

Primitive Baptist Church: Bible Basic Doctrines

Authors

Elder Johnson Vernon

Elder Michael Ivy

Elder Don Watson

Compiled by Brother Filden Oroni

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Foreword

This treatise conveys the Bible Basic Doctrines through a thorough analysis of the Bible. It is authored by the elders of Primitive Baptist Church with the guidance of the holy spirit. Primitive Baptists Church believes that we have been saved eternally by grace alone through the blood of Jesus that was shed at the Cross. The purpose of the Bible therefore is not to help us get saved eternally, but rather to help us to be saved timely during our existence on earth. We believe that the children of God are in every corner of the earth and in every tongue. Primitive Baptists believe that while God loves all of his children equally, He blesses them differently depending on how it pleases him. One way of pleasing God is through obeying his word and searching for his face from time to time. This treatise therefore will in no way help you win the love of God because God loved us when we were still deep in sin. The text will however help you understand the scriptures which will in turn help you do the will of the Lord and benefit from his blessings. We believe that in anything we do, it must be inspired by the Bible. If it is not in the Bible, then we should avoid it completely. The church, we believe, is not a prison for Christians as it may be portrayed by the contemporary world. The church is the Lord's Kingdom where the Lord is the King and we are his subjects. We meet in the church to recognize the authority of our Lord and glorify him. As joint heirs, we believe that we are free and the church is where we feel completely free when the Lord takes all our burdens from us. We are joint heirs with Christ and please stop living like a slave in our father's house, live like a true child of God, have joy and approach God frequently and fellowship with him more often. Serve the Lord through worshipping him and serve Him through serving his people and your existence on earth will be more thrilling and more meaningful. Be blessed as you gain deeper understanding of the scriptures. May the Holy Spirit guide you and enjoy!

Brother Filden Oroni

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Scriptures

To whom are the scriptures written?

When I go to my mail box to get my mail, there are two things I look for. I look to see if the letter is addressed to me and to see who wrote the letter to me. Sometimes I get mail in my box that is addressed to someone else. I know that mail is not for me. The scriptures tell us both, who is the author and to whom they are addressed. We read in II Tim. 3:16, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." From this we conclude that the author of the scriptures is the Holy Spirit and the scriptures are addressed to the "man of God." Once we can identify who the man of God is then we will know to whom the scriptures are written.

In the letters written by the Apostle Paul, he has a salutation in each letter. In the salutation, he identifies himself as the writer of the letter and he identifies to whom the letter is written. In each letter, Paul identifies the ones to whom the letter is written to be the following: saints, faithful in Christ, the church, or the beloved of God. The word, saints, comes from the same Greek word that is translated holy. When someone is born spiritually, they are given a holy nature and thus are saints. Saints does not mean someone who has accomplished some super feat or who has lived an exceptionally holy life, but rather in the scriptures it identifies those who are born of the Spirit of God. Dear reader, you who love the Lord are saints.

The scriptures are, therefore, written to those who have been born of the Spirit of God. Notice what Paul writes in I Corinthians, 2:9 "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. 10 But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. 11 For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. 13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. 15 But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. 16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ."

Since the natural eye hasn't seen and the natural ear hasn't heard and the natural heart hasn't perceived the things, which God hath prepared for them that love him, then how can anyone know those things? In nature, our perception of things is a result of the nature that God has given us. We have been given the spirit (nature) of man that we may know the things of man. We don't perceive the things of a cow, or a horse, or a bird, etc. because God hasn't given us a nature

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to perceive those things. In order to perceive the things of the Spirit of God we must first be given a spiritual nature in order to receive those things. This spiritual nature is given to us when we are born of the Spirit. As Paul wrote, "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." In the new or spiritual birth we are given a spiritual nature by which we can receive the things of the spirit. Since the scriptures are given by inspiration of God, we can understand with perception in our heart the scriptures because we are born of the spirit of God.

The Lord told some unbelieving Pharisees in John 8:42 "Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. 43 Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. 44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. 45 And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. 46 Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? 47 He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." These unbelieving Pharisees did not hear (perceive) what Jesus had told them. Jesus told them in verse 47 why they could not perceive his words: "He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." Thus, a person must first be of God before he can hear God's words. A person becomes of God when he is born of the Spirit of God.

The conclusion we can make from the above scriptures and the only conclusion we can make based on the above scriptures is that the scriptures are written to the spiritually born children of God.

Perhaps the reader is wondering, am I a spiritually born child of God to whom the scriptures are written? In Gal. 5:22 we read, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." Someone who is born of the Spirit begins to bear the fruit of the Spirit. Only those who have been born of the Spirit can bear the fruit of the Spirit. Dear reader, if you love the Lord or love his people, you have been born of the Spirit. If you joy in approaching to God in prayer or joy in talking to others about the Lord, then you have been born of the Spirit. If you have peace in your heart based on what God has done for you, then you have been born of the Spirit. If you have a desire to do good without any hope of a reward then you are born of the Spirit. If you believe in God and believe he blesses them that diligently seek him, then you have been born of the Spirit of God. If you bring forth any one of the nine-fold fruit of the Spirit listed above, then you have been born of the Spirit of God and the scriptures are written to you.

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Profitability and Benefits of the Scriptures

As born-again children of God it is profitable and beneficial for us to read and study the scriptures. In 2 Tim. 3:15-17 Paul told Timothy, "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." If we were to receive a personal letter from God addressed specifically to us would we take it lightly? Well, God has given us the scriptures and has addressed them to the man of God, that is, the children of God. We shouldn't take them lightly.

First, the scriptures are profitable for doctrine. Doctrine means teaching. God has instructed us in the scriptures of his major attributes and characteristics, and of his works, and of his covenant of redemption and of the various teachings of grace. He has also instructed us as to his Kingdom and the Church. These things serve as the foundation on which our personal lives are to be built, as well as our worship and service is to be built. We need such a foundation that we may be good and profitable servants unto God.

Second, the scriptures are profitable for reproof. If we were perfect, we would not need reproof. Even though we have been born spiritually of the Spirit of God, yet we still possess a flesh nature that Paul said, "I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." We are to mortify the deeds of the flesh. In order to bring our bodies into subjection we need the reproof of God's word. God's word convicts us of sin and encourages us to turn from particular sins and a sinful lifestyle.

Third, the scriptures are profitable for correction. Sometimes we may think we are doing something right or we may not be aware of the errors we are making in our worship towards God or our service or the manner in which we conduct ourselves. We need the correction of God's word to set us straight in our worship and service to God and our attempts at living uprightly.

Fourth, the scriptures are profitable for instruction in righteousness. We do not come equipped with a natural knowledge of how to live upright lives. We have to be taught how we are to live uprightly, and how we are to serve God, and how we are to worship him. The scriptures provide us this needful instruction.

Fifth, the scriptures make us wise unto salvation. The scriptures give us knowledge of our eternal salvation. According to 2 Tim. 1:9 life and immortality are brought to light through the gospel. The scriptures do not give us life and immortality but rather they give us knowledge (light) of that life and immortality that God has given us. They also tell us how we can save ourselves from an untoward generation, and from many pitfalls and problems in life. They instruct us in how we can deliver ourselves from false religions and worship systems and false service and false practices.

Sixth, the scriptures provide us spiritual food. In John chapter 21 the Lord told Peter to feed his lambs, and to feed his sheep. Also, in 1 Peter chapter 5 the elders are

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instructed to feed the flock of God and in Acts 20:28 they are told to feed the church of God. Of course, the spiritual food the elders have to feed the church with is the scriptures.

Seventh, according to Rom. 15:4 the scriptures give us hope: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." We have hope of eternal salvation because of the promises of God and we are made aware of those promises in the scriptures.

Eight, the scriptures bring peace to the hearts of God's children. Rom. 10:15, "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!" Also, we read in Eph. 6:15, "And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace."

Ninth, the scriptures give us knowledge and understanding of God's kingdom. When John came preaching, he said, "repent for the kingdom of God is at hand." Likewise, the Lord said, "repent for the kingdom of God is at hand." Many, many statements and parables are written concerning the kingdom of God. The New Testament has an awful lot to say about the kingdom of God.

Tenth, the scriptures teach us how that we are to worship God in an acceptable manner. John 4:23, "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." Without knowledge of the word of truth, we could not worship God in an acceptable manner.

While there are many more reasons and blessings to reading and studying the scriptures, these are some of the more important reasons.

Completeness of the Scriptures

According to 2 Tim. 3:16, 17, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." The word 'perfect' means mature or complete. The words perfect and thoroughly furnished indicate that the scriptures completely furnish the child of God with everything that is needed to perform all good works. In other words there is nothing lacking in the scriptures for the child of God. Couple this with the fact that Ps. 12:6 teaches that the scriptures are preserved of God in a completely pure state: "The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation forever. There are no errors in the scripture and they completely furnish us for everything that we need to worship and serve God and to live lives that are acceptable unto God.

What are the consequences of this scriptural completeness for the child of God? First, everything that is needed for worship is included in the scriptures. If it is not in the scriptures, we are not to include it in our worship services. Adding to what God has given us is a serious error.

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God gave the pattern of Old Testament worship to Moses and the children of Israel. God told Moses to "make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount." They were not to deviate from that pattern, nor were they to add to that pattern. On one occasion two of the sons of Aaron who were priests added to that pattern: Lev. 10:1 "And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, 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." They were to offer fire from off the altar in their censers, but instead they offered strange fire, which God had not commanded them. God was not pleased with their adding to his words and destroyed them. That should certainly teach us that we are to follow God's pattern and teaching and not alter it or add to it.

On another occasion, King David thought to bring the ark of the covenant up to Jerusalem from the house of Abinadab after that it had fallen into enemy hands and later came back to Israel and was kept in Abinadab's house for a period of time. 2 Sam. 6:1-7, "Again, David gathered together all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. And David arose, and went with all the people that were with him from Baale of Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the LORD of hosts that dwelleth between the cherubims. And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drave the new cart. And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab which was at Gibeah, accompanying the ark of God: and Ahio went before the ark. And David and all the house of Israel played before the LORD on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals. And when they came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God." Man's hands were not to touch the ark of the covenant and the Levites were to bear the ark by the staves through the rings on the side of the ark. Uzzah had violated God's teaching by putting his hands to the ark. In 1 Chr. 15:12, 13, David said, "And he said unto them, Ye are the chief of the fathers of the Levites: sanctify yourselves, both ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the ark of the Lord God of Israel unto the place that I have prepared for it. For because ye did it not at the first, the Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order." There is a due order to the worship and service of God. We should seek that order and follow that which the Lord has taught us.

There is a warning given to those who would add to or take away from the word of God. Rev. 22:18, 19 "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy

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city, and from the things which are written in this book." It is a serious thing for God's people to add to or take away from the words of the Lord.

Another consequence of the completeness of God's word is that we don't have to go outside the scriptures to interpret the scriptures. This principle is particularly applicable in the book of Revelations. According to Rev. 1:1 the book of Revelations is written in sign language. Many people try to interpret the signs in Revelations based on their knowledge of historical events or based on what they imagine those signs might mean. Many books have been written based on this manner of interpretation of this book. This is contrary to principle of the completeness of God's word. The signs in Revelations and in the books of the prophets are to be interpreted by the scriptures themselves. We are to compare spiritual things with spiritual, that is, we are to compare scripture with scripture for our interpretation of scripture.

In addition, the scriptures give us everything that we need for our personal discipleship. In Matt. 7:24-27 we read, " 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." The foundation of our lives is to be built on the scriptures. We are to live according to thus sayeth the Lord. There is nothing lacking in the scriptures that makes it necessary to go outside the scriptures to know how to live godly, upright lives.

Bible Rules for Bible Study

A study of the scriptures is a most noble undertaking. It was said of the Bereans in Acts 17:11, "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." As we begin a study of the scriptures it is important that we know that there are rules or principles the scriptures give us to study by. By using these rules or principles we will come to increase our knowledge of the scriptures and be able to correct any errors in our own knowledge base as well as discuss and reason biblically any differences of understanding we may encounter with our fellow Christian travelers.

The bible sets forth the following rules and principles to study by:

1. II Tim. 3:16, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." This passage teaches us several lessons:

A. All good works are taught in the scriptures.

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B. The scriptures are a thorough furnisher unto all "good works." We need not go outside the scripture to be thoroughly furnished in our instruction about any or all good works. In contrast, those things that are taught as good works, but not found in the scriptures are, in fact, "not" good works to be observed by us.

C. The purpose of the scripture is to mature (perfect) the man of God (those born of God).

D. All verses and passages of scripture, both in the old and new testament will fit into one or more of the four listed categories - doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in

righteousness. Paul's own writings and the order they are given unto us in the bible illustrate this lesson: Romans is primarily a book of doctrine, I & II Corinthians are primarily books of reproof, Galatians is primarily a book of correction, and Ephesians thru Philemon are primarily books dealing with instruction in righteousness.

E. Last, but not least, the bible is inspired of God.

2. John 5:39, the Lord said, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." This verse teaches us:

A. The old and new testament scriptures are a continual testimony of Jesus.

B. We are to search the scriptures for that testimony of Jesus.

3. II Tim. 2:15, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." This scripture teaches us:

A. Our study is not to approve us before others, but to be approved unto God. As workmen in the kingdom of God, we are to study that we might not be ashamed because of unskillful use of the scriptures.

B. We must rightly divide the word of truth. That doesn't say that we are to divide truth from error. For there is no error in God's word. We are to make the proper application of God's word. A text, out of context, is a pretext. Our application of the text must fit the context in which it is written. Furthermore, many subjects have multiple applications. As an example, the subject of justification can be greatly confusing until you realize the bible teaches three courtrooms. For instance, the bible teaches in the courtroom of glory we are justified by grace thru the shed blood of Jesus. In the courtroom of our minds, we are justified by our faith in the blood of Jesus, and in the courtroom of public opinion we are justified by our works. Until we rightly "divide" the subject of justification we will be in a state of confusion on this or any other subject.

4. II Pet. 1:20, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation." Too often people want to put their private interpretations on the scripture. This is often done by going outside the scripture to interpret things in the scriptures. If someone goes outside the scripture to interpret the scripture then he has a "private" interpretation. Regardless of the claims of some that they have a special revelation from God, the bible clearly teaches us that their claims are false.

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5. I Cor. 2:13, "Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual." This informs us that the Holy Ghost teaches us the understanding of His word by comparing scripture (spiritual things) with scripture. In other words, the scripture, by the unlocking of the Holy Spirit is its own interpreter.

6. John 10:35, "...and the scripture cannot be broken." Scriptures do not contradict (break) themselves. There cannot be a situation where the scripture teaches one thing and then,

elsewhere, teaches something which contradicts the previous scripture. The problem is in our understanding of what is being taught. We should seek to reconcile those scripture which appear to contradict themselves. Often this is done by changing our mind about what the scripture teaches. The previous rule of interpreting scripture by using other scripture also applies here.

7. Isa. 28:9, 10, "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; here a little and there a little." Studying and learning the scriptures is compared to the natural growth process. When we learn the basic precepts, then we build upon those basic precepts. Some precepts cannot be adequately learned until a good foundation has been laid. Furthermore, as in life, we learn "here a little, there a little." Learning is a lifetime process and our study of the scriptures should be for the rest of our lives. Almost any bible subject is taught throughout the bible (here a little, there a little). Indirectly, this warns us against forming hard concrete opinions based on a single verse of scripture.

8. Rom. 9:17, "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh..." Here Paul equates what God said to what the scripture said. Some have said, "I pay more attention to the red writing because that is what Jesus said." All scripture is the word of God. The black writing is just as much the word of God as the red writing.

If you have any questions or comments about the things I have written, or if you have a subject matter you would like to see addressed in this forum please let me know and I will do my best to address them.

Scriptures are a testimony of Jesus

Jesus said in John 5:39, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." At the time that the Lord said this to the Jews gathered around him, the only scriptures that had been written were the Old Testament scriptures. It is very easy to see that the New Testament scriptures are a testimony of Jesus Christ for they speak of him and his kingdom throughout. The Old Testament, however, is a different matter. The name of Jesus Christ is not in the Old Testament. How then can the Old Testament scriptures be a testimony of Jesus Christ?

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There are over a thousand prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah and of his works. But the Old Testament scriptures have a much greater testimony of Jesus than just the prophecies of the coming of Christ. Word pictures of Jesus are found in several Old Testament passages and Jesus is portrayed in the types and shadows of the Old Testament.

Some examples of word pictures of Jesus are found in the following passages:

A. Ps. 22:10 "I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly. 11 Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help. 12 Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. 13 They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. 14 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. 15 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. 16 For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. 17 I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. 18 They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture. 19 But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me. 20 Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog. 21 Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns. 22 I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee."

The above passage describes the crucifixion of Jesus and the parting of his garments by the Roman soldiers and the fact that they cast lots for his coat. It also describes how that a bone of his body was not broken. The passage is about the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Actually, many of the Psalms give us a word picture of Jesus Christ.

B. Is. 53:1 "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? 2 For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. 3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. 4 Surely, he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. 5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. 7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. 8 He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. 9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. 10 Yet it

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pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. 11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. 12 Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

When Phillip was led of the Spirit to go in the way toward the desert and was told of the Spirit to join himself to the chariot of the Eunuch of Ethiopia and the Eunuch was reading from the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, Phillip asked him, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" And the Eunuch answered, "How can I except some man guide me?" When Phillip understood where the Eunuch was reading, he went to the same passage and preached unto him Jesus. The 53rd chapter of Isaiah is all about Jesus.

C. 2 Sam. 23:1 "Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, 2 The spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue. 3 The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. 4 And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain. 5 Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow. 6 But the sons of Belial shall be all of them as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands: 7 But the man that shall touch them must be fenced with iron and the staff of a spear; and they shall be utterly burned with fire in the same place."

This conversation between the Rock of Israel and the God of Israel outlined the covenant work of Jesus Christ.

In types and shadows in the Old Testament Jesus is found on nearly every page. In the first chapter of Genesis, Jesus is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. In the second chapter of Genesis, Jesus is the lawgiver. In the third chapter of Genesis, Jesus is the judge executing the judgment of God because of sin. In the fourth chapter of Genesis Jesus in type is the lamb offered by Abel as an offering to God. In the fifth chapter of Genesis, Enoch typifies Jesus in that he walked with God and was taken up into heaven. In the sixth chapter of Genesis, the ark is a type of Jesus, as it shows forth the death, burial, and resurrection in a figure as set forth in the 3rd chapter of 1 Peter.

Additionally, Jesus is the seed of Abraham to which God promised he would multiply Abraham's seed as the stars of heaven, as the sand of the sea shore, and as the dust of the earth, and that his seed would possess the gates of his enemies, and in his seed would all kindreds and all nations of the earth be blessed. When Abraham was told to offer Isaac

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as an offering, Jesus is typified by the ram with his horns caught in a thicket who was offered in the place of Isaac. So Jesus was offered in our place. Jesus is also Melchisedec, the King of Salem and priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings. Jesus is typified by Joseph's coat of many colors. Joseph was also a type of Jesus in that there are over 100 parallels between the life of Joseph and the life of Jesus.

Furthermore, the bush that burned with fire but was not consumed that Moses saw typifies Jesus. Jesus suffered the fiery judgment of God for us yet was not consumed by that judgment as he arose on the third day.

Jesus is the man who wrestled with Jacob all night and touched him in the hollow of the thigh that shrank

The Passover lamb typifies Jesus.

All of the animal sacrifices in the ceremonial law of the Old Testament typifies Jesus.

Jesus is the shadow of a giant rock in a weary land.

Jesus is the bright and morning star.

Jesus is the Sun of Righteousness that Malachi spoke of.

Jesus is the cloud that went before the children of Israel to show them the way and the pillar of fire at night to give them light throughout all of their wilderness journeyings.

The temple of God in the Old Testament typified Jesus.

The seven sacrifices of Leviticus typified Jesus:

- A. Sin offering – Jesus was sacrificed for us to take away our sins.
- B. Burnt offering – Jesus suffered the wrath of God in our stead to satisfy God's justice.
- C. Peace offering – Jesus through his atoning sacrifice made peace between God and his elect.
- D. Wave offering – Jesus through his death, burial, and resurrection made us victorious over sin, the devil, death, hell, and the grave.
- E. Heave offering – Jesus rose victorious the 3rd day and later ascended back to heaven.
- F. Meat offering – Jesus body was without sin and this was typified by the unleavened bread.
- G. Drink offering – Jesus' blood was ceremonially typified both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament by the wine used in the drink offering.

The jubilee of the children of Israel typified Jesus.

Jesus is the balm of Gilead.

Jesus is the rivers of water in a dry and thirsty land that the prophet Isaiah wrote about.

Jesus is the ravenous bird from the east that Isaiah wrote about as Jesus lived by every word that proceeded from the mouth of God.

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Jesus is also the man who executes the counsel of God from a far country that Isaiah wrote about.

Jesus is the tree that Moses cast into the bitter waters of Marah that made them sweet.

Jesus is the man with the sword drawn who appeared unto Joshua, who asked, "Art thou for us or for our enemies?" The man replied, "Nay, but as captain of the Lord's host am I now come. Jesus is that captain of the Lord's host.

Jesus is the prophet like unto Moses.

Jesus is the Son of God who was in the furnace with the three Hebrew children on whom the smell of smoke was not found on their garments or the hair of their heads singed.

Jesus is the ladder of Jacob's vision on which the angels of God ascended and descended.

Jesus is the half shekel of atonement of the children of Israel.

Jesus is the beloved in the Song of Solomon.

Jesus is the brazen serpent that was hung on a pole.

Jesus is the Rock that followed the children of Israel to which Moses first smote and it brought forth water.

Jesus is the veil of the tabernacle and temple.

Jesus is the stone which the builders rejected.

The High Priest typified Jesus.

The garments of the High Priest typified Jesus.

Jesus is the tree of life in the midst of the garden of Eden.

We will stop here, but this is just a very small sampling of the types and shadows and pictures of Jesus Christ set forth in the Old Testament.

By looking for Jesus in each passage of the Old Testament it makes reading and studying the Old Testament much more interesting and enjoyable. Too often people read the Old Testament without looking for Jesus in its pages. When we do this, the reading becomes boring and tiresome. There is, however, nothing boring about seeing Jesus in the types, shadows, and figures of the Old Testament.

Two Covenants

Gal. 4:21 "Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? 22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. 23 But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. 24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. 25 For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. 26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. 27 For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou

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that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband."

Based on the above passage there are two covenants of worship that are taught in the scriptures. Now there are other covenants taught in the scriptures, but only two covenants of worship. The first covenant was given on Mt. Sinai to the children of Israel and was a covenant that gendered to bondage. At the time this scripture was written it answered to "Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children." This covenant is often called the "law." The second or new covenant is said to be free and to be the mother of us all. This covenant is often called the covenant of grace, or faith, or the kingdom of God.

The law covenant brought a curse upon those under the covenant. Gal. 3:10 "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. 11 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, the just shall live by faith." Since no one other than Jesus Christ has continued in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them, then everyone but Jesus Christ was under the curse of the law.

The following passages of scripture show us the purpose of the law covenant:

1. 1 Tim. 1:9 "Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, 10 For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine."

