

GREAT FACTS IN Human Redemption



by Clayton Winters

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in
Human
Redemption**

Clayton Winters

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Great Facts in Human Redemption
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Publisher's Note: The manuscript for this previously never before published book was found and presented to me and suggested that it be put into print. It consisted of 208 typed pages which had to be retyped. It has been my intent to reproduce brother Winters' material in this book exactly as he had written it, except for some handwritten corrections he had made and a few typos that I found. It is our prayer that the contents of this book will be beneficial for all who read it. To God be the glory!

Dedication

In Memory of Clayton Winters,

I had the great privilege of working with brother Winters for over 35 years. Most of that time, we worked together on Biblical Viewpoints, a television program. We also did a lot of radio work for Luray, Virginia; Erwin, Tennessee; and West Jefferson, North Carolina. Seldom a week went by that we were not working together. Our wives often told us that we worked together so much we knew what the other was thinking. We really enjoyed our time in Bible study while driving to WKPT-TV in Kingsport, Tennessee. We were able to discuss many Bible-related topics. Clayton served as a minister of the Church of Christ for over 60 years.

I have been so blessed to have had the privilege to work so closely with a real gentleman and Bible scholar. He authored many commentaries and produced about 20 Bible study guides and workbooks as well as many gospel tracts. We continue to use his works in schools of preaching today. His work ethic was second to none! Getting up around 4:00 am every morning to study was a real testament to his dedication. Only eternity will reveal the real good that was accomplished by the efforts of this great servant of the cross!

This book is presented in his special memory!

Eddy Craft

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Foreword

This is an extraordinary book from the pen of an extraordinary man. I have known the author all his life (since I am an older brother) and have worked closely with him all his spiritual life, having both learned the truth and obeyed the gospel at the same time.

Clayton Winters was born on July 15, 1931 to Ed and Bessie Winters in the mountains of upper east Tennessee. He grew up on a farm, and was thus deprived of advanced educational opportunities. He met Vivian May in the fall of 1949, and they were married the following spring: just five days later they both obeyed the gospel. Few women I have known have proven to be a more devoted wife than Vivian. To this union were born three children: Evelyn, Sandra, and David.

Clayton began, at my insistence, to preach the gospel a few months after his conversion, and has been a faithful proclaimer of the word ever since. He soon realized that he would need to improve his education, both formally, and in a ready knowledge of the Scriptures. I distinctly remember him coming to me to find the location of a passage that he knew was there, but was unable to locate, which a preacher with whom he was in a discussion denied being in the Bible. I gave him the Scriptural reference. He went on his way, but soon returned with a broad smile on his face: he said, "He caught me unprepared that time, but he will never do it again." With that determination firmly planted in his mind he has continued his formal and self-education. He is now recognized by all who know him as one of the most polished scholars in east Tennessee.

Howard Winters

CHAPTER I:

IMPORTANT FACTS ABOUT THE BIBLE

The Bible is to be read (Deut. 31:11-13; Mark 12:10), read daily (Acts 17:11), read privately (Acts 8:27,28), and read publicly (Ex. 24:7; Ezra 8:1-6; Luke 4:16; Acts 13:27; Col. 4:16). It is to be read carefully (John 10:26), diligently (Luke 9:44; John 5:39), and with joy (Acts 15:31).

Properly studied, God's Word can be understood (Matt. 24:15; Eph. 3:4), and will provide milk for the babe in Christ and meat for the mature Christian (Heb. 5:12-14; 1 Pet. 2:1, 2). It will produce growth (Acts 20:32), reformation of character (2 Kgs. 22:11; 23:3), disciples indeed (John 8:31), divine approval (2 Tim. 2:15), and a rich indwelling (Col. 3:16).

The Law of the Lord is perfect (Ps. 19:7), a lamp to our feet, and a light to our path (Ps. 119:105), and more to be desired than fine honeycomb (Ps. 19:7). It warns us, rewards us, and keeps us from presumptuous sins (Ps. 19:10-14). God's Word is the seed of the kingdom (Luke 8:11)—the element by which we are begotten (1 Cor. 4:15), born (1 Pet. 1:22-25), and grow (1 Pet. 2:2). It is the complete and final authority in religion (2 Tim. 3:16, 17), and that by which we will be judged in the last day (John 12:48; Rom. 2:16; Rev. 20:12-15).

To reap the benefits of the Word of God it should go without saying that it must be rightly divided. Satan quoted, but misapplied, Scripture (Matt. 4:6). So did the chief priests and Pharisees (John 7:51,52; 19:7), as well as the Sadducees (Matt. 22:23-33). The apostle Paul urged, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing [rightly handling, RSV] the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). Peter warned, "And account that the long-suffering

of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction” (2 Pet. 3:15,16).

With such an important Book lying before us, and with such dire consequences threatened for a failure to properly handle it, surely every sincere truth-seeker will want to learn some *Important Facts About the Bible* that he might (1) use his time profitably in Bible study, and (2) handle rightly or properly divide the Word of Truth. That is what this lesson is about.

THE TWO MAJOR DIVISIONS OF THE BIBLE

In the preface of your Bible you will most likely find the statement, “The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments.” This is not a printer’s convenience, nor is it the device of some man or group of men. Rather it is based on an inspired division of the Word of God, taken directly from the pages of the Bible itself. Note, if you will, how these two major divisions are designated and often contrasted:

The First and the Second. “For if the first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second” (Heb. 8:7). “Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary” (Heb. 9:1). “Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood” (Heb. 9:18). “Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second” (Heb. 10:9).

The Old and the New. “In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away” (Heb. 8:13). “And for this cause he is

the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance” (Heb. 9:15). “Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life” (2 Cor. 3:6). “After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me” (1 Cor. 11:25). “But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ” (2 Cor. 3:14).

The Ministration of Condemnation as Opposed to the Ministration of Righteousness. “For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory” (2 Cor. 3:9).

The Ministration of Death as Opposed to the Ministration of the Spirit. “But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?” (2 Cor. 3:7,8).

The Letter as Opposed to the Spirit. “Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life” (2 Cor. 3:6).

Tragic indeed has been the result for some who either have not learned, or have not recognized, these two great divisions of the Bible. The Judaizers wanted the benefits of the New, but the carnal ordinances of the Old, being willing to mutilate the gospel to retain circumcision (Gal. 1:6-9). Even a supposedly more enlightened Christianity still has the same problem. Some settle

the question of tithing by an appeal to the old system. Some argue for Sabbath keeping, although it was clearly an Old Testament ordinance, not reiterated in the New. Some contend for instrumental music in Christian Worship solely on the basis of its having been taught in the 150th Psalm, or practiced by King David. Others declare that salvation without baptism is our right because the thief on the cross was thus saved. So emphatic are many such folks that they boldly declare, "I live by the whole Bible, both the Old and the New Testaments."

Impossible! As much so as to ride at the same time two horses going in separate directions! The Old Testament says to circumcise your boy babies on the eight day after birth (Gen. 17:9-14). The New Testament says, "Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing" (Gal. 5:2). The old law required repeated sacrifices: "But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people" (Heb. 9:7). But "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many" (Heb. 9:28), and "By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14).

The commingling of the two covenants is a violation of clear Scriptural teaching. Jesus affirmed that no part of the law would pass until all was fulfilled (Matt. 5:18-20). Paul declared that in Christ we have become dead to the Old Testament system (Rom. 7:1-4), that it has been abolished (2 Cor. 3:13), nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14-17), and that it would be impossible to inherit under the Sinaitic covenant of bondage (Gal. 4:21-31). "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster" (Gal. 3:24,25).

May we learn well the two major divisions of the Bible, the Old and the New Testaments; and may these divisions be not

simply divisions of a book, but rather guidelines for application of the divine truths to our lives. Only in this way will the word of truth be rightly handled.

CONTENTS OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

The Old Testament contains the origin of the universe—the vast expanse of bodies, not even conceivable in man’s most fancied imagination. It records the voice of God speaking these things into existence, along with our own earth and its varied life forms. It testifies of man as the special creation of God, and of his fall from the paradise of God by sin. It then picks up the thread of promise made to Eve (Gen. 3:15), traces it through the seed of Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3), sees it develop through the Holy Nation of Israel (Deut. 7:6-9), nourishes it through the prophetic message (Deut. 18:18-22), and closes with the anticipation of the Sun of Righteousness rising with healing in his wings (Mal. 4:2).

The Old Testament also contains the Law of Moses, a law given by God to the people of Israel to nourish the righteousness and purity of that nation, and to symbolize by its worship many cardinal features of the scheme of redemption. Paul put this in focus when he said, “Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator” (Gal. 3:19). But perhaps no more concise and definitive statement of both the people and the law that governed them could be given than that which was penned by this same apostle in Romans 9:4,5: “Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.”

Another important feature of the first testament, although an often misunderstood one, is its genealogical structure. The reading of names lists can well be boring and very tiresome; but we must remember that as the backbone is to the human skeleton, so serves the genealogical structure of the Old Testament. And it is most precious, because it is reaching forward to the grandest of all beings: the Word made flesh (Matt. 1:1-17; Luke 3:23-38).

The New Testament contains the record of this Word made flesh (John 1:1-3,14), his earthly ministry (John 10:10; 20:30-31), his teaching (Acts 1:1), his death (Matt. 20:28), his resurrection (Mark 16:1-9), and his ascension back to the Father (Acts 1:9-11). But even more, it tells of the establishment of his glorious church (Matt. 16:18; Acts 2:47; Eph. 5:25-27), his plan of redemption (1 Pet. 1:18,19), and the ultimate victory over sin and death (John 5:28,29; Rev. 1:17,18).

It is also God's divine and authoritative law for those living under the Christian Age (2 Tim. 3:16,17), and will serve as the standard of judgment in the final hour (Rom. 2:16; Rev. 20:12-15). It is a guide no one who aspires to eternal life dares neglect. The Hebrews writer urged, "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him" (Heb. 2:1-3). Again, "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant,

wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace” (Heb. 10:28,29).

THREE DISPENSATIONS OF THE BIBLE

Having seen the two major divisions of the Bible, we are now ready to consider some more very important Scriptural divisions: the Patriarchal, Mosaic, and Christian Ages.

The Patriarchal Age. We have probably come to think of the Old Testament simply as the Law of Moses. This is not altogether true. While the Law of Moses is a cardinal part of the Old Testament, it contains the record of an even longer period when there was no revealed system, no written code, of law. This period we call the Patriarchal Dispensation. The word patriarchal is from a combination of the Greek words *pater* and *arche* meaning father-rule. It is quite evident that during the first 2500 years of time, with no written or codified system of law, God revealed himself through the heads of households, clans, or tribes, such as Noah (Gen. 6:12-22), Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3), and Jacob (Gen. 28:12-15). Note how clearly the Bible distinguishes this period from the Mosaic Age, an age when God gave more systematic revelation in written form. Jesus said, “Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man” (John 7:22). This period is further designated as one without law (that is, without law in the sense that there was no written or systematic code of law): “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: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's

transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come” (Rom. 5:12-14).

So not only do we see a period without systematic law, we have its boundaries fixed—from Adam to Moses. Some who are overly zealous toward the Sabbath commandment have ignored these boundary lines. They try to trace Sabbath keeping back to the very beginning of time; but such cannot be. The divine record says, “And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them. The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day” (Deut 5:1-3,12,13). Nehemiah reaffirmed the sabbath commandment as being characteristic only of the Mosaic Age when he said “Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments: And madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant” (Neh. 9:13,14).

“But,” inquires the sabbatarian, “Does not Genesis 2:3 declare, ‘And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made’?” Indeed so, but remember that Moses wrote Genesis hundreds of years after the fact of creation. Also note that when the Sabbath was sanctified, the rest from creation was a *past tense* event. The Sabbath was set apart for man at Sinai. Both Moses and Nehemiah by inspiration affirm this fact. Why should one be so wedded to a theory that he would want to deny it?

The Mosaic Age. The second dispensation of time was the Mosaic Age, the period during which the Law of Moses was in

force. It was bounded on one end by Moses and Sinai, and on the other by Christ and His Cross. Observe this division in the following Scriptures: “Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me?” (John 7:19). “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17).

Since that division is so important, especially on the latter end, let us look at it in considerably more detail. Paul fixed the exact point when the Law of Moses ended—the cross of Christ. “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ” (Col. 2:14-17). But beyond this he showed that, having been nailed to the cross, the law provides no longer a source of inheritance: “Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all... Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free” (Gal. 4:24-26,30,31). And anyone trying to justify himself by the law, forfeits his benefits in Christ: “For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace” (Gal. 5:3,4).

We have previously mentioned the thief on the cross, and the use so often made of that example: The thief on the cross was not baptized, and he was saved; therefore baptism is not essential to salvation.” But under what dispensation did the thief live and die? Certainly not under the Christian Age, for Christ had not yet died. So the thief could not have been dead to the law by the body of Christ (Rom.7:1-4); he could not have believed the gospel, which is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-4); and the New Covenant had not been ratified at that time by the blood of Christ (Heb. 9:16,17). In fact, at the time of his death, the great commission containing the command to be baptized had not even been given (Mark 16:15,16). He lived and died under the Mosaic Age, and therefore was not amenable to the Law of Christ, including the command to be baptized. A proper understanding of the dispensations of time will help one avoid such misapplications of Scripture. The same would be true of mechanical instruments of music in worship, tithing, Sabbath keeping, and other characteristic requirements of the law.

The Christian Age. As we have clearly seen, distinct boundary lines separate the first two dispensations; might we not expect the same of the third? And indeed, in such expectation we are disappointed. Christ lived and died under the Law of Moses: “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law” (Gal. 4:4). During His lifetime, He constantly urged people to observe the Law of Moses (Mark 10:17-19; Matt. 23:1-3; Luke 5:14). True, during his life he taught his disciples the principles of his kingdom (Matt. 5-7); but they did not come into force during his lifetime. But by his death on the cross the law was brought to an abrupt and complete end (Col. 2:14-17; Eph. 2:14-16).

The Old Testament had been ratified by blood (Ex. 24:3-8; Heb. 9:18-22); and now by the blood of the cross the New, having been validated, becomes a binding law (see Matt. 26:28; Col. 1:20; Heb. 10:28,29), and is ready to be published to the world by the apostles (Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:8). Paul affirmed, “For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth” (Heb 9:16,17). Stating it another way, Paul presents the cross as releasing God’s people to enter a new and better covenant: “Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God” (Rom. 7:4). This covenant began first to be revealed by the apostle Peter, a man previously given the keys of the kingdom (Matt. 16:18,19), on that notable first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:14-40; 11:15). So the boundary line has been set: Pentecost marks the beginning of the Christian Age.

Priests after the order of Aaron were never confirmed in their priesthood by oath: human mortality made it an ever-changing ministry (Heb. 7:21-23). But Christ is a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec (Heb. 5:6), His priesthood is unchangeable (Heb.7:24), being based, not on a carnal commandment, but on the power of an endless life (Heb. 7:15,16). But the covenant and the priest (mediator) of the covenant stand together: one is as permanent as the other (Heb. 7:11,12). The covenant, therefore, which began on Pentecost, when Christ was announced as king on David’s throne, will end only when Jesus steps down from that throne upon which He sits as Priest and King (Zech. 6:12,13); and that will be at His second coming when the kingdom is delivered back to the Father (1 Cor. 15:24-26). So

the Christian Age spans Pentecost to eternity—when time shall be no more (Rev. 10:5-6).

FURTHER DIVISIONS OF THE BIBLE

One may further expedite his Bible study by dividing the Scriptures into topical sections. Imagine, for example, that you want to find some examples of conversion. How long would it take you if you began at Genesis and read until you found some? Or if you wanted to study the life of Christ and his personal ministry, would you search first the book of Esther? These questions, of course, are elementary; but they point up a weakness many have in their search for truth. I have even heard some say, “I just allow my Bible to fall open, and then I begin reading with that page.” Needless to say, such a person will never learn much about the greatest book in the world. There is a far better and more profitable way to approach Bible study.

Topical Divisions of the Old Testament. The Old Testament may be divided into four sections. The first five books are books of law. These are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, and contain the basic laws for the nation of Israel. The second section is usually classified as history. These 12 books are Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1st and 2nd Samuel, 1st and 2nd Kings, 1st and 2nd Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, and chronicle the history of the Holy People from the crossing of Jordan to the return from Exile. The third section is made up of the poetic books. Being five (or six) in number they are Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, and Lamentations (the latter is sometimes classified with the prophets). The final section is that of prophecy, being itself in turn divided into two sections: the major prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel; and the minor prophets, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk,

Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, numbering 16 in all.

Topical Divisions of the New Testament. Likewise the New Testament may be divided into four sections. Four books of biography, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; one book of History, Acts; twenty-one epistles, letters written to churches or individuals, and one book of prophecy, Revelation.

If one wishes to study the life and works of Christ, he would quite naturally turn to the gospels. Nowhere else could he find so much detail in so short a space. These were written to tell us about Christ in such a way as to produce faith in him (John 20:30,31). The Acts detail the establishment and growth of the church, and the means of entrance into the kingdom. With its abundance of conversion examples (Acts 8,9,10,15,16,18 and 19), it makes it a simple task for one to find out how to become a Christian. And just as one finds out how to become a Christian in Acts, the epistles afford him detailed information on how to live as a Christian. Revelation is a book that depicts the persecution of the church and its ultimate victory in Jesus.

I do not know who authored the following poem, but he certainly expressed the sentiment of this writer with reference to the Holy Book:

“Blessed Bible, how I love it,
How it does my bosom cheer.
What has earth like this to covet?
O, what stores of wealth are here

Man was lost and doomed to sorrow;
Not one ray of hope or bliss
Could he from earth’s treasure borrow,
‘Till his way was cheered by this.”

The precious Word of God holds out to man the fondest hope of all—"In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began" (Titus 1:2). *This is a Great Fact In Human Redemption.* Surely it only makes good sense for us to learn these important facts about the Bible that we might quickly learn and rightly divide its message.

CHAPTER II: IMPORTANCE OF THE CREATION ACCOUNT

Perhaps no other Bible teaching has been so ridiculed in the past few years as that of the account of creation. Organic evolution demands that all matter is eternal; and that all life came from a non-life source, evolving to its present stage over a period of millions or even billions of years. Theistic evolution differs but little from the above theory, except that it has God guiding the process of evolution. Both think of the Genesis account of creation as overworked imagination or fairytale. Even Christians often think of the creation account as a good Bible class story for children, but of minor significance to the theme of the Bible as a whole.

Neither could be further from the truth! The creation story is foundation material; it is carefully weaved into the entire fabric of the Bible. Through it we may obtain a better understanding of God, His sovereignty, His laws, His Son, and our Christian obligation. It even helps us to understand who and what we are, and our close relationship with our fellowman. It is a fascinating story whose importance to the Bible narrative cannot be overemphasized.

THE CREATION OF THE UNIVERSE

We think of our earth as a huge ball, 25,000 miles in circumference. Yet on a clear night we can see our Milky Way, and we are told that it contains planets thousands, maybe even millions of times larger than our earth. Light travels at 186,000 miles per second. But if we mount a light beam and ride it at that speed for a million years, still we would not be out of the

city limits of earth, relatively speaking. Such an expanse staggers the imagination.

Yet, at the very word of God it all came into existence: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear” (Heb. 11:3). “God said,” and “there was” (Gen. 1:3). No words found in the Bible are more definitive of the God we serve than are these.

When God questioned Job about the marvels of this creation, He revealed to us some of the magnificence of the event. “Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof; When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” (Job 38:4-7). From nothing the vast universe suddenly appeared. Then from that formless, lifeless mass, beauty and life sprang forth! Light appeared, flowers bloomed, trees towered high, life happened. As the curtain was drawn back on that majestic scene, the morning stars sang together; all the sons of God shouted for joy.

The vastness of the universe made David wonder: “When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?” (Ps. 8:3,4). He saw in that creation the revelation of God’s universality and magnificence in the most eloquent tones. “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard” (Ps. 19:1-3). In Psalm 33:6 he again

pays tribute to the God of creation: “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.”

Nehemiah saw the Lord alone as the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. “Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee” (Neh. 9:6).

Christians believed in and prayed to the God of Creation: “And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is” (Acts 4:24).

The New Testament requires unswerving faith in 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” (Heb. 11:6). But what kind of God does one believe in, and to whom does he bow his head in reverence and worship, if not to the God of creation? To bring something from nothing, to bring cosmos (beauty, orderliness) from chaos, to bring life from non-life—that is Deity; and like the Psalmist, when we see these wonders of creation, our faith in God becomes easy and meaningful.

THE DAYS OF CREATION

On the first day God created light (Gen. 1:3-5); on the second the waters were separated, creating a firmament (Gen. 1:6-8); and the third day marked the separation of earth bound waters, and the appearance of dry ground, with vegetation springing from its soil (Gen. 1:9-13). The sun, moon, and stars were brought into being on the fourth day (Gen. 1:14-19); and on

the fifth all sorts of sea life was created (Gen. 1:20-23). God ended His creative week on the sixth day by bringing into existence all kinds of land creatures, and His crowning work--man (Gen. 1:24-31; 2:18-25). On the seventh day God rested (Gen. 2:1,2).

The days of creation were bound within the framework of “morning and evening” (Gen. 1:5,8,13,19,23,31), and form the basis for the daily and weekly measurement of time to this very day. “Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it” (Ex. 20:9-11). Although many do not acknowledge the God of creation, yet atheists, theistic evolutionists (while arguing long eons of time for the creation week), and infidel alike celebrate the daily and weekly division of time established at the creation. God in heaven must laugh, and hold them in derision (Ps. 2:1-4).

CREATION, GOD, AND REDEMPTION

The importance of creation in our concept of God, His law, and the scheme of redemption, in my opinion, has never been adequately stressed. As we said before, the creation is often treated as just a childhood story, easy to prepare, and interesting to tell. Rarely do we even attempt to relate it to the most fundamental truths of the Bible; but it permeates every facet of redemption’s sweet story, as we shall presently see.

CREATION PRESENTS GOD AS THE SUPREME SOVEREIGN OF THE UNIVERSE

Contrasted with Local Deities. Probably from soon after the fall, man began to think of gods as merely local. It is certain that throughout Old Testament times men served the gods of mountains, hills, waters, and valleys. Syria is a good example of this. “And the servants of the king of Syria said unto him, Their gods are gods of the hills; therefore they were stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they... And there came a man of God, and spake unto the king of Israel, and said, Thus saith the Lord, Because the Syrians have said, The Lord is God of the hills, but he is not God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am the LORD” (I Kgs. 20:23,28). Although an Israelite, Jonah seemed to believe that to escape Palestine would be to escape the presence of the Lord: “But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD” (Jonah 1:3). But God is not a local deity; He is Sovereign of the universe: “God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands” (Acts 17:24).

Contrasted with Idols. The God of creation cannot be conceived of as a piece of wood, stone, or gold. No better contrast between these and the living God could be found than in Paul’s sermon on Mars’ hill, recorded in Acts 17: “Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars’ hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, To The Unknown God. Whom therefore ye

ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device" (Acts 17:22-29). The idolater bows to the creature; the believer bows to his Creator! (see Rom. 1:21-25).

Contrasted with Astrology. Astrology is just another form of idolatry—the creature serving, and seeking guidance from the creation, rather than the Creator. Though thoroughly dedicated to the worship of heavenly bodies (see 2 Kgs. 22,23), they could not afford Israel no aid in her darkest hour. “Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail. Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee. Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it” (Isa. 47:12-14). Creation presents God as the supreme sovereign of both planets and men. Our relationship to Him determines our destiny (Deut. 11:26-29),

not the sign under which we may have been born. Having denied the God of creation, is it any wonder that we now have more full-time astrologers than full-time gospel preachers?

Contrasted with Earthly Rulers. While kings often assume for themselves deity, it is the Creator alone who holds the power of the throne. Daniel affirmed this fact to Nebuchadnezzar: “This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men” (Dan. 4:17).

To know God as the God of creation is to properly understand created *things*, and to know to whom our allegiance belongs.

CREATION INTRODUCES US TO CHRIST AS AN AGENT IN CREATION

Often a person may say, especially the theistic evolutionist, “I do not believe the creation story, but I do believe in Jesus.” But we must insist, if such be your case, that you do not believe in the Jesus of the Bible, for He was *God’s agent* in creation. All things were made by Him: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:1-3). God created all things by Him: “And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ” (Eph. 3:9). Through Him God made the worlds: “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all

things, by whom also he made the worlds” (Heb. 1:1,2). And not only were all things created by Him, but they were created for Him, and He is the power that holds them together. Paul said of Him, “Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist” (Col. 1:15-17).

