY

“And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh” (Luke 21:28).

At the beginning of the lesson we observed the angels telling the disciples to stop their gazing into the sky when Christ ascended. Now we are instructed to look up, for it is time for Him to return. All things are now ready. Blessed are those whom the Lord finds watching and waiting.

## REFLECTIONS

- Discuss the similarities and differences between Christ's first coming and His second.
- What was the promise of the Second Coming as given by Christ? by the angels? by the apostles?
- According to Ephesians 1, what is the relationship between the Rapture and Oneness?
- Why is the catching away of the saints at the second coming of Christ called “the Rapture”?
- What age will the Rapture terminate? What age will it begin?
- What are some of the signs of the Lord's soon return?

## Help Test

**True or False:** Circle the correct answer.

1. The second coming of Christ is the hope and comfort of the church.  
True or False
2. The one grand purpose of Christ's coming is to catch away His church.  
True or False
3. The Lord left His disciples clinging helplessly to false hope.  
True or False
4. Men and angels have affirmed the promise of God in reference to His coming again.  
True or False
5. Because of so many different views of prophecy, we are not to preach often about the coming of Christ.  
True or False
6. The message of Christ's coming strikes fear in the believers' hearts.  
True or False
7. As believers, we should only be interested in serving Christ for the "loaves and fishes."  
True or False
8. The word *rapture* is often used in the Scriptures.  
True or False
9. The phrase "catching away" is used in the Scriptures.  
True or False
10. To be in the Rapture or catching away is to be changed and have a body like unto Christ's own body.  
True or False



11. If we obey the gospel and live faithfully to the Lord, we will escape the terrible wrath of God to come.

True or False

12. To compare Noah's day to our own is to see two civilizations with similar sinful behavioral patterns.

True or False

## Chapter 12

# RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

### FOCUS

The resurrection of the dead is the greatest miracle of the ages. All nature testifies of its truth.

### KEY VERSE

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live” (John 5:25).

### SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Acts 2:22-33; 17:24-32; Matthew 22:23-32; Luke 14:7-14; Romans 1:1-4; I Peter 1:1-11

### INTRODUCTION

Inasmuch as Jesus Christ is the creator of all things, we have our origin in Him; because of His resurrection, we shall also have our destination in Him. Because He lives, all the dead shall be raised, some to everlasting life and some to everlasting contempt.

The central theme of the apostles' doctrine was the teaching concerning the Resurrection. Paul was one of its strongest advocates. He explained how it was a foundation principle of the church: “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept” (I Corinthians 15:20).

This Scripture gives to Christ another “first” in the annals of His life as the Savior of the world. Jesus had many such “firsts” that will never be equaled or surpassed. His resurrection was a total personal achievement. Many can lay down their lives, but only Christ could say, “I have power to take it again” (John 10:18). This He could do because He was both man and God.

Man can oftentimes get things started but cannot get them stopped. Paul explains this weakness in man and the power of Christ. “For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead” (I Corinthians 15:21). The doctrine of the Resurrection is the pedestal upon which all other doctrines are preached. In fact, it becomes the ground for all of our faith.

“If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain” (I Corinthians 15:14).

Those who believe in the miracle of Christ’s resurrection will take courage to live for God and have hope for the future. The very hinge upon which the door to immortality swings is the knowledge that Jesus lives. The foundation of the New Testament church is the empty tomb.

This lesson will not only bring to us points of interest relative to the positive proof of Christ’s resurrection, but also supporting truths regarding the various “episodes” of the resurrection (as we shall call them). These will reveal the proximity they have in relationship to our own spiritual experiences and will also position every individual as to where they will stand in the various rewards or judgments at the end of time.

## **I. THE PROMISE OF THE RESURRECTION**

Our future is as a sealed book, the contents of which will never be known if there is no resurrection from the dead. Everything of any eternal value will become void if the promise of life from the dead is only mythical and not factual. All of the objectives of a risen Lord would have remained in the tomb with a dead Master.

The promise of a resurrection and the subsequent achievements of the risen Christ is the greatest proof of a risen Savior. The works of many great men have died with the man, such as the works of the poet, the artist, and the architect. But the works of Christ continue, for He is alive not only to create but to superintend the works He has brought into existence.

The psalmist David not only believed in Jehovah God, but also believed in a risen Christ. He gave to us a scriptural support by giving us a prophetic promise: “Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt

not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption” (Psalm 16:9-10).

David, in this passage, rejoiced in the hope that his flesh would rest in the grave because of the certainty of Christ’s resurrection. His own soul would not be left in hell (the grave) because the Holy One (Christ) was raised before He could see corruption. To verify that Jesus was the Holy One spoken of by David read Acts 4:25-27.