2. Gal. 3:19 "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. 20 Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. 21 Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. 22 But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. 23 But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. 24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. 26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."

3. Heb. 10:1 "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. 2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. 3 But in those sacrifices, there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. 4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins."

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From the above we see that the law was designed for the lawbreaker. It brought sins to remembrance, but it could not do away with sin. It also showed us the need for a redeemer. The law was simply a shadow of good things to come, but could make nothing perfect. The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ. The work of a schoolmaster is to bring the students to the school. The law taught us of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and that we are sinners, and that we stood in need of a redeemer. The law as a schoolmaster pointed us to Christ. The law revealed to us that we were under the curse of the law of sin and death and unable to deliver ourselves out from under that curse.

The Lord came to fulfill the law. Matt. 5:17 "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. 18 For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." The Lord kept the law to the jot and tittle and thus fulfilled the law. Christ completed the law and brought in everlasting righteousness for his people. Rom. 10:4, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness for every one that believeth." Christ completed the law for righteousness and according to 2 Cor. 5:21, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Through fulfilling the law and becoming sin for us he made us righteous. Also, Gal. 3:13 "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."

While the law has been fulfilled it still has benefit for us today in that it testifies to us of Jesus: John 5:39 "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." Also, the law gives us types and shadows of heavenly things: Heb. 10:1 "For the law having a shadow of good things to come..." and Col. 2:16 "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a 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." In addition, the law gives us admonitions and examples for our edification and learning: 1 Cor. 10:6, "Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted." Notice 1 Cor. 10:11, "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." Finally, the language of the New Testament is sprinkled with the events of the Old Testament. To understand the New Testament, we need a real good working knowledge of the Old Testament. We, however, do not worship under the Old Covenant today.

The New Covenant came with the teaching and preaching of John the Baptist: Lk. 16:16 The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it. The Lord himself ushered in this New Testament: John 1:17 For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

The New Covenant is stated in Heb. 8: 6 But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. 7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place

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have been sought for the second. 8 For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: 9 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. 10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: 11 And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. 12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

The New Covenant is based on the principle of the new or spiritual birth where God writes his laws in the hearts and minds of his people, and not on 2 tables of stone. Furthermore, in the New Covenant there is no need to teach the people to know the Lord, for they all know him as a result of the new birth and the Lord's personal dealings with him. Now there is a lot that can be taught about the Lord and should be taught about the Lord, but we do not teach to know the Lord. Third, in this New Covenant of worship God is merciful to our unrighteousness. Under the law, the transgressors died without mercy. Fourth, the law continuously brought sins and iniquities to remembrance, but in the New Covenant God remembers our sins and iniquities against us no more. In New Testament worship, God is to us a God and we are to him a people.

In the studies ahead, we will be spending much time looking at the New Covenant worship and service of God's people as set forth in the New Testament.

Attributes of God

The Power of God – His Omnipotence

No doubt there could be and has been volumes written about the power of God. It is not my intent to write all about the power of God (which I am not capable of) but only to introduce the subject and perhaps encourage others to search the scriptures on this very important subject.

Perhaps the most obvious illustration of the power of God is this material universe in which we live. Countless millions of hours of search and research have gone into trying to discover the origins of the universe. God's word plainly tells us, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Creation goes beyond the grasp of human reason, for man has never created anything! To "create" means "to make something from nothing." Only God has this power and amazingly the creation of the universe (as astronomical and magnificent as it appears in our eyes) was not a great exertion of God's power as we read in Psms. 8:3, "When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars,

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which thou hast ordained." Thus, God only considered the creation of the universe as his "finger" work!

What many people fail to realize is that God's power in creation goes beyond the natural universe in which we dwell. In addition to the natural universe, all of God's children are created when they are "born again" to a spiritual realm. In fact, the new birth is called a creation in Eph. 2:10, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Also, in II Cor. 5:17 inference is made to those born of the Spirit as being new creatures, "Therefore, if any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature..."

Next, we see a manifestation of the power of God in the life of Jesus Christ as he lived on the earth. He gave sight to the blind, caused the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, cleansed the lepers, caused the lame to walk, restored the withered limbs, cast out all manners of unclean spirits, and cured diseases of every type. He also raised the dead on three occasions. The disciples marveled when he calmed the stormy sea by simply saying, "peace, be still." The Lord demonstrated power over all things including death: John 10:17, 18, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." In some places in the scriptures, it may appear to us that man took Jesus' life, but while it was man's intention to do so, yet ultimately Jesus had to lay down his life for him to die, then through the marvelous power that only God possesses he arose a victor over death and the grave on the third day.

Similarly, it took the same power of God to enable us to believe as it took to raise Jesus from the dead: Eph. 1:19, 20, "And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead..." Thus, belief is not something we muster up from our sinful carnal nature, but it is something we possess after God's mighty power has worked on us, both to give us spiritual life (Eph. 2:1, "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins) and to enable us to believe. Belief, therefore, is an evidence of the working of God's's great power in you. That the power of God is necessary in the giving of eternal life is proven in John 17:2, "As thou hast given him power over all flesh that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him."

In addition, the power of God is present when a God-called minister preaches the gospel to God's waiting and seeking people: I Thes. 1:5, "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Ghost, and much assurance..." Also, we read in Acts 4:33, "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all." Have you ever had the preaching of the gospel to stir you into action? If so, then the power of God was working in you to stir you to action. That same power was working in the preacher as he preached the word of

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God. Just a word of caution here - a lot of emotion people feel comes from stories men tell to arouse emotion. This is not the power of God. The power of God is manifested in the preaching of the gospel, not through artificial means to arouse emotion!

We may ask ourselves, "What application does the power of God have to us in our daily lives today?" Major applications are found in contemplation of the "promises of God." For instance, God promised in Psms. 12:6, 7, "The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation forever." Here God promised to preserve his words in a pure form forever. Paul so believed in this promise and ultimately the power of God that he taught a great doctrinal truth based on the preservation of a single letter in Gal. 3:16, "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." Paul was so convinced of the power and veracity of God that he knew that what he read in the scripture concerning Abraham's "seed" could not possibly have been inadvertently copied that way instead of "seeds."

God has made wonderful promises to us such as:

- a. The resurrection of our bodies from the dead (I Cor. 6:14; I Cor.15).
- b. To provide for our natural necessities (Matt. 6:33).
- c. To never leave us or forsake us (Heb. 13:5).
- d. To intercede for us (Rom. 8:34).
- e. To never withdraw his love from us (Rom. 8:35-39).
- f. To care for us (I Pet. 5:7).
- g. To help and intercede for our infirmities (Rom. 8:26, 27).
- h. To deliver and not forsake us in time of trouble (Job 5:19).
- I. To give us a throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need (Heb. 4:16).
- j. To give us rest (Matt. 11:28-30).
- k. To give us peace (John 14:27).
- l. To give us comfort (II Cor. 1:3, 4).
- m. To give us hope (Tit. 1:2).
- n. To strengthen us (Col. 1:11; Phil. 4:13; Eph. 3:16; I Pet. 5:10).
- o. To give us joy (Rom. 5:11).
- p. To give us spiritual treasures (Matt. 6:20; Col. 2:3).

When we understand and believe the power of God, then His promises become real to us in our experiences and become a great help, comfort, and encouragement to us as we face the trials and problems of life. May God bless your efforts to learn more about His astonishing power.

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Omniscience of God

Omniscience simple means that God knows all things, past, present and future. Foreknowledge refers to the fact that God knew all things before it ever comes to pass.

David in writing about the depth of the knowledge of God declared in Ps. 139:6 "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it." Who can know or understand the depth or width or height of the knowledge of God. We as creatures cannot attain unto it. Peter declared of Jesus in John 21:17, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest I love thee." His disciples said unto him in John 16:30, "Now are we sure that thou knowest all things..." Since God knows all things, then he knows all things past, present, and future. The depth of his knowledge boggle our finite minds. David said, "Thou knowest my down sittings and mine uprisings, thou understandest my thought afar off." Thus, we are assured that God knows all about us in the very details of our lives. He knows when we sit down and when we rise up. He even knows our thoughts before we even think them!

The statement of God's knowledge in Heb. 4:12, 13 causes us to fear and marvel all at the same time: "...and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes

of him with whom we have to do." The scriptures say that even the thought of foolishness is sin and since God discerns our thoughts and since he knows all about us and nothing can be hidden from him and since all our sins are brought to judgment before God. Therefore, we are made to

fear. However, God's foreknowledge is a comfort because when Christ died for our sins, he died for all of our sins. It is God's foreknowledge that enables him to know all of our sins, even before we were born, and laden them upon Jesus to redeem us from our sins.

Next, the foreknowledge of God assures us concerning the security of the physical universe in which we live: Heb. 1:3 reads in part, "...and upholding all things by the word of his power..." God's foreknowledge of all things works hand in hand with his upholding all things by the word

of his power. God is never "surprised" or "blindsided" by anything. The harmonic interactions of all the heavenly bodies is testimony of God's power and foreknowledge and assures that we won't be "wiped out" by a passing comet, for instance.

In addition, God's foreknowledge assures us of God's providential blessings and watch care in our lives. Since God knows all things, he knows all our circumstances of life and all about our environment. Matt. 10:29, 30 declare this principle: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered." He knows the things we need even before or if we ask him. His foreknowledge assures us that what we ask, he is able to provide. Furthermore, when we are faced with trials or difficulties that seem beyond our ability to handle the fact that God's knowledge far exceeds ours and that his power is unlimited is a

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great comfort to us. In addition, God's foreknowledge is an assurance to us of our salvation and that God's promises will be fulfilled. The following verses testify these principles:

A. Acts 15:18 - "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world."

B. I Cor. 2:7 - "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory."

C. Isa. 46:10 - "Declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."

D. Acts 2:23, 24 - "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it."

E. Acts 4:27, 28 - "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, are gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." Yes, God knows all of his works and they all will be performed as God purposed. All of his promises are yea and amen. He has saved his people from their sins and their eternal destiny is secured and we are preserved in Christ Jesus. There will be no surprises, slip ups or failures because God knew all things before, they ever come to pass. He will do all his pleasure.

Omnipresence of the Lord

The term, "omnipresence," simply means that God is everywhere present and nowhere absent. There is no place that God is not present. The following verses teach this principle:

1. Ps. 46:1 "To the chief Musician for the sons of Korah, A Song upon Alamoth. God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

2. Ps. 139:6 "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. 7 Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? 8 If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. 9 If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; 10 Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. 11 If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. 12 Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee. 13 For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb."

3. Heb. 13:5 "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

4. Prov. 15:3 "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good."

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5. 2 Cor. 2:14 "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place."

6. Job 5:19 "He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee."

7. 1 Kings 18:27 "And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked."

8. Ps. 23:4 "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

9. Ps. 41:1 "To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David. Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble. 2 The LORD will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth: and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. 3 The LORD will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness."

10. Ps. 46:1 "To the chief Musician for the sons of Korah, A Song upon Alamoth. God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. 2 Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;"

11. Deu. 4:31 "(For the LORD thy God is a merciful God;) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he swore unto them."

12. Deu. 31:6 "Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."

Grace

Grace is defined as the unmerited favor of God. It is the theme of the New Testament. The apostle Paul begins and ends each letter that he wrote, except to the Hebrews, with the mention of God's grace. The Old Testament ends with the word, curse. In contrast, the New Testament ends with the statement: Rev. 22:21 "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." The word, grace, appears two hundred times in the bible with one hundred and thirty one in the New Testament.

According to the scriptures our salvation from sin is by the grace of God:

1. Acts 15:11 "But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they."

2. 2 Tim. 1:9 "Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, 10 But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:"

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3. Eph. 1:6 “To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. 7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;”

Of course, salvation from sin is accomplished legally by justification before God. The scriptures teach that we are justified by grace through the atoning sacrifice of Christ:

1. Rom. 3:24 “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:”

2. Tit. 3:7 “That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

God’s choice of a people to be his was by the grace of God:

1. Rom. 9:11 “(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) 12 It was said unto her, the elder shall serve the younger. 13 As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.”

2. 1 Pet. 1:2 “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.”

3. Rom. 11:5 “Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace: 6 And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise, grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise, work is no more work.”

The new or spiritual birth is by the grace of God:

1. Eph. 2:1 “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins: 2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: 3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)”

2. Gal. 1:15 “But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, 16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:”

3. Tit. 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;”

Glorification is by the grace of God: 1 Pet. 5:10 “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.”

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The gifts of the gospel ministry were given by the grace of God: Eph. 4:7 “But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. 8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. 9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) 11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:”

Spiritual gifts that are given to every child of God are by the grace of God: Rom. 12:6 “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; 7 Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching...”

Our ability to believe is by the grace of God: Acts 18:27 “And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace:”

The gift to preach and the ability to preach are by the grace of God:

1. Acts 4:33 “And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.”

2. 1 Cor. 3:10 “According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.”

3. Eph. 3:8 “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;”

The true gospel is called the “grace of Christ” and is to be distinguished from any other so called gospel: Gal. 1:6 “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: 7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. 9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”

God also gives us grace for bearing our infirmities and our trials:

1. 2 Cor. 12:9 “And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

2. Heb. 4:16 “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

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The Holiness of God

Among the most widely presented subjects in all the scriptures is the holiness of God. The word holy appears in more than 600 verses of scripture. Twice in the scriptures God is called the thrice holy God:

1. Is. 6:3 "And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory."

2. Rev. 4:8 "And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him, and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."

The word, holy, literally means to be separate. God is separate from anything that is called God. In addition, his works are separate from any other works. His attributes are separate from the attributes of man.

The 46th chapter of the book of Isaiah shows forth the holiness of God. It begins by describing the false gods and then comparing God to the false gods. The first two verses show how that Bel and Nebo, the false gods, are carried by the beasts and are a burden to the beasts. In contrast, verses three and four show how that God has given birth to his people and has carried them. Next, verses six and seven show how that the false gods are the work of man and have no life. Finally, verses 9 to 11 show how that God is holy: "9 Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, 10 Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: 11 Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it." Only God can create life. The only God that carries the people and not the people him is the God of the bible. Only God can declare the end from the beginning and from ancient times the things that are not yet done. God does according to his will and not according to man's will. It is God who executes his own counsel or covenant. It is God who brings his covenant to pass.

God is also holy or separate in all of his attributes. God is the creator of all things, as the all-powerful God. He is the only one that is omniscient, knowing all things both past, present, and future. God only is from everlasting to everlasting. God has all wisdom. It is God that is everywhere present and nowhere absent. Even in the things that God cannot do he is separate from all others. Only God cannot lie, deny himself, change, fail, be discouraged, sin, be tempted with evil.

God is said to be the Holy Father. There are multitudes of natural fathers, but only one spiritual Father.

God is said to be the Holy Spirit. There are many spirits in the world, but only one Spirit of God.

Jesus is said to be the Holy child (Acts 4:27-30). As the holy child the Holy Ghost conceived him in the womb of a virgin. He was conceived and born holy, harmless,

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undefiled, and separate from sinners. He is also said to be the Holy One of Israel (Ps. 16:10; 89:18; Is. 10:17; 10:20; 17:7; 41:14; 43:3; 43:14; 47:4; 48:17; Mk. 1:24; Acts 3:14,15; 13:35; 1 John 2:20). As the Holy One he is described as the Redeemer and creator of his people. He kept the law to a jot and a tittle, thus fulfilling all things that were written about him. He was the perfect sacrifice to redeem his people from their sins. Thus, he was separate or holy from all other.

Even the very name of God is said to be holy: Ps. 111:9, "He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name." According we read in Acts 4:12, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

The place of God's abode is called the holy place (Ex. 26:33, 34; 1 Kings 8:6-8; Ps. 46:4; Is. 15:15; Heb. 9:12; 2 Chr. 30:27). The holy place in the Old Testament was typical of the Church in the New Testament and the most holy place in the Old Testament was typical of the glory world in the New Testament. The Lord has said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." What makes it a holy place is the Lord's presence.

Furthermore, God is declared to be clothed with holy garments (Ps. 93:1; 104:1; Dan. 10:5; 19:13). God is clothed with glory, and majesty, and honor, and righteousness. Jesus was also clothed with a vesture dipped in blood thus procuring the salvation and righteousness of his people.

God has made an holy covenant according to Lk. 1:69-74. This holy covenant is set forth for us in Rom. 8:28-30.

Also, God's word is said to be holy in 2 Tim. 3:15, "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

The God that Is

Exo. 3:13, 14, "And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? What shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you."

One of the names for God the children of Israel knew him by was "I AM." The term, I AM, indicates an unchanging ever present God. The God that is "the same yesterday, to day, and for ever."

When Jesus told some unbelieving Jews in John 8:58, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am," they knew he was claiming to be the great "I AM" and thus took up stones to cast at him.

The gospel of John presents a picture to us of Jesus as being the great "I AM." Jesus referred to himself as I am the _____ in eight different ways as follows:

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1. I am the light of the world (John 8:12; 9:5).
2. I am the bread of life (John 6:35).
3. I am the good shepherd (John 10:11, 14).
4. I am the door of the sheep (John 10:7).
5. I am the door (John 10:9).
6. I am the resurrection and the life (John 11:25).
7. I am the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6).
8. I am the true vine (John 15:1).

First Jesus said, "I am the light of the world." It is a particular world that Jesus is the light of. He is not the light of the world of darkness, nor of the world of iniquity, nor is he the natural light of the natural world (He created the sun, moon, and stars for that purpose). He is, however, the light of the spiritual world. To see takes eyes and light. Without either, it is impossible to see. When a person is born again he receives spiritual eyesight and Jesus becomes his light (that which manifests) and he is able to perceive spiritual things (I Cor. 2:9-14). Jesus in his life has made manifest to us thru his word everything that is good!

Second, Jesus said, "I am the bread of life." We don't normally think of bread as something that gives life, but something that sustains life or gives sustenance to life. When we eat natural bread it may satisfy our appetite for a little while, but after a while we hunger again, thus we eat more. However, the bread that Jesus is, is something we eat and satisfies our hunger so that we never need hunger again. When I came to realize that Jesus has saved me from my sins by his finished work at the cross, I have never had to hunger for another savior. I am satisfied he saved me and I no longer need or desire another savior. This bread of life (Jesus) satisfies me.

Third, Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd." As the good shepherd he gave his life for the sheep. Jesus is also called the "great shepherd" of the sheep. There have been many down thru the ages who have given their lives that others might live. Not one of them, however, ever redeemed one person from even one single sin! Jesus, by being the good shepherd manifests his love for the sheep, and by being the great shepherd, manifests his ability to save them. The fact that he is my shepherd makes these thoughts precious.

Fourth, Jesus said, "I am the door of the sheep." He also said, "All that ever come before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them." Thus, Jesus is our eternal security. We are preserved in him. No one can touch our eternal life for they must go thru the door

(Jesus) to get to us and this is impossible. Aren't you glad that your eternal life is preserved and secure in Jesus Christ?

Fifth, Jesus said, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." A distinction is made between this door and the previous door. The previous door speaks of Jesus as our eternal security and preservation. This door speaks to us of the kingdom of heaven, i.e., the church kingdom on earth. It is thru the finished work of Jesus and our obedience to his word that we are saved from a

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condemning conscience as taught in I Pet. 3:21, "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Also thru the completed work of Jesus and his word, we are fed of this spiritual food thru the preaching of the gospel and thru reading and studying God's word.

Sixth, Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life." Death is a reality we all face. Yet, it is not the end of all things, but only a passageway, thanks to Jesus. Jesus himself died on Calvary's cruel cross, yet three days later he arose a victor over death, never to die again. He has the power over death. When we think of death usually it is the death of the body we are thinking about. Yet the scriptures say, You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins. When we were dead (absent of spiritual life) God quickened (gave spiritual life) us as we read in John 5:25, "Verily, verily I say unto you, the hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the son of God, and they that hear shall live." Both the new birth and the resurrection of our bodies are "life from the dead" by the power of Jesus who is the "resurrection and the life."

Seventh, Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." "There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Jesus is "the way" of salvation. It is because he is "the truth" personified that he was a fit savior, for he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, who kept the law to a jot and a tittle and thus became the only savior of sinners. It is because he is "the way" and "the truth" that he is "the life" giving us eternal life.

Eighth, Jesus said, "I am the true vine and my Father is the husbandman." He also said, "I am the vine and ye are the branches." It is only as we abide in him, his love, his words, and his commandments that we as the branches (his disciples) can bring forth fruit to the glory of God. Jesus said, "Without me ye can do nothing." We are dependant on him to do anything godly and good in his sight. As "the vine" he supplies all we need to be fruitful. His chastisement purges us that we may be even more fruitful.

In each of these things that Jesus said "I AM" there is a present reality of the presence of God manifests towards us that gives us hope and consolation as we live our present lives. Jesus truly is "the God that is."

The Eternal God

One of the characteristics of God is that he is eternal: 1 Tim. 1:17 "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen." We know that the scriptures teach us that when we are born of the Spirit we have eternal spiritual life in the inner man. We also know that in the resurrection we will have eternal life in the body. However, God is eternal in a way that we are not. Our eternal life has a beginning. The scriptures teach that God is from everlasting to everlasting (Ps. 41:13; 90:2; 93:2; 103:17; 106:48; Is. 63:16; Micah 5:2; Hab. 1:12). Thus, God is eternal both in that he has no beginning and he has no ending.

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Since God cannot change, all of his characteristics and attributes are also eternal. The following verses show forth some of those eternal characteristics and attributes of God:

1. Jere. 31:3 "The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee."

2. Rom. 1:20 "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."

3. Deu. 33:27 "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them."

4. Ps. 119:142 "Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth."

5. Ps. 119:144 "The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding and I shall live."

6. Is. 26:4 "Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength."

7. Is. 54:8 "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."

8. 1 Pet. 5:10 "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."

Based on the above scriptures, we conclude that God's love, power, arms, righteousness, testimonies, strength, kindness, and glory are all eternal.

Furthermore, God made an eternal covenant:

1. Eph. 3:11 "According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

2. 2 Sam. 23:5 "Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow."

3. Heb. 13:20 "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."

This everlasting covenant is set forth for us in Rom. 8:28-30, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

Christ is said to be an eternal King:

1. Ps. 93:2 "Thy throne is established of old: thou art from everlasting."

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2. Jere. 10:10 "But the LORD is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation."

3. Dan. 7:14 "And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

4. 1 Tim. 1:17 "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen."

Manifold Wisdom of God

Is. 55:9 "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." God's wisdom far exceeds the wisdom of men. In the above verse God's ways and thoughts are compared to man's ways and thoughts and God's wisdom exceeds man's wisdom by astronomical proportions.

Eph. 3:8 "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; 9 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: 10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, 11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." By the grace of God the gospel is preached and taught to the intent that the church may know the manifold wisdom of God. Manifold means many fold. In other words, there are many aspects to God's wisdom. In this essay I would like to discuss four aspects of the wisdom of God.