But in addition to this Paul argues that Jesus’ headship of the church is premised on the basis of His preeminence in creation. Note carefully his argument in Col. 1:15-18, especially verse 18, “And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.”

CREATION HELPS US TO UNDERSTAND THE ETERNAL POWER AND NATURE OF THE GODHEAD

Man has not always had a systematic or written revelation from God, but he has never been left without God’s testimony of Himself—His creation. Creations argues a Creator. David recognized this when he said “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard” (Ps. 19:1-3). Paul in Romans also affirms this inevitable truth: “For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse” (Rom. 1:20).

CREATION ESTABLISHES GOD'S CLAIM AS DIVINE RULER OF THE UNIVERSE

What claim does God have over us? By what right does He command our knees to bow in His presence (Phil. 2:9-11), and our lives to be brought into submission to His will (2 Cor. 10:5)? By the right of creation of course. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Ps. 24:1). "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God" (Ps. 90:1,2). "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Rev. 4:11). "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters" (Rev. 14:6,7).

I do not know about you, but I know of no other reason why God should stake a claim on us, love us, protect us, or send His Son to redeem us than the fact that we are His workmanship, created for His glory (see Acts 17:24-26).

CREATION ESTABLISHES THE TRUE ORIGIN AND BROTHERHOOD OF MAN

"God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to

dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring” (Acts 17:24-28). “But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be” (James 3:8-10).

Racial prejudice has troubled our own country in recent years. African soil presently drinks in the blood of its inhabitants for the same reason. Ethnic, color, and social lines have ever been a plague to our world. How different it would be if we only believed in the God of creation—that we are His offspring! May the day hasten when the above truths will dawn on all of us, even on Christians! Creation establishes the true brotherhood of man.

IN VARIOUS WAYS CREATION HELPS US TO UNDERSTAND GOD’S LAWS

The First Commandment. God as Creator is beautifully extolled in the Scriptures. “Thine, O Lord is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name” (1 Chron. 29:11-13). “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For

thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen” (Matt. 6:13). “And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein” (Acts 14:15).

There is but one God, the divine Creator and Sustainer of all things. “For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him” (I Cor. 8:5-6). “One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Eph. 4:6). Creation demands one, and only one God. Thus the first commandment, “Thou shalt have no other gods before [besides] me” (Ex. 20:3).

The Second Commandment. Being created in the image of God, how ridiculous it is to think of God in terms of inanimate objects. Isaiah drove this point home forcefully. “He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it. Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth it; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god” (Isa. 44:14-17). Paul also made the same argument to the Athenians. “For in him we

live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent" (Acts 17:28-30).

When God said, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image" (Ex. 20:4), it merely reflected the affinity between man and his Creator.

The Fourth Commandment. The sabbath was given as a memorial of creation: "Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it" (Ex. 20:9-11).

The Sixth Commandment. Why do we feel very comfortable eating chicken or beef, but would abhor the consumption of human flesh? The atheist can give no sensible answer to that question, but the Christian can: creation—man is made in the image of God. "This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him" (Gen. 5:1). "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man" (Gen. 9:6). How logically and sensibly then follows the command: "Thou shalt not kill" (Ex. 20:13).

The Nature of the Marriage Relationship. The very foundation of the marriage relationship and its permanency is based on God's divine creation—man from dust, and the woman

from his rib. Jesus said, “Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Matt. 19:4-6). Almost half the marriages now contracted are dissolved by divorce; is it any wonder, since we have rejected the very basis for marriage?

The Sphere of Authority Between the Sexes. Bible teaching concerning the subjection of women is based on the Bible account of creation. To the Corinthians Paul said, “For the man is not of the woman: but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. For this cause ought the woman to have power [probably a sign of authority] on her head because of the angels” (1 Cor. 11:8-10). Furthermore he added, “But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve” (1 Tim. 2:12,13).

We could go on indefinitely, but all to the same effect. Almost, if not every major Bible teaching is in one way or another rooted in the creation account of Genesis 1-3. It is, therefore, not just an interesting childhood story, fairytale, or fancy: it is the very foundation upon which the rest of the Bible is built. It is a *Great Fact In Human Redemption*; we need to learn it, and learn it well.

CHAPTER III: ADAM AND EVE AND THEIR FALL

“Which came first, the chicken or the egg?” The answer to that seemingly simple question has spawned all sorts of wild, speculative theories. But the facts are, the Bible still holds the only sensible answer: God by His mighty power spoke into existence the universe, created all forms of life, and put within that creation the power of reproduction. “And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good” (Gen. 1:11,12).

The crowning work of God’s creation was man (Gen. 1:26), created as male and female (Gen. 1:27; Matt. 19:4), and having the same reproductive qualities as the rest of creation: “And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Gen. 1:28). That favored couple was placed into the beautiful Edenic Paradise, with everything necessary for their happiness and eternal existence having been supplied (Gen. 2:8).

But Adam and Eve fell from that pristine paradise. In our own country we have been told of “the shot that was heard around the world,” and this truly is the case with the sin of Adam and Eve—not only heard around the world, but having implications throughout both time and eternity. Aside from this story, so many great Bible doctrines become intangibles—sin,

human suffering, the Savior, redemption, even heaven itself. Truly, it is one of the *great* and important facts of the Bible.

THE CREATION AND HOME OF ADAM AND EVE

Adam from Dust, and the Woman from His Rib. The account of these creations are simple, but beautiful. “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth” (Gen. 1:26). “These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground. But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground. And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Gen. 2:4-7). “And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him... And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man” (Gen. 2:18,21-23).

The New Testament confidently affirms this creation account. Jesus said “Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his

wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?” (Matt 19:4-5). Paul asserted, “For Adam was first formed, then Eve” (1 Tim. 2:13). Again, “And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit” (1 Cor. 15:45).

The First Home of Adam and Eve. “And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil” (Gen 2:8,9).

It is important at this point that we understand the significance of the Hebrew term *Eden*. Authorities define it as meaning luxury, dainty, or delight; its usage elsewhere in Scripture bears this out. “For the Lord shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody” (Isa. 51:3). In describing the magnificence of the kingdom of Tyrus, Ezekiel, in terms considered most precious by human standards, compared it to the garden of Eden. “Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created” (Eze. 28:13). In much the same way the Assyrian is described: “Thus was he fair in his greatness, in the length of his branches: for his root was by great waters. The cedars in the garden of God could not hide him: the fir trees were not like his boughs, and the chestnut trees were not like his branches; nor any tree in the garden of God was like unto him in his beauty. I have made

him fair by the multitude of his branches: so that all the trees of Eden, that were in the garden of God, envied him” (Eze. 31:7-9). So when anything was looked upon as the epitome of beauty and greatness, there was but one thing with which to compare it—the garden of Eden.

What, perhaps, is of even greater significance for purposes of this study is the form the Hebrew *gan* (garden) took in the Greek. The Septuagint translates it by the word *paradeisos*, paradise, a word that takes on tremendous significance in the New Testament. We will have considerably more to say about this word and its application later on.

Man, the Zenith of God’s Creation. Seeing man dwarfed by the vastness of the rest of God’s creation moved David to ask the importance of man in God’s infinite scheme. But in the same breath he found the answer: “When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels [Heb. *Elohiym*, literally God], and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet” (Ps. 8:3-6). Man is not an animal, one step removed, on the scale of evolution. By creation he is superior, and was created to have dominion over the rest of God’s creation. Note God’s stated purpose with reference to this, “And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Gen. 1:28).

These superior beings were placed into the Edenic paradise, to dress, keep, and enjoy its beauty and life-giving resources, and

to enjoy a special fellowship with God. A sweet story indeed, but much too short. They did not live happily ever after.

THE FALL AND EXPULSION FROM EDEN

God placed in Eden everything necessary for the couple's happiness and eternal well-being. "And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil" (Gen. 2:9). As far as we know God placed only one restriction on this primitive pair: "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:16,17). It was here that the serpent hit Eve with magnum force: "And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:4,5).

Gallons of ink have been wasted as writers speculate about what kind of fruit it was that was forbidden. Was it an apple? a pear? a pineapple?... And besides this just what could have been so wrong with eating either of these, or any other kind of fruit for that matter? This has become a joke among unbelievers and the irreverent. Such questioning is subterfuge, causing us to miss the real point at issue. For you see the problem was, had the kind and loving Creator provided everything necessary for the happiness, well-being, and eternal existence of His creation? Or had He deprived them of something even greater by His restriction? This was the serpent's thrust. "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:5).

And this is Satan's thrust today. God warned, "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Ex. 20:14). Such, He declares, is a sin against one's own body (1 Cor. 6:18), a source of disease (Pro. 5:11), and that its end is as bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword (Pro. 5:4), and a shortcut to hell (Pro. 7:22,23,27). But Satan tells us to give free reign to lust, that God is depriving us of some of the good life; and, sadly, many are still buying his lie about the forbidden fruit. God said, "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth" (Eph. 4:28). But banks are robbed, cars are stripped, and homes broken into. Why? Satan has convinced the thief that he could have a better way of life by theft than by following God's law. Paul urged, "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men" (Rom. 12:17). Again, "Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men" (2 Cor. 8:21). But the merchant still advertises his great one-half off sale (one-half off what?), the horsetrader misrepresents the age of his horse, and the politician still profits from graft. Why? Again, it is the forbidden fruit. Satan has convinced man that dishonesty will bring him a better life than God's way. Take any sin—drugs, alcohol, lying, hypocrisy, idolatry—and analyze its indulgence: you will always find present the necessary elements of the forbidden fruit—man thinks he can make it better on his own than by following God's law.

But did Adam and Eve better themselves by turning their backs on God and His word, and accepting the serpent's lie? Human misery and failure answer that question. Sin collects its wage.

SIN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

One of the consequences of sin was that the eyes of Adam and Eve were opened, causing a recognition of their nakedness, and a desire to cover themselves (Gen. 3:7). There was certainly no shame in the actual nakedness of this man and his wife in their primitive paradise: “And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed” (Gen. 2:25). They why is the shame of their exposed bodies a consequence of sin? I confess that I do not rightly know. But I suspect that they saw their nakedness, not only as physical exposure before God, but also the total exposure of their whole being. Evidently through their fall they had acquired enough knowledge of the shame, the degradation, and depths of human depravity, especially in the sexual realm, to which their act would lead so as to make them want immediately a covering for both body and spirit. But a fig leaf is a poor covering for the body, much less the spirit: “all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do” (Heb. 4:13). It would remain for God to provide an adequate covering for both (Gen. 3:21; Rom. 4:7,8).

A second consequence of sin involves the curse placed on the serpent. “And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Gen. 3:14,15). Again, I do not know as much as I would like to about “the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan” (Rev. 20:2). I cannot speak with the authority and assurance of some of his origin, his original status, and his fall. But on the authority of the word of God I can speak of his devilish work in the world, and of his ultimate end through the

sacrifice of Jesus Christ. “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb. 4:14,15). “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” (Rev. 20:10). So whatever may have been his position beforehand—angel or devil, it is clear now. He is the deceiver, the arch enemy of all holiness and purity, the father of lies (John 8:44); and his doom is sealed. He rebelled against God, and must pay the price of that rebellion.

A third consequence is directed toward the woman: “Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee” (Gen. 3:16). Again we feel at loss to fully comprehend all that may be involved in this penalty; but some things seem evident: (1) conception would be multiplied. Young girls have had their reputations spotted, dreams broken, and lives ruined through unwanted pregnancies. Starvation haunts overpopulated countries. Even with the best modern methods of birth control, unwanted conceptions continue to mount. (2) Children are to be brought forth in sorrow. How Eve must have felt the full impact of this when she heard the news, “Cain has killed his brother Abel.” How any mother’s heart aches when her son or daughter becomes a murderer, a drug addict, a derelict, or she hears the prison doors slam against him. (3) Her husband would rule over her. There is no question that a woman is equal to a man. Yet in

every part of the world, in all recorded history, man has had the domino, sometimes to the extent of making the woman a virtual possession of slave (I read of one country where the man made his wives drink his bath water to show their subjection). Sin surely takes a heavy toll.

A fourth consequence applied mainly toward the man. “And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Gen. 3:17-19). Why do weeds outgrow good seeds? No doubt every farmer has asked himself that question as he mopped the sweat from his furrowed brow. But the answer is sin. God gave man every good thing to eat while in Eden, but man chose to strike out on his own. Now he must fight for his very sustenance, and often he loses the battle.

A fifth consequence of sin is death. “And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life” (Gen. 3:22-24). Paul added, “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” (Rom. 5:12). Again, “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” (1 Cor. 15:21,22).

Man thus severed his relationship with God, thinking he could make for himself a better life than God had prepared for him. What a price to pay for human pride and disobedience!

IMPLICATIONS OF THE CREATION AND FALL
CREATION ARGUES AGAINST THE THEORIES OF
EVOLUTION

An author, whose name I do not know, penned the following words:

“In the beginning was the amoeba,
And the amoeba begat sackworms,
And sackworms begat skull-less animals,
Skull-less animals begat single nostriled animals,
And single nostiled animals begat primeval fish,
And primeval fish begat mud-fish,
Mud-fish begat tailed amphibians,
Tailed amphibians begat primary mammals,
Primary mammals begat pouched animals,
Pouched animals begat semi-apes,
And semi-apes begat college Professors.

The Bible story is quite different. It affirms that man was made full-grown, and in the image of God, rather than evolving through a long line of lower life forms: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (Gen. 1:27). The Psalmist said, “For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever

passeth through the paths of the seas” (Ps. 8:5-8). When one glances at the American Standard Version, he will see *elohiym* in verse five translated God, not angels. This leaves absolutely no place for evolution: man was by creation, not evolution, a higher life form, just under God.

Evolution presents man as having evolved from lower life forms (even from non-life sources) into a more perfected species through the survival of the fittest; but the story of the creation and fall of man demands the opposite: he was created in a state of perfection, but degenerated through sin. Evolution and the Bible cannot be mated; in fact, they cannot even hold hands.

THE FALL EXPLAINS THE CALAMITIES OF MAN

When things go wrong, we are so often confronted with the question (having even asked it ourselves on occasion), “Why has God done this to me?” David wondered why the righteous were perplexed with problems, sometimes seemingly more so than the wicked (Ps. 73:1-16). Habakkuk thought God had a blind side with reference to violence in the street (Hab. 1:1-4). Broken hearts cry out “Why did my baby die?” “Why did my mother have to suffer so? She was such a good woman.” The atheist likes to say, “If there is a God, why does He not put a stop to all wars and human suffering?” What a snow job Satan has done on the world—blaming God for all human woes! But sin is the culprit. “And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return”

(Gen. 3:17-19). Even becoming a Christian does not alleviate the fact that we live in a sin-cursed world. A Christian wife may still have to go home to an alcoholic husband; Christian parents will sometimes bury their dead children; the body of a saint may be ravaged by cancer, heart disease, or muscular dystrophy. “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Rom. 8:22,23). With Paul we may cry out, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Rom. 7:24). But when we pass the blame, let us make sure that we place it where it belongs—Satan, not the great God who made everything good and very good (Gen. 1:31).

CREATION GIVES A SOLID BASIS FOR THE HOME AND FAMILY LIFE

Unity in the Marriage Relationship. God caused all the animals to pass before Adam (Gen. 2:20,21). Imagine, if you will, the scene—ugly gorillas, snarling dogs, snapping turtles, slimy snails. Will Adam find a help meet among this motley crew? There is no way! He gave them names, but he would not give them *his* name (Gen. 2:20). But then after a deep sleep he awoke to see Eve—beautiful Eve. What a contrast to the slime and the slither: “And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man” (Gen. 2:23). A Hebrew professor, Dr. Toyozo W. Nakarai, told me that the word translated *now* in the above passage often was used as an interjection similar to our word *wow*. And what man has not experienced the same feeling expressed by Adam when he first laid eyes on his future bride? The writer of the Song of Solomon surely expressed it well when

he said, "Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair... Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck. How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! how much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices! Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue; and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon" (SS. 4:1,9-11). Proverbs adds, "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies" (Pro. 31:10). Chaucer said: "What is better than wisdom?—Woman. What is better than a good woman?—Nothing." Amen.

And once the two are joined as bone of bones, flesh of flesh, the created nature demands that the union be permanent. In fact this creation story is the very basis of Jesus' law governing divorce and remarriage. "And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matt. 19:4-6).

When the home fails, we all lose. Husband and wife lose a loving, enjoyable, and fulfilling relationship; they suffer emotionally, financially, socially, and religiously. Children lose one, sometimes both parents, and the stability and security afforded them by loving parents. They suffer mental and emotional grief, and guilt that is often beyond their abilities to cope with. Society loses a unit of its most stabilizing influence; and the church loses part of, or maybe even the whole family. And more than one out of three homes are falling apart. Why? Probably the answer is twofold: (1) we are teaching, or allowing

our children to be taught, that the creation story is a myth, leaving no foundation for the home as God would have it. (2) Satan still holds out the allure of the forbidden fruit: “escape boredom, play the field, swing, ‘the door is always open and your path is free to walk,’ do not allow God to restrict your pleasure.” And we still believe the lie. Perhaps in no other situation is the following passage more applicable, “Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain” (Ps. 127:1).

Authority in the Home. Not only do we find in this account the divine basis for a permanent marriage, the principle of authority in the home also is prefaced on the creation and fall. The New Testament indisputably places headship in the man. “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body” (Eph. 5:22,23). “Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives... For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement” (1 Pet. 3:1,5,6). This principle of authority seems to be based on two facts.

First, Adam was primary in the order of creation. “Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve” (1 Tim. 2:11-13). And even though there is an inter-dependency on each other, the woman was provided as a suitable helper for the man, and not

vice versa: “For the man is not of the woman: but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. For this cause ought the woman to have power [perhaps a symbol of authority] on her head because of the angels. Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God” (1 Cor. 11:8-12).

The headship of man is not a dictatorship, but a position of tremendous responsibility in caring for his family. Paul said, “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel” (1 Tim. 5:8). Matthew Henry wrote, “If man is the head, she [woman] is the crown, a crown to her husband, the crown of the visible creation. The man was dust refined, but the woman was double-refined, one remove further from the earth... The woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved.” Another writer said, and I have lost the source, “The wife is no longer *surrendered* to the husband, she is *entrusted* to him. He does not have the right of *Lordship* over her; he takes *responsibility* for her.”

In the second place woman seems to have lost some of her eminence since she was primary in the order of the fall. Part of her curse was, “and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee” (Gen. 3:16). Paul further adds, “And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression” (1 Tim. 2:14). So women in almost every country of the world, and since time immemorial, have been subjected to the worst of indignities. The Athenians kept women in private chambers, guarded by dogs; and considered them to be fickle,

contentious, and nature's greatest misfits. Under Roman dominion, married females were the absolute property of their husbands. A Jewish writer said women were greedy, inquisitive, lazy, vain, and frivolous. Another said that women had received nine tenths of the empty-headedness that came upon the world. Be reminded once again, however, that such treatment of women was not God's original intent, this came as a result of sin. But it does figure in somehow with the New Testament teaching on the subject of women.

***CREATION AND THE FALL GIVE US A BACKGROUND
FOR DEFINING AND UNDERSTANDING SIN AND
REDEMPTION***

I know of no other way that one might gain such an accurate and exact knowledge of sin, its damnable nature, and the need for redemption, than against the backdrop of the fall of Adam and Eve. This fact surely is made unmistakably clear by Paul in Romans 5:12-21 "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: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)

Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.” Add to this his statement in 1 Corinthians 15:21,22, and the picture is complete: “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.”

Now, rip the foundation—the story of the fall—from under Paul’s teaching in the above passage. Make it fantasy, fairytale, or myth (as some even in the church seem quite willing to do), and what do you have left in such hitherto meaningful words as reconciliation, atonement, offense, free gift, redemption, grace, death, and resurrection? They all become wholly intangible, devoid of meaningful definition. Aside from everything else we have said, surely this shows the absolute necessity of the account of the fall in the scheme of redemption. Let the atheist deny it if he will; but the Bible believer? Never! It is an important Bible fact that ought to be engraved in the hearts and minds of young and old alike with God’s pen of iron, pointed with a diamond (Jer. 17:1).

CREATION AND THE FALL GIVE INSIGHT INTO PARADISE RESTORED

As we have already seen, the garden of Eden was a place of delight, and entered the Greek through the Septuagint as Paradise. In the New Testament this becomes a term of

marvelous significance to the Christian. Jesus said to the thief on the cross, “To day shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43). Paul told the Corinthians, “And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter” (2 Cor. 12:3,4). Our Lord sent this message to the church at Ephesus, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God” (Rev. 2:7).

But beyond doubt the most beautiful New Testament allusion to the Edenic Paradise is its restoration in the last chapter of Revelation. Read it carefully and reverently: “And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever” (Rev. 22:1-5).

What then is Paradise? It is Eden restored. Whether literally or figuratively I do not know; nor do I feel a need to bother my mind with such details. But this I do know: every good thing man lost in the fall will be restored to him in the Paradise of God—freedom from pain and sorrow, freedom from death, emancipation from the curse, no heat from the sun to pull sweat from the dusty brow, surpassingly beautiful surroundings; but

most of all, in the cool of the day we can walk once more in intimate and unlimited fellowship with the divine Creator and His precious Lamb.

“What a song of delight in that city so bright
Will be wafted ‘neath heaven’s fair dome,
How the ransomed will raise happy songs in His praise,
When all of God’s singers get home.

Having overcome sin, ‘hallelujah amen’
Will be heard in that land o’er the foam,
Every heart will be light and each face will be bright,
When all of God’s singers get home.”

So from the dawn of creation to the eternal home, the story of the first pair and their fall is weaved into the narrative of hope. It is a tremendously important fact in human redemption.

CHAPTER IV: THE FLOOD—SIN TAKES ITS TOLL

The splendor of Eden afforded man every possible need and pleasure. However, at the urging of the serpent, the first pair were convinced (at least Eve was) that God's law had unduly restricted them, depriving them of something that could make them far superior beings, probably even making them near equals to God (Gen. 3:4,5). Succumbing to this enticement, they stepped outside of God's law and favor, and struck out on their own to improve on Paradise.

But separated from God's holy law, and from the very source of life, sin by its very nature would erode and undermine man's physical and spiritual well-being, and head him down the path toward corruption, misery and death. God's law decrees that what a man sows, that he will also reap (Gal. 6:7,8), and what a terrible crop sin would produce by the time of Noah.

WITHOUT GOD'S GUIDANCE SIN MULTIPLIED *THE FIRST FAMILY FEELS THE STING OF SIN*

Cherubims and a flaming sword, pointing in every direction, now blocked the entrance to the garden of Eden (Gen. 3:22), and Adam was forced to fend for himself and his family against the elements and the unfriendly soil (Gen. 3:23). Watering the ground with his sweat as he grubbed the gnarled roots from the ground to gain space for good seed to grow, no doubt he looked long and often in the direction of the flaming sword, remembering the sweet Paradise lost by sin. But too much time could not be spent in looking back: the weeds would gain the advantage of the good seed. Besides that, his boys must be taught to keep the sheep and till the soil (Gen. 4:2). Sin is

collecting its wages, but the levy is cheap considering what is about to take place. For you see Adam is just now beginning to learn the destructive force of this thing called sin. Soon it would rip his little family to shreds.

Adam taught his boys to worship their Creator; but the situation was such as Paul would describe many years later, “I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me” (Rom. 7:21). So even in worship there is the appeal of the forbidden fruit: Cain searching for a better and more convenient way to worship God than that outlined by the Creator Himself (for the evidence of this see following Scriptures: Gen. 4:7; Heb. 11:4; Rom. 10:17; Jude 11). The Scriptural narrative thus declares, “And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him. And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him” (Gen. 4:3-8).

“For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” “In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children.” These words must have echoed through the very depths of Eve’s soul as she heard the message, “You son, Abel, is dead.” But the hurt was to intensify as the messenger continued, “Cain killed him.” The next few days must have been sheer torment for Eve as she buried Abel, and as Cain left for Nod a marked and fearful man

(Gen. 4:15). True, as the serpent promised her, she now knows good and evil (Gen. 3:5). She knows about the good God who created her, the good paradise with its gracious provisions, the good tree of life with its life-giving fruit. She also knows evil, but it is so far from the desirable knowledge presented to her by the arch deceiver. Rather it wrings from her soul every drop of hurt and agony possible. How many times in her mind she relived that temptation in Eden during those trying days perhaps only the love of a mother could know. For she had the certain knowledge that she was responsible for the cruel death of her son, as much so as if she had personally stuck a knife through his heart. But she had believed the lie: life can be better without God. Somehow things did not seem to be working out that way; but she had made a choice, and there was no turning back.