Though Christ would die and be buried, He would not remain in the grave long enough for His body to decay or be corrupted. Whereas this referred to His corporeal or natural body, we can look to the incorruption of our spiritual bodies. Like David, our flesh shall rest in hope, knowing that when we are raised up, this mortal shall put on immortality and this corruption shall put on incorruption. If Christ would have been corrupted in His natural body, we would have no hope of an incorruptible spiritual body.

We must thank God for the earlier sign of Jonas, the prophet, who was three days and nights in the belly of the whale (Matthew 12:39-40). This was the only sign that Jesus gave His generation, and it was in reference to His resurrection.

Unlike Jesus, Lazarus was in his grave for four days (John 11). His sisters indicated that he was already in a state of corruption. No doubt Jesus allowed this to prove He could bring incorruption out of corruption. Though Lazarus was not glorified at this time, it does offer hope to God’s people that in the resurrection the corrupt will be made incorruptible. Greater still, we mortals will be glorified and exist in a state of immortality.

To prove the deity of Jesus Christ, we have His profession to the sisters of Lazarus before He was Himself resurrected: “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live” (John 11:25).

He could speak these words because He was the eternal Word that is always in the present tense!

#### **A. The Faith of a Patriarch**

The story of the resurrection is much older than that Easter morning when Jesus came forth from the tomb. Many of the Old Testament patriarchs and writers, though not acquainted with the actuality of the resurrection, wrote of such a happening.

Such a man was Job. He shed much light upon the fact of the resurrection. It was while he was in the darkest hours of his life (like Jesus) that the truth of the “after life” sustained him. The writer of Hebrews captured the Lord’s distress and His triumph in one tense sentence, “Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2).

Note first Job's despair: "Why do ye persecute me as God, and are not satisfied with my flesh? Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!" (Job 19:22-24).

The exclamation points testify to Job's distress when spoke these words. And his desires were carried out. His words were written in a book (the Bible), and they were indelibly written in a rock (in the foundation of the church). Job's words were a prophetic utterance concerning the Rock, Christ Jesus, in which the truth of the resurrection would one day be so indelibly inscribed that the truth of it would endure forever. "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God" (Job 19:25-26).

### **B. The Knowledge of a Prophet**

The prophet Daniel was a man of great understanding, skillful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and such as had great ability to stand in the king's palace. (See Daniel 1:4.) This great man was used to interpret dreams and to write visions. His knowledge was of great significance to the king, for he had an "understanding of science." Yet, one of the greatest revelations that ever came to Daniel was the truth of the resurrection. "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:2).

In this Scripture is the revelation of the two destinies of men, eternal life or eternal damnation. Many have been heard to say, "When you are dead, you are just dead, and that is the end of it." But the words of Jesus are contrary: "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).

In these words Jesus bears witness to the prophet Daniel that the resurrection is not for the just alone but for the wicked and unjust as well. In the resurrection all men will proportionately be rewarded. Some will receive gifts of eternal life while others will receive the wages of sin, which is death.

"He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Revelation 22:11-12).

The prophet Isaiah also had a message on the resurrection: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust:

for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead. Come, my people . . . hide thyself . . . until the indignation be overpast” (Isaiah 26:19-20).

Isaiah, like all people who believe in the resurrection, clearly understood that it is not all of life to live and neither is it all of death to die. The prophet not only promised life from the dead but let it be known that our graves are a hiding place. And we should not die mournfully, for we shall awake from the dust singing forth the praises of God.

Job had a similar concept of the grave: “O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me! If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come” (Job 14:13-14).

Daniel, Isaiah, and Job all had hope in the resurrection. They were assured that a mighty change would take place when the saints of God would be raised up.

Paul summed it up in his writings to the Corinthian and Philippian saints: “Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (I Corinthians 15:51-52). “We look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body” (Philippians 3:20-21).

### **C. The Assurance of an Apostle**

Paul used the doctrine of the resurrection as the backbone of his preaching ministry. He witnessed a good profession before kings and magistrates and he made it a point to contend that Jesus was the “son of God,” the “very Christ,” the “resurrected Lord.”

- When Paul was brought before the council in Jerusalem he cried out, “Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question” (Acts 23:6).
- Paul stood before Felix and declared, “And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust” (Acts 24:15).
- Before Festus Paul also affirmed the resurrection. In fact the only point of interest to Festus was that Paul was accused of believing in “one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive” (Acts 25:19).
- Paul declared before Agrippa: “Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other

things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles" (Acts 26:22-23).