First, God manifest his wisdom in creation. When God created the heaven and the earth he manifest such a wisdom that is simply astounding to the finite mind. There are literally multiplied billions of stars all traveling the course that God designed. They travel their courses in perfect harmony with one another. Also, according to the scriptures God upholdeth all things by the word of his power. Man, in contrast, makes a simple engine and it only lasts a few years at best and wears out. God's universe has been going on for 6,000 years without failure. The immensity of the universe astounds the observer. The distance between stars is not imaginable by man's mind. Our solar system is designed in such a way as to support life with very narrow limits. There is a very narrow limit of temperature and a very narrow limit of elements within the proper proportion essential to the support of life. Exceed those limits and all life would cease. Yet for six thousand years and those narrow limits have never been exceeded. This all shows the very wisdom of God in design and creation.

False science says that man has evolved on earth from a single cell. Yet the single cell is literally thousands of times more complex than the fastest, most intricate computer that man has built. It is totally unreasonable to think that something so complex as the

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simple cell could come about by chance. I have never seen a watch or an automobile throw itself together by chance, yet the cell which is millions of times more complex supposedly came into being by chance. The truth is that God designed and created the cell. Furthermore, God designed and built the human body which has billions of cells. All of these billions of cells make up complex systems interacting with one another in astounding ways. This all declares the glory of God's wisdom in creation.

Second, God manifest his wisdom in his word. There are multiplied correlations in the scriptures between different numbers and different bible subjects. There are also correlations between bible colors and bible subjects. There are correlations between bible metals and bible subjects. The whole book of Revelations is written to us in sign language and God has given the meaning of every sign in his word. The Lord said, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." The scriptures are a continual testimony of Jesus Christ. There are no errors in the scriptures. They have been preserved pure by the power of God. What wisdom is revealed unto us both in the design of the scriptures and by what they teach.

Third, God manifest his wisdom in his covenant that he made with himself before the world began. God knew that man would transgress his law and would plunge himself and his posterity under the law of sin and death. Yet God made provision to have a people for himself purged of sin and its consequent effects by this covenant before the world ever was created. Man has been trying to get himself right with God every since Adam fell in the garden of Eden. All of man's efforts have been vain. God chose a people in Christ before the foundation of the world and then predestinated that they would be conformed to the image of Christ. In bringing about their deliverance from sin he calls or quickens them into spiritual life by his holy spirit and thus delivers them from the bondage of sin. Christ came at the appointed time to be a perfect sacrifice in their room and stead to deliver them from the condemnation of sin. When time shall be no more Christ shall come and deliver these people he chose from the corruption of sin in the resurrection.

Fourth, God manifests his wisdom in providing for the timely needs of his people. According to 2 Tim. 3:16 the scriptures are a thorough furnisher unto all good works. Every thing we need to worship him in Spirit in truth is found in the scriptures. Every good work whereby we glorify God is found in the scriptures. Answers to all of our problems and trials and circumstances is found in the scriptures. How we should interact with one another as a family unit is found in the scriptures. How the church is governed is found in the scriptures. The organization of the church is found in the scriptures. How we should use the gifts that God has given us is found in the scriptures. Food to satisfy our spiritual hungering is found in the scriptures. Indeed the scriptures are a thorough furnisher and manifest the wisdom of God.

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Seven Things God Cannot Do

Among the attributes and characteristics of God, there are seven things that the scriptures teach us that God cannot do. Because of these seven things the purposes, work, and promises of God are sure. Sometimes you will hear people say that God can do anything. Certainly he can do anything that he purposes or set out to do.

The first thing that God cannot do is lie. Tit. 1:2 "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." Also, Heb. 6:17 "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: 18 That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: 19 Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; 20 Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." We can rejoice in the fact that God cannot lie. This makes the promises of God sure. God cannot promise to do something and then fail to do that which he promised. It simply is impossible for God to lie. Lying is not one of his attributes.

The second thing that God cannot do is change. Mal. 3:6 "For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Also, James 1:17 "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Because God cannot change, we know that he cannot change his nature. He cannot be something other than what he is. He cannot change his mind. He cannot change what he purposes to do. He cannot change his covenant of redemption.

The third thing that God cannot do is deny himself. By definition the word deny means to contradict, i.e. disavow, reject, abnegate:--deny, refuse. 2 Tim. 2:13 "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself." God cannot contradict, disavow, or reject his own character, purpose, or works. God must act based on his sure characteristics and attributes. Also he cannot refute or disavow or reject his stated purposes or works.

The fourth thing that God cannot do is sin. Sin is defined as disobedience to the commandment. Two verses of scripture taken together show us the impossibility of God sinning. First, 1 John 3:9 "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." That seed that remaineth in him is said to be incorruptible as set forth in 1 Peter 1:23 "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." Thus God has an incorruptible nature in which he is totally incapable of sinning.

The fifth thing that God cannot do is be tempted with evil. James 1:13 "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." Regardless of the evil that goes on in the world, Jesus Christ could not be tempted to do any of it. Satan tried to tempt him, the Pharisees tried to tempt him,

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the Sadducees tried to tempt him, the lawyers and scribes tried to tempt him, the Council and local government officials tried to tempt him, but he could not be tempted with evil. It is not in his nature to be tempted with evil.

The sixth and seventh things that God cannot do are stated in Is. 42:4 "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law." God cannot fail. Everything God sets forth to do he will do because he simply cannot fail. It is not in his nature to fail. It is just impossible for him to fail. Furthermore, he cannot be discouraged and give up. No task is so difficult for him that he will become discouraged and give the task up. He will accomplish his will always.

These seven things that God cannot do assure us of the certainty of every promise, purpose and work of God being fulfilled.

The Godhead and the Number 3 (Part 1)

The number three is frequently used in the scriptures in association with the bible subject of the Godhead. As a matter of fact, the word, Godhead, appears in the bible exactly three times:

1. Rom. 1:20, "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..."

2. Acts 17:29, "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."

3. Col. 2:9, "For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily."

The Godhead is described for us in 1 John 5:7, "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." One of the great mysteries of the ages has been how can there be one. While we have great difficulty understanding how three can be one, yet we know it to be true because the scriptures plainly declare it is so. Furthermore, according to the first reference above God has placed the mark of the Godhead on the things that God has made. He has declared unto us that what we can understand of the Godhead can be understood by looking at the things which God has made. Ps. 19:1, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork."

Let us now take a look at natural creation and see if we can see the mark of the Godhead on those things which God has made. First, we live in a universe (uni = one) that can be measured with three parameters, time, space, and matter. Each of these three parameters has three parts. Time is measured in past, present, and future. For instance, in showing the ever present, eternal, unchanging nature of the Lord, he is declared by the scriptures to be the same, "yesterday, today, and forever." Space is three dimensional, height, width, and breadth so that we dwell in a three dimensional universe. Matter exists in three and only three states; solids, liquids, and gases. The building block of matter is

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the atom. All matter is composed of atoms either singularly or in combinations known as molecules. Every atom consists of three subatomic elements known as protons, neutrons, and electrons. These three elements make up for more than 99.9% of all atoms.

In addition we live in a world with a great variety of colors. Yet there are three basic colors from which all other colors are derived: red, blue, and yellow. By combining these three basic colors in various combinations all other colors can be formed.

Several times we read in the scriptures that the life of the creature is in the blood. There are three types of cells in blood: red blood cells, white blood cells, and platelets. These three cells are essential for life. The red blood cells carry oxygen and nutrients to feed the cells of the body. The white blood cells are essential in fighting various viruses, diseases, and foreign materials that invade the body, and platelets are essential to the clotting of blood when there is an injury to the body, thus starting the repair and healing of body wounds.

In man the organ used for hearing, the ear, consists of an inner ear, a middle ear, and an outer ear. The middle ear consists of three bones that pick up sound waves and converts them to vibrations that are translated into sound.

The seed of life both in plants and animals generally consist of three parts: outer covering, food stuff, and germ. Thru this three part seed, life of the plants and animals is reproduced.

According to 1 Thes. 5:23, man consists of three parts: “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

We live in a solar system that revolves around the sun which produces three major rays that are essential for life: the heat ray produces the heat necessary for an environment in which man can life; the light ray produces the light by which we are able to navigate on this planet; and the actinic ray is essential for oxidation thus driving the chemical reactions necessary for life. It is also interesting to note that the planet earth, the one in which God placed life, is the third planet from the sun!

Thus we may conclude that God has placed the mark of the Godhead on the things in nature, which God has made. In our next essay we will examine the mark of the Godhead as it pertains to the types and shadows of the Old Testament.

The Godhead and the Number 3 (Part 2)

“There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one.” This passage from I John 5:7 declares unto us the three and one Godhead. While there are many things about the Godhead I do not understand, the pattern of the Godhead is set forth for us throughout the scriptures, especially in the types and shadows of the Old Testament.

First, the scriptures as a whole consist of sixty six books. The scriptures are divided into the law, the prophets, and the letters. The first 22 books consist of the law and the

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workings of the law. The next 22 books consist of the prophets and fulfillment of the prophets. The last 22 books contain the letters of the apostles.

When God declared he would destroy the earth with a flood, he had Noah build an ark that consisted of lower, second, and third stories. Thus it was one ark with three stories. When God brought the flood waters upon the earth, He opened the windows of heaven, broke up the fountains of the great deep, and caused it to rain for 40 days and nights. Thus the flood waters were from three sources. When Noah sought to find out if the flood waters were abated, he sent forth a dove three times. In type the dove was a figure of the church. She bore three messages. The first message was that she found no rest for the soles of her feet. There was no rest under the old law covenant. Next, she bore the message of peace with an olive leaf plucked off. Thus under the new covenant of worship the gospel is the gospel of peace for God's sin-weary people. Third, the dove left the ark and returned not again. In the morning of the resurrection God's covenant people are leaving this earth to never return again. When man came off the ark, God replenished the earth with the three sons of Noah; Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Next, God made a covenant with Abraham and confirmed it with Isaac, and Jacob. In this covenant God promised to multiply their seed as three innumerable things: dust of the earth, sand of the sea shore; and stars of heaven. In Gal. 3:16 the seed of Abraham is declared to us to be Christ. The multiplied seed is the elect which Rev. Chapter 7 declares to be a great multitude which no man can number of every nation, kindred, people, and tongue.

When Moses and children of Israel crossed the Red Sea they journeyed three days and came to the waters of Marah and they were bitter. God showed Moses a tree which when he cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet.

The tabernacle the children of Israel built by God's pattern consisted of three parts: the outer court, the holy place, and the most holy place. Similarly the temple consisted of three major parts.

We are all familiar with Jonah being swallowed by a great fish and how that he was three days and nights in the great deep until God caused the whale to vomit him up on dry ground. The Lord gave as a sign of his resurrection that as AJonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, then the Son of man would be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Furthermore, the Lord gave the children of Israel three feasts in which the males were to gather and appear in the place which he would establish. These three feasts were: the feast of unleavened bread, the feast of tabernacles, and the feast of weeks.

When God delivered the children of Israel from the great host in the days of Gideon he chose out three hundred men and set them in three companies and by these he set up the destruction of that great host of enemies that were gathered against Israel.

When David numbered the children of Israel and displeased God, God gave David three choices: three years of famine; three months to be destroyed before their enemies;

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three days the sword of the Lord, even the pestilence in the land, and the angel of the Lord destroying throughout all the coasts of Israel. There were three choices and three was associated with each choice. The fact is this was God's judgment and the Godhead was being manifest in this judgment.

In our next essay we will look at the pattern of threes surrounding the death and resurrection of Christ.

The Godhead and the Number 3 (Part 3)

The mark of the Godhead is not only found in the things in nature and in the things that God had constructed (ark, tabernacle, temple) but it is especially manifest in the events surrounding the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Beginning with the time Jesus separated James, Peter, and John to be with him in the garden of Gethsemane we find numerous groupings of three that speaks to us to the fact that God was in control of the events that took place in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus:

1. This was the third time recorded in the scriptures that Jesus had separated these three apostles unto himself. The first time was when he raised the young maiden from the dead. The second time was at the mount of transfiguration and now the third time at the garden.
2. Next Jesus prayed the same prayer three times in the garden.
3. When Jesus was taken to the house of the high priest, Peter denied the Lord three times as Jesus had said that he would.
4. There were three trials of Jesus: at the high priest's house by the Sanhedrin court; before King Herod; and before Pilate the governor.
5. There were three malefactors associated with the crucifixion of Jesus: Barabbas who was let go, and the two thieves who were crucified on either side of Jesus.
6. Jesus was crucified in the midst of three.
7. Pilate had one saying written in three languages (Hebrew, Greek, and Latin) above the head of Jesus on the cross: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.")
8. Jesus was crucified at the third hour of the day.
9. While Jesus hang on the cross for six hours, there were three hours of light followed by three hours of darkness over all the earth.
10. There were three women specifically named Mary who stood at the feet of Jesus as he hang on the cross.
11. Jesus lay in the grave for three days and nights.
12. There were three angels present at the grave of Jesus: the mighty angel who rolled back the stone and sat on the stone and the two angels who appeared at the head and foot of where Jesus had lain in the grave and had said, "Why seek ye the living among the dead, he is not here, he is risen as he said..."

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13. Jesus elicited from Peter an affirmation of his love three times after his resurrection.

In our next essay we will look at the church and the mark of the Godhead associated with the church.

The Godhead and the Number 3 (Part 4)

“For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead...” According to 1 John 5:7, “There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost and these three are one.” Based on the above we see that God has placed the mark of the Godhead (three are one) on the things that God has made.

Jesus said in Matt. 16:18, “Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” The rock Jesus was referring to was the rock of revealed truth of himself. The church is built on three aspects of Jesus:

1. Who he is: Verily God manifest in the flesh; the Son of God; etc.
2. What he did: He saved his people from their sins; he quickens or calls them to eternal life; he changes their mortal body in the resurrection; he intercedes for them; etc.
3. What he says: his word, the scriptures.

In the Old Testament there were three buildings that when completed were made manifest by a cloud filling and surrounding the building, in which it was said, “the glory of the Lord filled the building.” These three buildings were the tabernacle in the wilderness, the temple built in Solomon=s day, and the building of Ezekiel=s vision. Similarly, three times in the book of Acts we read about the baptism of the Holy Ghost. First, on the day of Pentecost the Spirit filled the house where the church was gathered at Jerusalem. Next in the city of Samaria (Acts chapter 8) when the apostles came down and laid their hands on the people they were filled with the Holy Ghost. Finally, at the house of Cornelius when Peter preached unto the Gentiles the Gentiles were baptized with the Holy Ghost (Acts 11:15, 16).

When someone comes seeking entry into the church, they enter thru water baptism. Water baptism signifies three things: the death, the burial, and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. When someone is baptized, he is baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

The worship service of the true church is composed of three parts: singing, prayer, and preaching. Likewise, the communion service as laid down for us in the scriptures consists of three parts:

1. Eating the unleavened bread which signifies the pure, perfect, sinless body of Christ.
2. Drinking the wine which signifies the blood of Christ which he shed to redeem us from our sins.

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3. Washing the disciples feet which signify the humility required to serve one another and thus serve the Lord.

In our worship service we are told to sing and make melody in our hearts unto the Lord. Singing consists of three parts: melody, harmony and rhythm. Similarly when we pray, we pray with the unction and leadership of the Holy Spirit; we pray in the name or authority of Jesus Christ, who intercedes for us; and we pray unto the Father.

In conclusion, the Lord's church which the Lord has built bears the image or mark of the Godhead, thus identifying her maker and identifying her authenticity. May God be glorified by her throughout all ages!

The Justice of God

"He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he." As in all of his attributes and characteristics God is perfectly just. God has never acted or done anything that is unjust. His justice is just! According to Gen. 18:25 God is the "judge of all the earth." Isaiah declares in Isa. 33:22, "For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us."

God as the "judge of all the earth" and the only Creator of all things certainly has the right to establish and set forth any law that pleases him. David said in Psms. 19:7 that "The law of the Lord is perfect..." All laws that God sets forth are perfect as is everything that God does.

In the beginning when God had created all things in this natural universe, he placed Adam in the garden of Eden and gave him one commandment, "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 thou shalt surely die." Adam was free to eat of every tree of the garden but one. God certainly had the right to place this restriction on Adam, because He created all things and all things belong to him. The penalty for breaking the law was death. The marginal reading for "die" is "dying thou shalt die." This indicates an immediate death followed by another future death. Once this law went forth from the mouth of God and because God is Just, the sentence absolutely had to be carried forth, as God uttered it. As soon as Adam transgressed, he died in trespasses and sin, that is, his innocent nature changed into a totally depraved state absent any fellowship with God and separated from all godliness. Furthermore, the motions of sin in his mortal body began the process of bringing the mortal body back to the dust of death. In addition, when Adam transgressed, he brought himself under the eternal wrathful judgment of God known as the second death.

According to Rom. 5:12, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sins; and so death passed upon all men for that all have sinned." This teaches us that Adam was the representative of all his posterity and that the consequences of what he did passed upon all men. It also teaches us that the sin nature is hereditary. It passes from father to child. Please note that by one man sin entered into the world. Eve was the first

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to sin and she fell, but sin did not pass from Eve to the children, it passed from Adam to the children.

As the judge of all the earth God gives us his laws. Sin is defined in 1 John 3:4 "for sin is the transgression of the law." No sin is ever committed, but that God knows it as Heb. 4:12, 13 teaches us: "... God discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart...all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." Prov. 24:9 says "The thought of foolishness is sin." Further David said in Ps. 139:2, "thou understandest my thought afar off." God knows our thoughts even before we think them and the thought of foolishness is sin the eyes of God. Thus the idea that someone can hide their sins from God is foolish indeed. Some people think that because they see no immediate consequences to their sins that they have therefore "gotten away with sin." This is faulty thinking as we read in Heb. 2:2 "every transgression and disobedience receives a just recompense of reward." Remember God is just and there is no such thing as anyone getting away with any sin that they have ever committed. All sin is brought before the judgment seat of God. Every sin bears the same penalty as stated in Rom. 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death..." Since we have all died in Adam and because we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God, we were all under the same judgment of condemnation before God.

We like to think upon the mercy and grace of God. However, God does not lay aside his justice in order to show mercy and grace. His justice must be executed because He is perfectly just. Since all of us have sinned and come under the condemnatory judgment of God, how can we escape the wrathful execution of that judgment? This we will show but first consider Ps.85:10, "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Mercy and truth would seem to be opposing principles. Likewise righteousness and peace with God for a sinner would at first appear to be impossible. However, God has made a way.

Throughout the Old Testament God has illustrated the principle of substitution through animal sacrifices. The idea was that ceremoniously the sins of the people would be laid upon the sacrifice. However, Heb. 10:3, 4 teaches us, "But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." While this teaches us that only a human can be a substitute sacrifice for another human, those sacrifices also taught us of the requirement of perfection. Not just any sacrifice was suitable, but it had to be without spot or blemish. God would/will accept only perfection. Thus I could not be a substitute for you, nor you for me.

For someone to be a substitute in God's execution of justice he had to be perfect (without sin). Furthermore, he could not even possess the sin nature of fallen man. When Jesus was born of the virgin he was born without sin. He was declared to be that Holy thing and In Matt. Jesus said "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, but I have come to fulfill it. One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled.

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According to Heb. 7:26, Jesus was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." Thus Jesus was qualified to be the substitute atoning sacrifice for His people. God made Jesus to be sin for us on the cross in order to satisfy his divine justice. According to II Cor. 5:21, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." In the three hours of darkness God meted out on Jesus all that His divine justice required because of all our sins. His justice was perfectly executed and satisfied and it was here at the cross that mercy and truth met together and righteousness and peace kissed each other.

I Tim. 5:24 summarizes and illustrates God's justice, "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment, and some men they follow after." For those for whom Christ died their sins went before to judgment (at the cross). For those who are not redeemed, their sins follow after and judgment will be according to their works and they will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11-15). Thus, every sin is brought to judgment for God is Just.

The Sovereignty of God

Sovereign is defined as: 1. Above or superior to all others; chief; greatest; supreme. 2. Supreme in power, rank, or authority. 3. Of or holding the position of ruler; royal; reigning. 4. Independent of all others. That God meets the definition of sovereign in the first 3 above

is readily apparent. However, many people have difficulty in either understanding or accepting that God is "independent of all others." Many people think of God as being a servant to them. They think he can only do those things they allow him to do. That he is to be there at

their beck and call, whenever, they need him and he is there to verify their decisions.

The Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar learned a hard lesson in God's sovereignty and after the ordeal said, "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can

stay his hand or say unto him, What doest thou?" God is independent of all others and does as He pleases, not as man pleases. God does not consult man in any of his decisions nor does he ask for man's approval in any thing he does. There are numerous examples of God's sovereignty

that are set forth for us in the scriptures.

First, God's sovereignty is illustrated in those he chose to be his servants:

1. Abraham - he was practicing idolatry at the time God chose him and called him.

2. Moses - he had murdered an Egyptian and was a fugitive from the household of Pharaoh when God appeared to him on the backside of the desert.

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3. David - Jesse brought seven of his sons to the feast Samuel had called of which he thought one would be anointed to be the next king of Israel. However, the youngest he left behind to feed and care for the flocks. At seeing the oldest son of Jesse, Samuel said, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before him." God rejected all seven and chose David the youngest son of Jesse.

4. The twelve apostles - Jesus said "you have not chosen me, but I have chosen you."

5. Jeremiah - God said to Jeremiah in Jere. 1:5, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.

6. Saul of Tarsus - The apostles had chosen Matthias to be the one to replace Judas. Matthias was considered by the apostles to be a good man and they chose him. In contrast, the one whom God chose was busy trying to destroy the church of God, persecuting any that called on the name of Jesus, "breathing out threatenings and slaughter" towards any that called on his name.

7. Gospel ministers - In this gospel age God chooses, calls and sends those he chooses not whom man chooses, to preach the gospel (Rom. 10:15; Lk. 10:1, 2).

Second, God's choice of Israel to be the nation to which he established the old covenant illustrates his sovereignty as we read in Deut. 7:7, "The Lord did not set his love upon you nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people."

Third, God is sovereign in those he chooses to be his people as we read in Rom. 9:6-13, "Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel which are of Israel: Neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children: but in Isaac shall thy

seed be called. That is, They which are children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of promise are counted for the seed. For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son. And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her the elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Now some would say that God is unrighteous to exercise his sovereignty in choosing a people and this is addressed in Rom. 9: 14-16, "What shall we say then?

Is their unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

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Fourth, God is sovereign in the work of the new birth. John 3:8 teaches us, "The wind bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Thus, as the wind is independent of man in its direction, course, origin, and destination, so God is independent of man in causing us to be born again. Gal. 4:28 reads, "Now we brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. Isaac's birth was by promise from God. It was by God's will and not man's will. It was at God's appointed time. It was contrary to nature. Likewise, our spiritual birth is by covenant promise from God. It is by God's will and not man's will. It is at God's appointed time and it is contrary to nature (Eph. 2:1).

Fifth, God makes known the mystery of his word to whom he chooses. Matt. 11:25, 26 reads, "At this time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight."

Sixth, God dispenses spiritual gifts as it pleases him and not man. I Cor. 12:11, "But all these worketh that one and the self same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." Whatever spiritual gifts we possess is because God in his sovereignty gave them to us.

Seventh, God directs the field of labor for His ministers. This lesson is illustrated in Acts 16:6-9, "Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us." Also we read in Acts 20:28, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves and all the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood."

Finally, we should recognize God's sovereignty in the affairs of our life as James taught us in James 4:13-15, "Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that." We are dependent on him, but He is not dependent on us. God is sovereign.