POLYGAMY GAINS A FOOTHOLD

“And Lamech took unto him two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah” (Gen. 4:19). In these few words the Bible introduces us to what is probably the most brutalizing use of womanhood the world has ever known—polygamy. The happy home of Sarah was shattered when she allowed Abraham to take Hagar as a second wife (Gen. 16:1-3). The fierce jealousy between the two made them deadly rivals, and at least on two occasions Hagar was driven from the safety and compassion of her home and husband (Gen. 16:4-6; 21:9-21). Jacob married four women, and their rivalry for their husband’s attention was hardly equaled in Bible history (Gen. 30). Queen Esther, just one in a very large harem, unless called, could only approach her husband under penalty of death; all that could save her was the extended scepter of the king (Est. 4:11). Solomon had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines (1 Kgs. 11:3), and seems to have had hardly an ounce of respect

for any of them (Eccl. 7:27,28). Even king David, great as he was, would use women as political and social pawns when it was to his advantage (2 Sam. 3:13-16). I once read of a ruler who made his wives drink his bath water to prove their subjection. One ancient writer said, “We have harlots for our pleasure, concubines for daily physical use, wives to bring up legitimate children and to be faithful stewards in household matters.” What a perversion of God’s beautiful plan for two to become one—bone of bone, flesh of flesh! But, then, that is the way it is. It puts on a pretty face to hide its ugliness.

Lamech’s perverted life-style was also manifested in anger and murder. “And Lamech said unto his wives, Adah and Zillah, Hear my voice; ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech: for I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt. If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold” (Gen 4:23,24). Man on his own had been promised that he could make a better life for himself than that designed by the Creator, but sin is snowballing, and he seems helpless to stop it, or even slow it down.

THE INTRODUCTION OF IDOLATRY

A rather strange fact is introduced in Gen. 4:26. This passage says, “And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of the Lord.” Had not man called on God before? Is it not true that, even from the very gate of Eden, Adam and his family had sacrificed to God? Then what could possibly be the significance of this statement that at this particular time men began to call on the Lord? While much more may be involved, I think two things are apparent.

First, this emphasizes the fact, that while sin may be pleasant for a season (Heb. 11:25), man eventually realizes his need for

God. When he rounds that curve directly in the path of an 18 wheeler, it is amazing how quickly even the infidel cries, “O Lord.” People may worship money, pleasure, or possessions; but if the doctor says, “Terminal,” they begin to call on God. An infidel is said to have prayed in his final hour, “Oh God, if there is a God, save my soul, if I have a soul, from hell, if there is a hell.” It would seem that at this point in history man recognized his accelerating plunge into sin and depravity, and began to call on God to intervene.

In the second place, this appears to me as the most likely point for the introduction of idolatrous practices. This may be more than the text says, but I doubt it. After all, idolatry is nothing more than man’s feeble efforts to get some sort of divine control in his life, and the fact that it developed at a very early age is indisputable. Joshua said to the people, “Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood [probably in this context the Euphrates], and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Josh. 24:14,15). So a desperate creation calls on God, but through created objects that can neither taste, hear, see, nor smell (Deut. 4:28), and certainly cannot answer. Sinful man cannot devise a means back to God; he is on a downhill run into sin and corruption, and the brakes are not working.

THE TOTAL CORRUPTION OF THE HUMAN RACE

God said, “And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, That

the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years... And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart” (Gen. 6:1-3,5,6). What is involved in the first three verses quoted above may never be satisfactorily explained (I seriously question the traditional explanations among us). But I think understood in the context of Jesus’ statement, “For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark” (Matt. 24:38), and in the light of what we have seen develop in sexual and physical abuse of women, it must have involved a total abandonment to sexual licentiousness and corruption. The ideal of moderation and control, especially with reference to sexual activity, faded into oblivion. Fulfilling the desires of the flesh became the dominant thought of man, whether in the legitimate realm of marriage, or in unspeakably corrupt sexual liaisons. Such filth God could no longer allow to dominate His earth. “And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth” (Gen. 6:12,13).

ACCOUNTS OF THE FLOOD

THE GENESIS ACOCUNT

Although there are several accounts of the flood, the Genesis record provides the most detail. We quote here only a portion of

it. “In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened... And the flood was forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lift up above the earth. And the waters prevailed, and were increased greatly upon the earth; and the ark went upon the face of the waters. And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered. Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered. And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man: All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died. And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark” (Gen. 7:11, 17-23).

THE ACCOUNT OF THE PSALMIST

The Psalmist saw the flood waters covering the earth as a blanket: “Who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed for ever. Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a garment: the waters stood above the mountains. At thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away. They go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys unto the place which thou hast founded for them” (Ps. 104:5-8).

THE ACCOUNT OF ISAIAH

Isaiah spoke of the flood, but basically within the context of God's promise that it would not be repeated again on the earth.

“For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee” (Isa. 54:9).

NEW TESTAMENT ACOCUNTS OF THE FLOOD

Jesus Himself places His authority on the Genesis account of the flood (a fact hard to explain by those who do not believe the account, but claim to believe in Jesus). “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (Matt. 24:36-39).

The writer of Hebrews said, “By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith” (Heb. 11:7).

The apostle Peter has three references to the flood: one viewing it as a means of salvation for Noah and his family, and the other two showing God’s vengeance against sin. “Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water” (1 Pet. 3:20). “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” (2 Pet. 2:5). “For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water:

Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished” (2 Pet. 3:5,6).

LESSONS FROM THE FLOOD

In every account thus far we have related important Bible facts, we have seen that these stories have implications far beyond their immediate setting. In fact we have found them to be basic to the development and understanding of the scheme of redemption. In this respect the flood account is no different, and there are at least four lessons we can learn from it.

SIN EVENTUALLY EXTRACTS ITS WAGE

Sin produces death, whether by so-called natural causes or by catastrophe (Gen. 2:17; Eze. 18:20; Rom. 6:23). And when the stench of man’s defilement reached the very heavens, God could no longer bear or allow it. “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them” (Gen. 6:5-7).

Other examples of pressing God beyond His limits of toleration could be found in Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18; Jude 7), and the former inhabitants of the promised land (Deut. 9:4-6). The ten tribes were taken into the Assyrian captivity when their cup of abomination became full (2 Kgs. 17:13-23). The same thing was true of the Southern Kingdom and the Babylonian captivity (2 Kgs. 23:26,27). Daniel saw the overspreading of abomination as the reason for the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (Dan. 9:27; Matt. 24:3-22). When men

become as natural brute beast (2 Pet. 2:12), they must be destroyed (even as sinful beings we recognize the validity of this principle: that is why we keep some people in cages, some we hang or electrocute).

In fact, an often ignored principle is that sin carries within itself the seed for its own destruction. This is stated as a maxim by Paul to the Galatians: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (Gal. 6:7-8). Solomon said of the man going in to the prostitute, “He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; Till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life... Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death” (Pro. 7:22,23,27). The alcoholic destroys his liver, kidneys, stomach, brain, and nervous system. The homosexual often dies of aids. Paul said, “For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet” (Rom. 1:26,27).

Moses promised the children of Israel that obedience to God would allow them to possess and retain the promised land. Otherwise he warned, “But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out” (Num. 32:23). “Be sure your sin will find you out.” For years I misread that Scripture. I thought it said, “Be sure people will find out your sin.” No doubt the latter is usually true. Sin has a way of rearing its ugly head to destroy happiness, security,

reputation and lives even years and years after the fact. But this is not what the passage says. It says sin will catch up with you. It will hunt you down like an animal no matter who you are or how far you go. It will make you pay... and pay... and pay.

***EVEN IN THE PRESENCE OF SUCH A SINFUL STATE,
GOD'S MERCY AND GRACE IS ALWAYS MANIFEST***

“But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord” (Gen. 6:8). “By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith” (Heb. 11:7). “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” (2 Pet. 2:5).

The Sign of the Rainbow. Having survived the greatest catastrophe the world has ever experienced, a grateful Noah stepped from the ark and sacrificed to his God: “And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the Lord smelled a sweet savour; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done” (Gen. 8:20,21). Verse 21 of this passage is difficult. Does God just now recognize man's sinful tendencies from early youth? Has He decided simply to tolerate or ignore sin? The justice and holiness of God demand that such not be the case.

Man is sinful, and always will be. But rather than destroy His creation, God will provide a means of salvation for all who, like Noah, are willing to accept it. This is simply an extension of the promise made to mother Eve of redemption through her

Seed, or Christ (Gen. 3:15). This application becomes far more evident in the rainbow covenant that God entered into with Noah.

For God had said, “And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth. And I will establish my covenant with you, neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth” (Gen. 9:9-17). To be sure there are guaranteed temporal promises here: never again will such a flood of waters cover the earth, seed time and harvest, winter and summer, and day and night will continue to mark the times and the seasons. Even the living creatures of the field will be blessed with this protection. But the main thrust of the promise is spiritual. Sin has abounded with death and destruction over the whole face of the earth: “But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (Rom. 5:20). It was in this context that Isaiah (in a

chapter clearly predicting the coming blessings in Christ) saw the flood: “For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee” (Isa. 54:7-10).

So there really is a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. It ought always to remind us that, though we do not deserve it, the rain has stopped, and the sun is shining through the clouds. But far more than that it ought to serve as a beautiful testimony that, though deserving of death and hell we may be, God’s grace has afforded us redemption through Christ. And it must be more than a coincidence that when granted through the grace and mercy of Christ to once more approach God’s marvelous throne, we will see it encircled by...a rainbow (Rev. 4:3). “But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:57).

BAPTISM IS LIKE FIGURE OF THE FLOOD

The act of baptism is the very epitome of beauty and simplicity. Just a brief overview of it will demonstrate this to be true.

It is A Part of the New Birth Process. Jesus’ teaching on the new birth had puzzled Nicodemus. He questioned, “How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born? 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 3:4,5). Paul declares it to be the washing of regeneration: “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Titus 3:5). Naaman was told to dip seven times in the Jordan and his leprosy would be cured. At first he rebelled against God’s word, but later repented and obeyed Him. “Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean” (2 Kgs. 5:14). In much the same way when we obey the instructions of the Holy Spirit to be baptized for the remission of sins, we rise as a new creature to walk in newness of life: “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 6:3,4).

It is a Form of the Death, Burial, and Resurrection of Christ.

When viewed as part of the birth process, baptism marks the point of the beginning of sonship—the new life. But when considered in connection with the destruction of the life of sin, and the beginning of the new life in Christ, it is presented as a death, burial, and resurrection: “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? 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. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with

him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Rom. 6:1-6). Of our obedience to this form Paul further adds, “But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness” (Rom. 6:17,18).

It is For the Remission or Cleansing of Sins. To those who honor the inspiration of Scripture, two verses should be sufficient on this point. First, note the clear teaching on Pentecost, recorded in Acts 2:38: “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” The second verse is Acts 22:16, spoken to the penitent and praying Saul of Tarsus: “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”

It Prepares the Bride for Christ. In my opinion, one of the most beautiful figures in all of the Bible is the church presented as a bride to Christ. And baptism is the consummating act to prepare her for this presentation without spot, wrinkle, or blemish. “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:25-27).

It Puts Us Into Christ. All spiritual blessings are in Christ (Eph. 1:3). But one would search in vain the Holy Book trying to find a means of entrance into Christ, other than through the act of baptism. The Word of God declares, “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is

neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:26-29).

It Puts Us Into the Church of Christ. Church membership is not optional as some would have us to believe. In fact the very same acts that make us Christians, make us members of the body or church of Christ (see Acts 2:47). On the basis of what we have already seen concerning baptism, we could logically conclude that this is the consummating act through which we would enter the church. But logic is not necessary; the book affirms it: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13).

"Baptism Doth Also Now Save Us." It is at this point that the flood can help us to understand and appreciate the act of baptism. Peter said, "Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 3:20,21). So just as the waters of the flood washed and cleansed the earth from its sinful inhabitants, and at the same time carried Noah and his family to safety, so the act of baptism puts us into Christ, into His death, into contact with His blood, and transports us safely from the powers of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son (see Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3,4; 1 John 5:8; Col. 1:13). In the light of such truth, why the sectarian world has so viciously attacked this beautiful requirement is beyond me. But John's baptism was

rejected in much the same way (Luke 7:39,40). Such, I suppose, is the nature of the powers of darkness.

***THE AWFUL AND UNEXPECTED NATURE
OF GOD'S FINAL JUDGMENT***

From the mount of Olives Jesus looked down over the city of Jerusalem, wept for her, and bade her a final farewell: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matt. 23:37-39). Like the people before the flood, the time had come for sin to collect its toll, down to the very last drop of blood: "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matt. 24:21). But such horror on the City of Peace (they never learned the meaning of that term, Luke 19:42) was only typical of an eternal judgment against sin and its participants. And it was this awful and unexpected destruction that caused Jesus to call forth a warning from the flood: "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt. 24:36-39).

Adventist, Jehovah's Witnesses, and certain others have always been consistent time-setters (and always just as consistently wrong), even in the face of declarations that the

second coming of Christ will be sudden and unexpected. Jesus Himself said, “But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father” (Mark 13:32). Peter warned, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Pet. 3:9,10). But, then, inspired statements, even the words of Jesus Himself, seemingly never have bothered wild speculators much!

So sin had had its field day: the horrible death of almost everything that breathed testified of its wages (Rom. 6:23). But sin is not finished; it will again germinate and take root, spreading like a cancer through the descendants of the one righteous family. Satan had promised a better life for man without God, but Satan lied. Will God come back to man to exemplify his steps? Yes, but that is another story, told in another chapter of the book.

CHAPTER V: GOD'S PROMISE OF REDEMPTION

Paradise was lost because of sin. Satan's promise that men would become gods of their own destiny, making a far better life for themselves than God had provided, had proven to be an elusive dream. Man's best efforts at reform were as quickly dissipated as the early morning cloud (Hos. 6:4), and only God's divine grace had kept the earth from being wiped clean of all its abominable inhabitants (Gen. 6:8). But even though a battle had been lost in Eden, the war was not over. God promised a lethal blow to the head of Satan (Gen. 3:15), and set a token, a bow, in the clouds to indicate that His loving kindness had not eternally departed from His creation (Gen. 9:13). It would be a battle royal, but the victory would be sweet. The development of this promise, both in time and eternity, is one of the most fascinating stories of the Bible.

THE PROMISE AS IT ORIGINATED IN ETERNITY

Somewhere in the remote recesses of antiquity, even before the morning stars sang together, Deity discussed redemption. Having rejected animal sacrifice as nothing more than a temporary propitiation for sin, the Son willingly offered Himself. The Psalmist eloquently described the scene: "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart" (Ps. 40:6-8; see also Heb. 10:8,9). The offering was accepted. Death would lose its sting, the grave, its victory (1 Cor. 15:54). The

flaming sword would be removed, and paradise restored (Luke 23:43).

The Lamb Slain from Before the Foundation of the World. It is in view of this decision that Jesus is presented as the Lamb slain (not in reality, but in promise) from before the foundation of the world. “And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8). “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you” (1 Pet. 1:18-20).

The Church as God’s Eternal Purpose. Although we will have more to say about this later, we need to establish at this point the fact that the church of Jesus Christ was involved in this eternal plan of redemption: “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love” (Eph. 1:4). “And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph. 3:9-11). The church is not an afterthought. It is not a non-essential entity. It is the blood-bought institution wherein men are reconciled to God by the cross of Christ (Eph. 2:12-17). And the man who would ridicule or degrade its importance in the scheme of redemption has a lot to learn about God’s Book, and

His eternal plan of redemption through the church of Jesus Christ.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROMISE DURING THE OLD TESTAMENT PERIOD

The Old Testament is concerned with one grand central theme: a gradual revelation of redemption through Christ. Isaiah perhaps best described the process: “Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little: 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. But the word of the Lord was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken” (Isa. 28:9-13). We will observe this development as it courses through the Old Testament with ever-increasing intensity and clarity.

The Promise to the Patriarchs. The revelation of the promise began even as early as the fall. God warned the serpent, “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Gen. 3:15).

The promise was reiterated with considerably more detail to the patriarch Abraham: “Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that

bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 12:1-3).

As the bodies of Abraham and Sarah aged past the time of fertility, they needed concrete proof of God’s intention to carry out his plan. They received this in the form of a most solemn covenant in blood. Such a covenant was entered by dividing the body of an animal (or animals). The parties of the covenant then passed between its parts, striking the agreement in the presence of the severed body and the flowing blood (see Jer. 34:18-20). It was as if to say, “If we break this covenant, may our bodies be severed and our blood be shed even as it has been with this animal.” The Bible records this solemn covenant of intent in this way: “And he said, Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon. And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not... And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates” (Gen. 15:8-10,17,18).

A third confirmation of the promise was given to Abraham in the covenant of circumcision. God said, “This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you” (Gen. 17:10,11). The seed of Abraham would be in the bondage of Egypt for four hundred years (Gen. 15:13); the nation would divide, and

Assyria would scatter the ten tribes to the four winds (2 Kgs. 17:22,23); the iron bars of Babylon would hold Judah captive for seventy years (2 Kgs. 25:1-10). But Israel's faith would not down. Wherever she went, her mutilated flesh gave testimony of God's promise—some day, and in some way, Abraham's seed would bless the world.

Finally, when Abraham had showed his matchless faith by the intended sacrifice of his son, God made His promise immutable by oath. "And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice" (Gen. 22:15-22).

The promise was continued in Isaac. God had said to Abraham on the occasion of the institution of circumcision, "And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him... But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year" (Gen. 17:19,21). After God had appeared to Isaac and forbade him to go into the land of Egypt, He restated his intention of human redemption to humanity through Abraham's seed: "Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father; And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will

give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 26:3,4).

Jacob was next in line for the promise. “And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 28:12-14).

The promise was expanded in Judah. “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be” (Gen. 49:10). *Young’s Analytical Concordance* says of the word Shiloh, “A description of Messiah, as the Prince of Peace; or as the ‘seed’ of Judah.” Not only will the Seed of Abraham bless all nations, but he will appear as some form of a ruler who will gather God’s people together. “Little by little, precept by precept,” the promise begins to take shape.

The Promise Through the Prophets. Deuteronomy 18 makes known the fact that inspired prophets were to be a cardinal part of the Holy Nation. Not only would they serve as watchmen on the wall to warn the people of their sins when they strayed from God’s covenant (Eze. 3:17-19), but they would also gradually reveal the details of God’s coming redemption through Jesus Christ. “Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls” (1 Pet. 1:9). Again, “Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days” (Acts 3:24). It is at this

point that we select and record only a few of the literally hundreds of these prophecies.

Moses himself was one of these prophets. He said, “I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him” (Deut. 18:18,19; see also Acts 3:22,23). “Like Moses.” That adds significant detail to the promise. Moses was God’s very special prophet, mediator, and lawgiver. He led the people from bondage to the promise land, and interceded often on their behalf. Nothing less could be expected of the Seed of Abraham who is to bless all nations.

David was truly a great king in Israel. Although often more notarized as the sweet Psalmist of Israel, yet he was one of the greatest prophets; and through him the Messianic promise took definite form. The coming Seed would be recognized as the Son of God (Ps. 2:7,12); He would at first be rejected by those in positions of authority (Ps. 2:3); His rejection would culminate in crucifixion (Ps. 22:1-21), He would be resurrected and ascend to the right hand of the Father (Ps. 16:8-11; 24:7-10); His kingdom would be established, and He would rule forever from the throne of David. Let us look in more detail at some of these dramatic predictions. Nathan promised David, “And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever” (2 Sam. 7:12,13). David’s beautiful second Psalm says, “Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together,

against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee” (Ps. 2:1-7). The agony of the cross is graphically depicted in the twenty-second Psalm, “But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him... They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture” (Ps. 22:6-8,13-18). The Redeemer’s triumphant entry to be seated on David’s heavenly throne is also noted: “Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory. Selah” (Ps. 24:7-10). Man will be redeemed from sin and its wages; paradise will be restored; but what a horrible price God’s Son will have to pay for that redemption!

Isaiah is commonly called the Messianic prophet. And with good cause, for he adds many beautiful details to the Abrahamic covenant. “And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (Isa. 2:2-3). “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14). Or consider perhaps his most beautiful and moving prophecy of all, Isa. 9:6,7: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.”

Jeremiah also spoke of this King and the covenant of forgiveness he would establish with His people. “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth” (Jer. 23:5). “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an

husband unto them, saith the Lord: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jer. 31:31-34).

Daniel takes up the promise, but with more emphasis on an everlasting kingdom and its glorious King. “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever” (Dan. 2:44). “I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed” (Dan. 7:13,14).

Since Eve, sin had played its deadly game with God’s creation, but Zechariah saw a fountain opened for man’s cleansing. “In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness” (Zech. 13:1).

Sin separated man from God and paradise. Since then he has been forced to fend for himself, and has suffered untold miseries. But’s God’s grace was ever present, and even in the shadow of Eden a glimmer of hope was given through the Seed of the woman. And as the Old Testament ends that grace is ready to

burst forth on the earth with the power of the noonday sun: “But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall” (Mal. 4:2).

THE PROMISE FULFILLED IN CHRIST

Jesus Came as the Seed of the Woman. The promise had been made just outside Eden: “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Gen. 3:15). In his prediction of the virgin birth, Isaiah showed that He would be exclusively the seed of the woman: the man would have no part in this birth process, except of course as a legal progenitor (Isa. 7:14). When Christ came, it was necessarily in this precise way. Mary was told, “And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:31-35). Paul adds to this, “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Gal. 4:4,5).

Jesus Came as the Seed of Abraham. The Bible is very specific about this point; Jesus, and He alone, is the promised Seed of Abraham. Paul said, “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” (Gal. 3:16). The premillennialists who look to the Jewish nation for the future fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham, look to the wrong source. Old national Israel was the recipient of many special favors, but only to present Christ to the world. On this point Paul is absolutely clear, “Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen” (Rom. 9:4,5). With reference to this the same writer adds, “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:26-29). Inheritance does not come through the physical lineage of Abraham, but through the spiritual (see Matt. 3:9; John 6:63).

Jesus Established His Spiritual Kingdom. In the earliest accounts of His preaching, Jesus laid the groundwork for His kingdom. “From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 4:17). In Caesarea Philippi, in contrast to certain rumors that were being spread about His identity, Jesus affirmed to His disciples, “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matt. 16:18,19). Paul later affirmed the establishment of this kingdom as factual and present: “Wherefore we receiving

a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear” (Heb. 12:28; see also Col. 1:13). In that kingdom we are reconciled to God (Eph. 2:16), become fellowcitizens with the saints (Eph. 2:19), have the apostles and prophets as our foundation, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone (Eph. 2:20), and grow into a holy temple of the Lord, a habitation of God through the Spirit (Eph. 2:20-22).

By its very essence this kingdom is spiritual in nature. Consider, for example, the words of Jesus Himself, “Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence” (John 18:36). Those who wait for an earthly kingdom will wait in vain. The kingdom of God has already come with power (Mark 9:1), and the men are already worshipping and serving the Lord in that kingdom (Col. 1:13).

All Can Now Be Recipients of the Blessings Promised to Abraham by Obedience to the Will of Christ. Note carefully Peter’s answer to his inquiries on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ. “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. For 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 2:38,39). I am sure that several things are involved in the word *promise* in the context of Peter’s usage. But I am equally sure that it was designed to call attention to the fulfillment of the long awaited promise made throughout the Old Testament, and looked forward to with such great anticipation by every Jew. But if any vestige of doubt should remain in the reader’s mind that such is the case, let us look at another passage, this time

Acts 3:25-26: “Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.” The great promise of the Bible, then, is the remission of sins.

The Remission of Sins! What a promise! What a blessing! It provides an escape from sin and its curse. The flaming sword is removed, and the gates of paradise swing wide, bidding us to enter. Once more we have been given access to the tree of life; we can live forever (Rev. 22:1-5). “So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, 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. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:54-58).

CHAPTER VI: PEOPLE—LINKS OF THE BIBLE

Names, names, names! Such, perhaps, is our immediate reaction when we begin to read the Bible. By the time we have completed the first 11 chapters of Genesis we have already been exposed to seventy-nine different names, including two sections of what just seem to be meaningless names lists. The first six chapters of 1 Chronicles names or repeats over eight hundred names. When we begin to read the New Testament it opens with...you guessed it...a list of names—forty-seven in all (Matt. 1:1-16). Luke gives a consecutive list of seventy-five characters (Luke 3:23-38). It makes for a tedious, often boring, reading task. When Reader's Digest decided to condense the Bible, it left out most of these names. After all, they just clutter up an otherwise interesting book. Or do they?