Through these four defenses by the apostle Paul, we come to understand the importance of the doctrine of the Resurrection. He established the fact that all religious tenets are useless if Christ is not alive. To establish the truth of the resurrection is to provide the foundation for the teaching of the doctrines of baptisms (see Hebrews 6:2); that is, both water and Spirit. All doctrines that pertain to conversion and salvation have their inception in the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul declared his hope before all accusers. What he was and what he did was the result of a firm and constant belief in a living Christ. So great was his witness that one man trembled and another was almost persuaded to become a Christian. No doubt all of them shared the opinion of Agrippa when he said, "This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar" (Acts 26:32).

## **II. THE FIRST RESURRECTION**

When Jesus Christ became the firstfruits of them that slept, He established the belief of a life after death. He broke the bands of death and became a victor over death, Hell, and the grave. Because of this victory, the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. Hell can be avoided as a destination and the grave will have no victory over those who are saved. Paul asked, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (I Corinthians 15:55).

When the heroes of faith spoken of in the Book of Hebrews were offered an escape from their persecutions, they would not accept deliverance "that they might obtain a better resurrection" (Hebrews 11:35). That better resurrection would be in the first resurrection.

"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power" (Revelation 20:6).

Those who are in the first resurrection are esteemed as blessed and holy. They will escape the second death that is the final judgment of the wicked and ungodly whose destination is the lake of fire.

### **A. The Firstfruits**

Jesus Christ, who was the firstfruits of the resurrection, was likened unto the firstfruits of the harvest that Israel presented to the Lord. The following Scripture presents this parallel: "Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be

come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest: and he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you" (Leviticus 23:10-11).

The death and resurrection of Jesus is likened unto the planting of the seed and the anticipation in due time of a harvest. When the harvest was come, it was expected of Israel that the very first sheaf be waved before the Lord in acceptance of them as a nation. The Lord Jesus was the first sheaf of the resurrection harvest and was accepted of the Father for us. He knew full well His purpose. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:24).

Jesus, of course, was that corn of wheat and He did die, was buried, and upon His resurrection brought forth a harvest of souls and gave them hope of immortality.

A missionary wishing to teach a group of Moslems the truth of the resurrection of Christ, said, "I am traveling and come to a place where two roads meet. I look for a guide and see two men: one dead, and the other alive. Which should I ask for direction, the dead or the living?" "The living, of course," answered the people. "Then," said the missionary, "why send me to Mohammed, who is dead, instead of to Christ, who is alive?"—from *Pulpit Helps*

When Jesus became the firstfruits of the resurrection, He gave us an insight to the power of the resurrection, not only in Himself but to those who qualify for their own personal resurrection. The events accompanying the crucifixion of Christ included a massive raising of the dead. Truly this was a witness to the purpose for the cross.

"And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many" (Matthew 27:52-53).

Because of the knowledge of this great incident, we raise our voices with the apostle Paul: "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (Philippians 3:10-11).

Paul let it be known that in order to be raised up, we, like Christ, must die, "being made conformable to His death." With Christ it was a natural death, but for us it must be a dying out to sin and the Adamic nature. We must be planted or buried in the likeness of His death in water baptism that as the glory of the Father raised Jesus up from the grave so also shall we rise to walk in newness of life. Through the "born again" experience we become new creatures in Christ Jesus; old things have passed away and all things have



become new. We must now abide in this new creation until Christ comes for His church. And whether we are “alive and remaining” or “dead and waiting,” we will be raptured to be with the Lord.

## **B. The Miracles of the Resurrection**

A miracle is an event beyond the power of any known physical law. It is a supernatural occurrence produced by the power of God. Thus, the phenomena of the Resurrection can only be designated as a miracle. When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, a council gathered together and said, “What do we? for this man doeth many miracles” (John 11:47). To them the resurrecting of the dead was indeed a miracle. The greatest miracle of all was the resurrection of Christ. This was due to the fact that Christ, being dual in nature, both God and man, laid down His life and brought Himself back to life (John 10:18).

Pentecost was a resurrection miracle! Luke recorded, “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).

In this report we see a great miracle performed, the miracle of salvation brought to about three thousand souls in one day. Yet, there is another miracle that, perhaps, would never be detected if we didn't look into the background of the people involved. We need to see the lethargy and complacency and even hostility that existed in them regarding the ministry and life of Jesus Christ.

What was responsible for so many thousands of believers accepting the message of Peter so soon after Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and ascension? These people had to be trained in the methods and doctrines of the coming church. Yet, they were not only willing to accept Jesus as “both Lord and Christ,” but were later willing to suffer persecution and even death for Him.