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Profitability of the Scriptures

Benefits of the Word

Sometimes God's people question the benefit of studying the scriptures. As they view themselves as having busy lives and many responsibilities laid upon them, to what purpose should they set the reading and studying of the scriptures as a priority?

There are many blessings to the reading and study of God's word. First, the Lord told some unbelieving Jews to "search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life and they are they which testify of me." Thus the scriptures (old and new testament) are a continual testimony of Jesus. What child of God should not have a great interest in learning more about the one who saved him and gave him eternal life?

Second, the scriptures are spiritual food to the inner man. The Lord told Peter to "feed my lambs, feed my sheep, feed my sheep." Paul told the elders at Ephesus to "take heed unto thyself and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Peter admonished the elders to "feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof..." Job said, "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food." Thus our souls are fed spiritually by the word of God.

Third, the scriptures are according to Ps. 119:105, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." The scriptures not only illuminate the way we are presently living our lives, but guide us in the way we should live our lives. The Lord said, "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken unto a wise man who built his house upon a rock..." By reading and studying the scriptures and taking heed there unto we build our lives on a sure foundation that will secure us against the storms and trials of life.

Fourth, according to II Tim. 3:16, 17, the scriptures are a "thorough furnisher unto all good works." According to Eph. 2:10 God has created us in Christ Jesus unto good works, which he hath afore ordained that we should walk in them. Since we have been created unto good works, how will we know how to perform the good works without obtaining a good knowledge of the scriptures? We are told to "study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

Fifth, knowledge of the scriptures helps us in our warfare against sin. David said, "Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee." When Satan tempted the Lord three times in the wilderness the Lord responded each time with, "It is written..." In admonishing us to put on the whole armor of God, Paul told us to have our loins girt about with truth. Thus if we are to stand strong in our battle against sin, we need knowledge of God's word.

Sixth, knowledge of God's word brings us peace, comfort, rest, and hope. The gospel ministry preaches the gospel of peace thus giving peace to our war-torn soul as we learn that Jesus has reconciled us to God by his sacrificial atonement on our behalf. Thru

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knowledge of God's word we have rest from the burdensome toil of trying to get right with God when we learn that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness." The gospel of the grace of God comforts the children of God and gives us hope as we learn of God's sure promises in the covenant of redemption.

Seventh, the word of God sets us free. It sets us free from false worship, false works, false beliefs, and from the bondage of false teachers and false religious systems.

These are just a few of the blessings of reading and studying God's word.

Comfort

Is. 40:1 "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. 2 Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins."

Matt. 5:4 "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."

The above verses speak to us of the comfort that we derive from the gospel. The prophecy in Isaiah is of this gospel age and the need to comfort the Lord's people. The Lord's people who have been born of the Spirit of God have a warfare that they are engaged in. They are mourning over their sinful condition and trying to do war against their sins. They are trying to establish their own righteousness either through the deeds of the law or through their good works. The problem is neither their good deeds nor the deeds of the law can make them right with God. This war often rages in the heart and mind of God's people.

The comfort of the gospel to God's people is that the warfare is accomplished and their iniquity is pardoned. The war is over and there is no need to continue to fight this war. When Jesus died on the cross, he died to redeem us from our sins and to make us righteous before God: 2 Cor. 5:21, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." The false gospel teaches that Jesus died to make righteousness available to the masses and if you just keep fighting you may be able to attain to righteousness. The true gospel, however, teaches that the warfare of trying to establish ones righteousness is over and complete and we can rest from this warfare. The finished covenant work of Jesus Christ has established what we tried through our efforts to establish but were not able to establish.

Having mourned over our sins, we are now comforted to know that Jesus has redeemed us from our sins. We no longer feel the need to do something to get right with God. Now, instead of mourning over our sins, we rejoice in the finished work of Jesus Christ and what he has done for us.

In addition to the knowledge that our warfare is accomplished and that iniquity is pardoned, the gospel brings comfort to us concerning our trials and tribulations of life. This principle is set forth in 2 Cor. 1:3-7: Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the

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comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation."

The felt presence of the Lord in all of our trials and tribulations and the ability to see the working of His mighty hand of deliverance is a great comfort when we are often cast down and thinking our trials and tribulations are too great for us. The gospel tells us of God's working in our daily lives and encourages us to look for his deliverances and to cast our care upon him for he cares for us.

Furthermore, the true gospel brings knowledge to us that is a great comfort when we mourn the passing of a loved one: 1 Thes. 4:13 "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

The hope we have in the covenant promise of God of the resurrection of the dead eases our sorrow when we lose a loved one and encourages us as to their final destination.

Edify the Church

Edify comes from the Greek word oikodomeo and means: oikodome, oy-kod-om-ay'; fem. (abstr.) of a comp. of G3624 and the base of G1430; architecture, i.e. (concr.) a structure; fig. confirmation:--building, edify (-ication, -ing). Literally, edify means to build up.

There are several verses that show us that the gospel edifies or builds up the individual members of the congregation in the faith:

1. 2 Cor 12:19 "Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ: but we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying."
2. Eph 4:29 "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."
3. 1 Tim 1:4 "Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do."
4. Rom 15:2 "Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification."

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5. 1 Cor 14:3 "But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort."

6. 2 Cor 10:8 "For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed:"

7. 2 Cor 13:10 "Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction."

The gospel builds up the individual in the most holy faith and builds up their spiritual lives in the service of God. Yet, there is additional edification through the preaching of the gospel. This edification is the building up of the church as the body of Christ. The church consists of several individual members compacted together as the body of Christ. While the building up of each individual member is good for the church, yet the church itself is built up as a functioning body as well that includes the interaction and gifts of all the members working in harmony:

1. 1 Cor 14:5 "I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying."

2. 1 Cor 14:12 "Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church."

3. 1 Cor 14:26 "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."

4. Eph 4:12 "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:"

5. Eph 4:16 "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."

6. Eph 4:29 KJV) 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."

The gospel promotes the building up of each of the members of the church in the most holy faith and at the same time promotes the unity and use of the gifts of the church and the actions of the church as a body that the body itself may be built up in its worship and service to God and its ministry to the Lord's people.

Feed God's People

The following verses of scripture tell us of the need that God's people be fed spiritual food:

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1. John 21:15 "So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. 16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. 17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep."

2. Acts 20:28 "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."

3. 1 Pet. 5:1 "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: 2 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; 3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock."

The spiritual food that God's people are to be fed is the word of God: 1 Pet. 2:2, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."

This spiritual food not only promotes spiritual growth, but satisfies the spiritual hunger of someone who is born of the Spirit of God: Matt. 5:6, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

The preaching of the word satisfies the needs of the lambs, the growing sheep, and the mature sheep: Heb. 5:11 "Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. 12 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. 13 For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. 14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

The pattern in which God's people are fed through the preaching of the gospel is illustrated in a natural miracle that the Lord performed when he fed a multitude of people:

Matt. 14:15 "And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals. 16 But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat. 17 And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes. 18 He said, Bring them hither to me. 19 And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. 20 And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that

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remained twelve baskets full. 21 And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children."

Just as in the miracle of the loaves and fishes, the Lord must take the meditations and thoughts of his gospel ministers and bless them and break them (to their understanding) and this is preached by the gospel messengers to the waiting congregation who eat of the spiritual food to the fill and then pick up the fragments and eat of that spiritual food during the coming week.

Give Knowledge of Salvation

As we shall see the gospel gives knowledge of salvation to God's people. It does not, however, give knowledge of salvation to those who have not been born of the Spirit:

1. John 8:43 "Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. 44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. 45 And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. 46 Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? 47 He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." A person that is not of God cannot hear God's words. To such a person the gospel has no meaning.

2. 1 Cor. 2:12 "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. 13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." A man must be born of the Spirit in order to know the things that are freely given to him of God. The natural man (one not born of the Spirit) receives not the things of the Spirit of God, nor can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned. The natural man cannot, therefore, receive the gospel which is of the Spirit of God.

In contrast, to those born of the Spirit, the following verses show that the gospel brings knowledge of salvation to their hearts and minds and causes them to rejoice in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ:

1. Luke 1:76 "And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; 77 To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins." It is to the Lord's people who have been born of the Spirit that the gospel gives knowledge of salvation by the remission of their sins.

2. Rom. 10:1 "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. 2 For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about

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to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Without the true gospel, God's people in ignorance go about trying to establish their own righteousness through the works of the law or through some man devised works system which can never make them righteous before God. The gospel causes God's people to understand that Jesus has already made them righteous through his covenant work of redeeming them from their sins.

3. 2 Tim. 1:8 "Be not thou 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; 9 Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, 10 But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." Notice that the gospel brings life and immortality to light. The gospel does not give life and immortality, but shines a light on what Christ has done for us in giving us life and immortality.

The gospel, however, does not cause us to know the Lord, but the Lord himself causes us to know him:

1. Heb. 8:10 "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: 11 And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. 12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." We do not teach our neighbor and our brother to know the Lord. The Lord himself teaches us to know him.

2. Matt. 16:13 "When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? 14 And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. 15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. 17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." The Lord told Peter that he was blessed because the Father had revealed to him the Lord. The Father reveals the Lord to our souls in the New Birth.

In summary, the gospel is directed only to born again children of God and gives knowledge to them of their salvation through the finished work of Jesus Christ. The gospel does not, however, cause us to know the Lord, but God himself reveals this to our soul.

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Gospel Call to Repentance and Service

Matt. 3:1 "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, 2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." John the Baptist first preached the gospel of repentance. He called on the children of Israel to repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. That which he called on them to repent from was the pollutions of the doctrines of men and from unrighteous living. Shortly thereafter, the Lord Jesus Christ came and preached in Matt. 4:17 "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." All the types and shadows under the law service and all the prophecies concerning Jesus Christ were about to be fulfilled and it was time for the children of Israel to turn from the worship of God under the law service to worshipping God in the kingdom of heaven which was at hand. This was a great change in the manner of worship.

The gospel has many purposes including saving God's people from ignorance and from an untoward generation and from the many pitfalls of life including false worship. We will cover the utility of the gospel later, but now we will focus our attention upon the use of the gospel to call God's people to repentance and service.

First, the gospel is directed to God's people. Mark 16:15 "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." The creature is the spirit born children of God. Eph. 2:10 "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." In addition, we read in 2 Cor. 5:17 "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Furthermore, Gal. 6:15 says, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." From these verses of scripture we conclude that the new creature is the born again child of God. The gospel is directed to born again children of God. They are the only ones who have spiritual ears and spiritual hearts by which they can receive the Spirit directed gospel. This is in harmony with the fact that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them for they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14). Therefore, only the spiritually born children of God can receive the gospel and respond to the call of the gospel.

Second, the gospel message calls upon God's people to repent:

1. Mk. 6:12 "And they went out, and preached that men should repent."
2. 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."

Among the things that God's people are called on to repent from are these:

1. Self righteousness: Rom. 10:3 "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."

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2. Ungodly living: Matt. 3:7 "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance."

3. Selfish priorities: Matt. 6:33 "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Next, the gospel calls God's people to serve the Lord. The Lord said in Matt. 11:28 "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Paul taught in Rom. 12:1 "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.

2 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." When we come to the knowledge of the truth about salvation by grace and all that the Lord has done for us, then we have an inward conviction that because of God's love toward us that we should serve him. The gospel teaches us that we ought to serve the Lord in his kingdom here on earth. Much of the new testament teaches us about our service towards God and how we ought to live our lives to God's honor and glory.

Additionally, the gospel calls us unto the fellowship of God: 1 Cor. 1:9 "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." Amos 3:3 asks the question, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" The answer is obviously no, two cannot walk together unless they are agreed. To have fellowship with God we must do as we are taught in 1 John 1:3 "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. 4 And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. 5 This then is the message, which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Fellowship with God comes with living our lives according to the word of God. The gospel calls us to have fellowship with God.

Furthermore, the gospel calls us into the knowledge of the grace of Christ: Gal. 1:6 "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel." The gospel calls us to understand that salvation from sin is by the grace of God through the atoning blood of Christ and is according to God's eternal covenant of redemption, which he made before the world began.

Finally, men that God has called to preach the gospel make this gospel call: Rom. 10:14 "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a

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preacher? 15 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!"

Guidance for our lives

Ps. 119:105 "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." This Old Testament passage tells us that the word of God is like a lamp unto our feet, showing us where we stand, and like a light unto our path, showing us the way to go with our lives. As children of God we need direction in our lives. The preaching and teaching of the gospel gives us this direction.

The Lord told us in Matt. 7:13, 14 "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." When we enter the strait or restricted gate of our lives by obeying the word of God and walk the narrow way of discipleship we find the abundant life in the kingdom of God. Otherwise, our lives will be filled with destruction and misery.

The Lord also taught in Matt. 7:24-27 "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." This teaches us that we are to build our lives on the teaching and doing of God's word. We receive much of that teaching through the preaching of the word of God.

The scriptures teach us that the scriptures are a perfect guide to our worship of God: John 4:23, 24 "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." Thus, through the preaching and teaching of God's word, we are taught the correct way to worship God.

The scriptures warn us about the destructive ways of this world and how that we should avoid the pitfalls of life: Acts 2:40 "And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation." The scriptures warn us against drunkenness, fornication, adulteries, and all kinds of carnal vices.

The scriptures teach us about how we are to conduct ourselves in our families. They teach that husbands should love their wives as Christ loved the church. They teach that wives should reverence their husbands. They teach that fathers should bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. They teach that mothers should guide the household. They teach that children should honor their fathers and mothers by obeying them.

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The scriptures also teach us the proper behavior for a disciple of the Lord. They teach us about forgiveness, kindness, upright living, etc. The scriptures teach us about how we should conduct ourselves among others, both within the church and outside the church.

The scriptures teach about how masters should treat their servants and how servants should honor their masters.

There are scriptures to guide us in all of our activities of life.

Peace in the Heart

Peace is a very important subject taught in the scriptures. Paul began each epistle he wrote except for the book of Hebrews with the mention of peace such as we find in 1 Cor. 1:3, "Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ."

The word, "peace," is translated from the Greek word, "eirene," meaning a cessation of war or fighting, quietness. The subject of peace must be rightly divided. First, there is a peace that exists between God and his covenant children that was brought about by the covenant work of Jesus Christ: Col. 1:20, "And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. This judicial peace that exists between God and his children was brought about by the sacrificial atonement of Christ on behalf of the elect. This peace is not dependant on what the children do, but was only conditioned on the blood of Christ. This peace is an eternal judicial peace that cannot be broken.

Second, Christ sacrificial atonement completed the old law service and brought about a peace in worship between the Jews and the Gentiles. Eph. 2:11-14, "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace." The prescribed manner of true worship for both the Jews and the Gentiles is now the same because of the atoning sacrifice of Christ.

Third, the preaching of the gospel brings peace to the hearts of God's sin troubled children. Once a person has been born of the Spirit of God, he begins to be convicted in the courtroom of his heart and mind that he is a sinner and stands condemned before a just and holy God. In our minds, we believe that God is at war against us and that we must do something to get right with God. However, this warfare continues regardless of what we do to try to get right with God. This warfare ceases when we hear and believe the true gospel of the grace of Christ. When we by faith believe the covenant promise that Jesus

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died for our sins and that his atonement set us right with God, then we have peace in the courtroom of our heart and mind:

1. Rom. 5:1, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

2. Rom. 10:15, "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!"

3. Rom. 15:13, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."

This peace is peace that passeth all understanding.

Perfecting of the Saints

In the fourth chapter of the book of Ephesians, the Lord gave the gifts of the gospel ministry. These gifts were given for three purposes. Eph. 4:11 tells us, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." One of the things the gospel preachers were given for was for the "perfecting of the saints." Notice the gifts were not given for the making of saints, but rather God is the maker of saints and the gospel preached by the gospel ministers is to perfect that which God has already made.

The word, perfect, has more than one meaning. It can mean "without spot or blemish as in being perfect without flaw. Only God can make us perfect without flaw. This is not the work of the gospel ministry. Another meaning of the word, perfect, is to be mature. This is the meaning in the phrase, "perfecting of the saints." The gospel is preached to perfect or mature the saints.

In addition, the purpose of the scriptures we are told in 2 Tim. 3:16, 17: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." The scriptures are given to mature the "man of God" so that he will be thoroughly furnished unto all good works. The "man of God" is the born again child of God. The scriptures, when properly applied bring the child of God unto a perfection or maturity in worship and service towards God and his people.

We, as children of God, need maturing in several ways:

1. Matt. 19:21 "Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me." We need maturing in our love towards our neighbor and in our love towards God.

2. Luke 8:14 "And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. 15 But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest

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and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience." We need maturing in our fruit bearing to the honor and glory of God.

3. 2 Cor. 7:1 "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." We need maturing in living Godly or holy lives before God.

4. Col. 4:12 "Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." We need maturing in our service towards God.

5. 1 Thes. 3:9 "For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God; 10 Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?" Our faith needs maturing in our service towards God.

6. Rev. 3:1 "And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. 2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God." We need maturing in our works as the Lord's servants that we may do that which is right and pleasing in His sight.

7. Heb. 6:1 "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, 2 Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. 3 And this will we do, if God permit." We need to mature beyond just a basic understanding of the fundamental principles and go on to a maturity in a godly and holy living before God and man.

The gospel teaches us and brings us to such perfection as stated above.

Providential Salvation

In previous essays, we have studied our eternal salvation from sin including salvation from sin's condemnation, salvation from sin's bondage, and salvation from sin's corruption and noted that God has sovereignly saved us by his grace. Then we proceeded to study many of the timely deliverance that come to God's elect including salvation from ignorance, salvation from a condemning heart, salvation from death of fellowship, and salvation from an untoward generation! We learned the importance of the faith and good works of God's elect in effecting these timely deliverance.

In this essay, we take an overview look at four providential deliverance (salvation) presented to us in the scriptures. God in his providence works in the daily lives of his children. Sometimes he delivers us from circumstances either to save our lives or to deliver our lives from what we would consider to be adverse circumstances. I invite the reader to

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consider the faith and works of God's obedient people that is demonstrated during these scriptural episodes.

The first episode we will look at is found in Matt. 8:23-27, "And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And he said unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then, he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. But, the men marveled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!"

The second episode is Matt. 14:25-31, "And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

The third episode we present is Luke 18:35-43, "And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging: and hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. And he cried, saying, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me. And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried so much the more, Thou son of David, have mercy on me: and Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him: and when he was come near, he asked him, saying, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee. And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God: and all the people when they saw it, gave praise unto God."

The fourth episode is found in Heb. 11:7, "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."

While I only chose four episodes the old and New Testament are full of such episodes of God delivering his people with such timely deliverance. I marvel when I hear some people say they don't believe in timely salvation. Are they reading the same bible I am reading? The

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fact is God is not only the God who has wrought our eternal salvation from sin, but he is the God who is with us in the midst of our lives and in the circumstances of our lives. He is not a God afar off, but one who is near. He has told us to cast our care upon him for he careth for us. If we would stop to consider God's providential mercy and grace upon each of us then we are drawn to the conclusion that we have been saved many times from many adverse circumstances and trials and tribulations in our lives. Furthermore, when we read of such deliverance in the scripture and consider our experiences of life and God's dealings with us in providence, then it encourages us to "lift up our eyes unto the hills from whence cometh our help" when we come face to face with future trials and trying circumstances.

Rest

God set forth the principle of rest for us in the book of Genesis. God created the heavens and the earth in six days and he rested on the seventh. He set the pattern for us. He commanded that we should work for six days and rest on the seventh. God did not rest until the work was completed. He completed the work in six days and then he rested. Likewise, we should do our work first and then rest.

Likewise, we read in Hebrews chapter 1:1 "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, 2 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; 3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Here, again, the Son of God performed a work, purged our sins, and then sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. Christ would not have sat down if the work was not completed. The work of purging our sins was completed on the cross and then Jesus sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

If our sins are not purged until we do something, then the work is not finished. If the work was not finished, I say again, Jesus would not have sat down! Many of God's people, however, do not have this knowledge and are going about trying to do something in order that their sins might be purged.

Jesus said in Matt. 11:28 "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Notice that the command of the Lord is to a people that are laboring and at the same time are heavy laden. It is apparent the Lord is not speaking of someone laboring on their job, but this is a much greater labor with a much greater burden. This has reference to a person who is laboring trying to get right with God and who is burdened with a heavy burden of sin-guiltiness. When we labor trying to get right with God and know ourselves to be vile unrighteous sinners in God's sight, then we have a very heavy load to bear. While we try to clean up our life, yet we still have a conscious condemning us of sin.

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All that we may try to do under the law or under the works systems of men cannot make us right with God nor give us a conscience void of offense.

Under these circumstances, there is no rest for us for we cannot complete our task of getting right with God. Furthermore, the burden of sin-guiltiness just keeps getting greater every day.

Jesus said to come unto him and he would give us rest. The rest we find in Jesus is the truth of the gospel that Jesus has made us righteous before God: 2 Cor. 5:21, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." In Heb. 10:14 we read, "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." With this gospel knowledge, we can cease our efforts of trying to get right with God, and have a conscience void of offense, because Jesus has saved us from our sins. Thus, we can rest in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, by heeding the gospel call to service, we yoke up with the Lord in service to Him and he bears the greater burden of our service. We then rest when a task of service is completed in the approval of our Master who says to us, "Well done thou good and faithful servant...enter into the joy of thy Lord."

Spiritual Growth

The bible plainly tells us that as children of God that we are to grow in grace, knowledge, faith, love, and fruitfulness of the works God has given us to do:

1. 2 Pet. 3:18 "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."

2. 2 Th. 1:3 "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;"

3. Luke 17:5 "And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith."

4. 2 Cor. 9:10 "Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness."

5. Eph. 4:16 "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."

6. 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."

7. 1 Th. 3:12 "And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:"

8. 1 Th. 4:10 "And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more."

The gospel promotes and encourages spiritual growth in God's people:

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1. Eph. 4:15 "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:"

2. 1 Pet. 2:2 "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:"

From the standpoint of the new believer, as newborn babes, we are to desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby. The milk of the word promotes and encourages spiritual growth in us.

From the standpoint of the gospel preacher, speaking the truth in love promotes spiritual growth in God's children, such growth as gives praise, honor, and glory to God in the lives of his people.

The scriptures teach us that we are created to do good works: Eph. 2:10, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Further, the scriptures teach us that our good works or good fruits glorify God:

1. John 15:8 "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."

2. Mat. 5:16 "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

May God help us to grow spiritually through the preaching and teaching of the word of God.

Testify of Christ

This purpose of the gospel should be self-evident to just about any bible student. The Lord said to some unbelieving Jews in John 5:39 "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." While many people think they have eternal life in the keeping of the scriptures, the Lord corrected this concept when he said that the scriptures are a testimony of him. Of course, the scriptures the Lord was referring to at the time were the Old Testament scriptures for the New Testament had not been penned at the time.

Since the scriptures are a continual testimony of Jesus and we are told to preach the word, then reason tells us that we are to testify of Jesus. It should be the desire of every spirit born child of God to know more about their savior. Also, to know about Him who is their Prophet, Priest, and King.