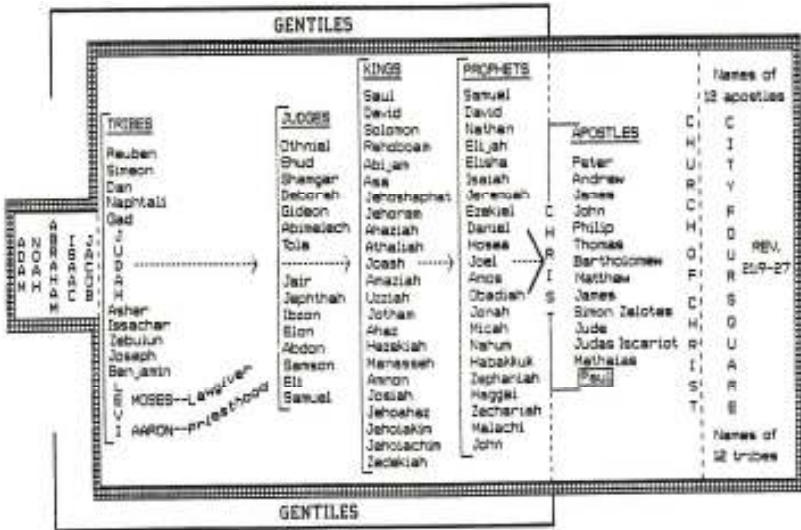
We must remember that essentially the Bible is a book about people—their origin, their fall, their struggles against Satan, sin, self, and each other; their hopes, and their eternal destiny. We must also remember that at the end of the line is Jesus—God made flesh. Thus the line begins with God and ends with God (see Luke 3:23, 38). Around the people in between is formed the framework of the scheme of redemption. This is not a part of the Bible that is subject to improvement by condensation, but the very backbone of the Bible itself.

All of these names are significant in the development of the scheme of redemption, but there are certain characters whose lives, when highlighted, make up the continuity of Bible history. Knowing these and their historical roles helps us to view the Bible in its proper historical and chronological perspective. For lack of a better term, we have designated these as *People—Links*

of the Bible—a very important feature of God’s book that we all need to become intimately acquainted with.

AN OVERVIEW OF PEOPLE—LINKS OF THE BIBLE

Perhaps the best way to understand what to many is a very difficult, if not a totally incomprehensible part of the Bible, is to first gain some concept of the overall story, then fit into that outline the intricately carved parts. We will try to do this by the aid of the following chart. Please study it carefully and prayerfully.



Adam. As previous lessons have emphasized, Adam marks the beginning of the human race—the crowning work of God’s creation. A proper concept of the Bible demands that everything start with him. Aside from that context we would not know about the creative power and lordship of God (Gen. 1:26,27). There would be no background for defining sin (Rom. 5:12), no explanation for pain, suffering and death (Gen. 3:16-19), no basis

for family life (Matt. 19:4-6), no rationale for a resurrection (1 Cor. 5:21,22), and certainly no understanding of (really no need for) redemption through Christ (Rom. 5:14-21). Adam is mentioned 30 times in the Bible, from the first book to the next-to-the-last; and to assume any basis for the Bible without him would be to assume a house of mystery—a house without a foundation, and having great chunks ripped from its superstructure. He is truly the beginning of *People—Links of the Bible*.

Noah. For about seventeen hundred years sin ravaged the earth, turning it into an immoral cesspool, hardly fit for human habitation. “And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years... And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart” (Gen. 6:1-3,5,6). The earth would have to be cleansed of its occupants. “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord” (Gen. 6:9). Noah was a man of faith (Heb. 11:7), exemplary character (Eze. 14:14,20), and a preacher of righteousness (2 Pet. 2:5). Through him and his family the Lord would, in a sense, make a new beginning: “And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein” (Gen. 9:7). Furthermore, God made a covenant of safety for the earth with this righteous man. No more would its inhabitants be cut off by such a catastrophic flood as had just been witnessed (Gen. 9:11). Rather He would deal with sin in a different way: He would provide a means of permanent escape from it by the obedience of One (Rom. 5:19),

even as through obedient and faithful Noah He had provided a temporary escape for all who would accept it (1 Pet. 3:19-21). God's rainbow sign was His guarantee of this blessing (Gen. 9:13-17). I think nothing more need be said to establish this righteous man as a significant Bible people-link.

Abraham. The marvels of God's created worlds stagger the imagination. The flood was the most catastrophic event of all history. Yet all of this, plus much, much more (in fact the first two thousand years of man's history on earth) is condensed to but eleven chapters in the Bible (Gen. 1-11). But the story of faithful Abraham fills thirteen chapters (Gen. 12-25). His name occurs 306 times in the Bible and is mentioned in 27 of its 66 books. God is the God of creation (Acts 17:24; Col. 1:16), but also very often in both Testaments He is called the God of Abraham (Gen. 26:24; 8:13; Ex. 3:15; Matt. 22:32; Acts 3:13). God promised him the land of Canaan (Gen. 12:7; 13:14-17), and promised that through him all nations of the earth would be blessed (Gen. 12:1-3). He was called the friend of God (Jas. 2:23), and the father of all that believe (Rom. 4:11). Moreover, all spiritual blessing will be inherited through his lineage (Gal. 3:26-29). His name is a part of every Christian's vocabulary. And while we can be absolutely sure of but few people's eternal destiny, Abraham is one of which we can (Matt. 8:11; Luke 16:22). There is truly no way to understand the total message of the Bible apart from this man and God's promise to him.

Isaac. Although very much overshadowed by his illustrious father, Isaac was nonetheless a son of promise, born to parents unable to conceive without miraculous intervention (Gen. 16:2; 17:16-22; Heb. 11:11,12). A person evidently of remarkable faith, he willingly submitted to his faith as a human sacrifice (Gen. 22:3-12). Moreover, he probably typifies the world about to be sacrificed until a substitute was provided through Christ;

and it is certain that he was representative of the New Covenant of promise, in contrast to Ishmael, the child of a bondmaid, who represents the covenant of bondage from Sinai (Gal. 4:21-31). But probably most significant is the fact that he stands as a link between Abraham and Jacob, later designated as Israel, the one from whom the Holy Nation received its name.

Jacob. Rebekah, the wife of Issac, was told, “Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger” (Gen. 25:23). Abraham had been promised, “And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing” (Gen. 12:2). That nation was destined to materialize and take shape in Jacob, and be divided into tribes on the basis of his 12 sons. And as previously suggested, it would be designated with the God given name of that patriarch (Gen. 32:24-32). With reference to the selection of Jacob, and the rejection of his brother Esau, the Old Testament says, “I have loved you, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob, And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness” (Mal. 1:2,3).

The Twelve Sons of Jacob. We will return later to these twelve sons for a more detailed discussion of their importance in *People-Links of the Bible*, but for now we simply point out the following facts concerning them. (1) Their names in order of their ages: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin. (2) Due to a famine, these sons and their families, along with the patriarch Jacob (seventy people in all), came into the land of Egypt (Gen. 46). (3) These seventy people settled in Goshen, and eventually grew strong enough to become a threat to Pharaoh, so he placed

them in hard bondage, and demanded that all their boy babies be killed (Ex. 1:7-16). (4) Two of the tribes are of particular significance—Judah and Levi. Judah represents the kingly line (Gen. 49:10), and Levi the priesthood and the holy attendants of the temple. At this point we look particularly at two of the descendants of Levi, Moses and Aaron.

Moses. Moses was from the tribe of Levi (Ex. 2:1,2), and is one of the greatest and better known personalities of the Bible. Through a series of events (Ex. 2:1-10) he was providentially reared in Pharaoh's household, and was eventually an heir to the throne. But he chose not to enjoy the treasures of Egypt (Heb. 11:24-26), but rather led his brethren from the Egyptian bondage to the very edge of the land flowing with milk and honey. He was selected as the mediator for Israel, and through him the law was given that would govern that nation for the next fifteen hundred years (see Gal. 3:19; Heb. 2:1-5). He was certainly one of the grandest figures of all time—warrior, statesman, lawgiver, and author. Through him came the first five books of the Old Testament—the books containing the law that bears his name (Neh. 8:1; John 1:17). Once the Holy People were brought to the brink of Jordan, Moses was called to Nebo, and was laid to rest in an unmarked grave (Deut. 34:1-8). C. F. Alexander wrote eloquently of this majestic scene:

By Nebo's lonely mountain,
On this side Jordan's wave,
In a vale in the land of Moab,
There lies a lonely grave.
But no man dug that sepulchre,
And no man saw it e'er;
For the angels of God upturned the sod,
And laid the dead man there.

That was the grandest funeral
That ever passed on earth;
But no man heard the trampling,
Or saw the train go forth.
Noiselessly as the daylight
Comes when the night is done,
And the crimson streak on ocean's cheek
Grows into the great sun—

Noiselessly as the springtime
Her crest of verdure weaves,
And all the trees on all the hills
Open their thousand leaves—
So, without sound of music,
Or voice of them that wept,
Silently down from the mountain crown
The great procession swept.

Perchance some bald old eagle
On gray Beth-peor's height,
Out of his rocky eyrie
Looked on the wondrous sight.
Perchance some lion, stalking,
Still shuns the hallowed spot,
For beast and bird have seen and heard
That which man knoweth not.

But when the warrior dieth
His comrades in the war,
With arms reversed and muffled drums
Follow the funeral car;

They show the banners taken,
They tell his battles won,
And after him lead his matchless steed
While peals the minute gun.

Amid the noblest of the land
They lay the sage to rest;
And give the bard an honored place,
With costly marble drest,
In the great minster's transept height,
Where lights like glory fall,
While the sweet choir sings and the organ rings
Along the emblazoned wall.

This was the bravest warrior
That ever buckled sword;
This the most gifted poet
That ever breathed a word;
And never earth's philosopher
Traced, with his golden pen,
On the deathless page, truths half so sage
As he wrote down for men.

And had he not high honor?
The hillside for his pall;
To lie in state while angels wait
With stars for tapers tall;
And the dark rock pines, like tossing plumes,
Over his bier to wave;
And God's own hand, in that lonely land,
To lay him in his grave;

In that deep grave without a name,
Whence his uncoffined clay
Shall break again--most wondrous thought!--
Before the judgment day,
And stand, with glory wrapt around,
On the hills he never trod,
And speak of the strife that won our life
Through Christ, the incarnate God.

O lonely tomb in Moab's land,
O dark Beth-peor's hill,
Speak to these curious hearts of ours,
And teach them to be still.
God hath his mysteries of grace—
Ways that we cannot tell;
He hides them deep, like the secret sleep
Of him he loved so well.

Aaron. Moses' brother was named Aaron. He not only served as spokesman for Moses (Ex. 4:10-17), but he and his descendants were given the priesthood (Ex. 28:1). The firstborn of the Israelites had been spared when God brought the final plague on Egypt (Ex. 12:11-13). Later, in lieu of each firstborn, He selected the tribe of Levi to minister in things holy, and to be supported with tithes from the other tribes (Num. 3:45; 8:10-12). The priesthood, however, was limited to Aaron and his descendants (Ex. 28:1; Num. 17; Heb. 5:4,5). Since the worship system of the Old Testament prefigured the scheme of redemption through Christ, this makes the tribe of Levi, along with the priesthood of Aaron, particularly significant to our understanding of the *People—Links of the Bible*.

The Judges of Israel. Once in possession of the promised land, the twelve tribes were assigned their possessions, then were ruled by men called judges for about three hundred and fifty-six years. Actually, the word rule may be implying too much. These might more aptly be described as local enthusiasts, who in times of Israel's trouble would rise up and deliver her from oppression by her enemies. The book of Judges, and down through the 11th chapter of 1 Samuel, tells of these men and their brave deliverances of the holy people. Fifteen of these are named in Scriptures. They are, Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, Gideon, Abimelech, Tola, Jair, Jephthah, Ibzon, Elon, Abdon, Samson, Eli, and Samuel. God had placed Israel in the promised land conditionally. He said, "Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day: And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known" (Deut. 11:26-28). As things went from bad to worse for the nation, she failed to understand that her problems were rooted in her rebellion. She rather blamed them on the lack of leadership, so requested a king. A king would not solve sin's problem, but, nonetheless, God granted them the privilege of having a king like the nations about them (see 1 Kgs. 8:4-22).

The Kings of Israel. Some forty-two people served Israel in this capacity. Saul, David, and Solomon reigned over all the people for combined reigns of one hundred and twenty years. By the time of Solomon's death the nation had become so dissatisfied with its leadership that ten tribes revolted. Jeroboam gained control of these tribes (later designated as the Northern Kingdom, Ephraim, or Samaria). Twenty kings ruled over these people (these are not shown on our people—links chart), and the

kingdom stood for more than two hundred years, or until 721 B.C. when it was brought to an end by the Assyrians. Rehoboam retained the kingship of the southern tribes (known best as the Southern Kingdom, or the Kingdom of Judah). Nineteen kings and one queen occupied the throne of Judah, and that kingdom lasted for one hundred and thirty-three more years before being brought to an end by the Babylonians in 588 or 587 B.C. These kings are shown on our chart because, basically, they are the descendants of David, and thus appear in the genealogical line of Christ. In addition to this it was in Jerusalem that God placed His name (Deut. 12:5,11; 1 Kgs. 14:21), the temple was constructed (1 Kgs. 6), and the worship was centered (Deut. 12:13,14; 1 Kgs. 12:26,27; John 4:19,20).

The Prophets of Israel. The prophets span almost the entire Old Testament period, and a study of their work is one of the most exciting adventures of all. Basically prophetic responsibility may be divided into two parts: (1) They served as watchmen on the wall to warn Israel of departures from God's covenant and of impending punishment for such (Eze. 3:17-19). (2) They pointed forward to the coming of the Messiah and His kingdom (Isa. 7:13,14; Dan. 2:44). The names of some of the major figures in this category are: Samuel, David, Nathan, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggia, Zechariah, Malachi and John the Baptist. Space forbids a detailed study of the work of these men. However, we insist that such is essential for any good student of the Book of God. We would further suggest that the most profitable way to study them is to put each prophet in his proper time frame. Elijah will serve as a good example of this. Instead of his prophecies being isolated in a separate book, they are weaved into the historical fabric of their time (see 1 Kgs. 17-2 Kgs. 2). The written

prophets have similar historical backgrounds; it is just the responsibility of the reader to determine their time (most books are well dated), and to study them in that reference. But these are indispensable people-links in the development of the scheme of redemption.

Jesus Christ. But whether patriarch, nation, priest, sacrifice, law, king, or prophet, all serve one grand purpose: they either prefigure, predict, or in some way point to the coming of Christ. He is the Seed of the woman (Gal. 4:4), the promised Seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:16), the end of the genealogical line (Luke 3:23-38), the Lamb of God (John 1:29), the Judge of all (John 5:26,27), the King on David's throne (Luke 1:31-33; Acts 2:29-36), and the great Prophet (Acts 3:22, 23). He is he "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord" (Rev. 1:11). This is perhaps best summed up by Paul in two separate passages, "Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen" (Rom. 9:4,5). "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: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Eph. 1:10,11).

Jesus built His church: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). It is His Holy Nation (1 Pet. 2:9), His spiritual Israel (Gal. 6:16), His temple (Eph. 2:21), His priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5), His house (1 Tim. 3:15), and the habitation of God through the Spirit (Eph.

2:22). In it men are reconciled to God (Eph. 2:12-17), and through it glory is given to God throughout all ages, world without end (Eph. 3:21).

The Twelve Apostles. Jesus selected twelve apostles—ambassadors—to represent Him when He returned to heaven (John 17:8-21). Their names vary from place to place, since they were identified by more than one name; but from Acts 1:13 we pick up this list, “And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.” Add to this Matthias, who replaced Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:23-26), and the list is complete. These He laid as foundation material for the church (Eph. 2:19,20), gave them the keys to the kingdom (Matt. 16:19), endowed them with a special measure of the Holy Spirit to reveal the New Testament system (John 14:26; 16:13; Acts 2:1-4; Eph. 4:11-16), and empowered them with the gift of miracles to confirm their words (Mark 16:16-20; Acts 1:8; Heb. 2:1-4).

But attention must be given to another apostle—Paul. Formerly he was a persecutor of the church of Christ (Acts 7:58-8:3; 26:9-11), but was selected and commissioned as an apostle when confronted by Christ on the Damascus road (Acts 22:14,15; 26:16-18). Although born out of due season (1 Cor. 15:8), and not listed as one of the twelve (1 Cor. 15:5-9), yet he was not a whit behind the chiefest apostles (2 Cor. 11:5), and was more abundant in labor than all the others (1 Cor. 15:10). He wrote fourteen of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament.

By now we should clearly see the importance of the *People-Links of the Bible*. They are really links in the development of the scheme of redemption. And that should offer sufficient

motivation to make us want to become more intimately acquainted with these individuals. But we are not through yet; our view needs to be broadened.

AN EXPANDED VIEW OF THE PEOPLE-LINKS CHART

The Gentiles. With the selection of the seed of Abraham as the holy instrument through which the Christ would come, the Gentiles were left without any access to, or direct revelation from God. However, God had not abandoned them. He allowed them to live under a law of nature and conscience, and in judgment they will be judged accordingly. Paul said, “For there is no respect of persons with God. For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel” (Rom. 2:11-16). With the coming of the church of Christ, the division between Jew and Gentile ceased (Eph. 2:12-17; Rom. 10:12; 1 Cor. 12:12,13; Gal. 3:26-29). Cornelius and his household were the first Gentile converts (Acts 10-11), and from that hour God has never recognized a distinction between the two. All men are now united as one in Christ (Eph. 3:1-6).

The Law of Moses. “Wherefore then serveth the law?” Paul both raises and answered that question: “It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a

mediator” (Gal. 3:19). By the time of the flood the world has seen sin out of control, so much so that the earth rejected its inhabitants. Until the Redeemer made His Advent, sin had to be kept in check; the earth had to have a leavening influence. Paul said the law served that purpose. So the Law of Moses was not given to all men, just the chosen people of God, the Israelites (Deut. 5:1-3). It formed a partition wall between them and the rest of the world (Eph. 2:12-17), but at the cross of Christ was brought to its final end (Col. 2:14-17). It is a rejection of Christ for one to try to justify himself by that system today (Gal. 5:3,4).

The Law of Christ. Moses himself had predicted a lawgiver that would replace him. “For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people” (Acts 3:22,23). Jeremiah spoke of a new covenant that God would enter into with His people through Jesus Christ: “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jer. 31:31-33; see also Heb. 8:6-13). Thus by His death on the cross, we have become dead to the law that we might be the bride of Christ: “Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married

to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God” (Rom. 7:4).

The apostles are foundation material in the church of Christ. “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Eph. 2:19,20). Jesus gave them His law (John 14:26; 16:13; 17:20,21; 1 Cor. 2:9-13; 11:23; 15:3; Gal. 1:11,12), and it was in turn committed to writing that we might always have it as our guide (John 20:30,31; Rev. 1:11; 1 Cor. 14:37; Eph. 3:1-5; Col. 4:16; 2 Tim. 3:16,17; 2 Pet. 1:14-21). This writing (the New Testament) is final (Jude 3; Rev. 22:18,19; Gal. 1:6-9), authoritative (1 Cor. 14:37; 2 Thess. 3:15), and will be the standard of judgment in the last day (John 12:48; Rom. 2:16; Rev. 20:12-15).

We have already noted that the twelve tribes of Israel formed the very basis of that nation that was destined to give the Redeemer to the world. Through them the land division was accomplished, the lawgiver came, the priesthood was established, and the genealogical line was determined through which the Messiah would come. The hand-picked, personally trained apostles of our precious Lord were foundation material in the church of Christ, bearing witness to Christ, spreading His unsearchable riches through the gospel of peace, and committing to writing that gospel for all generations to come. And when we pass to that eternal city built foursquare, we will find it surrounded with a wall having twelve gates of pearl, and with twelve foundations of the most exquisite stone conceivable to the human imagination. On those twelve gates will be inscribed the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, and on the foundations will be written the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb (Rev. 21:12-21). Furthermore, passing through those pearly gates, the

redeemed from earth's remotest corners will be seated with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the eternal kingdom of God (Matt. 8:11,12).

Names, names, names! Boring, tedious, tiresome? No, never! Rather the stories of human suffering, misery, disappointment, tragedy, and *final triumph*! Edit them from the pages of the Bible? God forbid! One might as well strip the bone structure from the human body. They are people links in human redemption. They link us with our origin, and they link us with our destiny. Digest them well.

CHAPTER VII: THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

In our last lesson we touched on the fact that the church built by Jesus Christ was the eternal purpose of God (Eph. 3:9-11), His Holy Nation (1 Pet. 2:9), His spiritual Israel (Gal. 6:16), His priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5), His house (1 Tim. 3:15), His habitation through the Spirit (Eph. 2:22), His place for our reconciliation (Eph. 2:12-17), and our means for His eternal glorification (Eph. 3:21). Moreover, the apostle Paul further exalts the church by saying, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:25-27). Such a glorious institution demands far more in our study than just a casual observation.

THE CALLED OUT

Since it has been altered by time, and buried under large accumulations of human tradition, a clear definition of the meaning of the original term for church is a must. It is from the Greek *ekklesia*, a combination of *ek*, out of, and *kaleo*, to call. Thus it means to call, or to call out. What one is called to or out of is, of course, established by context. Thayer defines it as follows, “Prop. a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place; an assembly.” The Scriptures itself bears out this meaning, and uses it in the following settings.

A Secular Assembly. Luke called the rioting mob at Ephesus an *ekklesia*: “Some therefore cried one thing, and some another:

for the assembly was confused: and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together... And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly” (Acts 19:32,41).

The Church in the Wilderness. God called Israel out of the bondage of Pharaoh: “When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt” (Hos. 11:1). Thus Stephen could refer to these people as a church, a called out body of people: “This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us” (Acts 7:38).

Religious Assemblies of the Old Testament. By the commandment of Moses, Israel gathered to hear the word of God read (Deut. 31:28). This gathering was called in the Septuagint an *ekklesia*: “And Moses spake in the ears of all the congregation of Israel the words of this song, until they were ended” (Deut. 31:30). We find the same thing true of an assembly called by Joshua. “There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them” (Josh. 8:35).

The New Testament Church, As A Universal Body, Local Group, or Assembled Worshippers. The term *ekklesia* is used one hundred, eleven times in the New Testament with reference to the called out body of believers in Christ. In a few of these usages it refers to the universal church—every person who has accepted the call of the gospel, thus becoming a part of the kingdom of God. This usage can be unquestionably demonstrated by the following facts. (1) Jesus promised to build the church: “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18). (2) The church was

purchased with the blood of Christ: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Eph. 5:25). (3) The church is the body of Christ, over which He serves as head: “And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence” (Col. 1:18). (4) Christ is the Savior of the Church: “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body” (Eph. 5:23). (5) The church is made up of those whose names are enrolled in heaven: “But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect” (Heb. 12:22,23). (6) The Lord adds the saved to the church: “Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47). The Ethiopian eunuch was in a deserted place when he obeyed the gospel, far removed from any local congregation (Acts 8:26-39), but his baptism put him into the same universal body, shared in common by every other Christian (see 1 Cor. 12:12,13).

By far the most predominant usage of *ekklēsia* is with reference to a local congregation (about one hundred times). We read of the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1), the church of God at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:2), the churches of Galatia (Gal. 1:2), and the seven churches of Asia (Rev. 1:11). This would include all the called out in any given locality.

A third New Testament usage of *ekklesia* is of an assembly gathered for worship. Consider the following passages: “For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it” (1 Cor. 11:18). “Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue” (1 Cor. 14:19). “Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience as also saith the law” (1 Cor. 14:34). We often speak of “going to church.” This is a perfectly legitimate use of the term, providing we understand it in the sense of the assembly. However, our denominational neighbors often use the same phrase simply to indicate the facilities for worship. We would probably do well to seek a more definitive term for their understanding and instruction.

Thus we see from the Scriptures three usages for the term church: the universal body of Christ, the local body of Christ, and the local body of Christ assembled in a worship capacity. For the main part during the balance of this lesson, we will be speaking within the context of the universal church.