The change in these people's attitude was brought about solely because of their acceptance of Peter's message when he held them under indictment for the crucifixion of Jesus: “God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:36-37).

When the three thousand people believed and were persuaded that Jesus was alive and willing to forgive them, they obediently accepted the message of Peter and were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ and received the Holy Ghost. The turning point was the belief in the miracle of the resurrection of Christ. Up to this time even the apostles were overcome with doubts, often timid, sometimes doing rash things; but after the

Resurrection they were changed men. They received a quick understanding of what they were to preach and became bold in proclaiming it.

This boldness was altogether necessary in view of the many erroneous doctrines prevalent then. Some were of the opinion that the resurrection was past: "Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some" (II Timothy 2:18).

That the resurrection was future was an opinion held by many. For example, "Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day" (John 11:24). Some did not believe in the resurrection at all: "The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection" (Matthew 22:23).

Jesus, however, answered all doubts with His declaration of Himself: "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25).

When we consider the error of the "no resurrection" theory, it behooves us to reevaluate and to reaffirm the real purpose of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The miracle of the Resurrection supports the miracle of salvation! The four basic and important steps of Christ's life—His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension—parallels our own born again experience. This constitutes our hope of the rapture of the church. The cross upon which Jesus died is representative of the death of those who die out to sin through repentance. Godly sorrow works repentance and that repentance works death in those who confess their sins to Jesus Christ. Christ's burial in the tomb is representative of our baptism in water in the name of Jesus Christ. The resurrection of Jesus is indicative of our being brought out of a watery grave of the dead past. We now have arisen to walk in the new life through the Spirit and the operation of God, having been filled with the resurrection power, even the Holy Ghost. Now, like Christ, we will have a time of waiting before our translating. Very soon, however, we expect to "ascend" in the Rapture!

### **C. Qualifications for the First Resurrection**

If those in the first resurrection are "blessed and holy," then to be in the first resurrection one must be recognized as a saint of God, which being defined means "holy one." It was the bodies of the "saints" that arose at the crucifixion of Jesus, not the bodies of "sinners."

In every age there will be those who qualify as saints. We of this age are required to have the "born again" experience to qualify for the first resurrection. Our objective is to "see" the kingdom of God (John 3:3). Our hope is to hear the trumpet of God that shall

alert the dead and the living to His coming. However, in our time, we shall not be qualified to be in this first resurrection unless we have been born again of water and Spirit and are living a holy life before God. To miss the Rapture is to become a prey to the power of the second death.

### **III. THE LAST RESURRECTION**

Jesus, in the last days of His ministry, spoke of a last resurrection and a final judgment: "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" (Matthew 25:31-32).

### **SUMMARY**

Jesus Christ was abused, whipped, driven through streets, nailed to a cross, thrust through with spears, robed in grave clothes, and buried in a tomb. But He arose again, alive and stronger than ever before! The world took God's very best and made Him suffer and destroyed Him for three days; but true to His word, He built the temple again and promised to do the same for all those who would believe in Him. "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14:19).

### **REFLECTIONS**

- How does the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus Christ rate in significance with other doctrines?
- To whom did Paul witness regarding his defense of the resurrection of Jesus Christ?
- Name the different episodes of the resurrection.
- Summarize the rules for cause and effect regarding the resurrection of Christ and us.

## Self Help Test

**Give brief answers.**

1. The central theme of the apostles' doctrine concerned \_\_\_\_\_
2. The doctrine of the Resurrection is the \_\_\_\_\_ upon which all other doctrines are preached.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ is a reference showing that David believed in a risen Christ.
4. The only sign that Jesus gave His generation was in reference \_\_\_\_\_
5. Give references showing that the following Old Testament character believed in or had hope in a resurrection.
  - a. Daniel \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Isaiah \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Job \_\_\_\_\_
6. What hope did Paul declare before all his accusers? \_\_\_\_\_
7. The death and resurrection of Jesus is likened unto what two things? \_\_\_\_\_
8. What event accompanied the crucifixion of Christ? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Why was the resurrection of Christ the greatest miracle of all? \_\_\_\_\_
10. When did the three thousand obediently accept the message of Peter on the Day of Pentecost? \_\_\_\_\_
11. What other miracle does the miracle of the resurrection support? \_\_\_\_\_

## **Personal Study Notes**

## Chapter 13

# THE JUDGMENT

### FOCUS

Everyone should understand that he must answer to God for his thoughts, words, and deeds. Man must and will reap what he sows. It is the law of the harvest.

### KEY VERSE

“For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:14).

### SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Jude 14-25; II Peter 2:1-9; 3:1-13; Psalms 89:13-18; 97:1-6; Revelation 22:11-19; Romans 2:1-13

### INTRODUCTION

The theme of our studies has been the apostles' doctrine. This study on the judgment is referred to as a doctrine in Hebrews 6:2. If therefore it is a doctrine, it becomes an integral part of our preaching and teaching ministry. It also is to be considered a tenet of our faith.

To preach judgment is not to take away from the goodness and mercy of Christ, but rather it beautifies His character. In fact when we preach “the God of judgment,” we use a term identifying one mark of His character. We must remember that in His dealings with men, the character of God is twofold.

“Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God” (Romans 11:22).

We understand these to be complementary traits of character. His love and mercy are made precious by His stern judgment. His wrath and indignation are tempered by His goodness. He is both Savior and Judge.

A story is told of a young boy who got into deep water in the “old swimming hole” and was drowning. A man passing by on the country lane saw the boy’s plight and plunged in and rescued him. Years later, the boy fell into bad company, committed several serious crimes, and was apprehended by the law. Standing before the bench to receive his sentence, the boy suddenly recognized the face of the judge. His heart leaped with hope.

“Sir,” he exclaimed, “surely you remember me and will have mercy. I’m the boy you rescued out of the old swimming hole years ago. Surely you would not make that rescue all in vain by sending me to prison!” The judge recognized the boy, but sadly replied, “Son, that day I was your savior, but today I am your judge!”

“The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth” (Psalm 9:16).

According to the principles of His own existence, God must judge as well as reward. He must condemn as well as commend. Jesus told His disciples that when the Holy Ghost would come, it would not only comfort but would convince, convict, and reprove the world.

“And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: . . . of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged” (John 16:8, 11).

It is unthinkable that the god of this world would be judged and not those who follow him.

“The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes . . . the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether” (Psalm 19:8-9).

It is impossible to separate the commandments of the Lord from the judgments of the Lord. One complements the other. It pays to serve God and receive a just reward, but it can never pay to sin against God. The soul that sinneth shall die and the wages of sin is eternal death.

## I. JUDGMENT DECLARED

In the first recorded conversation the Lord had with mankind, He set Himself up as a judge of human behavior. In respect to the forbidden fruit, God said, "For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:17). This law of forbidding was a test to man's obedience, and from that day to this every disobedience shall receive a just recompense of reward.

"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 had done, whether it be good or bad" (II Corinthians 5:10).

Many are willing to accept God's favors but not His judgments. However, if the Lord is not our judge, neither is He our heavenly Father, for every true father recognizes the need for judging right and wrong in the rearing of his children. Judgment has been declared as a measure of safety for the innocent and defenseless. Most people would not want to live in a society that is without law and order. Through law and the executing of the law, the rights of men are established and maintained.

"But the LORD shall endure for ever: he hath prepared his throne for judgment. And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness. The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble" (Psalm 9:7-9).

God never intended that His judgments be dark and gloomy, but a means of giving mankind the refuge of divine security. In fact, if the statutes of the Lord are accepted and obeyed, they will rejoice the heart. The psalmist said, "I will sing of mercy and judgment" (Psalm 101:1).

Divine justice is basic to our gospel message, for it speaks of a loving Christ. On the other hand, God is stern in the rebuking of sin. If God were a tyrant, all men, whether good or bad, would only know the vengeance of His anger. But the face of the Lord is only against them that do evil. For the upright, He maintains their cause. He metes out vengeance only to those who oppress His people. As Jehovah God judged by the plumbline of righteousness, so did His Son, Jesus Christ. Isaiah prophesied of His reign. "Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment" (Isaiah 32:1).

In the Book of Hebrews, we read of the divinity of Christ and the dominion over His kingdom attributed to Him by His Father. "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom" (Hebrews 1:8).



The apostle Peter, in his reflection upon the charge to preach the gospel, remembered Christ telling the apostles “to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead” (Acts 10:42).

Although there are different periods of judgment, every day is judgment day for God's people. Paul wrote to the Corinthian saints, “For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged” (I Corinthians 11:31). This authority has been given to us that it might become our own responsibility to commend or condemn ourselves through the appropriation of the Scriptures to our lives and conscience.

### **A. History Discloses Judgment**

Every age has a history in which both the goodness and judgment of God has been exercised. Every dispensation has and will end in judgment. This symbolizes that what God does in a general sense He will do in a personal and particular sense, for “it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27).

The following ages and their ending is conclusive evidence that the final act of God in the earthly lives of men is to judge them.