We do not teach people to know the Lord! Heb. 8:11 "And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest." The Lord's born again children know the Lord through the miracle of the new birth. Once they are born of God, they have the nature inwardly of God. They have eternal life, and they have the laws of love written in their heart, and they have received the spirit, whereby they cry "Abba Father." The Lord asked Peter who He, (the Lord) was and we read the answer in Matt. 16:15 "He saith unto them,

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But whom say ye that I am? 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. 17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” Flesh and blood did not reveal Christ to Peter, but the Father in heaven revealed him to Peter.

While we do not teach every man his neighbor and every man his brother, sayintg, “Know the Lord” we do teach about the Lord. The scriptures are a testimony about the Lord.

There are many things that we teach about the Lord:

1. We teach about the attributes of the Lord our God.
2. We teach about Him as our Creator.
3. We teach about Him as our Savior.
4. We teach about Him as our King.
5. We teach about Him as our High Priest.
6. We teach about Him as the executor of the Covenant of Redemption.
7. We teach about Him as our timely deliverer in the adverse circumstance of life.
8. We teach about Him as our Guide or Leader in life.
9. We teach about Him as our hope of eternal life.
10. We teach about Him as the Husband of his birde, the Church.
11. We teach about Him as the Lamb of God.
12. We teach about Him as the Federal Head of the elect family of God.
13. We teach about Him as the giver of Spiritual gifts.
14. We teach about Him as the Builder and Head of the Church.
15. Etc., Etc., Etc.

Every child of God in the Church has a Ministry

Eph. 4:11 “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:”

1248. diakonia, dee-ak-on-ee'-ah; from G1249; attendance (as a servant, etc.); fig. (eleemosynary) aid, (official) service (espec. of the Chr. teacher, or techn. of the diaconate):--(ad-) minister (-ing, -tration, -try), office, relief, service (-ing).

1247. diakoneo, dee-ak-on-eh'-o; from G1249; to be an attendant, i.e. wait upon (menially or as a host, friend or [fig.] teacher); techn. to act as a Chr. deacon:--(ad-) minister (unto), serve, use the office of a deacon.

Eph. 4:11, 12 tells us that one of the purposes that the Lord gave the gospel ministry is for the work of the ministry. That is the gospel ministry was given to instruct each member of the church in their individual ministry. Each member of the body of Christ has a ministry. While only a few of the church members are ever called to preach the gospel,

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yet every member of the congregation is given of the Lord, spiritual gifts and an individual ministry.

We are all familiar with the gospel ministry. Young preachers much be instructed in what and how they are to preach to the Lord's people and how to minister the word of God. Paul told Timothy: 2 Tim. 2:2 "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." The biblical pattern for training young gospel ministers is for an experienced elder to serve as a father to a young preacher to train the younger in the gospel and the church and the ministry. Paul served as a father in the ministry to Timothy, Silas, and Titus and perhaps to many other young preachers. Moreover, the pastor is to teach the young ministers and the church about the duties and qualifications of the men who are to occupy the office of elder and to teach them about the responsibilities of that office.

Acts chapter 6 sets forth for us the establishment of the office of deacon. Deacon comes from the Greek word "diakoneo" which means to minister unto or to serve. Thus, the deacon is a minister. We learn in Acts chapter 6 that the deacon is to serve the table of the needy, to serve the table of the gospel ministers so that they can spend their time ministering the word, and to serve the table of the needs of the local church. Again, the gospel ministers are to teach the deacons their duties and the requirements of the office as well as to teach them and the church the qualifications of those who serve in the office of the deacon.

Additionally, each member of the church has a ministry. All the members are given spiritual gifts, some of which are outlined for us in Rom. 12:6 "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; 7 Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; 8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness. 9 Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. 10 Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; 11 Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; 12 Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; 13 Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality." Also, we read of spiritual gifts in 1 Cor. 12:4 "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. 6 And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. 7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. 8 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; 9 To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; 10 To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: 11 But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."

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Some examples of the ministry of individuals are set forth for us in the following passages of scripture:

1. Acts 9:36 “Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did. 37 And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber. 38 And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them. 39 Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them.”

2. Rom. 16:1 “I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: 2 That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also. 3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: 4 Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. 5 Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my wellbeloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ. 6 Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us.” In this passage Phebe, Priscilla, Aquila, and Mary are specifically mentioned as having a work to do in serving the Lord.

3. 2 Cor. 9:1 “For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you: 2 For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many.”

4. 1 Cor. 15:15 “I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,)”

5. 2 Cor. 9:12 “For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; 13 Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men; 14 And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you. 15 Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.”

6. Rev. 2:19 “I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.”

7. Acts 11:29 “Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea:”

Seeing as how each member of the congregation has a ministry, it is the duty of the gospel minister to preach and teach the members as to how to perform their ministry and encourage them in that ministry.

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Depravity

Adam - Federal Head of All Mankind

There is a biblical doctrine referred to as the "doctrine of federal headship." This doctrine teaches that when Adam was in the garden of Eden and was given the "covenant of the law of sin and death" that he represented not just himself in that covenant, but stood as the covenant representative of all mankind. Thus the effects of breaking that covenant applied not just to him, but also to all that he represented.

The covenant of the law of sin and death is stated in Genesis 2:16, 17 as follows: "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 thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

The "doctrine of federal headship" is alluded to in 1 Corinthians 15:22, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." From this, of course, we gather that all that were in Adam, die. Just as we gather that all that are in Christ are made alive. The most comprehensive teaching on the "doctrine of federal headship" is found in Romans 5:12-19.

Romans 5:12 reads, "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." Paul wrote this nearly two thousand years ago, long before any of us existed except in the mind and purpose of God. Thus none of us alive today had ever personally sinned when Paul wrote this epistle. Yet Paul affirms that death passed upon all mankind for that all mankind had sinned. Since we had not personally sinned, then how had we sinned? The answer is "we sinned in Adam" as we were seminally in Adam and Adam was our representative before God. Thus when the sentence of death passed upon Adam as a result of his sin, that same sentence of death passed upon us.

Romans 5:13, 14 reads, "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." Simply stated the above teaches us that God does not impute sin to us when there is no law. A law must be given in order to have sin imputed against us. From Adam to Moses no additional law, besides the "law of sin and death," had been given to mankind. Furthermore, God had driven man from the garden and fixed it so that man couldn't return to the garden. Thus none of the subsequent offspring of Adam could return unto the garden and eat of the forbidden fruit. They could not sin after the similitude of Adam's transgression. Notwithstanding, death reigned over all mankind from Adam to Moses even though they had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression and even though no other law had been given by which sin could be imputed to them. What caused this reign of death? Though they had not personally sinned, yet they sinned in Adam, as he represented them in the garden of Eden.

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Next, Romans 5:15 teaches us that by the offence of Adam, the many in Adam are dead. Furthermore, in Romans 5:16, we are taught that God's judgment was, as a result of Adam's transgression, to condemn all mankind. Again in Romans 5:17 we are taught that as a result of Adam's offence death reigns over us. Romans 5:18 reads, "Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation..."

Finally, verse 19 says in parts, "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners..." The results of all this can be summarized as follows:

1. Adam represented all mankind in the garden.
2. When Adam ate of the forbidden fruit, because he represented us, it was as though all mankind had eaten of the forbidden fruit.
3. God's sentence of death upon Adam because of sin was also a sentence of death upon all mankind because of the sin of Adam.
4. Death in all its aspects not only reigned over Adam, it reigned over all mankind which were seminally in Adam and sinned in Adam.
5. When Adam transgressed, his nature fell to a sin-cursed state. We were made sinners because of Adam's disobedience and our nature is the same as Adam's sin-cursed nature.

The bible teaches that "the wages of sin is death" and because "death reigns" over us as a result of Adam's sin. We will consider the subject of death in our next bible forum essay.

In similar fashion as Adam was the federal head of all mankind, Christ is the federal head of all the chosen elect family of God. We will cover this aspect of federal headship at a later time.

Death

The Bible says, "The wages of sin is death..." God told Adam "...in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." The marginal reading for "die" is "dying thou shalt die." This indicates an immediate death followed by a later death. Thus we know the bible teaches more than one kind of death.

The scriptures teach at least five deaths. These deaths are:

1. Death of the body or corporeal death.
2. Death in trespasses and sins.
3. Death to fellowship.
4. The second death or eternal death.
5. Death to sin.

Beginning with Adam sin began to work in the lives of every man to bring forth the death of the body. These corruptible, mortal bodies are headed to the grave as God told Adam, "for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

Second, to be dead in trespasses and sins speaks of the state or condition of our carnal nature. This death is characterized as rendering us incapable of fearing God

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(Romans 3:18), of seeking God (Romans 3:11), of understanding the things of the Spirit of God (Romans 3:11; I Corinthians 2:14), of knowing the way of peace (Romans 3:17). Under this death we only seek after the world (Ephesians 2:2), the spirit of Satan (Ephesians 2:2), and to satisfy fleshly lust (Ephesians 2:3). Furthermore our carnal mind is enmity with God (Romans 8:7) and we cannot please God (Romans 8:8). All of our works are verily wickedness (Galatians 5:19-21). David described this death as beginning at conception in Psalms 51:5, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me." Furthermore, he said we begin to portray this sin-cursed death nature at birth as stated in Psalms 58:3, "The wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies." Under the law of sin and death according to David we will not even think about God, Psalms 10:4, "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts." In addition, a person dead in trespasses and sins is incapable of delivering himself from that condition. The prophet Jeremiah illustrated this truth through question and answer in Jeremiah 13:23, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." Paul described us under the law of sin and death in Romans 5:6-10 as being "without strength," "ungodly," "sinners," and "enemies of God."

The third death is "death to fellowship." The story of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32 illustrates this death. When the prodigal had left his father's house to go waste his substance with riotous living and then later returned, the father described this son thusly, "For this my son was dead, and is alive again..." Likewise he said to his other son, "For this thy brother was dead, and is alive again..." Please notice that the prodigal when wasting his substance with riotous living did not lose his relationship to his father or brother, but he lost his fellowship to them. He was dead to their fellowship. Paul, also describes this death to fellowship in I Timothy 5:6, "But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth." I guess we could safely call her a living "dead" person. I wonder how many of God's people are dead to the fellowship of God and to the fellowship of the saints as a result of seeking worldly pleasures?

The fourth death we will consider is called in Revelation 20:14, the "second death." This is God's eternal punishment for sin. Those who suffer the "second death" are "cast into the lake of fire" to suffer the eternal vengeance of God. They are described in Revelation 20:12 as being "the dead, small and great" and they are "judged every man according to their works." Verse 15 tells us, "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." Paul describes these in II Thessalonians 1:7-9 thusly, "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."

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Finally, there is a good death taught in God's word. Romans 6:2 asks us, "How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" What does it mean to be "dead to sin?" It means to be dead to the condemning affects of sin and to be dead to the bondage of the law of sin and death. Hebrews 2:14 speaks of Christ thusly, "Forasmuch 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 of their lifetime subject to bondage." When Jesus died on the cross for us, he delivered us from the wrathful judgment of God (second death) and when he arose the third day he established our hope in the resurrection of our mortal bodies. Also in Romans 8:2, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." This is in harmony with Ephesians 2:1 which states, "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." Likewise the Lord said in John 5:25, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the son of God and they that hear shall live." When Christ speaks to us in that still small voice giving us spiritual life we become "dead to" the condemning effects of sin and its bondage over us. We now, in spirit, fear God, seek after Him, understand spiritual things, believe that he is, bear good fruit, seek to please him, etc. Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.

Depravity - Death Nature

The scriptures when describing our depraved natural state often use the word "dead" as evidenced by the following scriptures:

Ephesians 2:1, "And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins."

Romans 8:2, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."

John 5:25, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live."

Ephesians 2:4, 5, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved)."

Colossians 2:13, "And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgive you all trespasses."

Romans 7:6, "But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter."

II Corinthians 5:14, "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead."

I John 3:14, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

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The word, dead, can be defined as the absence of life and the opposite of life. The words, death and life, are diametrically opposed. In describing the total depravity of man in his natural state (before he is born again) the scriptures use the words, dead and death, to mean the absence of spiritual life. For instance in Ephesians 2:1-3 man before he is born again (quickened) is described as following the course of this world, having the prince of the power of the air (Satan) working in him, having his conversation (lifestyle) in the lust of his flesh, and fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. According to the scriptures, being the friend of the world is to be the enemy of God, to be possessed and directed by the spirit of Satan is sin, and to fulfill the fleshly lusts is sin. Thus, our entire behavior before the new birth is sinful behavior. Paul said, "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh dwelleth no good thing." He also said in Romans 8:7, 8, "Because the carnal (fleshly) mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Thus the absence of spiritual life renders one totally incapable of righteous behavior, of seeking after God, of knowing the things of the Spirit of God, or of pleasing God.

It is no wonder that the scriptures say, "By grace ye are saved." It had to be by the grace of God due to our "dead" nature. To be dead is to be without strength. A dead person has no strength whatsoever. If he is dead, he cannot as much as lift his little finger in response to an offer nor can he help anyone. Such was our condition when we were spiritually dead. Romans 5:6 says, "For when we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Being dead in trespasses and sins makes us spiritually without strength. God's grace and God's power as well as his mercy and love were required to bring us out of this state: Ephesians 2:4, 5, "But God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)."

In contrast to death, actions are the evidence of life. John wrote, "We know we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Love is an evidence of spiritual life, of being born again. Galatians 5:22, 23, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, against such there is no law." Fruit is borne on the tree. The tree must first be present before fruit can be borne. Fruit is the evidence and identifier of the tree. Anytime any one of the 9 above fruit are borne is evidence of the presence of the Spirit. We can bear this fruit because we have been born of the Spirit of God. For instance, we have faith because we have been born again. Since faith is a fruit of the Spirit, we must have the spirit before we can exhibit faith.

The Lord told us in John 5:25 how we were given spiritual life from the dead state we were in, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live." We know this has reference to the spiritually dead and not the dead bodies in the grave because the Lord said "the hour is coming and now is..." The resurrection of our dead bodies is coming, but it's not now taking place. The resurrection to spiritual life of those spiritually dead in trespasses

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and sins is both taking place now and will continue to take place in the future till all that God calls are born again. Please note that it is the powerful "voice" of the Son of God that brings life from the dead. No man has this power in his voice or otherwise to raise the dead. If a man wants to convince me he has power to raise the dead, he needs to go create a universe by speaking it into existence and then maybe I will believe him.

As we said before, only God has the power to raise the dead and such was our condition under the law of sin and death. He quickened us when we were dead. Praise be to His holy name.

Depravity's Bondage

One way to describe the effects of bondage is to declare what things those in bondage cannot do. For instance a typical prisoner in a Texas jail cannot go wherever he pleases, or see whom ever he pleases whenever he pleases. Furthermore, he cannot choose to do what ever he pleases. His bondage places severe restrictions on his actions.

We were in bondage to our sin-corrupt fleshly nature prior to being born again. Romans 8:2, "For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." The "law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus" is the "new birth" and this "new birth" freed us from the "bondage" of "the law of sin and death."

Nature places restrictions on all living creatures and binds them to the limitations of their nature. For instance, birds can fly and snakes crawl on their underside. Just don't expect a snake to fly and a bird to crawl on its underside. Likewise, man before he is born from above (born again) is limited to the abilities of his sin-cursed nature. Paul said, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing..." (Romans 7:18)

Let us now look at several things the scriptures tell us that man cannot do before he is born again:

Matthew 19:25, 26, "When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible." With these 5 words (With men this is impossible) the Lord put to silence all the advocates who say that man can save himself from sin and cause himself to obtain eternal life. It simply is impossible for man to save himself.

I Corinthians 2:14, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Those that are born-again are two-fold men. They are natural men and they are spiritual men. Those who haven't been born again are one-fold, i.e., they are natural men only. In this natural state they cannot discern spiritual things nor can they receive the things of the spirit of God. This is why Paul said in I Corinthians 1:18, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness..." Since the preaching of the cross is of the Spirit of God and the natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God it is no wonder he considers preaching of the cross to be

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foolishness.

Matthew 7:18, "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." Based on this statement it is no wonder Paul said of those under the law of sin and death in Romans 3:12, "there is none that doeth good, no, not one." A person that is not born again possesses only the "corrupt tree" flesh nature and according to Galatians 5:19-21 all of his works are evil.

John 3:3, "Jesus answered and said unto him, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Due to the spiritual nature of God's church kingdom, and because he cannot discern spiritual things, the unborn again man cannot see (perceive) this church kingdom.

John 3:5, "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Without a spiritual nature man is unable not only to see the kingdom of God, but also to enter the kingdom of God.

John 6:44, "No man can come to me except the Father which sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." The word, draw, comes from a Greek word meaning "to drag." The meaning is illustrated by a horse drawn carriage. The carriage is inanimate and does nothing to move itself. All the effort to move the carriage is performed by the horse. Before we are born again we cannot come to Jesus. We must be drawn (dragged) of the Father in order to come to Jesus. It is not our effort that brings us to Jesus, but God's drawing that brings us to Jesus.

John 8:43, 47, "Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word. He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." Before we are born-again, we were not of God, thus we could not hear (perceive) God's words. After we were born again we had the ability to perceive spiritual things and therefore could perceive God's words.

John 12:39, 40, "Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them." The Lord told some unbelievers in John 10:26, "But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you." Before we are born again we cannot believe. Faith is one of the nine-fold fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22) and comes as a result of the new birth.

Romans 8:7, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." The "law of God" is the "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:2). Before we are born-again we have only a carnal mind and that mind is the very enemy of God. With that carnal mind we do not seek after God, we do not fear God, and we do not desire God.

Romans 8:8, "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Thus, before we are born again we are completely unable to please God and furthermore have no desire to please God.

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II. Peter 2:14 speaks of the unborn-again in this manner, "Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin..." An unborn-again person possesses only a fleshly nature and will only walk after the course of this world and the prince of the power of the air, seeking to fulfill the desires of the flesh and mind (Ephesians 2:2, 3) all of which is sin in the eyes of a just and Holy God.

As we see the bondage of our sin cursed depraved nature we can thank God for that "law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus" that has made us free from "the law of sin and death."

Depravity - Incapability of Understanding

One aspect of the total depravity of our human nature before we are born again that is strongly emphasized in the scriptures is that we were totally incapable of spiritual understanding. In describing the nature of men under the law of sin and death, Paul wrote in Romans 3:11, "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." Paul uses the universal "none" to show us this is true of all mankind prior to the new "spiritual" birth.

The Lord told some unbelieving Pharisees in John 8:43, "Why do you not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my words." He further expounded in verse 47, "He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." The Lord obviously had reference to more than just natural hearing or natural discernment. Those to whom the Lord was speaking had natural ears and natural discernment. They, however, had no spiritual discernment. They could not "hear" the spiritual lessons being taught in God's words. To discern spiritual things, an individual must be born of God. Except we are of God, we cannot hear God's words.

Eight times in the gospels and eight times in the book of Revelation we have this or a very similar statement recorded, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear..." This must have reference to the spiritual ear, not the natural ear. Paul wrote in I Corinthians 2:9, "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." All men, unless deformed, have natural eyes, natural ears, and a natural heart. These three sensory organs (sight, sound, feel) are incapable of sensing what God has prepared for them that love him. If we relied on our natural sensory organs to know then we could never know the things God has prepared... Some, indeed, have thought these things just simply can't be known of men. Verse 10, however, tells us that we who are of God know, "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God." We know the things God has prepared for them that love him, because the Spirit has revealed them unto us! Now did the Spirit reveal them unto us through our natural sensory organs (eye, ear, heart)? No because they are incapable of receiving them. Verse 11 reads, "For what man knoweth the things of man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the

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things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." Man naturally has a nature (spirit) that enables him to understand the things of man.

However, this nature cannot transcend the human nature and understand spiritual things. How then can fallen depraved man ever understand the things of the Spirit of God? The answer lies in verse 12, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit, which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." We received this "spirit which is of God" when we were "born again." God imparted to us in the new birth a spiritual receiver that "we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." When we were born again God gave us spiritual eyes, spiritual ears, and a spiritual heart. Now these spiritual sensory organs are attuned to receive spiritual things. Furthermore, they also act as spiritual transmitters as we read in verse 13, "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual." Also we gather from this verse that the new birth not only gives us a spiritual receiver and a spiritual transmitter, but it also gives us spiritual "reasoning ability" to be able to compare spiritual things with spiritual things.

Next, Paul summarizes the total incapability of natural man for spiritual discernment in verse 14, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

Things we cannot know or discern are foolishness unto us. We haven't time for such things. Is it any wonder then that Paul wrote in I Corinthians 1:18, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness..." Why is the preaching of the cross to the unregenerate (those not born again) foolishness? Because the preaching of the cross is of the Spirit of God and these unregenerate have no spiritual receivers. In actuality it works like this: The unregenerate have "no fear of God" thus cannot be convicted in their hearts of sin. Because they do not feel the curse or burden of sin in their heart they reason that they have no need of a savior, then they reason that this preaching of salvation from sin by Jesus at the cross is just foolish prattle by superstitious men.

In contrast, we who have been born again, now having the fear of God in our hearts do feel the curse or burden of our sins in our heart. When we hear (with the spiritual ear of the new birth) the preaching of the cross, this message brings to our (spiritual) hearts how that Jesus died to deliver us from our sins and as Paul wrote in the last half of I Corinthians 1:18, "but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." This with our spiritual eyes we see (discern) that God through Christ saved us from our sins at the cross. Thanks be to God for this marvelous gift of the new birth.

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God's Covenants

God's Covenants

While time and space will not permit us to go into an exhaustive study of all of God's covenants, we will briefly look at 4 of the covenants.

The student of the scriptures soon comes to the realization that God is a covenant making and covenant keeping God. God makes two types of covenants. There are the conditional two-sided covenants in which God makes promises that are based on man's obedience to the terms of the covenant. Then there are the unconditional one-sided covenants in which God fulfills all the terms and actions to the benefit of those embraced by the covenant.

The first covenant we read about in the scriptures is the "covenant of the law of sin and death." This covenant was set forth in Gen. 2:16, 17 as follows: "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 thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." In this covenant God promised freedom to man to eat of all the trees of the garden but one. As long as man did not eat of the forbidden tree he had the benefits and privileges and provisions of the garden. If, however, he ate of the forbidden tree he would die. Adam as the federal head of all mankind was free to either eat of the tree or not eat of it with attendant consequences. This was a two-sided conditional covenant.

The second covenant we read about is found in Gen. 9:9-17. In this covenant God said that "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...neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth." This is a one-sided covenant. All the provisions and terms of the covenant are accomplished by God. Neither man or any of the creatures are responsible to carry out any of the provisions of the covenant. This covenant is unconditional on man's or the creature's part. This is an unconditional one-sided covenant. Man's actions could in no way alter the outcome of this covenant.

The third covenant we consider is found in Exodus chapter 20 and is known as the "covenant of works" or the "covenant of the law." In Ex. 20:5, 6 we read, "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 a holy nation." In verse 8 we read, "And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." In this covenant God gave the people the ten commandments to keep. This was a two-sided conditional covenant. The conditions on the people were that they would obey the commandments of God and enjoy the benefits of the covenant or they would not obey the commandments of God and suffer the curse of the covenant. The

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consequences and provisions of this covenant were dependant on the actions of the children of Israel. It was obey and be blessed or disobey and be cursed.