THE NATURE OF THE CALL INTO THE LORD’S ASSEMBLY

The church, then, is the called out body of believers, the people who are the peculiar possession of Christ. But how are we called? To what are we called? And for what purpose? That is the next topic for discussion.

We Are Called by the Gospel. In denominational circles we often hear of people being called in different ways—experiences, divine manifestations, dreams, visions, even calamities. But according to God’s Book there is but one way for a person to be

called into the kingdom and service of God—the gospel of Christ. Paul said, “But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess. 2:13,14). The gospel is God’s power to save (Rom. 1:16), it is the seed of the kingdom (Luke 8:11), the means of producing birth (1 Cor. 4:15; Jas. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:22,23), and for giving life (John 6:63). By it we are cleansed (John 15:3), sanctified (John 17:17), and nurtured (Heb. 5:12-14; 1 Pet. 2:1,2; Acts 20:32); and from its precepts we are instructed in every good work (2 Tim. 3:16,17; 2 Pet. 1:3). On Pentecost, when the message was heard, it brought conviction and conversion (Acts 2:37,41), and Peter declared of it; “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you” (1 Pet. 1:22-25).

A Call for Separation. The call of the gospel is unmistakable: we are to separate ourselves from the world and its defilement, and to walk in holiness before the Lord. Paul urged, “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with

idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (2 Cor. 6:14-18). The angel resounded that heavenly call: “And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues” (Rev. 18:4). The very nature of the Lord’s church demands such separation. “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” (1 Pet. 2:9). Our call is a call for purity and obedience to God: “For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness” (1 Thess. 4:7). Let us walk worthy of our vocation (Eph. 4:1).

Called into the Kingdom of God. Paul said, “That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory” (1 Thess. 2:12). The same idea is expressed, but in different words, Col. 1:13 “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.” Premillennialists deny the existence of the kingdom; but to do so, they must also deny the call. But this is not the only thing wrong with premillennialism. It is a pernicious theory. It demands that the law be reinstated, thus building again the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile (Eph. 2:12-17); that the old temple be rebuilt, ignoring the fact that the church is the temple of God (Eph. 2:21,22); that animal sacrifice be resumed, thus rejecting Christ as the only sacrifice for sin (Heb. 10:26); and that inheritance be based on the physical lineage of Abraham, denying our spiritual relationship with the father of the

faithful through faith and baptism (Gal. 3:26-29). In short, it seeks to undo every single thing which Christ died to accomplish. But Christians know, and will accept the fact based on the authority of the Word of God, that we became a part of the kingdom when we became a part of the called out. We are called in His kingdom.

Called into the Grace of Christ. We hear much talk these days about the grace of God. A person dies outside the church, and we are prone to say, “He was such a good person, I hope the grace of God will be extended to cover what he lacked in obedience.” Or we hear and laud those who exegete on the grace of God in contrast to the law of God, making God’s law a cruel taskmaster from which only God’s grace could rescue us. We plead grace for our often repeated sins, without ever broaching the topic of repentance. We even debunk the church as somehow in opposition to the grace of God. Now we are not skirting the importance of the grace of God; without it we would all be lost (Eph. 2:8,9; Titus 3:5). But we do affirm a fact as to where the grace of God may be found: it is in His kingdom. It is a unique possession of the called out. Note Paul’s statement to the Galatians, “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel” (Gal. 1:6). God’s grace was extended to the whole world during the time of Noah (see 1 Pet. 3:18-20), but ultimately its recipients were inside the ark, every last one of them (Matt. 24:37-41; 1 Pet. 2:4,5). The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men (Titus 2:11); but only those within His body, the called out, will be its ultimate recipients (Heb. 5:8,9). Bleeding hearts need to call men by the gospel into the kingdom, not try to extend the grace of God beyond His fixed boundary lines.

Called into the Fellowship of God's Son. We are separated from the companionship of the world and have been called into the fellowship of God's Son. "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1:9). John adds to this, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). As with grace, man wants to set his own boundary markers for fellowship. And it is true, we can declare fellowship with anyone or anything we want to, even the unfruitful works of darkness (Eph. 5:11); but we cannot have *Christian* fellowship outside our calling. The called out have established fellowship with the Son through adherence to apostolic teaching (remember that it was through their gospel message that the call came); all others are outside that fellowship regardless of the lines we may try to draw or erase.

Called to Peace. The prophet Isaiah said, "And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isa. 2:4). Again, "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. 11:6-9). At the birth of Jesus angels sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14). Jesus

promised His disciples, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27). That peace comes in the body of Christ—peace with God, peace in the midst of widespread human alienation (Eph. 2:12-17). No wonder the Bible affirms, “And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful” (Col. 3:15). Or again, “But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace” (1 Cor. 7:15). We are called to peace—a peace that passes all understanding (Phil. 4:7).

Called to Eternal Life. Access to the tree of life was lost in Eden (Gen. 3:22-24), and the many graves that dot our hillsides are a grim testimony to this fact. But the good news is that Jesus has made it possible to change all that. He spoke of the bread of life: “For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst” (John 6:33-35). He spoke of the water of life: “But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14). He spoke of the way of life: “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). He even guaranteed life to those already dead: “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). “I am he that liveth,

and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death” (Rev. 1:18). Thus the voice of the Master calls us to eternal life: “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses” (1 Tim. 6:12).

Called to Eternal Glory. There is a sense in which even those who have not accepted the Master’s call will have eternal life—living forever in the region of the damned (Matt. 25:46). But the Christian will not only have life, he has been called to eternal glory. “But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you” (1 Pet. 5:10). Such life is described as being more abundant (John 10:10), far better (Phil. 1:23), eternal (2 Cor. 5:1), free from the corruption of sin (Rev. 21:27), and release from all suffering and misery (Rev. 21:3,4).

So the church is simply the body of people who have accepted the call of the gospel, separated themselves from sin and its corruptive way of life, and have entered a new life of service in harmony with the Master’s will. In view of this meaning, think how far-fetched the statements of some are: “You do not have to be a member of the church to be saved,” “One church is just as good as another,” or “We ought to preach Christianity, not churchanity.” No wonder Paul could speak of it as a glorious church (Eph. 5:25), or a church through which God would receive glory throughout all ages, world without end (Eph. 3:21).

NEW TESTAMENT DESIGNATIONS OF THE CHURCH

New Testament names or designations of the church are numerous; but unlike denominational appellations, they are

always definitive and inclusive, expressing the glorious attributes of the church, and its relationship to God and Christ, and of its members to each other. A few Scriptural examples will demonstrate this.

The Church of God. Paul addressed the church at Corinth in this way, “Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both their's and ours” (1 Cor. 1:2). At least three distinct things about the church are expressed by this designation.

(1) God planned it in eternity. To the Ephesians Paul wrote, “And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph. 3:9-11). So before the morning stars sang together, or the sons of God shouted for joy, the divine Architect drafted the plans for the church. From the foundation stone to the crowning pinnacle, it is His masterpiece. When we call it the church of God, we give recognition to such; and what fallible human creature would dare set his hand to alter it?

(2) God inspired prophets to predict it. Isaiah said the Lord's house would be established in the top of the mountains (Isa. 2:1-3), and a Son would rule over it from the throne of David (Isa. 9:6,7). Daniel spoke of it as a kingdom that would break in pieces all other kingdoms, and would stand for ever (Dan. 2:44). With reference to these and other such divine predictions Peter wrote, “Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of

time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into” (1 Pet. 1:10-12). Again, “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Pet. 1:19-21).

(3) It was commanded in His only begotten Son. John 3:16, often called the golden text of the Bible, says, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” We read again, “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law” (Gal. 4:4). When Jesus came it was to bring together or accomplish all things having been originated and developed through God’s eternal purpose: “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” (Eph. 1:10).

So it is the church of God in conception, presentation, and consummation. What term or designation devised by man could be so definitive?

The Church of Christ. The church is so designated in Rom. 16:16: “Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.” So much could be said for this beautiful expression, but the scope of this study demands abbreviation.

The term church of Christ designates: (1) Its Founder: “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18). (2) Its Owner by right of purchase: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). (3) Its foundation: “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11). (4) Its chief Corner Stone: “And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Eph. 2:20). (5) Its Head: “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” (Eph. 1:22,23). (6) Its Savior: “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body” (Eph. 5:23). This term denotes ownership, leadership, and eternal destiny. We have certainly said a lot about the New Testament church when we say church of Christ.

The Body of Christ. This expression shows the interdependency and source of spiritual sustenance of the members as they function under the one Head, Christ. “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Eph. 4:15,16). Paul adds in Col. 2:19, “And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.” But perhaps the most definitive illustration of this relationship comes from Paul’s First Corinthian epistle: “But

now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked. That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular” (12:20-27). No wonder the hymn writer was moved to pen these beautiful words:

Blest be the tie that binds Our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds Is like to that above.

We share our mutual woes; Our mutual burdens bear;
And often for each other flows The sympathizing tear.

When we asunder part, It gives us inward pain;
But we shall still be joined in heart, And hope to meet again.

“The Body of Christ”—so full of meaning! When we speak of that body it should be with reverence, and with a heart overflowing with thanksgiving for such a fellowship.

The House of God. Isaiah said that the Lord’s house would be built in the top of the mountains (Isa. 2:1-3). Paul defines that house as the church: “But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which

is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15). At least two things are depicted by this.

(1) It reflects our family relationship brought about by the new birth. Jesus said, “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). Paul emphasized to the Corinthian church, “For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel” (1 Cor. 4:15). To the Galatians he added, “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father“ (Gal. 4:4-6). We are new creatures (2 Cor. 5:17), recreated in God’s image (Rom. 8:29), raised to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4), having God as our Father (Gal. 4:6), and Jesus Christ as our Brother (Heb. 2:11,12).

(2) It reflects our spiritual inheritance. “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ” (Gal. 4:6,7). I thank God for having allowed me the blessing of being a part of my parent’s household. They favored me with love, discipline, necessities of life, protection, fellowship, and family inheritance (meaning whatever the family possessed was mine also). I thank God even more for my family relationship in Christ. Once someone remarked to brother C. R. Nichol, “Brother Nichol, you act like you owned the world.” Without hesitation he replied, “I don’t, but my Father does.” “For all things are your’s; Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all

are your's; And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. 3:21-23). That is walking in tall cotton. But the house of God is one of the descriptive terms used in designating the called out, the church of Christ. Wear it with pride, and speak of it often with a thankful heart.

The Bride of Christ. No doubt the most intimate appellation applied to the church is that of the bride of Christ. Paul exhorted the Corinthians, "Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me. For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:1,2). A great heavenly multitude joined in a hallelujah chorus saying, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints" (Rev. 19:7,8). The designation of the church as the bride of Christ reflects at least three things:

(1) The intimate relationship between Christ and His church. God took from Adam's side a rib and made woman (Gen. 2:21,22); and when Adam saw his help meet, he exclaimed, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:23,24). It could probably also be said that the church was taken from the side of Christ—flowed from His body (John 19:34; 1 Pet. 1:18,19). The most beautiful of all descriptions of the marriage relationship, however, is given by Paul: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it... So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh;

but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh” (Eph. 5:25,28-31). Yet Paul declares, “This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Eph. 5:32).

(2) The church was as a fruit-bearing body. The first couple was told to be fruitful and replenish the earth (Gen. 1:28). The great commission is simply a command to reproduce through the preaching of the gospel (Matt. 28:18-20). Under the figure of marriage, Christians, along with Christ, produce fruit by enlarging the family of God. “Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God” (Rom. 7:4). In reference to fruit-bearing Jesus Himself gives a rather strict warning: “Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit” (John 15:2).

(3) The need for moral purity. The Hebrew word for bride is *kallah*. In their Hebrew-English Lexicon, Brown, Driver, and Briggs says it means one closed in or reserved for her husband. Paul says that the bride of Christ is to be without *spilos* (spot, Eph. 5:27), a word which, according to Thayer, means without moral blemish. Unfaithfulness on the part of Christ’s bride cannot be tolerated. “Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth

against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:15-20). The heavenly multitude made it clear that the attire of the bride was her righteousness: "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints" (Rev. 19:7,8). What an honor to be the bride of God's only begotten Son. He died to make it pure and holy (Eph. 5:25-27); let us live that it might be presented to Him in the same way. The church is the bride of Christ; it ought to wear His name proudly (Eph. 3:14,15).

At their very best, denominational names are restrictive, sectarian, and divisive. They may exalt one single facet of the church, such as baptism; its systematic method of functioning, the eldership, or the church's universality; or they may depart entirely from any New Testament connection and honor men such as Martin Luther. But always human names are divisive: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" (1 Cor. 1:10-13). But New Testament names are inclusive, expressing the glorious relationships between God, Christ and

the church. Why the religious world has never been satisfied with Bible names is beyond this writer's comprehension. But, then, such is the nature of sin and rebellion in the human race.

In summary may we say that the church is the called out of Christ: called out of sin and rebellion, called into the kingdom, called into grace, called into the fellowship of God's Son, called to peace, called to eternal life, and called to eternal glory. It is designated as the church of God, the church of Christ, the body of Christ, the house of God, and the bride of Christ: all glorious expressions of the divine nature of the church, its glorious Originator and Founder, and its pure mission. May it ever be so understood and designated by the people of God.

CHAPTER VIII: TERMS OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

We have already defined the church as the called out people of God—called out from the world by the precious gospel, cleansed by Christ’s perfect blood, and placed as citizens in the kingdom of heaven. Thus when we speak of the terms of church membership, we are speaking of conditions of forgiveness from past sins, requirements for salvation, means by which we become children in the family of God. As in the days of Noah, the grace of God has been extended to all: “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men” (Titus 2:11); but only those who respond in obedience to our Lord’s conditions will be actual recipients of that grace: “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Heb. 5:8,9). The scope of this lesson will be to explore these terms of pardon, and who has the right to set them.

WE HAVE SINNED AGAINST GOD, AND HE ALONE CAN STIPULATE THE TERMS OF PARDON

In theory the above heading would probably go unchallenged; in practice, well, that is a totally different matter. Certainly we are quick to acknowledge that we have sinned, at least in a general sense (Rom. 3:9-23), that our sin is against God (Ps. 51:3,4), and that the penalty for sin is death (Rom. 6:23). But then we proceed to devise our own plan of forgiveness, regardless of what God has specified in His Book: “Lay your hands on the radio and repeat after me...” “Hit the sawdust trail.” “Just pray the sinner’s prayer.” “There is nothing you can

do.” “I know the Bible commands it, but I do not believe you have to do that.” And on and on... With this wide gap between preaching and practice, there is certainly a pressing need for more firm Scriptural teaching on this topic.

We have Sinned Against God. Sin may hurt and offend, even destroy others; but ultimately all sin is against God. It is, in fact, by scriptural definition a violation of the law of God. “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4). David said, “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest” (Ps. 51:4). When Israel asked for a king, God assured a concerned Samuel, “Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them” (1 Sam. 8:7).

Man Cannot Devise His Own Means of Redemption. If any proposition is clear from the preceding lessons, this one should be. The worship man devises will be contaminated (Gen. 4:3-8); the tower he builds will result in a Babel of confusion (Gen. 11:4-9); the king he selects will tax and enslave him (1 Sam. 8:4-18); and the traditions he formulates will make void the law of God (Mark 7:1-13). Jeremiah pinpointed the problem: “O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23). Isaiah shows the impossibility of sinful man thinking his way to God’s holy level, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa. 55:8,9). A way that man accepts as right may be completely opposite to the way of life. “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the

ways of death” (Pro. 14:12). His efforts may even be an abomination to God. “And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God” (Luke 16:15).

If man could have devised his own means of salvation, there would have been no need for a Savior. But the evidence is clear: our only hope of salvation is through Him. Jesus Himself declared, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). In the garden of Gethsemane He prayed, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matt. 26:39). But another way was not possible. The terms of pardon had been fixed in heaven (Matt. 16:19), and no one could change them.

God Alone May Stipulate the Terms of Pardon. This brings us to the real crux of the matter. If I should travel to Egypt and violate the laws of that country, they alone could state the terms of my pardon (some people have learned this the hard way). If I offend my neighbor, he alone can tell me what to do to once more gain his good favor. In other words, pardon must come from, and upon the terms fixed by, the offended party.

This principle is clearly seen in the covenant God made with Israel. When that nation had come into the wilderness of Sinai, God gave them this message through Moses: “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the Lord commanded him” (Ex. 19:5-9). The people responded,

“All that the Lord hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord” (Ex. 19:8). These same characteristics were present when the covenant was ratified by blood: “And Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord hath said will we do. And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the Lord. And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words” (Ex. 24:3-8). So God set the terms; man responded by obedience. King Saul learned the hard way that alterations to this rule are unacceptable: “And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king” (1 Sam. 15:22,23). Under the new covenant we find the same requirements present. Jesus said, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven... Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his

house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine” (Matt. 7:21,24-28). Paul said, “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Heb. 5:8,9). All these Scriptures simply state the same evident fact: God states the requirements; God gives the commands; man responds by obedience.

**AN ILLUSTRATION OF THIS PRINCIPLE—
AN EXPOSITION OF LUKE 7:29,30**

John the Baptist was one of the truly great prophets (Matt. 11:11). He came to manifest Christ to the people (John 1:29-34), and to make ready a people prepared for the Lord (Luke 1:15-17). In doing this, he urged a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins: “The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins” (Mark 1:3,4). And Luke records, “And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him” (Luke 7:29,30). This is a powerful Scripture to illustrate the principle that we have just set forth.

The People and the Publicans Justified God, Being Baptized.

The word justify is from the Greek *dikaioo*. Thayer defines it as, “Put into a right relationship (with God); acquit, declare righteous; show or prove to be right.” The first part of the definition could not possibly apply to the context of Luke 7:29: God was never out of a right relationship, nor did He have anything for which He needed acquittal. But look at the latter part of its meaning: “to declare righteous, or to prove to be right. How beautifully this illustrates what we have been saying! These people, including some wicked and hated publicans, did not argue with God’s requirement of baptism. Rather they readily admitted that they were sinners, and that God was just or right in requiring them to be baptized for the remission of sins. HE was the one against whom they had sinned; He was the one to fix the terms of pardon. Theirs was but to obey—and they did! No wonder Jesus said to some religious hypocrites of His day, “Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him” (Matt. 21:31,32).

The Pharisees and Lawyers Rejected the Counsel of God.

Reject is from the Greek *atheteo*. By definition it means to reject, refuse, ignore, make invalid, or set aside. Of its usage Thayer says, “a. Do away with something laid down, prescribed, established; b. according to context ‘to act towards anything as though it were annulled; hence to deprive a law of force by opinions or acts opposed to it, to transgress it... to thwart the efficacy of anything, nullify, make void, frustrate...” These and other meanings are illustrated by the way it is handled by translators. Note the following examples (italics are mine to

indicate the translation of *atheteo*). “And he said unto them, Full well ye *reject* the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition” (Mark 7:9). “He that heareth you heareth me; and he that *despiseth* you *despiseth* me; and he that *despiseth* me *despiseth* him that sent me” (Luke 10:16). “For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will *bring to nothing* the understanding of the prudent” (1 Cor. 1:19). “I do not *frustrate* the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain” (Gal. 2:21). “Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man *disannulleth*, or addeth thereto” (Gal. 3:15). “Having damnation, because they have *cast off* their first faith” (1 Tim. 5:2). What a powerful word: reject, despise, bring to nothing, frustrate, disannul, cast off! But this is what one does when he refuses to accept God's terms of pardon, in this instance baptism for the remission of sins.

But in reality, what was it that these Pharisees and lawyers were rejecting? Not just the simple act of baptism, but rather the counsel of God. For this word counsel is from the Greek *boule*, and by definition is affirmed to be used, “Esp. of the purpose of God respecting the salvation of men through Christ” (Thayer). In other words, by rejecting one requirement in God's plan of salvation, they rejected, despised, or declared void the total plan of salvation. No wonder James was moved to write, “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all” (Jas. 2:10). If God is just in making any one requirement, He is just in making every requirement. We simply do not accept His plan piecemeal.

So getting this passage in proper perspective, we see that God is just and right in fixing His terms of pardon. To obey these terms is nothing more than to state that we are sinners, that God is just in stipulating certain terms of pardon, and that we

accept His salvation on those terms. But to reject any condition of pardon is to declare void God's whole plan of salvation. It is by action stating that He has no right to require of me certain conditions that do not strike my fancy. How badly this lesson is needed among those who reject as non-essential certain gospel requirements: "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46).

GOD'S TERMS OF PARDON

There are five initial requirements for membership in the church, the family of God. These are: (1) hear the gospel of Christ; (2) believe in the Christ who gave us the gospel by His sacrificial death; (3) repent of our sins; (4) confess our faith in Christ as the Son of God; and (5) be baptized into Christ for the remission of our sins. We will now consider each one of these in more detail.

Hear God's Word. Moses recognized a need to hear the coming prophet. "For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people" (Acts 3:22,23). At Peter's request for three tabernacles, one each for Moses, Elias, and Christ, God responded, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Matt. 17:5). Jesus said, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me" (John 6:45); and He commissioned His apostles, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"

(Mark 16:15). Paul declared, “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Cor. 1:21). Again, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Rom. 10:13-14). The Pentecostians heard words that brought conviction and conversion (Acts 2:22, 37). The Ethiopian eunuch could not understand what he was reading without a guide, so Philip began at the same Scripture and preached unto him Jesus (Acts 8:30-35). Cornelius assembled his household to hear words that would save them (Acts 10:33; 11:14). Faith is essential; it is impossible to please God without it (Heb. 11:6). But it is impossible to have faith apart from the gospel message: “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17).

Faith in Christ. John’s writings are replete with declarations of the necessity of faith and the consequences of its absence. In what is perhaps his most famous passage, he declared, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:16-18). In the same chapter he continued, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36). In quoting Jesus Himself, he records, “I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye

shall die in your sins” (John 8:24). John, in fact, declared that his purpose in writing was to produce faith: “And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:30,31). In a later epistle, he proclaimed faith as our ultimate means of victory in overcoming the world. “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:4,5).

Paul took up the same banner of faith: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16). Later he told the Roman brethren, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 5:1). Viewed negatively, he said, “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” (Heb. 11:6). Faith in Christ is a condition of salvation; only the most dogmatic Calvinist would care to deny it.

Repentance of Sins. Repentance is both a change of heart and a change of action. This may well be demonstrated by Jesus’ parable of the two sons. “But what think ye? 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” (Matt. 21:28,29). When Jonah delivered his message of doom to Nineveh, the king covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. “And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the

decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands” (Jon. 3:7,8). This Jesus called repentance (Matt. 12:41). One who has lived in rebellion against God’s will must change his attitude toward God and His Word (2 Cor. 7:10); but he must also change his life from disobedience to obedience, producing the fruits meet for repentance (Matt. 3:7-10).

Our Lord has made repentance a necessary condition to salvation. Twice He said, “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3,5). Luke’s account of the great commission reads, “Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:46,47). Paul warned, “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead” (Acts 17:30,31). And Peter added, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9).

Confession of Faith in Christ. A fourth item in the plan of salvation is a confession with the mouth of that which we believe in the heart. Some who believed were not willing to take this step: “Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him,

lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God” (John 12:42,43). Such could not be saved. Jesus said, “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 10:32,33). Paul emphasized its essential nature in this way, “But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom. 10:8-10). Again, “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:9-11).

Baptism for the Remission of Sins. Finally we come to the consummating act bringing us into sonship—baptism. Since a great portion of the religious world has rebelled against this requirement, we feel the necessity of using more evidence in its defense. We urge our readers to lay aside any previous beliefs or preconceived notions, and to prayerfully consider the following facts revealed in God’s inspired Word.

(1) It is an element in the new birth. “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). “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Titus 3:5). (2) It

was made a necessary condition of salvation by Jesus Himself. “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15,16). (3) It is for the remission of sins. “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). (4) It is for the washing away of sins. “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). (5) It is the act that puts us into Christ. “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:26,27). (6) It puts us into the body of Christ “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13). (7) We are baptized into the death of Christ. “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. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Rom. 6:3-6). (8) Baptism now saves us. “Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward

God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 3:20,21). (9) It is an earthly witness, along with the Spirit and the blood, of our obedience to Christ. “And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one” (1 John 5:8). Need we say more?

EXAMPLES OF CONVERSION

The above array of Scriptural evidence on the five steps in the plan of salvation should be adequate for the sincere truth-seeker. But to show beyond any reasonable doubt that the proposition set forth is correct, we will briefly review some examples of conversion. Possibly we can be aided in this quest by the following chart.