- *The Age of Innocence*—Adam and Eve were expelled from Eden for their disobedience.
- *The Age of Conscience*—The evil of the antediluvians brought on the Flood ending this age.
- *The Age of Brotherhood*—Human government ended in the confusion of tongues at Babel because of insubordination and pride.
- *The Age of Faith*—The dispensation of promise ended in the ten plagues upon the people of Egypt.
- *The Age of Law*—in the giving of the Law, God required a blood sacrifice for sin. He bore the judgment of this age Himself at Calvary.
- *The Age of Grace*—The church age will end with the catching away of the church and the outpouring of God's wrath upon the wicked.
- *The Age of Peace*—The Millennium will end with the White Throne Judgment.

### **B. Judgment of Angels and Men**

The apostle Peter disclosed some historical judgments. In his second letter three different judgments that symbolize the judging of all living beings are recorded in sequence. In all of these accounts, one great truth unfolds. In their rebellion against God, the offenders found themselves one day outside the bounds of God's mercy.

- *The fallen angels*—The first judgment was rendered to one-third of the angelic host who kept not their first estate. “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” (II Peter 2:4).

The emphasis here should be placed upon the fact that the angels sinned even before the creation of man. However, they still have reservations to meet God in the judgment. They have learned that time wears out neither the guilt of sin nor the penalty of sin. As the angels kept not their first estate of purity and obedience and are under judgment, there is also a warning to those New Testament Christians who have not kept their “first love.”

“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent” (Revelation 2:4-5).

- *The old world*—The second judgment of which Peter wrote was of the antediluvian world. “And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly” (II Peter 2:5).

In this account God swept away a world of sinners. As in every case they were forewarned but gave no heed. Noah preached righteousness as a way of life that could have been a way into the ark and safety, but only eight souls obeyed. Jesus also preached righteousness as a way of life. Righteousness was the sceptre of His kingdom. His kingdom was introduced to establish righteousness as a judgment against ungodliness. “And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” (I Peter 4:18).

- *The wicked cities*—The third mentioning of judgment by Peter was the wrath of God displayed upon the twin cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. “And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly” (II Peter 2:6).

As we look at these judgments we may be prone to lose heart and feel that God is only a judge and not a savior. Yet, no one has a good reason to find fault with God's judgments when there stands before him the overwhelming evidence of His mercy. God has a standing promise before all humanity. “The Lord is . . . not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (II Peter 3:9).

## **II. JUDGMENT OF THE CHURCH**

“For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?” (I Peter 4:17).

God has made His church a standard-bearer for both truth and judgment. Paul said, “Behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (I Timothy 3:15).

If God judges the church worthy, He will judge the world unworthy. If He excuses the church, He will accuse the world. (See Isaiah 10:12; Jeremiah 25:29; Ezekiel 9:6.)

### **A. Discerning the Lord's Body**

The church is recognized as the Lord's body and those who are its members are to possess a discernment as to its purpose and its functions. There is a damnation (judgment) in conjunction with those who fail to possess this spiritual attribute. It is a safeguard against committing evil.

You may live abundantly and gloriously when compassed about with saints and the ministry, but when alone, you inevitably must be a good preacher to your own soul in order to survive. A personal discernment will achieve this for you. “For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged” (I Corinthians 11:29-31).

Paul revealed the sickness and premature death of those who treat lightly and irreverently the true purpose of the church (the Lord's body). We are held responsible for our carrying out of the functions of the church. God has put into our hands the operation of the preaching of the gospel, the fruits and gifts of the Spirit, the praying for and anointing of those who are sick, and many other such demands. If we treat these obligations lightly, we will be charged with failure of discernment and eating and drinking unworthily, and shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

### **B. God Judges the Church**

“But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world” (I Corinthians 11:32).

This phase of judgment covers those chastisements provided by the Lord that we might grow and bring forth fruit. “Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth” (Hebrews 12:6). These judgments are not to be thought grievous or damning, but rather they are to

be welcomed, for they prove to be corrective measures that we might not err in the ways of salvation. Then there are those judgments of rewards to those who have walked in the ways of the Lord. No doubt this was what David had in mind when he petitioned the Lord: "Judge me, O LORD: for I have walked in mine integrity . . . Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart. For thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes; and I have walked in thy truth" (Psalm 26:1-3).

Every Christian should come to the place where he, like David, would not be afraid to be judged of the Lord. It is indeed gratifying to have judged oneself clear of all sin and to have the Lord confirm that judgment by saying to him, "Well done."