The fourth covenant we will consider is found in Rom. 8:28-30, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of

his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Please note that this is a one-sided unconditional covenant. All the actions in this covenant are to be performed by God. Man is the recipient of all the benefits of this covenant but his actions in no way alter the outcome of this covenant. This covenant is known as the "covenant of redemption" or the "covenant of grace" as the covenant results in the "redemption" of God's people and it is all by the "grace" of God. There are five actions in this covenant - foreknow, predestinate, call, justify, and glorify. In each of these actions it is God who does the action. Those foreknown are the recipients of the benefits of the covenant. Man's actions do not alter the outcome of this covenant for the same ones foreknown are also predestinated, called, justified and glorified, without the loss of one. Again this is a one-sided unconditional covenant.

In our next several essays, we will undertake a study of this "covenant of redemption."

Covenant of Redemption #1

In our previous essay, we noted that God makes two types of covenants - conditional and unconditional covenants. We also noted that the covenant of redemption as stated in Rom. 8:28-30 is an unconditional covenant, i.e., there are no conditions placed on man, but God is responsible for carrying out all the actions in that covenant.

Before we study each of the actions in the covenant of redemption listed in Rom. 8:28-30, let us look at an Old Testament passage that teaches us about the covenant of redemption. This passage is found in II Sam. 23:1-7. This passage begins by telling us that the words that follow are the last words of David. Then it tells us that though the words were spoken by David as his last words, that he was just a mouth-piece for the Holy Spirit, "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me and his word was in my tongue." In other words the words spoken were actually the words of the Holy Spirit with David being used as a mouth-piece!

Next, in verse 3 we are told that the Holy Spirit is relating to us a conversation between the "God of Israel" and the "Rock of Israel:" "The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me..." Thus in this conversation the Rock of Israel spake to the God of Israel and what followed were the words which the "Rock of Israel" spake to the "God of Israel." I Cor. 10:4 tells us that the "Rock of Israel" is "Christ:" "...for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ." Therefore the words that followed in

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II Sam. 23:3-7 were the words of Christ, the Rock of Israel, to God, the Father, the God of Israel.

In verses, three and four Christ set forth his own requirements to rule as King. Then beginning with verse 5 He relates to us provision of the covenant of redemption. First He says, "Although my house be not so with God..." The Lord's house was composed of sinners. They stood before God condemned by sin. They were not righteous or worthy of eternal glory. Next Christ said "yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant..." Now we see that this covenant was between Christ and God the Father. The covenant was not made with man. While the family of God is embraced by this covenant, they are not parties to this covenant.

The Lord went further and said "ordered in all things and sure..." This covenant between God the Father and God the Son covered all the details. There was nothing left to chance. This covenant is SURE. All the provisions will be carried out just as God ordained them.

In addition, the Lord went on: "for this is all my salvation..." This salvation is a salvation that the Lord performs as stated in Matt. 1:21, "he shall save his people from their sins." Notice that when Christ said "all my salvation" that this statement excludes the works of men in bringing it about. It is "all" of the Lord. The Lord went on to say "and all my desire..." God always accomplishes his will: he is never frustrated or disappointed with anything he sets out to do.

Again the Lord said further, "Although he make it not to grow." This covenant neither increases nor decreases in scope or coverage. It results in all its provisions being carried out to its fulfillment and embraces in the end all those who were embraced in the beginning. It neither grows nor diminishes.

Next in v.6 the Lord said, "But the sons of Belial shall be all of them as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands." The sons of Belial are representative of our sins. The fact that they cannot be taken with hands illustrates our helplessness in attempting to do any thing to save ourselves from sin. All of our works are as filthy rags before God. Finally, the Lord said, "But the man that shall touch them must be fenced with iron and the staff of a spear; and they shall be utterly burned with fire in the same place." Who was it that was "fenced with iron and the staff of a spear?" It was Jesus who was nailed to the cross with iron nails thru his hands and his feet and who at the end had a spear driven thru his side. It was he and he alone that could deliver and did deliver us from our sins. Fire is a figure of God's judgment found often in the scriptures. In the same place where Christ was crucified were our sins utterly burned with the fire of God's judgment. They were completely burned with "fire in the same place." Since our sins were utterly burned, then there is nothing left for the sinner to do to be made righteous before God's bar of justice. According to this everlasting covenant of redemption Christ has delivered us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. He has delivered us from our sins. Praise be to his Holy name.

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In our next essay we will begin to look at the provisions of the covenant of redemption listed for us in Rom. 8:28-30.

Covenant of Redemption #2

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." (Rom. 8:28) Rom. 8:28-30 is commonly called the "Covenant of Redemption." In our next essay we will consider the "all things" that "work together for good." In this essay we will look at the "purpose" of God. Verse 28 above speaks of those who "love God" "who are the called according to his purpose."

Chronologically, God purposed to call a people, then he called those he purposed to call, and then as a consequence of this calling they love God. No man loves God before he is called of God. According to 1 John 4:7, "everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God." God's calling is the "cause," the new birth is the "effect," and love of God is the "consequence."

God is a God of purpose. He does not work his will based on chance or happenstance. He purposes to do something, then he does according to his purpose. The scriptures speak of the purpose of God thusly:

A. Isa. 46:11 - "I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it."

B. Eph. 3:11 - "According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

C. Eph. 1:9 - "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself."

D. Eph. 1:11 - "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the council of his own will."

E. II Tim. 1:9 - "Who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

F. Rom. 9:11 - "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth..."

From the above we make the following observations about God's purpose:

A. What God purposes to do, he does. According to Nebuchadnezzar in Dan. 4:35, "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" No force in heaven and earth can stop or hinder God from doing what he has purposed to do. Once God purposes to do something, it WILL be done.

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B. God had an eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus. Mortal time bound man has a difficult time understanding something that is eternal, i.e., has no beginning or no end. Yet what God has purposed in Christ Jesus has no beginning and has no end. It is infinitely old and will last an eternity. The Covenant of Redemption expresses God's eternal purpose in Christ Jesus.

C. God's purpose is his good pleasure. It pleased God to choose, save, call and glorify a people to be his.

D. God purposed our eternal inheritance.

E. In God's purpose, he councils only with himself, he does not council with anyone else. Of course, when you have all wisdom and all knowledge there is no reason to council with anyone else!

F. God works all things after the council of his own will. God does not have to alter anything according to changed circumstances. The God who has all power and all knowledge can and does purpose according to his will and then executes his purpose without change or need of change.

G. Our salvation from sin and our holy calling is according to that which God purposed in Christ before the world began. God purposed to save us and God purposed to call us. Now, here in time he executes his purpose. He saves us and he calls us. Thus our salvation and calling are not by chance or happenstance, but by God's eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

H. God purposed to choose a people to be his and according to Eph. 1:4 he chose them before the world began. His choice was not based on works but was by grace.

To be able to purpose something, then bring it about exactly as he purposed it, speaks of God's wisdom, power, knowledge, and character. As one old testament verse states "I am God, I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." God purposes and never changes from that he purposes. He does according to his purpose and it comes to pass just exactly as He purposed it.

In the Covenant of Redemption God purposed to foreknow, predestinate, call, justify, and glorify a people. The end result is that they are chosen, predestinated, called justified, and glorified just as God purposed.

As a side note, we love God because he called us. The fact that we love God is evidence we are embraced in this Covenant of Redemption.

Covenant of Redemption #3

Rom. 8:28-30 is commonly known as the "Covenant of Redemption." It is an unconditional covenant that God made with himself to procure the salvation, new birth, and glorification of those he foreknew.

The statement at the beginning of this passage has been a subject of much discussion and controversy in religious circles thru the ages. This statement causing controversy is "All things work together for good to them that love God." The controversy revolves

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around the meaning of the word "all." Is the "all" in this passage a universal "all" or a contextual "all?" All can be universal, i.e., embracing everything without exception or it can be contextual, i.e., embracing only those things within the context. If the "all" is universal, then the statement would teach that everything that ever happens whether good or bad ultimately works together for good to them that love God. If, however, the "all" is contextual then the statement would be referring only to the things within the context, i.e., God's foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, and glorification. Using the contextual "all" would teach only that "all" refers to the above five things and these five things are working together for good to them that love God.

Sometimes, I hear people make the statement after something good has happened to someone that "all things work together for good to them that love God." I, personally, have never heard anyone say that after something bad had happened to someone!

Now, if the "all" in "all things" is universal then all sins, evil, the devil, his angels, and every catastrophe as well as everything else that happens in the universe would work together for good to them that love God. For the all to be universal there could be no exceptions. Since the above listed things such as sin, evil, the devil, his ministry, and catastrophes don't on the surface appear to be working together for our good, God is assigned the responsibility of controlling those things in such a way that ultimately, they work together for good for those who love God. Usually the passage where Joseph told his brethren, who sold him into Egyptian slavery, is quoted, "ye meant it for evil, but God meant it for good," to attempt to substantiate a universal "all" things.

When in doubt about the meaning of God's word, our best course of action is to let the scriptures speak as to the meaning. Rom. 3:7, 8 reads, "For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner? And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? Whose damnation is just." Paul said it was a slander for anyone to report that he or those with him said "Let us do evil that good may come." Now if my or anyone else's evil deeds result in good to them that love God, then why did Paul say it was a slander? Thus it would appear that the universal "all" theory does not stand up under the scrutiny of God's word.

Now all this is not to say that sometimes God providentially intervenes in our lives and turns "lemons into lemonade." This has happened, no doubt, many times in the lives of his people, but this doesn't justify saying that God will take every evil and every sin that is ever committed and make each of them work for our good.

My conclusion is that the "all" in Rom. 8:28 is a contextual "all" and that everything about God's foreknowing a people, predestinating them to be conformed to the image of Christ, calling them, justifying them and glorifying them works together for our good. Paul concludes in v. 31, "What shall we then say to "these" things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" The "these things" are the "five things" in v. 29 and 30 which are the "all things" in v. 28.

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Covenant of Redemption #4

Before proceeding to notice how and why the five things in Rom. 8:29, 30 in the covenant of redemption work together for good to them that love God, let us notice that the five things listed in those verses are all listed in the past tense - foreknew, predestinated, called, justified, glorified. Now we know that from a timely standpoint we were not all called at the time this was written, nor are we yet conformed to the image of Christ as we will be, nor are we completely glorified in the sense that we will be according to this covenant. How then can we explain how the past tense verbs can be used? The answer is found for us in Rom. 4:17, "(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickened the dead, and calleth those things that be not as though they were." God can call things that be not as though they were because what God purposes to do must be done! Since the covenant of redemption shows us God's eternal purpose, He is justified in using the past tense though to us some of those things are yet future. Remember, what God purposes to do is as good as done.

Next, we want to consider the good that those five things work together. The end results of those five things are all eternal good for those whom God foreknew. Now there is much timely good that comes to us during our lifetime, such as providential blessings, growth in spiritual knowledge, fellowship with God and his people, true worship of God, etc. These and many more are timely blessings and certainly can be classified as good to us and for us. However, the good in the covenant of redemption transcends timely blessings and speaks to us of eternal good. First, we will be conformed to the image of Christ and that conformation is for an eternity. Second, the result of God's calling is that we are born again, and that spiritual birth gives us eternal life in the spirit. Third, our justification from sins places us in a righteous position with God that can never be altered. Fourth, our glorification in body, soul, and spirit is eternal.

Now let us proceed to consider how those five things - foreknew, predestinated, called, justified, glorified - work together for that eternal good to those that love God. Please note the unity of effect that those five things have. This is noted thru the use of the pronouns, whom and them. For when the scripture says, "whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate...and whom he did predestinate, them he also called..." we note the absolute unity of action and effect upon the ones being acted upon. In other words, the same ones that God foreknew are the exact same ones that he predestinated, and the exact same ones that he called, and the exact same ones that he justified, and the exact same ones that he glorified. There are not more or less that he foreknew than he predestinated or more or less that he predestinated than he called, etc. Thus, he foreknew the same number of people that he also predestinated, called, justified and glorified. The effect upon us individually is that once he foreknew us, he also predestinates us, calls us, justifies us, and glorifies us. Thus, if I am the beneficiary of one of the actions of God in this covenant then I am a beneficiary of all five of the actions in this covenant. Thus, they all work together for our eternal good.

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However, why is it that they all work together? The answer is because the action is all of God. None of the things listed in this covenant requires any action on man's part. The covenant speaks of whom God foreknew and of whom God predestinated, and of whom God called, and of whom God justified, and of whom God glorified. This is the reason why those five things work together. It is all in keeping with God's eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. This is why there can be no failure in this covenant. It is an unconditional covenant, that is, there is no conditions placed on man to perform in order for the provisions of this covenant to be carried out. All of the provisions will be carried out by God. No wonder the writer could say in verse 31, "what shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" One might be tempted to say, "Well the devil and all the fallen angels are against us, as well as the messengers of Satan, and a wicked world." However, it does not matter who might attempt to oppose us, for God is for us and he has all power in heaven and in earth and none can stay his hand or say unto him, what doest thou. God is greater than all the combined forces of all creation and God will bring to pass what he purposes to do. God cannot fail or be discouraged. We can rejoice in the knowledge that those five things in his covenant of redemption work together for our eternal good, because God is the one who is working the covenant.

In our next essay, we will begin looking at what the scriptures have to say about each of the five things listed in the covenant of redemption beginning with those whom God foreknew.

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Salvation

Salvation

This is the first in a series of essays on the subject of salvation. The words save means "to deliver; to make or keep safe; or to preserve."

In all but a couple of times in the New Testament the word is used as a verb or a preposition.

To understand the subject of salvation there are a few rules we must follow:

1. First, we must know what we are being delivered from or what we are being delivered to. For instance, if I say, "I am saved." That statement begs the question: "What am I saved from?" or "What am I saved to?" Without knowing the "from" or "to" the statement loses meaning.

2. Second, we must know the context in which it is used. Most often the context defines the meaning and application of words.

3. Third, we need to know what brings about the salvation. For instance is the salvation brought about by my actions or works, or is the salvation brought about solely by the actions or works of God and we are the recipients of that salvation by the grace of God? To illustrate the above, someone cried out "Lord, save me." Without any more information we don't know if the person was concerned with the condition of his soul or if he was concerned with the immediate surrounding conditions. As it turns out, Peter was walking on water to go to

Jesus. When he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. Peter was concerned with the immediate surrounding conditions and was crying out for the Lord to save him from drowning. He was not at that time occupied with thoughts of where he would spend eternity.

There are two categories of salvation taught in the scriptures. There is the category that deals with our eternal salvation, i.e., our salvation from the condemning effects of sin, our salvation from being dead in trespasses and sins, and our salvation into heaven's glory world. All aspects of our eternal salvation we find is brought about by God's grace and is not by the works or actions of man.

The second category deals with the many timely deliverance God's people can and do experience in our timely stay upon earth. Included in this category are deliverance from ignorance, from vain worship, from the pitfalls of life, from going about to establish our own righteousness, from this untoward generation, etc. In this category certain works or actions are generally required by the child of God to bring about the deliverance.

2 Tim. 2:10 illustrates these two categories of salvation: "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." The verse indicates with the words, "also" and "with," that these are two categories of salvation taught in the scripture. One category as we have discussed pertains to eternal glory. The elect in this verse already have eternal glory due to the work and actions of God and by his grace. The second category of salvation is conditioned on the

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elect performing some work or action in order to obtain the timely salvation. This is a conditional salvation. The elect may or may not obtain this salvation based on whether or not they fulfill the conditions prescribed. The eternal glory is an unconditional salvation. God has and will perform every thing necessary for the elect to obtain eternal glory.

Next one must already have been saved from the condemnation of sin and from being dead in trespasses and sins before he can experience the timely category of salvation. Phil. 2:12, 13 illustrates this principle: "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his own good pleasure." Thus we see that before we can work out our timely salvation God must first have performed a work in us that gives us both a desire (to will) toward God and his service and an ability (to do) to perform the service of God." Therefore, we have to be saved eternally in order that we might experience timely salvation.

Salvation from Sin's Condemnation

There are at least three aspects to the eternal salvation into heaven's glory world. All three aspects deal with salvation from sin. The first aspect which will be the topic of this essay is salvation from the condemning effects of sin. The second aspect is salvation from the bondage of sin. The third aspect is salvation from the corruption of sin.

Salvation from the condemnation of sin took place at the cross. Salvation from the bondage of sin takes place when we are born of the Spirit. Salvation from the corruption of sin takes place in the resurrection. Together these three deliverances make up our eternal salvation from sin into heaven's glory world.

We will begin our consideration of the salvation from the condemnation of sin by noting those passages of scripture that indicate we were under the condemnation or curse of sin:

1. Gen. 2:17 - "But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."
2. Rom. 6:23 - "For the wages of sin is death..."
3. Rom. 5:18 - "Therefore as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation..."
4. Gal. 3:10 - "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them."
5. Matt. 25:41, 46 - "Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels...and these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

Jesus' declared purpose for coming into the world is set forth for us in Matt. 1:20, 21, "But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for

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that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." Thus God's declared purpose for Jesus to come into the world was to save "his people" from "their sins!" That it was necessary that someone should save us from our sins is declared in Matt. 19:25, 26, "When his disciples heard this they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible." Thus salvation from sin is not something men can bring about, but only God can bring about.

That Jesus is the only one who could save us from sin is declared in Acts 4:12, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Thus we are saved by Jesus and none other. Paul punctuated this concept in I Tim. 1:15, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."

II Tim. 1:9 tells us that salvation from sin was by God's purpose before the world began and is by God's grace: "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." All of our works including the work of faith, are excluded from having any part in bringing about this salvation from sin's condemnation. It is solely by the grace of God that we are saved. Paul said we could not mix works and grace in Rom. 11:6, "And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."

This salvation from sin's condemnation is a completed salvation and completely removed the curse of the law from us as declared in Gal. 3:13, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." When Christ hang on the tree of the cross he became our curse for us. According to II Cor. 5:21, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Becoming sin for us and being made a curse for us Jesus suffered the full and complete wrathful judgment of God that God demanded as payment for our sins. He paid it all, all the debt we owed. The ransom payment has been made. The condemnation of sin is past as we read in Heb. 10:14, "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." According to Heb. 8:12 God will not remember our sins and iniquities against us. According to Rom. 8:33 there is no charge that can be laid to God's elect for it is God that justifieth. Yea, there is no condemnation of sin to them in Christ Jesus. May the name of Jesus Christ be praised for ever by his people.

In our next essay we will consider our salvation from the bondage of sin.

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Salvation from Sin's Bondage

In our previous essay we considered salvation from sin's condemnation and concluded that it was by grace through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus upon the cross. In this essay we will consider our salvation from sin's bondage.

When Adam ate of the forbidden fruit he brought himself and all his posterity into the bondage of sin. His flesh nature and subsequently our flesh nature was so corrupted by sin that it rendered him and us incapable of willingly serving or seeking God. The following passages of scripture describe our fallen depraved flesh nature:

1. Rom. 3:9-18 - "What then? Are we better than they? No in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes."

2. Eph. 2:1-3 - "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in times past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

3. 1 Cor. 2:14 - "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

Thus in our fallen sin corrupt nature we are rendered incapable of:

1. Knowing the things of the Spirit of God.
2. Understanding the things of God.
3. Seeking after God.
4. Doing anything good.
5. Fearing God.
6. Knowing the way of peace.
7. Receiving the things of the Spirit of God.

Furthermore, we were enslaved to our sin-corrupted flesh nature so that we were bound to:

1. Walk after the world.
2. Walk after Satan.
3. Have our lifestyle (conversation) in the lusts of the flesh.
4. Fulfill the desires of the flesh.
5. Fulfill the desires of the mind.

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6. Commit the wicked works of the flesh.

It was while we were in bondage to our sin-corrupt flesh nature that God saved us, not from the corruption of sin, but from the bondage of sin as we read in Rom. 8:2, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." In the miracle of the new birth God has freed us from the bondage of the sin-corrupt flesh nature. We still have the sin-corrupt nature and it is as Paul stated in Rom. 7:18, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing." Our freedom comes from the fact that God has imparted within us a new nature, so that we are no longer bound to the slavery of sin, but can seek God, know the things of God, serve God, worship God, do good, walk by faith, pray unto God, understand spiritual things, etc.

The scriptures speak of the new birth as salvation as we read in the following verses:

1. Eph. 2:4, 5 - "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved)."

2. Tit. 3:4, 5 - "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost..."

We note that this salvation from sin's bondage is by the grace of God and not by works of righteousness which we have done. The new birth is brought about by the direct work of the Holy Spirit quickening us into spiritual life when we were still dead in trespasses and sins. At the time we were quickened we were completely incapable of performing or doing any "works of righteousness." Truly, it is according to God's great love wherewith he loved us that while we were yet his enemy that he caused us to be born of the Spirit. Truly, God is rich in mercy to quicken vile sinners. Salvation from the bondage of sin is by grace.

In our next essay we will consider salvation from the corruption of sin.

Salvation from Sin's Corruption

This is our third essay dealing with our eternal salvation from sin. In the previous two essays we considered salvation from sin's condemnation and salvation from sin's bondage. In this essay we will consider salvation from sin's corruption. II Cor. 1:10 connects these three aspects of salvation from sin together: "Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us." The writer indicates a past deliverance, a present deliverance, and a future deliverance. All three deliverances are brought about by God. Jesus died to redeem us from sin's condemnation (past deliverance). The Holy Spirit quickens us (causes us to be born again) to deliver us from sin's bondage (present deliverance). Jesus Christ is coming again to deliver us from sin's corruption (future deliverance).

This future deliverance from sin's corruption shall take place in the resurrection of the dead. I Cor. Chapter 15 is abundantly clear in describing our deliverance from sin's

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corruption. We quote the following verses to show the change that will take place in our mortal bodies in the resurrection:

1. V.42 - "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption.

2. V.43 - "It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory..."

3. V.43 - "It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power."

4. V.44 - "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body."

5. V.49 - "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

6. V.53 - "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." Thus the resurrection is the time our mortal bodies will be delivered from sin's corruption as Paul wrote in I Cor. 15:54-57, "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." We make the following observations about this deliverance from sin's corruption:

1. It is brought about by the power of God.

2. It is the gift of God.

3. The victory is through the covenant work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

4. It is the final ultimate victory over sin, death, the grave, the devil, and hell for God's elect.

When Paul said that the body is raised in glory he thus tied the resurrection to the covenant of redemption as set forth in Rom. 8:29, 30, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Thus we are brought to the conclusion that all three aspects of salvation from sin (salvation from condemnation, bondage, and corruption) are tied to this covenant whereby God purposed before the world began to predestinate the elect to be conformed to Jesus Christ. In all three aspects we are brought to the conclusion that eternal salvation from sin is by the grace of God and not by any work of man. This is in harmony with the words of God recorded in Isa. 63:5, "I looked and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation to me; and my fury, it upheld me."

In our next essay we will begin to consider the much timely deliverance to God's children that are promised to them thru their faith and obedience to God's word. Now these deliverances do not alter or change what God has done in bringing about the eternal salvation from sin's condemnation, bondage, and corruption. God's eternal salvation stands

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for an eternity, but he has also given us (the elect of God) the prospect of many timely deliverances.