EXAMPLES OF CONVERSION

CONVERTS	HEARD	BELIEVED	REPENTED	CONFESSED	WERE BAPTIZED
PENTECOSTIANS Acts 2:14-41	2:37		2:38		2:41
SAMARITANS Acts 8:5-25	8:6	8:12			8:12
THE ETHIOPIAN Acts 8:26-40	8:35	8:37		8:37	8:38
SAUL OF TARSUS Acts 9:3-19	9:17				9:18
CORNELIUS Acts 10, 11	10:33	10:43	11:18		10:48
LYDIA Acts 16:14, 15	16:14				16:15
THE JAILOR Acts 16:25-24	16:32	16:31			16:33
CORINTHIANS Acts 18:8	18:8	18:8			18:8
EPHESIANS Acts 19:3-6	19:3	19:4			19:5
Total	Heard	Believed	Repented	Confessed	Were baptized

Note that on Pentecost there was first the preaching of the gospel of Christ. Peter declared that Jesus had been crucified, but had been resurrected to sit on the right hand of the Father as both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:14-37). Faith is not specifically stated as a condition of salvation, but it is implied by the fact that Peter's message cut them to the heart, and caused them to cry out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). In answer to the query, repentance and baptism were then enjoined: "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... Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:38,41). So three of the five steps in the plan of salvation are specifically named in this example of conversion. The other two, faith and confession, would be supplied from other Scriptural commands, or other examples of conversion.

Avoiding the risk of being tedious, and considering the above example to be sufficient, we can summarize the other conversions by saying that each one gives certain steps in God's plan for redemption, but not necessarily all of them in each one, and not necessarily always the same ones. As an illustration the Pentecost conversions specifies hearing the word, repentance, and baptism, but makes no mention of either faith or a confession of faith. The conversion of the Samaritans itemizes hearing, faith, and baptism, but makes no mention of repentance and a confession of faith. The Eunuch's conversion includes a confession of faith, along with hearing, belief, and baptism; but again there is no mention of repentance. And so it would go with all the examples of conversion. Then how does one arrive at the total plan of salvation? Obviously in the same way he would arrive at any other Scriptural truth: by hearing and

comparing everything God has to say on the matter. The total plan of salvation from past sins, or the terms of church membership, then, is the totality of the requirements in all the conversions: (1) hearing, (2) believing, (3) repenting, (4) confessing, and (5) being baptized.

It is interesting to note, as already observed, that the denominational world denies baptism its rightful place in the plan of salvation; but in the examples of conversion it is an act that is *always* specified.

A CHALLENGING CONCLUSION

Recall again what we pointed out from Luke 7:29,30, near the beginning of this lesson, that “The Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.” They did not reject everything John taught, just one thing insofar as this text is concerned. But that was tantamount to rejecting everything God offered—His whole counsel. It meant that they believed they were right in their rejection of His command, and He was wrong in giving it. Jesus said of such, “Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?” (Matt. 23:33). Think about it, reader: will you justify God by submission to His terms? Or will you despise His counsel by rejection? The choice is yours. But we reemphasize, it is not your choice to remove certain unwanted commands and accept the others. It is a package deal; you take it all or you reject it all. This is a *Great Fact in Human Redemption*.

CHAPTER IX: THE WORSHIP OF THE CHURCH

The church is the called out of Christ, separated from the world, and walking and worshipping in the beauty of holiness (2 Cor. 6:14-18; Ps. 29:2). The church is the body of Christ with our Lord serving as its Head, directing and nourishing each individual part (Eph. 4:15,16). The church is the bride of Christ, producing the necessary fruits of that union (Rom. 7:4). The church is the holy nation, over which Jesus rules as both Lord and Christ (the anointed King), and who will in time show “Who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords” (1 Tim. 6:15). The church is the house of God, built as a habitation of God through the Spirit (Eph. 2:21,22).

But the church of Christ is also God’s holy priesthood, over which Christ serves as High Priest (Heb. 7:26-28), and under whom each Christian functions as a priest to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God. “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ... 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” (1 Pet. 2:5,9). “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name” (Heb. 13:15). “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 [spiritual worship, RSV]” (Rom. 12:1).

**AS PRIESTS WE MUST DISTINGUISH
BETWEEN THE HOLY AND THE UNHOLY**

Not All Worship is Acceptable to God. Israel's worship had become so repugnant to God that He warned them through the prophet Amos, "I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols" (Amos 5:21-13). Jesus said of the traditional worship of the Pharisees, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15.8,9). The ignorant worship of the Athenians was condemned by the apostle Paul: "For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, To The Unknown God. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you... And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent" (Acts 17:23,30). So was the will worship of the Colossians: "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind... (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body: not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh" (Col. 2:18,21-23). Since all worship is not acceptable, how may we determine what spiritual worship really is? As we have already seen, so much depends on the answer to that question, we must not approach this study lightly.

Our Worship Must Be Holy. The term *holy* is quite unique. We normally associate it almost exclusively with morals, but this is not necessarily its dominant usage in the Scriptures. The Hebrew *qodesh* (holy) means “Apartness, sacredness” (BDB). It is widely used throughout the Old Testament of something set apart, and made sacred for the service of God. For example, we read of holy garments (Lev. 16:4), holy vessels (1 Chron. 22:19), holy tithe (Lev. 27:30), holy loaves of bread (Lev. 23:20; 1 Sam 21:5), and holy perfume (Ex. 30:34-38).

Anything authorized (set apart) by God for use in His service was thus considered holy. But the converse of that was also true: anything God had not authorized for such use was unclean (not morally clean, but in the sense of something authorized). The priests of Israel were required always to make a difference between the clean and the unclean—the authorized and the unauthorized. This they did not always do.

Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, engaged in unauthorized worship by using strange (unholy or unauthorized) fire to burn incense, and died in the process (Lev. 10:1-10). The fire on the altar had been miraculously ignited (Lev. 9:24); the priests were required to keep it perpetually burning (Lev. 6:13); and it was this fire that was to be used for burning sacrifices and incense (Lev. 16:12,13). It was holy, or authorized, fire. But Nadab and Abihu “...took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord” (Lev. 10:1,2). Their deaths served as a warning to all priests: “And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean; And that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses” (Lev. 10:10,11). The fire they offered

looked the same, smelled the same, and gave off the same kind of heat as that from the altar; it even consumed the incense just as well. But it lacked one essential ingredient—it had not been authorized in the service of God: it was not holy.

But even in view of this disastrous example, Israel seems never to have learned this principle very well. For in Ezekiel's time, through that prophet God strongly rebuked the priests for violating it: "Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them" (Eze. 22:26). It was this same situation in principle that Jesus addressed as vain worship among the Pharisees. Their self-appointed service of washing pots, cups, and brazen vessels lacked divine sanction. It rested on no higher authority than human tradition, and as such was totally unacceptable in the worship of God (Matt. 15:1-9; Mark 7:1-13).

Jesus had instituted the Lord's supper on the night of His betrayal (Matt. 26:26-29). This was a simple memorial, commemorating the suffering and death of our Lord, as was to be observed as delivered (1 Cor. 11:2). The Corinthian church, however, had turned it into a festive occasion, resembling very much the pagan temple feasts (1 Cor. 11:17-22). But Paul warned that such unauthorized changes would make one guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, and would bring damnation to the participants by producing spiritual sickness and death (1 Cor. 11:27-30). God only accepts in worship that which has been made holy by His commandment authorizing its use; everything else bears the stigma of uncleanness.

Worship Must Be Rendered from Holy Hearts. Paul said, "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands,

without wrath and doubting” (1 Tim. 2:8). Again to the Romans, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. 12:1,2). From Peter’s first epistle we read, “For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil” (1 Pet. 3:12). So Paul urges, “Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Tim. 2:22).

One of Israel’s greatest mistakes was to assume that holy objects and formal service were the only necessary ingredients of acceptable worship. She would trust in lying words, crying, “The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, are these” (Jer. 7:4). Religious formality was here substituted for righteous living: “Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?” (Jer. 7:8-10). Such sham worship was a stench in God’s holy nostrils; He would not even smell in their solemn assemblies (Amos 5:21). Surely they, like David, needed to learn that the sacrifices of God required a broken and contrite spirit (Ps. 51:17).

As the spiritual priesthood of Christ our worship must be characterized by these two elements—holy objects (items authorized in worship to God), and holy hands to offer the worship. Jesus defined it this way, “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in

spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23,24). Anything short of this will result simply in vain, will, or ignorant worship—after the doctrines and commandments of men.

GOD’S PLAN OF WORSHIP

Allow us to restate at this time a point we argued in our lesson on the *Terms of Church Membership*. We demonstrated that it was God against whom we had sinned, and that it was God, and He alone, who could stipulate the terms of pardon. The people justified God by accepting and obeying His terms, while the Pharisees and lawyers frustrated, made void, disannulled, despised, or brought to nothing His counsel by their stubborn refusal to do the same. This same principle will apply with equal force to the topic of worship.

Suppose you enter a restaurant and order a steak, baked potatoes, and salad with French dressing. But the waitress serves you fish, French fries, and slaw dressed with mayonnaise. Even though the waitress argued fluently that she like the combination, or that all her customers before you had ordered this particular platter, would you quietly accept and pay for this meal? Probably not! And why? Because you are the one placing the order, and you recognize your right to order what you please. Now, if you can see that, you can see what we are saying about the worship of God. It is God Who has created us for His glory (Rev. 4:11; Rom. 1:25); it is God who has tendered the command to worship (John 4:24; Rev. 14:6,7); it is God to whom the worship is directed (Matt. 4:10; Rev. 19:10). Thus it is God alone who has the right to dictate the items of worship (Acts 17:23-25; Matt. 15:9). What I like, what I do for my own entertainment, or what my predecessors practiced, should in no

way enter into it (see Deut. 12:13-15). Recognizing, then, God's right to determine His own worship, may we at this point willingly open our hearts to hear what He has revealed as acceptable in this respect.

We May Sing His Praise. How abundantly God has supplied us with the evidence that singing is an acceptable expression of our praise for Him. "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them" (Acts 16:25). "And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name" (Rom. 15:9). "What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also... How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying" (1 Cor. 14:15,26). "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:18-19). "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col. 3:15,16). "Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee" (Heb. 2:12). "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms" (Jas. 5:13).

Perhaps no other human expression touches human heart-strings so deeply. Singing can have one reveling in laughter, or as quickly bring him to tears. It can embolden his courage, or

quiet his troubled spirit. It can inspire reverence or violence. Beyond question, the most popular and best loved book of all the Bible is the Psalms—the hymnbook of the Holy People. It is this emotionally charged act of singing that God has sanctified for our use in His praise, whereby we might express the innermost feelings of our hearts and minds. We can joyfully and Scripturally exult, “Praise God from Whom all blessings flow.”

“But,” replies the critic, “I like instrumental music with singing.” So do I, but let us remember that neither of us is the object of worship; God is. And after all Jesus Himself did say that what pleased men might well be an abomination in God’s sight (Luke 16:15). There is nothing morally wrong with the use of instrumental music in its place; but under the New Covenant it has not been sanctified (made holy) by God’s commandment, and is therefore unclean in His worship.

We May Engage in Fervent Prayer. The song writer penned the words, “What a privilege to carry Everything to God in prayer.” Yes, one of the greatest privileges ever afforded the human race, to speak to the Lord with the confidence of being heard. “For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil” (1 Pet. 3:12). “And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight” (1 John 3:22). Jesus said, “And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it” (John 14:13-14).

The early church engaged often in fervent prayer: “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). When persecution threatened, they took it to the Lord in prayer: “And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy

servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness” (Acts 4:29-31). When James was martyred and Peter imprisoned, they took it to the Lord in prayer: “Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him” (Acts 12:5). Paul urged the Colossian church to pray for open doors for the gospel (Col. 4:3), and the Thessalonian church that the Word of God might have free course (2 Thess. 3:1). The Ephesians he exhorted, “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel” (Eph. 6:18-19).

Christians pray for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 8:22), for daily bread (Matt. 6:9-11), in times of distress (Acts 16:25), when making important decisions (Acts 13:1-3; 14:23), for those in positions of authority (1 Tim. 2:1-3), for release from infirmity (2 Cor. 12:7-10; Jas. 5:13), and for each other (1 Thess. 5:25). Often heavy hearts have difficulty in wording prayers. We need not be concerned: “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Rom. 8:26). *What a privilege to carry Everything to God in prayer!*

We May Observe the Lord's Supper. On the night He was betrayed Jesus instituted this memorial feast. “And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it

to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matt. 26:26-29). To the Corinthians Paul added, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread" (1 Cor. 10:16,17). Again, "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body" (1 Cor. 11:23-29).

This memorial of breaking bread, as it is sometimes designated, was a weekly observance of the early church under inspired guidance. "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached

unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight” (Acts 20:7). It was a violation of apostolic injunction to willfully miss the first day assembly: “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Heb. 10:25).

But what sincere Christian would want to miss an opportunity to commune with his Lord in this memorial? We forget so easily (Jer. 2:32; 2 Pet. 1:9); our righteousness is as the morning cloud and the early dew (Hos. 6:4). But our redemption came with a terrible price—the blood of God’s precious Son (1 Pet. 1:18-19); that we must *never* forget. And we will not if we properly observe the Lord’s supper on the set day, in the appointed way. In fact we will never be more than four days away from such a remembrance. On Wednesday we will only be four days from having had our minds relive that momentous event on the cross; but it will only be four days until we remember it again. “This do in remembrance of me.” So simple, yet so beautiful and dramatic, is the way the Lord has devised for us to do this. I hope we will all resolve to never again miss such an occasion of worship and remembrance.

I looked for you last Sunday
In the breaking of the bread
When in remembrance of my death
The table white was spread

But sad to say I looked in vain
On that momentous day;
What appointment more important
Kept you, my child, away?

The cup, the symbol of my death,
Spoke of the pain I bore
To ransom you from sin and hell
Both now and evermore.

The bread my broken body proved
My love for you still true;
But as I scanned the table round
I wondered where were you?

Has that first love that once you knew
Grown cold and lost its flame?
Is there no surge of life within
The mention of my name?

O, how I looked for you last Sunday
When the table white was spread.
O, could you not remember me
In the breaking of the bread.

Author Unknown

We May Give of Our Means. As an expression of our love and devotion to Christ and His cause, we give as prospered on the first day of each week. Certain facts about this act of worship are evident from Scriptures. (1) By apostolic order the collection is to be taken on the first day of each week. “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come” (1 Cor. 16.1,2). The expression “Upon the first day of the week” is the Greek *kata mian sabbatou*. *Kata* with an accusative (the case

here) regularly means *every*, and is so recognized by the King James translators in other places. For example: every city (Luke 8:1,4), every synagogue (Acts 22:19), every church (Acts 14:23), every day (Acts 2:46), every year (Luke 2:41). Thus the RSV, as do most other later translations, rightly renders this passage, “On the first day of every week.” (2) Our gift is to be based on our prosperity (1 Cor. 16:2). The Old Testament bound a tenth of one’s earnings (Lev. 27:30), but this is not a characteristic of the New Covenant. However, our gift is to be determined in proportion to our income, and is expected to be liberal (2 Cor. 9:6-8). (3) Our gift is to be made cheerfully: “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7). The word for cheerful is *hilaros* (compare with our word hilarious). It describes an act of joy and excitement: joy in sharing our prosperity with those who are less fortunate; joy in sharing the gospel of Christ with a lost world; joy in building up the body of Christ. No wonder the Lord said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). (4) Our gift is to be sacrificial. David said, “neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing” (2 Sam 24:24). The poor widow gave all she had, even all her living (Mark 12:41-45); the saints at Jerusalem sold their possessions to share with others (Acts 2:44,45; 4:34,35); the Macedonian Christians gave out of deep poverty (2 Cor. 8:1,2). (5) Our first gift must be that of self. Earlier in this study we pointed out that spiritual worship must come from a spiritual man—one who has presented his body as a living sacrifice to God. I once knew a family (and that term in this instance surely has to be limited to the purely physical) in which both parents and the children, including some relatively young ones, operated the household independently. That is, each one provided his own income, kept

his own individual supply of groceries, cooked his own meals, etc. Coming from a loving family that shared everything in common, I thought this was a very strange family, cold and uncaring. When we give ourselves to God, the gift is total: everything we have has been dedicated to God and His service, His work, His family. Paul said of the Macedonian Christians, “And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God” (2 Cor. 8:5). Having made that commitment, their generous gift, springing even from deep poverty, followed as a matter of course. “And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it” (1 Cor. 12:26).

We May Engage in Mutual Edification. According to Thayer the verb *oidodomeo* means “To build a house, erect a building.” He goes on to add, “Since both a Christian church and individual Christians are likened to a building or temple in which God or the Holy Spirit dwells (1 Cor. iii:9,16 sqq.; 2 Co. vi:16; Eph. ii.21), the erection of which temple will be completely finished till the return of Christ from heaven, those who, by action, instruction, exhortation, comfort, promote the Christian wisdom of others and help them to live a correspondent life are regarded as taking part in the erection of that building, and hence are said *oidodomein*, i.e., (dropping the fig.) to promote growth in Christian wisdom, affection, grace, virtue, holiness, blessedness.” In this mutual upbuilding in the assembly we see all the items of public worship emerge: “If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad? But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: And thus

are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth. How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying” (1 Cor. 14:23-26).

Some people think of the worship outlined in the New Testament as boring, monotonous, unexciting, or drab. They seek to remedy this by turning the worship assemblies into a three ring circus with their additions. Others, while holding a semblance of respect for Bible authority, but having lost the spiritual devotion necessary for worship, absent themselves from the assembly frequently or altogether. Paul warned the Hebrew Christians of this particular danger, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries” (Heb. 10:25-27). But the spiritual priests of Christ feast at an altar from which the world cannot eat (Heb. 13:10), and offers the sacrifice of praise to God *continually* (Heb. 13:15). He needs no mechanics, other than the divinely appointed ones, so to do (2 Tim. 3:16,17).

CHAPTER X: OVERSEERS OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

The church is the body of Christ, over which He serves as Head (Eph. 1:22,23; Col. 1:18). As the universal church, it is the body that contains all the saved (Matt. 16:18; Acts 2:47; Heb. 12:23); on the congregational level it is the body of Christ containing all the saved in any given locality, and assembling for the purpose of worship or edification (1 Cor. 1:1,2; Rev 1:11).

Each local congregation is autonomous. This word is from a combination of two Greek words, *autos* self, and *nomos* law, thus meaning self-ruled, or self-governing. That is, there is no central organization, no earthly headquarters, no conference, no synod that controls or dictates to the local churches. Rather, each congregation is free to carry on its work, conduct its worship, own its own facilities, and control its finances, guided only by its Head as He leads her through the Word of God (Eph. 4:13-16).

However, there are men in each fully organized local congregation, designated as overseers, who have the responsibility of guiding, protecting, and feeding the flock of God (Acts 20:28). These men are variously designated as overseers, bishops, elders, or pastors; and it will be the scope of this lesson to explore their office, responsibilities, and qualifications for carrying out this great work among the people of God.

ELDERS APPOINTED IN EVERY CHURCH

In New Testament times, no one man was ever appointed to rule over one church. Rather, a plurality of such were selected for each congregation. Prophets from Jerusalem came to

Antioch to tell of a forthcoming famine. “Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul” (Acts 11:29-30). Later, when a dissension arose at Antioch over circumcision, it was determined “Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question... And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them... And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter... Then pleased it the apostles and elders with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas and Silas, chief men among the brethren” (Acts 15:2,4,6,22). As Paul and Barnabas made their second missionary journey they carried the decision of the apostles and elders with them: “And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem” (Acts 16:4). A number of years later Paul returned to Jerusalem, “And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present” (Acts 21:17-18). So the great church at Jerusalem, the first one ever established, was served over the years by a plurality of elders.

During his first missionary journey, Paul had planted a number of congregations. On a return visit it is said, “And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed” (Acts 14:23). This certainly included the churches at Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, and no doubt other churches along

their missionary route. When sometime later Paul planted the church at Ephesus, a plurality of elders were appointed there also: “And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church” (Acts 20:17). These same men he charged, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). The church at Philippi, also established by Paul, had a plurality in its leadership: “Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons” (Phil. 1:1). The same apostle reminded Titus, “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee” (Titus 1:5).

James said, “Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord” (James 5:14). Peter added, “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed” (1 Pet. 5:1).

Thus the evidence is overwhelming. In New Testament times, every fully organized congregation appointed a plurality of men to take the oversight of the flock of God. And that prepares us for the next section of our study: the various titles by which these men were designated.

TERMS DESIGNATING THE OVERSEERS AND THEIR POSITION

They Were Called Bishops or Overseers. These two terms are a translation of the Greek *episkopos*. Thayer defines it as “An overseer, a man charged with the duty of seeing that things done by others are done rightly, any curator, guardian,

superintendent.” The force of the term can be seen from its usage under various circumstances (*italics* are mine to indicate the word in question). Of the temple crews during Josiah’s reform it is said, “And the men did the work faithfully: and the *overseers* of them were Jahath and Obadiah, the Levites, of the sons of Merari; and Zechariah and Meshullam, of the sons of the Kohathites, to set it forward; and other of the Levites, all that could skill of instruments of musick... And they have gathered together the money that was found in the house of the Lord, and have delivered it into the hand of the *overseers*, and to the hand of the workmen” (2 Chron. 34:12,17). Speaking of the blessing to come on Israel, Isaiah said, “For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron: I will also make thy officers peace, and thine *extractors* righteousness” (Isa. 60:17). Perhaps the NIV is clearer on this passage, “I will make peace your governor and righteousness your *ruler*.” Coming into the New Testament we find, “For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and *Bishop* of your souls” (1 Pet. 2:25). With reference to an officer in the church, we find the following: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you *overseers*, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). “Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the *bishops* and deacons” (Phil. 1:1). “A *bishop* then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach” (1 Tim. 3:2). Finally, “For a *bishop* must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre” (Titus 1:7). These verses make it rather

easy to see the position of responsibility, leadership, oversight, or rule occupied by these officers in the church of our Lord.

But perhaps two more words from the same root will give us an even better insight into the office and function of the bishop. *Episkope* means visitation or office. It is treated in the following manner by the translators: “Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of *visitation*” (1 Pet. 2:12). “For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his *bishoprick* let another take” (Acts 1:20). “This is a true saying, if a man desire the *office of a bishop*, he desireth a good work” (1 Tim. 3:1). The next word for consideration is the verb form *episkeptomai*. This means, “To look upon, to consider, to have regard to, something or someone... To visit... To investigate, to search... to take oversight... to appoint, to commission, to install someone” (*Theological Dictionary of New Testament Words*). Observe its usage. “Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, *set a man over* the congregation, Which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd” (Num. 27:16,17). Jesus said, “For I was...naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye *visited* me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me” (Matt. 25:35,36). James said, “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To *visit* the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (Jas. 1:27). Finally, Peter uses it as follows, “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind” (1 Pet. 1:2).

It should be very clear by now that the bishop in the church of God is one who takes the oversight of the flock, visiting among them, looking out and providing for their needs, and protecting them from their enemies both without and within. No wonder the New Testament says, “This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work” (1 Tim. 3:1).

They Were Called Elders. This is the Greek *presbuteros*, and is used with reference to age, maturity, or rank. Among the Jews of Jesus’ day there had developed a body of leaders often distinguished by the term elders. In Egypt Moses assembled and addressed the elders of Israel (Ex. 3:16-18; 4:29; 12:21). What position of authority these may have had is not clear. Elders were present and active, seventy in number being mentioned on one occasion, during the wilderness wanderings (Ex. 17:5,6; 18:12; 24:1,2; Lev. 4:15). Seventy elders were later selected to help Moses bear the burden of the people (Num.11:16-25). Elders stand first in a list of heads, judges and officers; and had the responsibility to deliver murderers to the avenger of blood (Deut. 19:11,12), and to make atonement for unsolved murder (Deut. 21:1-9). A rebellious son was to be brought before the elders (Deut. 21:18-21), and they were the ones to chastise a man who falsely accused his wife of immorality (Deut. 22:13-21). The Sanhedrin or Council of Elders was the highest Jewish tribunal during the Greek and Roman periods, being composed of seventy members plus the high priest who served as president. It was with this body that Jesus often clashed (Matt. 15:1-9; 27:12-20; Luke 20:1). Jesus was asked by the Pharisees, “Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the *elders*? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread” (Matt. 15:2; see also Matt. 21:23; 28:12; Mark 15:1), showing their influence and authority in His day. This, of course, does not form the pattern

for elders in the New Testament church, but it does give us a background in which to study the word.