### **C. God Judges Sin in the Church**

In the first four chapters of the Book of Acts are many miracles of mercy. These were miracles of healing and also miracles of salvation. With all of these wonderful things taking place it is difficult to realize that the fifth chapter of Acts would unfold a miracle of judgment.

In the midst of a mighty Holy Ghost revival, the church had to pause and see a man and his wife judged for hypocrisy. Yes, there are good and bad figs on the same tree. In the case of Ananias and Sapphira we see a great example of the severity of God following the goodness of God. Those who are wise will see in God something that must be respected; that is, both loved and feared.

Ananias and Sapphira were confederates of evil. They both lied and they both died. They were both in the exploding, expanding early church and their weakness was not exposed until they were called upon to keep pace with others who were stronger and more devoted to the cause. Their hypocrisy led to their deaths and brought fear upon the church.

Out of this account of God judging sin in the early church comes the following characteristics we should avoid in our Christian walk.

- Never use your Christian profession as a cover to "make a fair show in the flesh."
- Never use a good thing that is designed to bless the church to bring you personal preeminence.
- Never expect a lie to keep you covered. God is able to sweep away a refuge of lies.
- Never forget that when one lies to the elders in the church, he is lying not to men, but unto God. The Holy Ghost in them shall judge him, as Peter judged Ananias and Sapphira worthy of death.

These poor creatures presumed upon others that they were guided by the Holy Ghost in what they did, only to find out that the Holy Ghost in others discerned their falsehood. Thus God judged them by one of their own and they found out too late that the “wages of sin is death.”

#### **D. Saints to Judge in the Church**

When we become a member of the body of Christ, we are given judicial authority. The church has been given its own judicial system by which it settles its problems. The laws of men are not suitable to correct or to judge the spiritual conflicts that arise, for we do not live by carnal commandments in the church.

Paul deplored the situation in the Corinthian church where brother was going to law with brother. He stated, “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?” (I Corinthians 6:2-3).

Seeing then what is at stake, let us conduct our lives in such a way that we will not be an offense to the sinner.

“He that winneth souls is wise. (Proverbs 11:30).

“And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever” (Daniel 12:3).

### **III. FINAL JUDGMENT**

The Scriptures have decreed a last and final judgment. It is not only final as to its conclusion, but is universal in its scope. It is called the “day of the Lord.”

Revelation 20:11-15 describes this final judgment that will not only be the time set up to judge all men and nations, but it will mark the end of God’s dealing with humanity in their sins.

The last judgment is for the final disposition of the souls of men. The good and the bad will be placed in their eternal abode. The two destinies of men will have been reached. It will be eternal life or eternal death.

The second death is the reward of the lost. Those in the first resurrection had power in them to defeat the power of the second death. Those who have not let sin have

dominion over them will not fear the power of the second death for the sting of sin is death—the second death.

One of the final acts of the last judgment will be the sentencing of Satan. His defeat began in the Garden of Eden when God put a difference between Satan and his children (seed) and Christ and His children (seed). The last judgment will be the scene of the final act when the eternal separations will take place.

“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” (Revelation 20:10).

## SUMMARY

To say there is no judgment is to say there is not a God. But because there is a God, the good will not go unrewarded and the bad will not go unpunished.

For the child of God who has placed his trust in the saving power of the gospel, the judgment holds no terror. Instead, the sure judgments of the Lord are a comfort and a security to him, for he knows that God is in control!

## REFLECTIONS

- How can God be both a savior and a judge, both good and severe?
- By what laws does God render judgment?
- How many ages of man are there, and by what means does each end?
- Discuss the three examples of sure judgment described by Peter.
- When does judgment take place for the saints of the New Testament church?
- What did Paul mean by the phrase, “discerning the Lord’s body”?
- Describe the final judgment.

## Self Help Test

**True or False:** Circle the correct answer.

1. Judgment is never referred to as a doctrine in the Bible.  
True or False
2. The love and mercy of God are made precious by His stern judgment.  
True or False
3. Every day can be judgment day for God's people through the appropriation of the Scriptures.  
True or False
4. The first historical judgment was rendered to one-third of the angelic host.  
True or False
5. God never gives forewarning before His judgment comes.  
True or False
6. The judgment on the twin cities of Sodom and Gomorrah was an example unto those that after should live ungodly.  
True or False
7. Sickness and premature death can come to those who lightly and irreverently treat the true purpose of the church.  
True or False
8. Paul spoke of the saints judging the world.  
True or False
9. The final judgment is called the "Day of the Lord" in Scriptures.  
True or False

## Missionary Spotlight: Rev. and Mrs. Harry E. Scism



**The Harry E. Scism Family, c. 1970**  
Loretta, Harry, Audrene, and Stanley

In January 1949 a fourteen- year-old boy walked up the gangplank of the “China Mail” with his family to sail to Madras, India. They arrived on March 26, 1949. Thus began Harry Scism’s missionary life. He had twenty-seven years of experience serving the Indian church, ten years in Sri Lanka, and ten years in Burma. In 1970 he became the regional field supervisor for the Asia/South Pacific Region. In 1976 he was appointed general director of Foreign Missions.