Salvation from Ignorance

In our previous essays we have considered how God has saved us from the condemnation of sin, from the bondage of sin, and from the corruption of sin. These make up our eternal salvation which according to the scriptures are by the grace of God and not by the works of the creature. In this essay we will begin to look at our timely salvation. That there are two types of salvation taught in the scriptures is plainly set forth in II Tim. 2:10, "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in

Christ Jesus with eternal glory." Thus "the elect" already have "eternal glory" and Paul desired they would have another salvation, for which he endured "all things" for their sake.

One aspect of timely salvation is deliverance from ignorance and working to "get right" with God. Paul prayed for a people in Romans chapter 10 who were ignorant of God's righteousness and going about trying to establish their own righteousness. In other words, they were trying thru their efforts to "get right" with God. That such effort is futile is evidenced by the fact that salvation from sin is by the grace of God. They, however, according to their ignorance thought they could do something that would put them in judicial favor with a just and holy God.

Please note that no one tries to get right with God who hasn't first felt the conviction of sin in his heart. A person who wants to get right with God does so, because he has been convicted in his heart of sin. Next, no one has felt conviction of sin in his heart until God has first written his laws in his heart. Without law there can be no conviction of sin. God writes his laws in our heart when we are born again (born spiritually). Jesus died and redeemed all, who are born again, from the condemnation of sin. The born again person being convicted by the laws of God written in his heart will try to alleviate his heartfelt conviction of sin by trying to get right with God. At this point in time he is ignorant of the "righteousness of God," i.e., that Christ thru his sufferings and death on the cross redeemed him and made him right with God. He in his ignorance goes about trying to do something to get right with God.

In Matt. 11:28 the Lord said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The born again but convicted child of God labors trying to establish his own righteousness all the while he is heavy laden with a burden of sin guiltiness. What can save this individual from the predicament he is in? Well the answer is "coming to Jesus" to see that he is "the end (fulfillment) of the law for righteousness." When we see that Jesus has made us righteous before God then we will stop all our efforts in trying to get right with God. The true gospel brings this knowledge to the laboring sin burdened child of God. II Tim. 1:10 declares the gospel purpose as follows: "But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the

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gospel." The gospel brings life and immortality to light! It declares what Jesus has done for us and how we are made righteous thru his sacrificial atonement. The gospel does not give life, but it brings that life that God has already given us (of which we were before ignorant) to light or knowledge. Therefore when the born again child of God who is burdened with sin guiltiness and trying to get right with God hears and believes that Jesus died to deliver him from his sins and that he is thus made right with God, he is then saved from his ignorance and from his fruitless attempts to get right with God. Many of God's born again people are today still in their ignorance trying to get right with God. Let us have the same concern and prayer for them that Paul expressed in Rom. 10:1, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." Isaiah 40:1,2 illustrates the purpose of the gospel in saving God's people from ignorance and effort in trying to get right with God: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished; that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." Many of God's people today are fighting a warfare in trying to get right with God when the war is already won for them by the Lord, they just don't know it. The gospel, however, brings this knowledge to them.

It is indeed a great comfort and load removed from our heart when we come to believe that Jesus has redeemed us from our sins by his sacrificial atonement and by the grace of God. It removes the load of sin-guiltiness from our heart and delivers us from a fruitless effort of trying to get right with God.

In our next essay we will consider how we may save ourselves to the service of God and from a condemning heart.

How are we Saved from a Condemning Heart?

In this essay we will continue to look at our timely salvation. That there are two types of salvation taught in the scriptures is plainly set forth in II Tim. 2:10, "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." Thus "the elect" already have "eternal glory" and Paul desired they would have another salvation, for which he endured "all things" for their sake. We will now consider how the elect are saved from a condemning heart and into the service of God. When we are born again God writes his laws in our heart and mind (Heb. 8:10; II Cor. 3:3; Heb. 10:16; Rom. 2:15), sprinkles our heart from an evil conscience (Heb. 10:22), and sets up a courtroom in our heart and mind (Rom. 2:15; 1 John 3:21, 22). In this courtroom we are convicted in our hearts as sinners under the wrathful judgment of God as the following examples illustrate:

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1. Isa. 6:5 - "Then said I, Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."
2. Luke 18:13 - "And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner."
3. Rom. 7:24 - "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Thus, as the above scriptures illustrate, when we see ourselves in light of God's laws and the justice and holiness of God, that we then begin to see ourselves as poor ruined sinners worthy of God's wrath being executed upon us. The question before us is "How are we delivered (saved) from our condemning heart?" The answer is given to us in Mk. 16:15, 16, "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." Thus, without doubt, there is a salvation in the preaching of the gospel, believing the gospel, and being baptized." I Pet. 3:21 describes this salvation to us as follows: "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."

Peter points out to us that the salvation in baptism is "not" the putting away of the filth of the flesh. The filth of the flesh is sin. Sin is not put away by water baptism. Sin is put away by the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Baptism is a figure of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Peter also points out to us that the salvation in water baptism is "the answer of a good conscience toward God." I have always been taught that if you have an answer then you must have first had a question. The question is a two part question. First, do you as a sinner, believe that Jesus died on the cross to deliver you from your sins and that when he arose that proved you are justified? The second part of this question is that since Jesus died to redeem you from your sins are you going to serve him as his disciple and enter into that service thru water baptism? Thus belief of the gospel message and being "baptized in water serves to deliver (save) you from a condemning heart. The gospel message assures you that Jesus delivered you from the wrathful judgment of God and thus assuages the condemning heart. Likewise, water baptism assuages the heart that would condemn us if/when we turn away from the service of God.

The above principles are illustrated for us in Isa. 6:6-8. As you will recall from above that Isaiah in v.5 had seen himself in a state of condemnation and woe. Verses 6 and 7 tell us how that God had taken care of the problem that plagued Isaiah's heart: "Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from off the altar: and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." In the typical language above, if in place of the "seraphim" we inserted the gospel preacher and in place of the "live coal"

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we inserted Jesus' suffering and death on the cross, then we have the gospel message that brings such comfort to a sin-plagued heart.

Next, in v.8 we see the call to service and response of Isaiah: "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me." This is typical of the call to service in the gospel and ones response to that call by being baptized in water. Thus it is the answer of a good conscience towards God.

Thus the salvation from a condemning heart requires the preaching of the gospel; belief of the gospel; repentance; i.e., turning from any false belief system or evil works in our lives; and baptism. This salvation requires us as born again children of God to perform the above works if we are to experience this salvation from a condemning conscience and salvation into the service of God in his kingdom. Unlike our eternal salvation which is by grace and without our works, this timely salvation is brought about in part by the works God has given us to maintain.

Salvation from Death of Fellowship

In this essay, we will consider another aspect of our timely salvation which is deliverance from being dead to fellowship with God. One of the chief joys of a child of God is to have fellowship with God. Fellowship is defined as "sharing in common." Amos brings to our attention the requirement for fellowship when he asked the question in Amos 3:3, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" The answer is implied that we must be agreed together in order to have fellowship one with another. In order for us to have fellowship with God we must agree with God. This agreement is on God's terms and not on ours. God does not change (nor does truth) in order that we may have fellowship with him. Anytime that change is required, it is required of us! This requirement for fellowship is further set forth in 1 John 1:5-7, "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Thus to have fellowship with God and to have true Christian fellowship with one another we must walk in the light of God's revealed truth.

Only God's born again children can have fellowship with God. According to Rom. 8:7, 8, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." A person who has not been born spiritually is "in the flesh" and thus has only a carnal (fleshy) mind. This type of individual cannot please God and thus can have no fellowship with God. Also this type of person cannot understand spiritual things (Rom. 3:11; 1 Cor. 2:14), or seek after God (Rom. 3:11), or do good (Rom. 3:12, or know the way of peace (Rom. 3:17), or fear God (Rom. 3:18). Thus he is incapable of walking with God. It is only after we are born spiritually that we can understand spiritual things, do good, seek after God, know the

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way of peace, and fear God. Thus, we who are born again are the only ones capable of having fellowship with God.

Many times God's born again children do not have fellowship with him. When Jesus raised Lazarus from the grave, this was not only typical of the resurrection, but it was also typical of the new birth when we are quickened from being dead in trespasses and sins. When Lazarus came forth from the grave he had grave clothes on. Jesus commanded to loose him and let him go. When we are born of the Spirit we are still possessors of grave clothes, i.e., our habits and lifestyle. These must be changed if we are to have fellowship with God. Thus repentance is required for God's children to have fellowship with God.

With many of God's children, they experience fellowship with God and then die to that fellowship. In James 5:19, 20 we are told, "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." James refers to brethren erring from the truth and if they continue in that error they would die. This is a death to fellowship. Luke 15:11-32 addresses dying to the fellowship of God and being saved from that death. In this passage the younger of the two sons had requested that his Father divide the inheritance. Upon receiving his portion, the younger son took his journey into a far country and wasted his substance with riotous living. That youngest son when he was in a far country wasting his substance with riotous living was dead to the fellowship of his Father and to his elder brother. After he had repented and come back he was restored to fellowship with his Father. His relationship with his Father never changed. He was his Father's son before he left, after he left, and when he returned. Likewise our relationship with God does not change. We are his children regardless of our status of fellowship. When the younger son had returned the Father declared, "For this my son was dead; and is alive again, he was lost, and is found." Later he explained to the elder brother, "for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found." The essential requirement for the younger son who was dead to the fellowship of his Father and elder brother was to repent. While the providential hand of God was present in leading him to repent, yet "he" had to repent to be saved from death to fellowship.

How we live our lives and what we believe are essentials in having fellowship with God. II Cor. 6:14-18 declares to us, "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."

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In conclusion repentance saves us from the death of fellowship with God. Living godly lives and believing the truth brings us into fellowship with God.

Salvation from an Untoward Generation

In this essay we continue a study of timely deliverance (salvation) as we look at the exhortation in Acts 2:40, "And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation." It is only those who have been called of God that can save themselves from this "untoward generation." According to Rom. 3:17 the unregenerate (those not born again) know not the way of peace. Likewise, in Eph. 2:2, 3 we are told that before we are born again we "walked according to the course of this world" and "had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of our flesh and mind." It is only after the miracle of the new birth that we can "save ourselves from this untoward generation."

The Greek word for untoward is "skolios" meaning crooked or curved in contrast to that which is straight. John describes for us this "untoward generation" in the admonition of I John 2:15, 16, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." James says in James

4:4, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." Thus we conclude that the course of this world is to satiate self with the fleshly lusts. That is to live a lifestyle seeking to satisfy the fleshly desires.

There are two ways that are set forth for us that we can choose to travel in this life. There is the broad way that most people travel and there is the narrow way of discipleship that a few travel. Matt. 7:13, 14 describes these ways for us thusly: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate and narrow is the way, which leadeth to life, and few there be which find it." For a child of God to travel the road of life living a lifestyle to satisfy the fleshly lust is to travel the road that leads to destruction. Destruction can come in many forms a few of which are:

1. Broken marriages, broken relationships, broken fellowship, and broken promises.
2. A lifetime of despair, despondency, and depression.
3. A lifetime of dependency brought on by addiction to drugs and alcohol and other addictive substances and practices.
4. Loneliness.
5. Bondage to the false ideas and false teachings of false prophets.
6. Lives, ours and others, destroyed by lustful action.

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7. Wasted opportunities to worship and serve God with the talents God has given us.

. Guilt-ridden lives often coupled with mental illness.

Those who travel the broad way of destruction usually do so because of the promises of fleshly gratification (lust of flesh, lust of eyes, pride of life) only to find out later in life how "empty" those promises really were.

The other way set forth for us to travel is the "narrow" way of discipleship or "way of peace also known as the "highway of holiness." We are admonished in Rom. 12:1, 2, "I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that you 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." The travelers along the "highway of holiness" find that they experience a life of inner peace, rest, comfort, fellowship with God, true spiritual joy, friendship with God and God's obedient people, help in time of trouble, growth in the knowledge of God's word, strength during the time of adversity, consolation in time of loss, etc. Thus this way leads unto the deep, full spiritual life in God's kingdom.

We save ourselves by initially and continually committing ourselves to the worship and service of God in his kingdom church and to being disciples of Jesus Christ by studying his word and by being doers of his word and by mortifying the deeds of the flesh through purging out the old fleshly ways and replacing them with the way of holiness and godliness.

Thus we should all strive to enter in at the strait gate and walk the narrow way which leads to this rich spiritual kingdom life.

In our next essay we will consider how we are saved with many timely, providential deliverance.

Providential Salvation

In previous essays, we have studied our eternal salvation from sin including salvation from sin's condemnation, salvation from sin's bondage, and salvation from sin's corruption and noted that God has sovereignly saved us by his grace. Then we proceeded to study many of the timely deliverance that come to God's elect including salvation from ignorance, salvation from a condemning heart, salvation from death of fellowship, and salvation from an untoward generation! We learned the importance of the faith and good works of God's elect in effecting these timely deliverance.

In this essay, we take an overview look at four providential deliverances (salvation) presented to us in the scriptures. God in his providence works in the daily lives of his children. Sometimes he delivers us from circumstances either to save our lives or to deliver our lives from what we would consider to be adverse circumstances. I invite the reader to

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consider the faith and works of God's obedient people that is demonstrated during these scriptural episodes.

The first episode we will look at is found in Matt. 8:23-27, "And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And he said unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then, he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. But, the men marveled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!"

The second episode is Matt. 14:25-31, "And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou; bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

The third episode we present is Luke 18:35-43, "And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging: and hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. And he cried, saying, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me. And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried so much the more, Thou son of David, have mercy on me: and Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him: and when he was come near, he asked him, saying, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee. And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God: and all the people when they saw it, gave praise unto God."

The fourth episode is found in Heb. 11:7, "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."

While I only chose four episodes the old and New Testament are full of such episodes of God delivering his people with such timely deliverance. I marvel when I hear some people say they don't believe in timely salvation. Are they reading the same bible I am reading? The fact is God is not only the God who has wrought our eternal salvation from sin, but he is the God who is with us in the midst of our lives and in the circumstances of our lives. He is not a God afar off, but one who is near. He has told us to cast our care upon him for he careth for us. If we would stop to consider God's providential mercy and grace upon each of us then we are drawn to the conclusion that we have been saved many

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times from many adverse circumstances and trials and tribulations in our lives. Furthermore, when we read of such deliverance in the scripture and consider our experiences of life and God's dealings with us in providence, then it encourages us to "lift up our eyes unto the hills from whence cometh our help" when we come face to face with future trials and trying circumstances.

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New Birth

The New Birth - Part I

The scriptures have a lot to say about being born again and the consequent effects upon those who are born again. Many erroneous ideas have been put forth about what man must/can do to cause himself to be born again. One highly popular evangelist wrote a book on the subject of how man can be born again. The problem with such concepts is that they simply are not true. The plain biblical teaching is that God is sovereign in bringing about the new birth. By the term, sovereign, we mean "independent of all others." God is under no dependency on man to bring about the new birth. God does not cause anyone to be born again because of their actions of belief, works, or following a prescribed course of action.

John 3:8 describes God's sovereignty in causing someone to be born again. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whether it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." Just as God is sovereign, the wind is also independent of the actions of man. "The wind bloweth where it listeth" - No man has ever had the power or knowledge to direct or control the direction or force by which the wind blows. Likewise man does not have the power or knowledge to bring about the new birth. "And thou hearest the sound thereof" - While we have the evidence of the wind's blowing, this knowledge is not a cause of the wind's blowing, but is an effect of the wind's blowing. Likewise there are many evidences of the new birth given unto us to assure us of that birth, but those evidences are an effect of the birth and not the cause. "But canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth" we are not able to pinpoint a place on earth and say the wind originates here, or pinpoint a place on earth and say this is the final destination of the wind. Thus we conclude the wind is totally independent of man in its blowing, its direction, its origination and its destination. Likewise the Holy Spirit is totally independent of man in bringing about the new birth. The new birth takes place when and where the Holy Spirit chooses. Likewise it is God's choice and not man's choice as to who will be born again and who won't be born again.

Likewise John 3:6 teaches us the sovereignty of God in the new birth and affirms that the new birth is not a cooperative endeavor between God and man: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." In our natural birth it is the actions of the flesh that brought about our natural birth into the world. Even here, it was not our actions, but our parent's actions that brought about our natural birth. By parallel, the spiritual birth is brought about by the Holy Spirit. Again it is the actions of the Holy Spirit that brings about this spiritual birth and not our actions. The Lord said in John 6:63, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." Now if I in my flesh could do something to help bring about the new birth, then there would be a profit in the flesh, but the Lord affirms that there is no profit in the flesh, but that the Holy Spirit does the quickening (new birth).

Similarly, John 1:11-13 teaches us that God is sovereign in bringing about the new birth: "He came unto his own...even to them that believe on his name: Which were born,

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not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." This passage teaches the Sovereignty of God in causing us to be born again by first ruling all other possible causes. First, man's belief is ruled out as a cause for the passage shows that the birth took place prior to man's belief. This leaves us with the only logical conclusion that belief cannot be a cause of the new birth. Secondly, the new birth is not the result of a blood relationship to Abraham or anyone else. Thirdly, the new birth is not the result of the will or desire of the flesh. Man, by nature, does not desire to be born again. Fourthly, the new birth is not the result of man's will or choice. Thus, man does not choose to be born again and because of his choice the new birth comes about. Therefore, having ruled out all other possible causes of the new birth, John simply states that the new birth is "of God." While there are other scriptures, which show God's sovereignty in bringing about the new birth, these sufficiently prove God's independence of man in causing anyone to be born again.

The New Birth - Part II

In our last installment we looked at the sovereign work of God in bringing about the new (spiritual) birth in an individual. In this installment we will look at the condition of man prior to being born again and see his total inability to do anything to bring about the new birth.

Ephesians 2:1, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins..." The word, "quicken," means to make alive." When we "were dead in trespasses and sins" we were "made alive" spiritually. Our condition prior to being born again was "dead in trespasses and sins." Verses 2 and 3 describe this condition of being "dead in trespasses and sins," "Wherein in time past (i.e., prior to being born again) ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath even as others." When we "were dead in trespasses and sins," we "walked according to the course of this world." The course of this world is abomination to God. The scriptures say that whosoever is the friend of "this world" is the enemy of God. Thus, we conclude that when we were dead in trespasses and sins that we were the "enemies of God."

Secondly, we followed after the "prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Jesus is the "prince of peace." Satan is the "prince of the power of the air." We, being dead in trespasses and sins walked after Satan and had the spirit of Satan working in us as he now works in the children of disobedience.

Thirdly, we had our "conversation" or life style "in the lusts of our flesh..." Paul said "that in me that is in my flesh dwelleth no good thing." "The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the father but is of the world" (1 John 2:16). For our life style to be after fleshly lust is to live selfishly and carnally.

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Fourthly, we "fulfilled the desires of the flesh and of the mind." Thus we weren't just walking after them, but we were actually doing those things.

Fifthly, our nature was the same nature that the children of wrath now possess, i.e., we "were by nature the children of wrath even as others." This was our condition before we were born again.

We have described in Romans 3:9-18 our condition under the law of sin and death from which bondage we were delivered by the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:2). It is said of man before the new birth that "There is none righteous, no, not one." Thus we conclude that before we were born again we were in our fleshly state totally unrighteous before God. Secondly, we are told that "there is none that understandeth." I Corinthians 2:14 says that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness to him: neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned." Without the new birth we cannot discern spiritual things, we cannot know them and we cannot understand them. We must be born again to understand the gospel, to know God, and to discern spiritually the word of God.

Thirdly, we read where "there is none that seeketh after God." Prior to being born again, no man will nor can seek after God. How foolish it is that men will say that seeking after God is a prerequisite condition for being born again. Contrariwise a man must be born again in order to be able to seek after God.

Fourthly, "there is none that doeth good, no not one." Prior to being born again a man cannot do good. Is being baptized, or believing the gospel, or repenting, or believing on the Lord Jesus Christ doing good? If it is, then man must be born again prior to doing any of those things.

Finally, we read that "there is no fear of God before their eyes." A man who does not fear God will not come to God. Therefore, a man cannot come to God prior to being born again.

Jesus said in John 6:63, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." If I through preaching the gospel or you through believing the gospel can bring about the new birth, then there is a profit in our fleshly undertakings and the Lord was wrong. He never has nor will make a mistake. His spoken voice gives life, not our deeds! We conclude with John 5:25, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live." When we were "dead in trespasses and sins we heard the life giving voice of the Son of God speaking spiritual life into our very being and thus we now live spiritually. Having that spiritual life we can understand spiritual things, seek after God, know God, do good, worship God, fear God, believe the gospel, repent, and become the disciple of Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift!

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The New Birth - Part III

The new birth is compared to or said to be many things including: resurrection, circumcision, and creation. In this installment we will look at the new birth as a spiritual "creation."

First, the bible tells us that God is the only creator as follows:

- a. Ephesians 3:9, "...who created all things by Jesus Christ."
 - b. Colossians 1:16, "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible...all things were created by him, and for him."
 - c. Revelation 4:11, "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."
- Since God is the only creator, thus, by inference man has created nothing, nor is he capable of creating anything.

Secondly, while God completed his natural creation in six days and rested on the seventh, his creation of spiritual things continues as evidenced by Revelation 4:11 where it is said that for God's "pleasure they are and were created." The word "are" indicates a now creation whereas the word "were" indicates a past creation. Natural creation is past, spiritual creation continues.

Third, those who are born again are said to be the created workmanship of God in Ephesians 2:10, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." In Ephesians 4:24 we read, "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Thus, we conclude that the "new man" is the creation of God. In the new birth the inner or new man is created in righteousness and true holiness by our faithful Creator.

Fourth, those who are born again are said to be new creatures as follows:

- a. II Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature..."
- b. Galatians 6:15, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." Furthermore, the use of the term, creature, in the New Testament has reference to those who are born again in all but a few scriptures in which natural creation is indicated by the context.

Fifth, when we are born again (created) we are given a new set of senses. We are told in I Corinthians 2:9, 14 that the natural senses and the natural man cannot discern spiritual things. It is only after we have been born again (created) that we are enabled to have senses that can discern spiritual things. Eight times in the gospels and eight times in the book of Revelation we are told, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear..." These verses have reference to spiritual ears for we cannot discern spiritual things through the natural man. Also we are told that "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Thus it takes spiritual eyes to perceive that spiritual kingdom. In addition, since God is a Spirit we must have spiritual feeling in order to "feel after him" (Acts 17:27). Furthermore, to "taste the heavenly gift" (Hebrews 6:4) and to "taste the good word of

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God" (Hebrews 6:5) and to "taste that the Lord is gracious" (I Peter 2:3) takes spiritual taste buds that we come into possession of when we are born again (created).

Finally, to perceive the odor of a sweet smell from Christian sacrifices (Philippians 4:18) we must possess a spiritual nose. In conclusion, God alone and without the help or assistance of man creates us spiritually (causes us to be born again). We must have been created spiritually in order to perceive spiritual things. Thus to hear and respond to the gospel we must have been born again. For these reasons we may conclude that the gospel is for those already born again and not for those who haven't been born again.