We have cited numerous Scriptures in the previous section proving a plurality in the eldership who serve New Testament congregations. We will not repeat them here, but instead refer the reader back to that section. However, we note the following facts with reference to this body of men. (1) There were appointed to their position as elders: “And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed” (Acts 14:23). (2) When a contribution was gathered at Antioch for needy Christians in Judea, it was sent to men designated as elders (*presbuteros*) who evidently took charge of the distribution (Acts 11:27-30). (3) When a problem arose over the matter of circumcision, the elders, along with the apostles, were at the forefront, hammering out a solution, based on the revelation they had received (Acts 15:2,6). (4) Paul called for the elders of the church at Ephesus (Acts 20:17) to meet him at Miletus, and charged them to feed God’s flock, and to protect them from false teachers who would try to devour them: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears” (Acts 20:28-31). (5) The elders rule in a congregation, and are to be considered worthy of double honor: “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.

For the scripture saith, thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward” (1 Tim. 5:17,18). (6) No accusation is to be received against an elder that cannot be substantiated by two or three witnesses: “Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses” (1 Tim. 5:19). (7) When any are sick, the elders are to be asked to engage in prayer on their behalf: “Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord” (Jas. 5:14). (8) The elders are charged to feed and take the oversight of God’s flock: “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind” (1 Pet. 5:1,2). (9) They lead the flock by their example: “Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being examples to the flock” (1 Pet. 5:3).

So we see the elders, both by definition and usage, as older or more mature men, appointed to serve a local congregation by overseeing it, protecting it, feeding it, and leading it by exemplary lives and conduct; men who are held in the highest esteem by both the members of the body of Christ and the community at large.

They Were Called The Presbytery. This is from the Greek *presbuterion*, and is used but three times in the New Testament: twice of the elders among the Jews, and once with reference to New Testament elders (see Luke 22:66; Acts 22:5; 1 Tim 4:14). It means a “Body of elders, presbytery, senate, council” (Thayer). So while *presbuteros* has reference to the individual elder, *presbuterion* depicts all the elders of a local congregation functioning as a body.

They Were Called Shepherds or Pastors. Here we are dealing with the Greek word *poimen*. Note some examples of its usage (again the italics are mine): “And there were in the same country *shepherds* abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night” (Luke 2:8). “I am the good *shepherd*: the good *shepherd* giveth his life for the sheep” (John 10:11). “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great *shepherd* of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant” (Heb. 13:20). “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, *pastors* and teachers” (Eph 4:11). Of the verb form of this word (*poimaino*), Thayer says, “To feed, to tend a flock, keep sheep... to rule, govern... to furnish pasturage or food; to nourish.” Illustrative of this with reference to the eldership are the following two passages: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind” (1 Pet. 5:2).

Let it be clearly understood at this point that the term pastor in the New Testament has no reference at all to the preacher. I realize that this is almost its total usage in denominational circles, but not so in the organization of the Lord’s church. The elders are the pastors, the shepherds, who tend or feed the flock. It is an abuse of the New Testament concept of oversight to apply this to an evangelist, unless, of course, he should also happen to have been appointed as an elder.

Bishops, Overseers, Elders, and Pastors Are Different Terms Designating the Same Office. The truth of this statement should by this time be quite evident; but it is an important Bible fact,

and we do not want to take its understanding for granted. Paul came to Miletus and called for the elders of the church at Ephesus (Acts 20:17). Yet he addressed this body of men as overseers (KJV), or bishops (ASV) (Acts 20:28). The elders feed (shepherd) the flock under Christ the chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:1-4), but this is precisely the same work outlined for bishops (Acts 20:28).

A person may be both a father and a carpenter—not two different people, but two terms designating different aspects of his life. This is also true of the Bible terms for the eldership. They are elders because they are men normally older in age, and most certainly mature in the Christian faith (1 Tim. 3:6); they are bishops because they oversee and provide spiritual guidance for God’s heritage (Acts 20:28); and they are shepherds or pastors because of their responsibilities to feed and protect the flock. Actually to have a good understanding of these different designations helps us to appreciate more fully the qualifications and work of these great men of God.

QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS

So much has been said and written about the qualifications of elders as recorded in 1 Tim. 3:1-7, and Titus 1:1-14, that we hesitate to add to the list. But perhaps a few pointed remarks would not be amiss. We think that these qualifications may be best considered in five general categories.

(1) Qualities in family relationships. In this respect, the elder must be the husband of one wife, ruling well his own household. “A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach... One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church

of God?)” (1 Tim. 3:2,4,5). “If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly” (Titus 1:6).

(2) Qualities in community relationships. Included in this would certainly be the following: blameless, of good report, given to hospitality, a lover of good men, and one not accused of riot or unruly (1 Tim. 3:2,7; Titus 1:6-8).

(3) Qualities in dedication and temperament. This would require men who are vigilant, sober, of good behavior, just, holy, temperate, and educated and grounded in the gospel (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8,9).

(4) Qualities in discipline or self-control. Under this heading we would list the following: Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre (dishonest gain), patient, not a brawler, not covetous, and not soon angry (1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7).

(5) Qualities in experience and maturity. Not a novice (1 Tim. 1:6), that is, not one who has newly come to the faith.

CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARD THE ELDERSHIP

God’s Word certainly sets a high standard for those who would serve in the eldership; nothing less could be expected, for they watch for our souls. But there is also a corresponding responsibility on the part of the membership as well. We need to work toward qualifying men to serve as elders; but we also need to qualify congregations for serving under elders. This, in our opinion, has been a neglected area among us.

We must recognize that elders do have the oversight of the congregation. This is not an optional arrangement; it is a Holy Ghost appointed position in the church of Christ. Paul said, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers...” (Acts

20:28). This is God's will and way for His church. Furthermore these men assume this position of oversight, not by constraint, not for the hope of some material gain, but with a willing and ready mind (1 Pet. 5:2). Oh, I am sure that many good men accept the bishoprick with misgivings—about their qualifications, about their leadership abilities, about having time for such a momentous task—but they accept it nonetheless, and place themselves on the firing line for the Lord. It is a fearful responsibility to feed the flock (1 Pet. 5:2), lead the flock (1 Pet. 5:3), and watch for souls (Heb. 13:17). May God's richest blessings rest upon those dedicated men who are willing so to do, and upon their wives and families who are willing to share them with the flock of God. It is no wonder that the ones John saw seated around the throne of God, clothed with white raiment, and wearing crowns of gold, were designated by no other term than that of elder (Rev. 4:4).

Every Christian must therefore be concerned about his complete submission to this plan of church leadership. Anything short of this could not be acceptable to God. Remember, we are not dealing with options, but with an appointment of the Holy Ghost. Following are four areas in which the New Testament is very specific in this respect.

(1) We must submit to the elders with the recognition that they do watch for our souls. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" (Heb. 13:17). "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder [plural of *presbuteros*]. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (1 Pet. 5:5). There is no way that elders can watch for our souls unless we are willing subjects. Their

pleas will fall on deaf ears; their exhortations will go unheeded; their warnings will be ignored. Elders may prepare food and times for feeding—Sunday evening and Wednesday evening assemblies, special classes, gospel meetings, etc.; but unless Christians are willing to show up for the feeding, they have not accepted God’s plan for the eldership. Often a church blames elders for failing to properly lead, while in reality the blame lies at the feet of the church who has failed to follow. You cannot have a leadership without a followship.

(2) We are not to rebuke elders, but rather entreat them as fathers (1 Tim. 5:1). Rebuke is from the Greek *epiplasso*, and this is its only New Testament usage. It is a strong term meaning, “a. prop. to strike upon, beat upon: b. trop. to chastise with words, to chide, upbraid, rebuke” (Thayer). Such action toward all elderly is here forbidden, and certainly elders of the church are included. On the other hand we are to entreat him as a father. Entreat is from *parakaleo* and bears such meanings as address, speak to, beg, entreat, console, encourage, or strengthen. This our approach to elders, even in matters of disagreement or correction, must be characterized by dignity, respect, and love. They truly are worthy of double honor (1 Tim. 5:17).

(3) We are to hold elders in the highest possible honor, and to provide for any needs they might have: “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward” (1 Tim. 5:17,18). When an evangelist spends his time engaged in the proclamation of the saving message of the gospel, he has every right to receive compensation of a monetary nature. Paul said, “Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things” (Gal. 6:6). When men are engaged in the oversight

of souls, they have every right to expect both the dignity afforded the office, and physical sustenance when such is necessary. A congregation qualified for an eldership will see that their elders are provided both.

(4) No accusation is to be received against an elder unless there are two or more witnesses (1 Tim. 5:19). Any elder who does his job of feeding, overseeing, rebuking, and administering discipline will occasionally make an enemy—an enemy vicious enough to destroy him by malicious gossip or slander. God know that such would be the case. So He has provided a measure of protection for His overseers. An accusation must be substantiated by two or more witnesses before it can be entertained as a legitimate charge. The church that abides by this injunction will hear very few complaints about the men who watch for their souls.

A great marriage is accomplished when a husband and wife recognize God’s divine order of authority in that relationship (1 Cor. 11:3-12), and when each shares a mutual concern and respect for the other’s feelings, needs, goals, commitments, and individuality. Paul expressed it this way, “Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord” (Eph. 5:21,22). These same can be said of great churches. They are built by recognizing God’s divine order of church government—elders ruling, overseeing, protecting, leading, and feeding; members honoring that oversight, following, and faithfully feasting at the table provided—and all done in a spirit of love and submission: “Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time” (1 Pet. 5:5,6).

The overseers of the Lord's church are an appointment of the Holy Ghost (Acts 20:28). That is a *Great Fact in Human Redemption*. We ought to spare no effort in making the eldership what God intended for it to be.

CHAPTER XI: DEACONS—MEN APPOINTED TO SERVE

When Paul wrote his epistle to the Philippians, he introduced it in this way, “Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons” (Phil. 1:1). After having stipulated the qualifications of bishops, the same writer opens another list of qualifications by saying, “Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre” (1 Tim. 3:8). But who are deacons? And what is their position and work in the church of Christ? The answer to these questions is the topic of this chapter.

MEANING AND USAGE OF THE TERM DEACON

Deacon is a transliteration (the original word giving an English spelling) of *diakonos*. It is defined by Thayer as follows, “One who executes the commands of another, esp. of a master; a servant, attendant, minister; 1. univ. of the servant of a king. 2. A deacon, one who, by virtue of the office assigned him by the church, cares for the poor and has charge of and distributes the money collected for their use... a deaconess, a woman to whom the care of either poor or sick women was entrusted.” The Arndt-Gingrich Lexicon defines it, “1. Masc. – a. servant of someone. b. gener. helper. c. deacon as an official of the church. 2. deaconess.”

Diakonos in all its forms is used a total of 101 times in the New Testament. Following is a list that might be helpful in understanding its variety of usages. *Diakoneo* (the verb form) is used thirty-seven times. It is translated minister twenty-three times, serve ten times, administered two times, and use the office

of a deacon two times. *Diakonia* is used thirty-five times, and translated by ministry twenty-six times, serving five times, administration two times, and office and relief one time each. *Diakonos* is used twenty-nine times. Twenty times it is translated minister, seven times servant, and two times deacon. So a deacon in general usage is anyone who serves or ministers to others. In this sense all Christians are deacons: “But he that is greatest among you shall be your *servant*” (Matt. 23:11). “But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your *minister*” (Mark 10:43). But there is a special usage of the term, indicating a man appointed to serve as an officer of the church. In the passages determined by to have this meaning, translators have chosen to indicate such by allowing the original to stand as a transliteration rather than to translate by the normal terms, hence our word deacon. It is this special usage that will challenge our attention in this chapter as an important Bible fact.

THE OFFICE OF DEACONS

Men Were Appointed as Deacons. This is to say that men were not merely selected for a specific work, or perhaps selected a specific work for themselves; and that they were deacons only until they completed that assigned task. Rather, they were appointed to an office in a supervisory capacity, and would remain in that office until removed. Since this point is sometimes challenged, we need to carefully substantiate it by Scripture.

With reference to the first seven who evidently received the appointment to this position, we read the following, “And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.

Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them” (Acts 6:1-6). First, note from the above that while they are not called deacons, they were appointed to serve (*diakoneo*) (v. 2). In the second place you will observe that they were appointed over the business of serving, not necessarily just to do the work themselves (v. 3). Appoint is from the Greek *hathistemi* and means, “1. to set, place, put. To set one over a thing, put in charge. 2. Appoint one to administer an office” (Thayer). Consider its usage in the following passages: “Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord *hath made ruler* over his household, to give them meat in due season?” (Matt. 24:45). “His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I *will make thee ruler* over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matt. 25:21). “And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord *shall make ruler* over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?” (Luke 12:42). “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and *ordain* elders in every city, as I had appointed thee” (Titus 1:5). “For every high priest is *ordained* to offer gifts and sacrifices:

wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer” (Heb. 8:3).

As we have seen before, bishops received their appointment by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28). But now we are also seeing that the office of deacon is by divine establishment. Paul said, “God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues” (1 Cor. 12:28). We direct your attention here especially to the word helps. It is the Greek *antilepsis*, and is defined, “In Bibl. speech aid, help; plur., 1 Cor. 12:28, the ministrations of the deacons, who have care of the poor and the sick” (Thayer).

Further evidence of this official capacity of deacons is seen when Paul introduces his epistle to the Philippians, “Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons” (Phil. 1:1). Three divisions are clearly seen here in the membership of this congregation: saints, bishops, and deacons. But assuming for argument’s sake that the work of a deacon is not in an official capacity, just a saint responding to a temporary need, how could Paul, who was far removed from Philippi, know that at any one given time anyone was acting as a deacon? It is very evident that he recognized it as an office in the Lord’s church, and knew that men had been selected to fill that position.

The Qualifications of Deacons. We will call attention to these in more detail later, but at this point we simply make this observation: if a deacon were no more than any saint engaged at a given time in some good work or service, why the qualifications at all? For example, the deacons were to be the husbands of one wife. Can only the married engage in the Lord’s service? Before being appointed as deacons, each was to first be proved. Proved how? Evidently by services they had

already rendered. But if they were already engaged in such service, why did Paul not recognize them as deacons already? Once more, could a male member of the body of Christ carry out a needed Christian service, such as washing the feet of an invalid, or taking food to a destitute person, if his wife were not in subjection? We all know that he could; but he certainly cannot serve as a deacon when such is the case.

We, therefore, conclude that it is an indisputable fact that God did as surely set in the church the office of the deacon as He did the office of the bishop; and that when a man faithfully fills that office, God abundantly blesses him: "For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 3:13). Furthermore, it is the responsibility of every New Testament church to organize itself in harmony with this divine plan.

THE QUALIFICATIONS OF DEACONS

Qualifications of Deacons. As it is with elders, so deacons must also measure up to a divine standard of excellence. "Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well" (1 Tim. 3:8-12). What was said with reference to the qualifications of the elders, and the areas where such qualities were manifested, may also, for the most part, be said of the deacons. And rather than repeat them here, we ask the reader to refer back to that

section of this work. However, there are two items that challenge us to further investigation.

The Qualification of the Wives. *Gune* is a word the Greeks used for both woman and wife. Its precise meaning must be determined by context. Unfortunately, some have concluded that the women referred to here are not the deacon's wives, but rather women who serve in an office of deaconess. This view has been given some credence by those who produced the RSV by rendering the passage in question simply as "the women," and by transliterating Rom. 16:1 to read deaconess. This is an important distinction that is being made, and we need to carefully consider the following facts. (1) *Diakoneo* is used eight times in the New Testament in connection with a woman's work, and every usage refers to serving food (see Matt. 8:15; 27:55; Mark 1:31; 15:41; Luke 4:39; 8:3; 10:40; John 12:2). *Diakonos* as a feminine form is used only once (Rom. 16:1), and translated in the KJV as follows, "I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchræa." Furthermore Paul even defines the very nature of Phebe's service: "for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also" (Rom. 16:2). She was not an officer of the church in Cenchræa in violation to 1 Cor. 14:34,35 and 1 Tim. 2:12, but rather probably a wealthy woman who provided much support for those who labored in the gospel. (2) Within the context of 1 Tim. 2, we observe that Paul had first given the qualifications of elders, requiring of them the kind of home life that would be an asset, not a hindrance, to their work. He then proceeded to require the same of deacons, demanding that their wives be Christian help meets rather than gossips and busybodies who would destroy their husbands' influence and effectiveness. (3) Paul's use of masculine forms shows he was not speaking of women as deacons: "And let these [*houtoi*, nom., pl., masc.] also first be proved; then let them use

the office of a deacon, being [ontes, nom., pl., masc., part.] found blameless... For they [hoi, nom., pl., masc.] that have used the office of a deacon [deakonesantes, nom., pl., masc., part] well purchase to themselves [eautois, dat., pl., masc.] a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 3:10,13). So not one word is said by Paul in 1 Tim. 3 indicating that women occupied the office of a deaconess. On the contrary both grammar and context show that it was men who filled this position of service. (4) Finally, when the need arose for the appointment of the first deacons, the apostolic command was for men, not women, to fill the office: “Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business” (Acts 6:3).

Deacons Must Hold the Mystery of the Faith. The term mystery is used often in connection with the gospel. It has reference to the fact that God in eternity had planned for the redemption of mankind, but had not revealed His plan until it was unveiled through the precious gospel of Christ. “But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (1 Cor. 2:7-10). Paul further expounds the mystery by saying, “For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few

words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel” (Eph. 3:1-6). So the mystery is no longer a mystery; it is now a matter of clear revelation—a revelation that all mankind is within the scope of the great commission (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Rom. 1:16), every recess of humanity is to hear Messiah’s name (Rom. 10:11-13; Phil. 2:2-11)—and the wonder of it all: all are made one in the body of Christ (Gal. 3:26-29; Col. 3:11).

Deacons must hold the mystery of the faith—all are one in Christ: red, yellow, white, black, brown, or polka-dot (if there are such). We teach our children to sing, “Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight,” then we station deacons at the doors of the church buildings to block the entrance of other races, especially the blacks, into our worship facilities. Heaven must blush in shame! The first deacons were appointed to stop such unchristian partiality—the Hebrews being favored over the Grecian Christians in the daily ministration (Acts 6:1). The very nature of a deacon’s work will throw him among lower social levels, different ethnic groups, people of low moral character, the profane and vulgar. If he does not hold the mystery of the faith, he will not administer his office with eyes closed to skin color, ragged clothing, dirty bodies, and warped attitudes. But then, if he does not hold the mystery of the faith, he is not qualified by God to be a deacon!

THE WORK OF DEACONS

The first deacons appointed were certainly engaged in the business of waiting on tables—seeing that the Hebrew and

Grecian widows were properly cared for by the benevolence of the New Testament church (Acts 6:1-6).

Under the Old Covenant God nurtured in His people a benevolent spirit toward those who were less fortunate. He commanded that in the seventh year the land should lie idle, that the poor might gain sustenance from it (Ex. 23:10,11). When the harvest was reaped, the corners of the field were left, and the gleanings were not gathered; these were left for the needy (Lev. 19:9,10). But in addition to this, a portion of the tithes of the land was to be used for benevolence, meeting the needs of both Israelite and stranger in the land (Deut. 26:12,13). It was in the very nature of God to care for His creation: "For the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward: He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment. Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Deut. 10:17,19). He could ask no less of His Holy People: "When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled; Then thou shalt say before the Lord thy God, I have brought away the hallowed things out of mine house, and also have given them unto the Levite, and unto the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow, according to all thy commandments which thou hast commanded me: I have not transgressed thy commandments, neither have I forgotten them" (Deut. 26:12,13).

We find the same characteristics required of those who live under the New Testament. Jesus said, "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away" (Matt. 5:42). Hardly has the writer of Acts finished

telling about the establishment of the church until he reports, “And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need” (Acts 2:44,45). The same benevolent spirit prevailed in the Macedonian churches: “Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints” (2 Cor. 8:1-4). The church at Jerusalem had a daily ministration whereby both the Hebrew and Grecian widows had their needs met (Acts 6:1-6); and Paul’s letter to Timothy shows that the church in general was obligated to thus respond to the destitute among them (1 Tim. 5:3-10). In fact, Paul enjoined, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10). With such charitable sharing of the physical necessities, it would only be natural that men were appointed to see that the sharing was done with equity. Deacons were the ones thus appointed.

However, with reference to this, may we add here a word of caution. Deacons, as well as all other Christians, work under the oversight of the elders. It is not so that elders have the oversight of the spiritual affairs of the church, while deacons have the oversight of the physical and financial. When a contribution was sent from Antioch to meet a benevolent need in the area of Judaea, it was sent to the elders, evidently that they might oversee its distribution (Acts 11:29,30). Remember, elders

oversee the church of God; deacons are a working unit of that church.

While the New Testament is not specific about other works in which deacons might be engaged, we think we can reasonably assume from the meaning of the word itself that they are men on call. They are the official servants of the church, working under the oversight of its bishops, and stand ready to do whatever needs to be done. They might be appointed to care for the meeting facilities, teach, do personal evangelism, visit the sick, keep in close contact with the welfare of the elderly, share in financial decisions, handle correspondence, keep records, or just be *Somebody Else* (performing those menial tasks that we are always told, “Let somebody else do it”). The work of overseers is a rather awesome responsibility; deacons are their right hand men in accomplishing their task. And “They that use the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 3:13).

CHAPTER XII: THE WORK OF AN EVANGELIST

Paul said to young Timothy, “But watch though in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry” (1 Tim. 4:5). In another place he wrote, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” (Rom. 10:13-15). The same writer said, “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Cor. 1:21). The whole world lies in wickedness (1 John 5:19); there is no possible hope of salvation without the good news of the crucified and risen Savior (Rom. 1:16). How beautiful are the feet of them that carry that message of redemption! We need a greater understanding and deeper appreciation of these devoted servants of the King.

DEFINITION AND USAGE OF SOME KEY TERMS

I once read that a proposition well defined was half argued. That, no doubt, is so; and what is said of propositions is equally so of words. So we shall begin this topic, as we have a number of others, by trying to gain a better understanding of the terms used. Often in moving from one language to another we are quite able to convey a reasonable meaning of words, but sometimes lose the euphony of sounds so necessary in

understanding word families. For example consider *poimante...poimnion*, feed the flock (1 Pet. 5:2). About the closest we could come to approximating the original sounds would be to say shepherd and sheep. This problem is especially apparent in the words for gospel and evangelist. The English reader has not a chance of recognizing them as being words from the same family. But they are, and it enriches our understanding immensely if we recognize and define them as such. *Euaggelion*, translated seventy-six times gospel, means, “1. a reward for good tidings. 2. good tidings. a. the glad tidings of the kingdom of God soon to be set up... the glad tidings of salvation through Christ; the proclamation of the grace of God manifested and pledged in Christ; the gospel... b. ...the narrative of the sayings, deeds, and death of Jesus Christ...” (Thayer). *Euaggelizo*, normally translated preach the gospel, or bring glad tidings, is defined “To proclaim glad tidings; spec. to instruct (men) concerning the things that pertain to salvation...” (Thayer). *Euaggelistes*, translated evangelist four times, Acts 21:8; Eph. 4:11; 2 Tim. 4:5, is “A bringer of good tidings, an evangelist” (Thayer). Thus we see an evangelist as a gospel preacher who gospels out the gospel (not very good English, but it gives you an idea of the relationship of the words we translate gospel, preaching, and evangelist).

To look at one other word perhaps would be helpful, the work *kerux* (preacher, 1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11; 2 Pet. 2:5): “A herald, a messenger vested with public authority, who conveyed the official messages of kings, magistrates, princes, military commanders, or who gave a public summons on demand, and performed various other duties. In the N.T. God’s ambassador, and the herald or proclaimer of the divine word...” (Thayer).

So an evangelist is a preacher, a messenger, a proclaimer of the gospel, calling men’s attention to the message of redemption,

and urging their obedience thereto. This might well be seen by observing Ezekiel's commission: "Son of Man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die: and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul" (Eze. 3:17-19). But it certainly comes through crystal clear in the great commission of our Lord Jesus Christ, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matt. 28:19,20).

THE POSITION AND WORK OF EVANGELISTS

The Position of Evangelists. In the Lord's church, elders were appointed by the Holy Ghost (Acts 20:28); deacons were also placed by the commandment and approval of inspired apostles (Acts 6:1-6), and set in the church (1 Cor. 12:28). Evangelists share no less an appointment from God for the unity and advancement of the kingdom of light. Paul wrote, "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave some apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of

the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Eph. 4:8-16). This passage, of course, has specific reference to some miraculous elements in the New Testament church; but we know from other Scriptures that evangelists, along with shepherds and teachers, were to remain as a permanent part of its organization.