On October 31, 1989, God called Audrene Scism home. After Brother

Scism walked through the dark valley of grief, God brought another wonderful lady, Helen Stewart, into his life. They married on December 8, 1990. In January 2000 Brother Scism announced he would be stepping down as the general director at the end of his term. Consequently, he and his wife applied for and were granted an appointment as international teachers in January 2001. They resigned from their foreign appointment in March 2010. He continues to serve as an honorary Global Missions board member.

In the January-March 2002 issue of *World Harvest Today* magazine, the general director of Global Missions, Bruce Howell, wrote:

For the past twenty-five years the visionary leadership of missionary Harry E. Scism and family has blessed the Foreign Missions Division of the United Pentecostal Church International. When Brother Scism and his family accepted the challenge of becoming the general director, he was serving as the regional field supervisor (now called regional director) for Asia-South Pacific Region. He was well qualified, having arrived in India at the age of fifteen and serving there until his appointment as regional field supervisor.

Joining the Foreign Missions Board as a regional director has given me time to observe this great man. One thing that I have always noticed in Brother Scism is that he is a true Christian! His walk with God is one of



sincere and profound dedication. He has passion for reaching this world, and under his leadership we have seen the UPCI enter seventy countries. When he turned over the helm of this great division, the church was in 142 nations of the world.



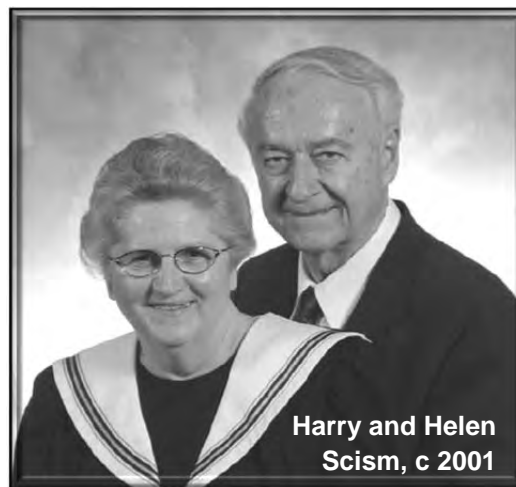
**Harry E. Scism, General Director of Foreign Missions**

During the twenty-five years Brother Scism served as general director of Foreign Missions, the following accomplishments have been made:

- The overseas constituency of the United Pentecostal Church International has grown from 215,652 to 2,755,893.
- The number of missionaries sent forth by the United Pentecostal Church International of North America has increased from 184 to 511.
- The geographic outreach with respect to reaching “every nation” has expanded from 72 nations to 142.
- The number of national preachers associated with our mission endeavors has increased from 3,107 to 20,666.
- There are now 137 Bible schools, which were attended by 2,963 students. In addition to these Bible schools, there were 547 seminars where 24,457 students were trained as well as 3,575 students were involved in correspondence ministry.
- Under Brother Scism’s directorship, Associates In Missions came into full fruition in 1978. There are now 177 AIMers.

The following ministries have been added to the FMD during Brother Scism's tenure:

- Compassion Services International
- Leadership Development International
- Friendship International
- Missionary Kids Association
- Multi-Media Ministry
- World Network of Prayer\*
- Global Training Institute



The following “first such conferences” were held during Brother Scism's tenure:

- World Fellowship Conference in Jerusalem in the fall of 1976.
- Chinese Summit held in Hong Kong in 1996
- French Summit in Paris in 1997
- World Evangelism and Leadership Conference in Alexandria, Louisiana, in 1998
- Global Council held in Malaysia, Indonesia in November 2000.

Under Brother Scism's tenure, the gross annual Foreign Missions income has increased from \$3,951,055.02 to \$24,075,489.54.

Another observation that I have made is that Brother Scism is a true friend to the missionary. He always watches out for the good of the missionary. That being the case, it is no wonder that Brother Scism leaves this position of general director and is being promoted back to being a missionary with an International Teaching appointment.

I honor this great man and the future of our division owes a debt of gratitude to our leader of twenty-five years.

\*WNOP was conceived in Brother Scism's heart.