But even the very nature of the church as God’s missionary organization would demand that such be the case. In Mark’s account of the great commission we read, “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). Luke furnishes us with some additional details of this commission: “Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:45-47). Like leaven in meal (Matt. 13:33), the gospel was to spread until it had permeated every fiber of our sin-cursed habitation: “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall

be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

The New Testament church felt very heavily the weight of this responsibility. The world was lost without the saving message of the gospel; but how could they hear without a preacher? And how could he preach unless he was sent? (Rom. 10:13-15). And send them they did! Philip blazed the trail to Samaria, “Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them” (Acts 8:5). The church at Antioch selected Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:1-3), and through them the gospel was carried to Cyprus, Perga, Antioch of Pisidia, Lystra, and Derbe (Acts 13:1-14;26). Later, on other journeys, Paul expanded the territory to Tarsus, Troas, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Rome, and possibly as far away as Spain. No man ever took more seriously the responsibility of an evangelist, or labored with more evangelistic zeal that did the apostle Paul. We have his own testimony to this effect: “I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:14-16). “For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel... For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the fore. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak:

I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Cor. 9:16,19-22). So successfully did these men labor in the gospel, along with every individual who believed the salvation of the world depended on it (Acts 8:4), that within thirty years inspiration could record, “But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world” (Rom. 10:18).

The Work of the Evangelists. So evangelists were set in the church by inspiration, and were used as the arm of the church to reach out to a lost world with the gospel. That is the general view of them presented thus far, but now we need to look at their work and responsibilities in a little more detail. Perhaps we could best do this from gleanings garnered from three New Testament books written especially to evangelists, First and Second Timothy, and Titus.

(1) They had the responsibility to fully organize and qualify churches according to the New Testament pattern. Once Paul and Barnabas had established churches, they soon returned to appoint elders to oversee the flock (Acts 14:23). The same charge was given to Titus: “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee” (Titus 1:5). And both Timothy and Titus were given a list of qualifications to guide them in such selections (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9).

(2) Their work required them to be diligent students of the word of God. God’s people must be a taught people. Jesus said, “It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me” (John 6:44). The great commission said, “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:30). Such a commission necessitates study and preparation. Timothy was told, “Till I come, give

attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all” (1 Tim. 4:13-15). Again, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).

(3) They were to preach the word of God. Paul charged Timothy, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:2). The ramifications of this evangelistic requirement are tremendous; but since space limitations dictate brevity, we can here only highlight a few.

Consistency between Doctrine and Practice. Paul asked, “Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?” (Rom. 2:21,22). Nothing is more disgusting than a teacher who points one way and walks another, and some of Paul’s most solemn charges to evangelists were to the point. He urged Timothy, “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity... Take heed unto thyself, and unto thy doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Tim. 4:12,16). “But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness... I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1

Tim. 6:11,13,14). “Flee also youthful lust: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Tim. 2:22). “Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men’s sins: keep thyself pure” (1 Tim. 5:22). *Keep thyself pure!* The evangelist who is not willing to do this commits spiritual suicide!

Teaching with Authority Principles of Conduct and Purity. The evangelist may often be pressured to condone sin, especially in the lives of the influential. That he must never do. Paul strongly warned, “Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear. I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality” (1 Tim. 5:20,21). Neither wealth nor position should be allowed to hinder the proclamation of truth, “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life” (1 Tim. 6:17-19). Neither age nor status exempts the Christian from the pursuit of holiness (Titus 2). Rather the grace of God demands it: “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). So to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men” (Titus 3:1,2). God recognizes no double standard: the evangelist must live above reproach. But so must everyone who wears the name of Christ:

“These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority” (Titus 2:15).

Rebuking and Rejecting False Teachers and Their Doctrines. David said, “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward” (Ps. 19:7-11). But God never gave a law that Satan did not try to counterfeit; and this is especially true of the saving message of the gospel of Christ. “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works” (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

For men whose prime purpose it is to carry the gospel of Christ, it is especially appropriate that they be aware of false teachers and their threat to the cause of Christ. Paul sounded to Timothy these warnings, “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron” (1 Tim. 4:1,2). “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are

good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away” (2 Tim. 3:1-5). “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned to fables” (2 Tim. 4:3,4). Titus heard the same warnings: “For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake” (Titus 1:10,11).

Nor was one inch of gospel territory to be ceded to the counterfeiters; their mouths had to be stopped: “Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake” (Titus 1:11). They had turned aside to vain jangling (1 Tim. 2:6), erred from the faith, and made shipwreck of it (2 Tim. 2:18; 1 Tim. 1:19). Like a canker, their words would eat away the vitals of the church (2 Tim. 2:17). They were liars, abominable, disobedient, and reprobate to every good work (Titus 1:12,16). Rebukes had to be administered, and that sharply (Titus 1:13), and continued disobedience required rejection as heretics (Titus 3:10,11). Titus carried Paul’s letter threatening not to spare the false teachers at Corinth (2 Cor. 13:2). As he did so, he no doubt well remembered the dissimulation over circumcision at Jerusalem, and the apostle’s firm stand against it: “But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you” (Gal. 2:3-5). Even Peter, a

pillar in the church, came under Paul's censure at that time: "But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed" (Gal. 2:11). So as evangelists, Titus and Timothy, like Paul, had been thrown into the heat of battle for the souls of men; they dare not allow the enemies of the cross to be the only ones to draw the sword (1 Tim. 6:12).

Willing to Endure Hardships. No one ever said the work of an evangelist was to be easy, except maybe those who have never tried it. "For therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe" (1 Tim. 5:10). "Be not therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God" (2 Tim. 1:8). "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Tim. 2:3). Perhaps Paul's own experiences best epitomize this aspect of evangelism: "Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more, in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches" (2 Cor. 11:23-28).

Training Others for Evangelism. Jesus said, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his

harvest” (Matt. 9:37,38). Timothy received his training for this harvest field from the greatest evangelist on earth (Acts 16:1-3); he knew full well the value of drinking long and deep from such learning and experience. But long after both he and Paul had gleaned the field and were at rest in the shade at the end of the row, there would still be other fields to glean. The work of an evangelist must be self-perpetuating: “And the things that thou has heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2). There is no more challenging work for the evangelist than this.

THE EVANGELIST AND HIS WAGES

We have touched on the challenging and many-fold works of the evangelist (the list above is certainly not exhaustive). Now we turn to talk about the support for his labor.

It is a principle of honor and ethics to pay for services rendered or values received. Abraham insisted on paying the fair market price for a burial cave for his beloved Sarah (Gen. 23:3-16). Gentiles had a duty to repay a spiritual debt by physical means (Rom. 15:27). In 1 Cor. 9:7-14 the apostle Paul showed the validity of this principle, especially with reference to gospel preachers, by the following: (1) The soldier is paid for his warfare. (2) The vinedresser eats grapes from the vineyard. (3) The shepherd drinks milk from the flock. (4) The ox that treads out the corn is not to be muzzled. (5) Temple workers eat bread from the altar. (6) Gospel preachers live of the gospel. In the strongest language possible God denounced those who would violate this principle: “Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the laborers who have reaped down

your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth” (Jas. 5:3,4).

In keeping with this principle gospel preachers have a right to expect a fair and honest wage: the Bible is explicit about this. The workman is worthy of his meat (Matt. 10:9,10); they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel (1 Cor. 9:4-6,11,14); the Philippian church sent once and again to Paul’s necessities (Phil. 4:15-17); Paul received wages from other churches while preaching the gospel at Corinth (2 Cor. 11:7-9; 12:13); and anyone laboring in word and doctrine is worthy of being supported well (1 Tim. 5:16,18).

But even in our own generous time some evangelists may still be underpaid. Following are some reasons why such may be the case. (1) We may not like the preacher, and thus resent contributing to his support. I recall an actual incident when a family stopped contributing to the local church. The elders had begun supporting a new evangelist, and the lady of the household said, “I do not trust him; I do not like his white teeth and his flashy smile.” (2) We may feel the church ought to get by as cheaply as possible; and if a preacher is willing to work for half price, we should be willing to let him. (3) We may not understand the structure of the preacher’s salary, thus believe that he is being paid considerably more than he actually is. If you compare the preacher’s salary posted on the financial report with your own take home pay, remember: (a) your social security tax has already been deducted, his has not; (b) your income tax has been withheld, his probably has not; (c) your unemployment is already paid, he has no provision for such protection; (d) your hospitalization and life insurance is probably already paid, his may not be; (e) your company has established a paid retirement for you, his has not; (f) his average annual car

expense is \$4,200.00, or \$80.00 weekly (based on 20,000 miles x 21¢). (4) We expect his contributions to be exemplary, certainly higher than the average contributor in the congregation. (5) We expect him to participate in all gift-giving occasions: showers, graduations, anniversaries, and housewarmings. (6) We expect his dress to be exemplary of his profession. (7) We expect him to do considerable entertaining, both of members and prospects.

Churches and members may sometimes, probably inadvertently, be guilty of defrauding evangelists their just wage. Following are some of the ways this has or can be done. (1) Plan free or partial-pay meetings. The meeting is free for the members, but the preacher pays all the expenses. (2) Have a lectureship-type meeting and suggest that each preacher donate his time and expenses. The meeting is free for the members, but again the preacher pays. (3) Have an exchange meeting with another congregation. Again, the congregation has a free meeting, but the preachers bear the expense. (4) Expect the preacher and his wife to provide lodging and food for all visiting preachers. (5) Expect a preacher to put in an unreasonable number of hours in his work. (6) Have a favorite preacher to drive many miles for a wedding or a funeral with little or no compensation.

Now may I add to the above just a few lines of explanation or apology. These things are not presented as a complaint from one who feels neglected, abused or defrauded. I have been with the great Broyles St. Church of Christ in Erwin, TN for over twenty-five years. Never in all that time have I once felt neglected, overworked, or underpaid. Quite the contrary, they have always seen that every known need of myself and family was generously supplied. Nor do I know of any preacher who refuses, or even wants to refuse, any of the above tasks when called upon. However, I do know from personal experiences and

observations that such often puts a strain on his pocketbook and stress in his heart. What I am saying is, that if an evangelist is worthy of his position, he is worthy of his support.

“How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” (Rom. 10:14,15). “It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Cor. 1:21) This is another *Great Fact in Human Redemption*.

CHAPTER XIII: THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

The church of Christ is the called out—called out of the world of idolatry, lust, uncleanness, immorality, and every form of degrading evil to a holy way of life (1 Cor. 6:9-20; 2 Cor. 6:14-18; Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Pet. 1:15). We are God’s holy nation, challenged by the grace of God to exemplify that fact by sober, righteous, and godly living (1 Pet. 2:9; Titus 2:11,12). We are the bride of Christ, cleansed by the blood of Jesus from every spot, wrinkle, or blemish, and to be presented to Christ in the beautiful white linen gown of righteousness (Eph. 5:25; Rev. 19:7,8). We are the priesthood of Christ, offering our bodies as holy, and acceptable sacrifices in spiritual worship (1 Pet. 1:5; Rom. 12:1,2). The Psalmist of old sang, “Give unto the Lord ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come before him: worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness... Blessed be the Lord God of Israel for ever and ever. And all the people said, Amen, and praised the Lord” (1 Chron. 16:28,29,36; see also Ps. 29:2; 96:9). How much more should the church of Christ be able to join in that refrain, “Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.”

The Beauty of Holiness!!! Some think God’s way is drudgery, taking the sprint out of the step, and the spice out of life; a law of artificial and useless precepts. These see no beauty in holiness, at least they profess not to. Like Eve, they see beauty only in forbidden fruit. But is there beauty in holiness? To prepare a fertile soil for the lesson before us, let us visualize the following situations.

You are looking for a home for your family when this advertisement from the local paper catches your attention: “House for sale, five bedroom brick, modestly priced. Excellent neighborhood: every nearby home is occupied either by thieves, liars, convicted killers, or parent abusers. Be sure to come by during daylight hours only.” Excitedly, you reach for the phone—or do you? The daughter you have loved and nurtured to 20 years is ready to leave the security of family and home for the college of her choice. You notice a college brochure she has been perusing. “Excellent academic and social programs. Each professor holds an earned doctorate, and is an avowed sexual pervert. We boast more rapists on our campus than any other school of its size. And, yes, we do encourage cheating on exams.” You tell your daughter, “That sounds like a school with sprint in its step, and spice in its life. I think it would be a wise choice” Or do you? You have been hailed into court on some false charges. The judge calls you into his chambers, and apprises you of the fact that your opponent has offered \$2,000.00 to be divided between judge, jury, and attorneys for a favorable verdict; and that unless you are willing to up the ante, such will be rendered. You marvel at their open mindedness, and feel thankful that you are protected under such a judicial system. Or do you? If you flinched at the above imaginary situations, perhaps we are ready to proceed with our lesson on *The Beauty of Holiness*.

GOD’S WAY IS A WAY OF HOLINESS

The royal prophet said, “And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found

there; but the redeemed shall walk there: And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (Isa. 35:8-10). Peter declared, “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 marvelous light” (1Pet. 2:9).

The Nature of God’s Holy Laws. It is not true that God’s ordinances take the joy out of living; in reality they make life livable. When you bought your new car, the manufacturer included with it a user’s manual. It tells you how to get the best possible service out of that machine. Sure, you may ignore changing the oil at recommended intervals, and even boast that such would be a waste of time. But eventually you are going to find out that the manufacturer was not just trying to keep you from enjoying your car while it is on a grease rack, or waste your valuable Saturday mornings taking care of it yourself. He knows that to really enjoy it you will have to do needed services. Think of the Bible as God’s service manual for the human body. God is our Creator: every command He has given us in His Word is designed for our benefit both in time and in eternity. Sure, we can ignore His injunctions and get by for a while; but eventually the grime of sin, and the metal filings of immorality wear away our vitals, and we will end up in the human junkyard of destruction. Some cases in point:

God has said, “Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise” (Pro. 20:1). The New Testament adds, “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18). Why such a command? To deprive one of some secret benefit or pleasure derived from alcohol? Let the Bible speak for itself: “Who hath

woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again” (Pro. 23:29-35). Let the problem drinker, the alcoholic, and the skid row bum add their testimony of financial ruin, broken homes, wrecked nervous systems, cirrhosis of the liver, delirium tremors, ulcerated stomachs, destroyed brain cells, eternal hell, and holiness suddenly becomes beautiful.

Consider also sexual immorality. We have heard so much in recent years about the sexual revolution, liberation from puritanical morals, and freedom to do one’s own thing. Fornication and adultery became affairs, then relationships. Perverted sex became gay, and then an alternate life style. Hollywood led the parade, the news media spread the word, and even churches took up the chant. Penicillin had removed the fear of venereal disease; birth control pills took care of the problem of unwanted pregnancies; man was finally free to do his own thing—and do it, he did. But suddenly, like a wounded, half-crazed animal, aids, one of the most dreaded and potentially dangerous diseases of our century, pounced on this group of degenerates. And wonder of wonders! this same liberal camp is now spending millions to tell us what safe sex is: one partner for life. They would never admit it, but that is precisely the same thing God’s law said from the beginning: “Nevertheless, to

avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband” (1 Cor. 7:2). God had warned of such disasters as we now face, had we just been willing to listen: “For at the window of my house I looked through my casement, And beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding, Passing through the street near her corner; and he went the way to her house. In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night: And, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart. (She is loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house: Now is she without, now in the streets, and lieth in wait at every corner.) So she caught him, and kissed him, and with an impudent face said unto him, I have peace offerings with me; this day have I payed my vows. Therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently to seek thy face, and I have found thee. I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved works, with fine linen of Egypt. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning: let us solace ourselves with loves. For the goodman is not at home, he is gone a long journey: He hath taken a bag of money with him, and will come home at the day appointed. With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him. He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; Till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life” (Pro. 7:6-23).

In contrast to that lifestyle the Psalmist said, “The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times” (Ps. 12:6). A proverb reads, “Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him” (Pro. 30:5). The New Testament asserts, “But the wisdom

that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, with partiality, and without hypocrisy” (Jas. 3:17). Paul crowns the whole for those who would use God’s manual for life, “For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come” (1 Tim. 4:8).

The Unclean Shall Not Pass Over It. The Lord’s way is a way of holiness; all the councils of men on earth cannot change that fact. Some would seek to admit the ungodly and the immoral into the kingdom of God, writing on its forehead, “MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH,” and make it “The habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird” (Rev. 17:5; 18:2). Such might well name their children Lo-ammi---not My people (Hos. 1:10). Isaiah declared that the unclean would not so much as pass over the way, much less be able to walk in it (Isa. 35:8). Zechariah predicted, “In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the Lord’s house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and see the therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts” (Zech. 14:20,21).

The Fool Shall Not Err Therein. People do not stumble blindly into the way of holiness; neither are they voted in by some body of men with artificial standards, or no standards at all. They must be born again (John 3:5), cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ (Rev. 5:9), and become new creatures in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). People make a choice to become the holy people of

God (Acts 13:45,46); they do not enter the kingdom to change the standards of the way of holiness. “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” (Gal 5:19-21).

THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

The song says, “How beautiful to walk in the steps of the Savior.” True indeed! there is beauty in holiness. There is love, unselfishness, devotion, honesty, integrity, sexual fidelity, sobriety, truth, service, joy, and hope. Allow us to use just three points as illustrations of this truth.

The Beauty of Holiness In the Home. There is something so beautiful about God’s plan for the home. The husband and wife become one flesh: “And Adam said, this is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and were not ashamed” (Gen. 2:23-25), nourishing and cherishing her even as his own body (Eph. 5:28); and the wife holds her husband in reverence (Eph. 5:33). Their marriage bed is undefiled (Heb. 13:4), and only death will be allowed to separate them (Matt. 19:4-6; Rom. 7:1-3).

Blessed with the powers of reproduction, they become heirs together of the grace of life (1 Pet. 3:7). They recognize their children as a heritage of the Lord (Ps. 127:3-5), provide for their necessities (1 Tim. 5:8), nurture them in a loving atmosphere of the Lord’s discipline (Eph. 6:1-3), provide for them an

inheritance (2 Cor. 12:14; Pro. 13:22), and wear their grandchildren as a crown in old age (Pro. 17:6).

The children rise up and call their parents blessed (Pro. 31:28). They obey them (Eph. 6:1), make their instruction an ornament of grace for their heads and decorative chains for their necks (Pro. 1:7-9), honor them with their substance in their declining years (Eph. 6:2,3; Mark 7:9-13), and rise with respect in the presence of their hoary heads (Lev. 19:32).

From the ancient Hebrew Scriptures we glean this concept of the home as God intended it to be. *Ish*, man or husband, is probably from the root word meaning strong. His is the one designed by the Maker with the strength to provide for and protect his family. *Ishah*, woman or wife, is believed to be derived from *anash*, meaning soft, feminine, or delicate. So while the husband supplies the strength for the family environment, the wife adds the qualities of softness, gentleness, and the finer qualities of life (1 Pet. 3:7). But there is more: from *banah*, meaning to build, comes the words for son and daughter (*ben* and *beth*)—the building blocks of the family. But the home is not really complete until it is self-perpetuating. Thus when the son takes a wife, she is designated by the term *kallah*, meaning completeness or perfection. So a new unit of the family has been started. But it may be weak and need considerable protection. This is where the in-laws (in our day often a term of disrespect) fit into the picture. They are designated by *cham* and *chamoth*, from a root meaning to protect, surround, or guard (one form of it means a wall). For as a wall, they surround and protect the new and delicate family unit, allowing it to strengthen and mature. A lady called and asked me to officiate at her wedding. As usual, I asked her if there was anything in particular that she wanted in her ceremony. She replied, “Yes, use that wedding ceremony from the Bible.” I knew well that

the Bible did not record a wedding ceremony, but I knew exactly what she meant: “Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me” (Ruth 1:16-17). Beautiful! But these are words spoken by a daughter-in-law to her deceased husband’s mother!

But contrast God’s structural design for the home with the way society often tries to build it, and the beauty of holiness can really be seen. More than half of the marriages contracted are defiled by adultery. About one out of three is broken by divorce, leaving children destitute of one, often both parents, robbing homes image, and the marvelous balance of a soft, delicate mother. (One so-called liberated woman observed that they had become more like men than their husbands). One and one-half million babies are killed each year through abortion. Child abuse is rampant. Rebellion of youths gains countless headlines. One must be wearing blinders and colored glasses who cannot see the beauty of holiness in the home.

The Beauty of Holiness in Christian Women. Paul argued Christian women to practice behavior that would adorn holiness, “The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed” (Titus 2:3-5). Behavior that characterizes holiness in a Christian woman, in addition to the items stated in the preceding, might be summed up as follows:

(1) She portrays holiness by her quiet spirit and manner of life. Peter said, “Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands: that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement” (1 Pet. 3:1-6).

(2) She portrays holiness by inward adorning that is reflected in outward modesty. This will perhaps need some explanation, but first the Scripture: “In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or any costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works” (1Tim. 2:9,10). Paul’s Greek expression is, *en katastole kosmio*. *Katastole* means, “1. Prop. A lowering, letting down; hence 2. A garment let down, dress, addire” (Thayer). “Department, outward, as it expresses itself in clothing, as well as inward” (Arndt-Gingrich). *Kosmios* is defined, “Well-arranged, seemly, modest” (Thayer). So the Christian woman adorns the heart, then reflects the contents of the heart by her appearance, especially by her clothing. Those who design skimpy, sexy, skin-tight clothing leave no doubt about the message they want to convey (there is such a thing as the attire of a prostitute, Pro. 7:10). But a Christian (?) woman

often objects, “I do not try to appeal to men’s baser lusts when I wear such apparel, I just like the design.” Well, her argument is with her Creator not with us; inspiration says clothing is the mirror of the heart.

But getting back to our main point, the woman who becomes holiness is chaste, controls her tongue, does not imbibe intoxicants, teaches her children high standards of conduct and morals, professes godliness, adorns herself with good works, and reflects what she is by her apparel. Contrasted to that is the woman without virtue: “As a jewel of gold in a swine’s snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion” (Pro. 11:22). She is loud and stubborn (Pro. 7:11), violates her husband’s trust (Pro. 7:18-20), silly and lascivious (2 Tim. 3:6), and miserable to live with (Pro. 21:9). There is beauty in the holiness of God’s crowning work of creation. Every man choosing the companion of his life will be quick to recognize and admit it.

(3) *The Beauty of Holiness in Service.* The apostle Paul said, “I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness... But unto holiness, and the end everlasting life” (Rom. 6:19,22). Jesus washed His disciples’ feet, then instructed them, “If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him” (John 13:14-16). The same Lord said, “Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse

you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Matt. 5:42-44). Paul commanded, “Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you; bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rom. 12:13-21).

Early Christians sold their possessions and goods and shared with any who had needs (Acts 2:44,45; 4:34-37). They conducted a daily ministration for needy widows (Acts 6:1-6). They gathered contributions to be sent to distant places (1 Cor. 16:1,2). They even extended such help beyond the fellowship of the body of Christ (2 Cor. 9:13; Gal. 6:10). Since then, Christians have fanned out to every remote recess of the earth, ministering to the sick and dying. They have established service organizations such as colleges, hospitals, orphan’s homes, and homes for the aged, freely giving of their time, talents, and money out of concern for others. Christian ladies have cooked and cleaned for the sick and aged, carried meals to homes invaded by death, made garments to clothe the naked, comforted the troubled, and held lovingly the hand of the dying. In a dog-eat-dog world, there is something extraordinarily beautiful about such unselfish holiness.

A FINAL EXHORTATION

When His people followed Him in the wilderness, God declared, “Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the firstfruits of his increase” (Jer. 2:3). Zechariah’s prophecy of God’s New Covenant people was, “In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD” (Zech. 14:20). Paul said of our re-creation, “That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another. Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Eph. 4:22-32).

The church is a holy institution, made so by the precious blood of Christ: “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:25-27). God forbid that we as Christians

should ever speak, act, or live in such manner that would reflect to the world a tarnished image of that glorious institution. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord (Heb. 12:14). So may we always, “Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come before him: worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness” (1 Chron. 16:29).

GREAT FACTS IN **Human** **Redemption**

by Clayton Winters



About the Author

Clayton Winters was born near Mountain City, TN on July 15, 1931. He was married to the former Vivian May, and they were the parents of three children: Evelyn, Sandra, and David.

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