The New Birth - Voice of the Lord

The 29th Psalm is all about the voice of the Lord. In verse 4 the psalmist states, "The 'voice' of the Lord is powerful..." From the very beginning of the bible we see the power in God's voice manifest as he said, "Let there be light: and there was light." By simply speaking,

God created the natural universe in which we live! Now that is power! In contrast, the voice of man can either hurt or soothe the eardrum, but it cannot bring anything into existence. Only God's voice has the power to create.

God's voice gives life to the dead. When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, it was written that Jesus "cried with a loud 'voice,' Lazarus come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes..." Jesus with his voice spake the name of Lazarus and he came forth from the dead. In 1 Thes. 4:16 we read about the resurrection of our bodies from the grave, "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the 'voice' of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with him in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Similarly this power of Jesus' voice in raising the dead bodies from the grave is written about in John 5:28, 29, "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his 'voice,' and shall come forth..." Thus we must conclude that the efficient cause of the resurrection of the dead bodies in the grave is the "voice" of the Son of God!

Before we are born of the Spirit of God (born again) the bible describes us as being dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1). When we were dead in trespasses and sins we had no spiritual life. As God is the creator of all things, it is He who has "created us in Christ Jesus unto good works." This creation is the new birth. Please note, as follows, that it is the 'voice' of the Son of God and not the voice of man that brings Spiritual life into the dead faculties of our heart and soul:

a. John 5:25, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the 'voice of the Son of God:' and they that hear shall live."

b. John 6:63, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that 'I speak' unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."

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c. John 10:16, "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear 'my voice;' and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."

d. John 10:27, 28, "My sheep hear 'my voice' and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

To the above I make the following observations:

a. It is the "voice" of the Son of God that gives life to those who were before spiritually dead.

b. The flesh does not assist in giving spiritual life because "the flesh profiteth nothing." Thus the preacher, teacher, friend, or parent cannot give eternal life nor can my actions as a fleshly being help cause the new birth.

c. All those to whom the "voice" of the Son of God is spoken hear and are given eternal life.

d. All those that the Lord speaks life into are preserved from perishing.

Now we may ask ourselves the question, "Have I heard the voice of the Son of God and what did it sound like?" When Elijah the prophet fled from the wicked queen Jezebel, the Lord told him in 1 Kings 19:11-13, "And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a 'still small voice.' And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle..." A still voice would make no naturally audible sound. Yet the still voice of the Lord is more powerful than the great wind, earthquake, and fire! God brings forth the new birth with a still small voice that our natural ears cannot hear. Yet we can know we have been born again by the evidences in our lives. This we shall address in another essay.

Finally we read in Isa. 55:10, 11 of the certainty of the new birth to those to whom God speaks, "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." When God speaks his word into the dead faculties of the heart and soul, it does not return to God void, but it accomplishes what God pleases (the new birth) and it prospers in the thing whereto he sent it.

Praise God for his powerful still small voice that caused us to be born again.

The New Birth - Love in the Heart

When God causes us to be born again several things happen to us. One of the things that happened to us is that God wrote his laws in our heart and our mind. Several verses of scripture point to this which we quote as follows:

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A. Heb. 8:10, "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God and they shall be to me a people."

B. Heb. 10:16, "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them."

C. II Cor. 3:3, "Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart."

D. Rom. 2:15, "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."

From the above scriptures several conclusions can be drawn. First, the laws of God are written into both the heart and the mind. Secondly, it is God who does the writing and not man. Thirdly, these laws written in our heart and mind serve as the basis or foundation for our covenant worship of God. The foundation of the law worship or service was the ten commandments written on two tables of stone. The foundation of our worship under the gospel is the laws of God written in our hearts and mind. Fourthly, these laws written in our heart and mind along with the conscience God gave us serve as the basis for the self-examining courtroom of our heart and mind.

We may ask ourselves, "Just what laws did God write in our hearts and minds?" I Thes. 4:9 seems to be the key to answering this question, "But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another." Clearly God has taught us to love one another and not man. Clearly, this was a direct teaching from God to man without any intermediary (preacher). I John 3:14, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Love for the brethren is a direct evidence of the new

birth. Anyone who loves the brethren has been born again! Therefore, we know that God has written love into our hearts and mind in the new birth. Matt. 22:37-40 ties down for us that love toward God is to be manifest in our heart, soul, and mind, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Thus God writes these two great laws in

our hearts and mind and as a result we are able to love God and our neighbor. Without these laws written in our hearts and mind we would be unable to love either God or our neighbor. James 2:8 says, "If ye fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well." Rom. 13:8 reads, "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law."

Finally, we read in Rom. 2:14, 15 "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

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themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts. The basis of our love toward God and toward our neighbor is founded on the laws of love that God wrote in our hearts and mind when he caused us to be born again.

In our next essay we will look at the subject of repentance and its relationship to the new birth.

The New Birth and Repentance

The scriptures teach that when people are born again, God writes his laws within their hearts and their minds. We quote the following seven passages that prove this principle:

A. Psm. 37:30, 31 - "The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment. The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide."

B. Psm. 40:8 - "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart."

C. Jer. 31:33 - "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 laws in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people."

D. Heb. 8:10 - "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people."

E. Heb. 10:16 - "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them."

F. II Cor. 3:3 - "Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart."

G. Rom. 2:14, 15 - "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."

We draw several conclusions from the above seven passages:

A. God writes his laws directly into the hearts and minds of his children, there are no intermediators.

B. These laws written in the hearts and minds of God's people serve as the foundation of the new covenant of worship.

C. These laws manifest themselves in the lives of God's people.

D. These laws serve as the foundation of a court room set up in the hearts and minds of God's people.

Upon the last conclusion we expand using Rom. 2:14, 15. There can be no trial or judgment without a law. No one can be tried for breaking a law when there is no law. In a court room there are laws, witnesses, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and a judge. First,

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the laws are in the hearts and minds of God's people. Secondly, God has given us a conscience whose purpose is to be a faithful witness. Thirdly, our thoughts thru either accusing us or excusing us serve as both the prosecutor and the defense attorney. Finally, our hearts serve as the judge (I John 4:20).

God has built within each of his children a court room. The trials within our heart and mind serve to convict us and lead us to repentance. First, we are convicted of our own sinful condition which causes us to see ourselves as condemned before a just and holy God. Afterwards, we are enabled, by faith in Christ's atoning blood, to see Jesus as our Savior. Thus the court room of our heart and mind has served to both convict us and to justify us. For an example of these principles I encourage the reader to look at Isaiah's experience in Isaiah Chapter 6.

Secondly, this court room serves to convict us of individual sins, thus causing Godly sorrow within us. This in turn leads us to repent (II Cor. 7:10, "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of.") We do not repent in order to be born again or to become a child of God, but we repent because we are born again!

Finally, we ask ourselves, "What laws are written in our hearts and minds when we are born again?" I Thes. 4:9, tells us that God teaches us to love one another, "But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another." Similarly, I John 4:7 reads, "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." Again, I John 3:14 says, "We know we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." From the above we can conclude that love comes from God and is placed within us when we are born again. God teaches us to love directly by writing the laws of love within our hearts. The Lord taught us that there are two great laws of love in Matt. 22:37-40, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. Rom. 13:8, 20 teaches us that "love is the fulfilling of the law." Likewise, Gal. 5:14 reads, "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Paul told Timothy in I Tim. 1:5, "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." Finally, James wrote in James 2:8, "If ye fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well."

On the negative side we can conclude that before a man is born again, he will not love his neighbor or God, he will be totally selfish in his actions, he will have no conviction of sin or sins, and he will not repent or believe that Christ is his savior. The gospel is foolishness to him (I Cor. 1:18).

Conversely, the man that is born again, having the laws of love in his heart, will love both God and his neighbor, will manifest unselfish love, will be convicted of sin and of

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individual sins, will be led to repent, rejoice in the gospel of his salvation, and by faith see Jesus as his savior.

Only One Way to be Born Again

How many ways are there for being born again? Were people in the Old Testament days born-again in a different way than in these New Testament days? Are those who die in infancy or those who are mentally incapable of responding to the gospel born-again in a different way than those who do hear the gospel? Are people who never have an opportunity to hear the gospel born-again in a different way than those who hear the gospel? We read in John 3:8, "The wind bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. In a previous installment we noted that this scripture taught the sovereignty of God in bringing about the new birth. It also teaches us that "every one" is born of the Spirit in the same way. There is no such thing as some being born of the Spirit in one way and others being born-again in a different way.

I want to look at five examples of people who were born again at different times and under different circumstances. It will be noted that they were all born-again by the grace of God without man's help or cooperation.

Let us first look at David. David said in Psms. 22:9, 10, "But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me to hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly." Based on the above we know that God was David's God while still in his mother's womb and that he was made to hope while still a suckling infant. David was indeed born of the Spirit at a very early age. Due to this fact, the Spiritual birth had to be by the sovereign work of God without any human instrumentality. Remember our text says, "so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Thus we are all born of the Spirit in the same way that David was.

Second, we look at John the Baptist. The angel Gabriel prophesied to Zacharias concerning John in Luke 1:15, "For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb." Also we read in Luke 1:41, 44, "And it came to pass, that, when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost...For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy."

Please note that John was filled with the Holy Spirit in his mother's womb and was filled with "joy." "Joy" is the second of the 9-fold fruit of the Spirit listed in Gal. 5:22 and its presence proves John was born again while yet in his mother's womb. John's spiritual birth had to be by the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit without any human instrumentality. Remember our text says, "so is every one that is born of the Spirit." In the same way that John was born of the Spirit, so are we born of the Spirit.

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Third, we look at the thief on the cross. At one time both thieves were railing upon Jesus (Matt. 27:44), but something happened to one of the thieves as he hang on the cross, for we read in Luke 23:39-43, "And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly: for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Certainly a fundamental change had come over this thief who went from railing on Jesus to praising him and recognizing him as Lord during the first three hours he hand on the cross. This change was not brought about by any human instrumentality, but was the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit. Remember our text says, "so is every one that is born of the Spirit." We are born of the Spirit in the same manner that the thief on the cross was born of the Spirit.

Fourth, we read in Acts 9:1-6 about Saul of Tarsus, "And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priests, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecuteth thou me? And he said, Who art thou Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecuteth: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished, said, Lord what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." We can all recognize that Saul went from being the church's worst persecutor to being the church's strongest defender based on what happened to him on the Damascus road. This change in Saul's life was not brought about by human instrumentality, but by the sovereign work of a Sovereign God. Remember our text says, "so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

Finally, in Acts 10 we read of a Gentile by the name of Cornelius. In the last part of chapter 10 we read about how Cornelius and his household and friends heard the gospel preached for the first time. However, prior to hearing the gospel we have the following evidences that Cornelius was already born of the Spirit prior to ever hearing the gospel:

- A. In verse 2 Cornelius is called a devout man.
- B. In verse 2 Cornelius is said to "fear" God.
- C. In verse 2 we find that Cornelius gave much alms to the people.
- D. In verse 2 Cornelius prayed to God always.
- E. In verse 4 we find that Cornelius' prayers and alms came up for a memorial before God
- F. In verse 15, God said he had already cleansed Cornelius and the Gentiles with him.

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G. In verse 22, Cornelius is called a just man. Now all the above was said of Cornelius prior to his ever hearing the gospel. By the evidences we are forced to conclude that Cornelius was born again without the use of human instrumentality, but by the sovereign work of a sovereign God. Again our text says, "so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Our grand conclusion must be that every one that is born of the Spirit is born of the Spirit in the same way that David, John, the thief on the cross, Saul of Tarsus, and Cornelius were. That is by the grace of God without human instrumentality. Praise be to God for what he has done for us.

Relationship Between Belief and New Birth

In this essay we will look at the relationship between belief and the new birth.

Most people today are taught and believe that you must hear and believe the gospel in order to be born again. In a cause/effect relationship, they think that "belief" is the "cause" and that the "new birth" is the "effect." This concept is to them supported by an erroneous belief in what John 3:16 teaches. In truth, the "new birth" is the "cause" and "belief" is the "effect" of the new birth.

When we are unsure what a person is teaching, it is best to go to him and let him explain what he is teaching. We will let John explain which comes first, belief or the new birth. For this we will consider several verses of scripture in the book of John as follows:

A. John 1:11-13...to them that believe on his name: which were born...of God." For the sake of brevity we didn't quote all the above passage, but please note "believe" is in the present tense, while "were born" is in the past tense. Grammatically, therefore, the birth must precede the belief; i.e., they were born of God prior to believing.

B. John 3:36, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life..." Again, "believeth" is present tense and "hath" is past tense. Thus everlasting life (new birth) precedes belief.

C. John 5:24, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." Once again, "heareth" and "believeth" are present tense and "hath" is past tense. Hence, everlasting life comes before we can hear or believe. Thus we must be born again prior to "hearing" or "believing." Hearing and believing are evidences of the new birth.

D. John 6:47, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." You show me someone who believes on Jesus and I will show you someone who already has everlasting life.

E. John 8:43, 47, "Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word." "He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." Clearly, you must first be of God (born again) before you can hear God's words (gospel).

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F. John 10:26-28, "But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." In this passage the sheep are those to whom Christ gives eternal life. Those who are not given eternal life do not believe. Only those who are given eternal life believe, thus belief is the evidence of the fact that God has given us eternal life (new birth).

G. John 13:37, 38, "But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord who hath believed our report? And to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" It is not the miracles we see with our natural eyes that enable or entice us to believe, but it is the miracle performed within us (new birth) that enables or causes us to believe. God must first cause us to be born again (reveal his holy arm <strength> within us) and then we can "believe the report."

H. 1 John 5:1, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." Once again, "believeth" is in the present tense and "is born" is in the past tense, thus again showing us that the new birth precedes belief and in this case "belief that Jesus is the Christ."

Plainly it can be seen from the several verses quoted that John taught that the new birth comes before belief. Thus the question should be asked, "What then does John 3:16 teach?" One thing it teaches us is the eternal security of the believer. Believing doesn't cause us to get eternal life, but Christ died that we may have eternal life. Since eternal life (new birth) precedes believing, then I may conclude that any person that believes already has eternal life and that Christ died for them in order that they may have eternal life.

In our next installation we will look at the evidences of the new birth.

Evidences of the New Birth

In the last several essays, we have proven conclusively that God is sovereign in bringing about the new or spiritual birth in one of his children. We have shown that we are born spiritually when Christ speaks spiritual life with HIS voice into our very heart and soul.

Knowledge of God's sovereignty in causing one to be born again should cause each of us to seek the answer to a critical question: "Am I born again." If I am born again, heaven will be my eternal home and all the promises of God to his people are precious and sure to me. How can I know if I have been born again? The bible gives us several incontrovertible evidences of the new birth. If I find any one of the evidences in my life then I have conclusive proof that I have been born again. It isn't necessary to be able to identify all the evidences, any one of the evidences is sufficient to identify us as a born again child of God.

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In this essay we will look at seven of the evidences of the spiritual birth. While there are several more evidences, these seven are perhaps the easiest to conclusively identify in our lives.

First, love toward the people of God is an evidence of our new birth as stated by the following verses of scripture:

A. 1 John 3:14 - "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death."

B. 1 John 4:7 - "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God."

C. 1 John 4:12 - "No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us."

Second, doing that which is right is an evidence of our new birth as shown by the following scriptures:

A. 1 John 2:29 - "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that everyone that doeth righteousness is born of him."

B. 1 John 2:3-5 - "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him."

C. 1 John 3:7 - "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous."

Third, if we have ever been led by the Spirit of God we can rest assured that we have been born again as Rom. 8:14-17 teaches us, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear: but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be we suffer with him, that we may be glorified together."

Fourth, growth in Christian virtues is an evidence of our spiritual birth. II Peter 1:5-10 proves this principle: "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure."

Fifth, if we have felt the chastening rod of God in our lives then we are assured of our spiritual birth as the following verses prove:

A. Rev. 3:19 - "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent."

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B. Job 5:17 - "Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty."

C. Prov. 3:11, 12 - "My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, neither be weary of his correction: For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth."

D. Heb. 12:5, 6 - "And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him; For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

Sixth, confessing Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is an evidence of our spiritual birth as the following two passages prove:

A. 1 John 4:1-3 - "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God."

B. 1 John 4:15 - "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God."

Seventh, belief is an evidence of our having been born again:

A. 1 John 5:1 - "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God."

B. 1 John 5:9-11 - "If ye receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son.

C. 1 John 5:13 - "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."

Thus the scriptures say "by their fruits ye shall know them. A good tree bringeth forth good fruit." We can know with assurance that we have been born again by looking at the evidence of that spiritual birth in our lives. May God be praised for his unspeakable works and for his manifold assurances toward us.

Spiritual Circumcision of the Heart

In this essay we will look at the "new birth" as a spiritual "circumcision" of the heart.

In the Old Testament (Gen. 17:7-14) we read where God established his covenant with Abraham and his seed after him for an everlasting covenant and gave them the ordinance of circumcision as a "token" of the covenant between God and Abraham. Every man child was to be circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin when he was eight days old. Thus circumcision identified them with the covenant God made with Abraham and his seed.

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In Rom. 2:28, 29 we read of the "spiritual circumcision of the heart" as follows: "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."

In Col. 2:11 we read how this spiritual circumcision of the heart takes place, "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ." There are several points we wish to make about

this "spiritual circumcision of the heart." First, this circumcision is performed by Christ and it is done without hands. This is a direct operation performed by Jesus Christ upon the sinner's heart and it is done without human instrumentality.

Second, as the ordinance of natural circumcision was a token of the covenant God made with Abraham and his seed, so spiritual circumcision of the heart is tied to the eternal covenant of redemption as set forth in Rom. 8:28-30. It is in the process of "God's calling" that the covenant children have their hearts circumcised.

Third, as natural circumcision identified the recipient with the covenant promises made to Abraham and his seed, so spiritual circumcision of the heart in the new birth identifies the recipient with God's covenant promises in the covenant of redemption. It is in the evidences of the new birth that we are able to identify ourselves and others with those covenant promises of election, predestination, justification, and glorification.

Fourth, as in natural circumcision there was a cutting away of the foreskin of the flesh, so in spiritual circumcision there is a "putting off the body of the sins of the flesh." When we are born again we begin to realize we are sinners, but we are also brought to understand that Jesus died to put away our sins. As a result of the new birth we see our sins put away by Jesus covenant work of redemption on the cross. He was made to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God by him (II Cor. 5:21).

Fifth, as natural circumcision was performed on the eighth day and eight is the bible number associated with new beginnings, so spiritual circumcision of the heart is a new beginning for those thus circumcised. II Cor. 5:17, "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away: behold all things are become new." When we are born again, we are a "new beginning" spiritually. Whereas, before, we had no spiritual life and were incapable of understanding spiritual things and had no desire for the things of God, afterwards, we have spiritual life and thus are capable of comprehending spiritual things and desire the things of God.

Sixth, spiritual circumcision is performed on the heart. It involves a change of the heart (seat of emotions). After the new birth we have a heart that greatly desires and longs for the things of God. It cries out "abba father" and is emotionally tied to the covenant work of Jesus Christ.

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Seventh, spiritual circumcision of the heart makes us an "inward Jew." We are now associated with the people of God through an inward work of grace on our heart performed by the Holy Spirit. The word Judah means "praise." We are now the "praise" of God not through our works but as a result of God's inward work. Furthermore, as inward Jews we should give "praise" to God for his unspeakable gift.

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Election

Foreknowledge of God

In studying the covenant of redemption recorded for us in Rom. 8:28-30 we are told of a people that God foreknew. This is a special and limited aspect of the foreknowledge of God. In future essays, we will study at length this special aspect of God's foreknowledge. In this essay, we want to consider a broad view of God's foreknowledge.

David in writing about the depth of the knowledge of God declared in Ps. 139:6 "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it." Who can know or understand the depth or width or height of the knowledge of God. We as creatures cannot attain unto it. Peter declared of Jesus in John 21:17, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest I love thee." His disciples said unto him in John 16:30, "Now are we sure that thou knowest all things..." Since God knows all things, then he knows all things past, present, and future. The depth of his knowledge boggle our finite minds. David said, "Thou knowest my down sittings and mine uprisings, thou understandest my thought afar off." Thus, we are assured that God knows all about us in the very details of our lives. He knows when we sit down and when we rise up. He even knows our thoughts before we even think them!

The statement of God's knowledge in Heb. 4:12, 13 causes us to fear and marvel all at the same time: "...and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." The scriptures say that even the thought of foolishness is sin and since God discerns our thoughts and since he knows all about us and nothing can be hidden from him and since all our sins are brought to judgment before God therefore we are made to fear. However, God's foreknowledge is a comfort because when Christ died for our sins, he died for all of our sins. It is God's foreknowledge that enables him to know all of our sins, even before we were born, and laden them upon Jesus to redeem us from our sins.

Next, the foreknowledge of God assures us concerning the security of the physical universe in which we live: Heb. 1:3 reads in part, "...and upholding all things by the word of his power..." God's foreknowledge of all things works hand in hand with his upholding all things by the word of his power. God is never "surprised" or "blind sided" by anything. The harmonic interactions of all the heavenly bodies is testimony of God's power and foreknowledge and assures that we won't be "wiped out" by a passing comet, for instance.

In addition, God's foreknowledge assures us of God's providential blessings and watch care in our lives. Since God knows all things, he knows all our circumstances of life and all about our environment. Matt. 10:29, 30 declare this principle: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered." He knows the things we need even before or if we ask him. His foreknowledge assures us that what we ask, he is able to provide. Furthermore, when we are faced with trials or difficulties that seem beyond our ability to

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handle the fact that God's knowledge far exceeds ours and that his power is unlimited is a great comfort to us. Also God's foreknowledge is an assurance to us of our salvation and that God's promises will be fulfilled. The following verses testify these principles:

A. Acts 15:18 - "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world."

B. I Cor. 2:7 - "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory."

C. Isa. 46:10 - "Declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."

D. Acts 2:23, 24 - "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it."

E. Acts 4:27, 28 - "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, are gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." Yes, God knows all of his works and they all will be performed as God purposed. All of his promises are yea and amen. He has saved his people from their sins and their eternal destiny is secured and we are preserved in Christ Jesus. There will be no surprises, slip ups or failures because God knew all things before they ever come to pass. He will do all his pleasure.

In our next issue, we will begin to examine God's special appointment of a people to be his (whom he foreknew).

Foreknow

The covenant of redemption reads in Rom. 8:28-30, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

In our last essay, we considered God's foreknowledge of all things. In this essay we will look at a limited specific aspect of God's foreknowledge, i.e., "whom he did foreknow." The scriptures tell us that God knows all things, therefore he knows all things past, present, and future. Thus, he knows about all people who ever have or ever will live on the face of the earth. However, the "foreknow" in the covenant of redemption is not speaking about God knowing about all people, but is speaking about a very specific portion of those who have or will live on the earth.

We read what Jesus said in Matt. 7:21-23, "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. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy

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name? And in thy name cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." The Lord told these who were claiming to prophesy in his name, cast out devils, in his name, and to do many wonderful works in his name that he never knew them. This certainly is not to say that he never had knowledge of them or that he never knew about what they had claimed to have done. However, it is teaching us that he never appointed them to do the works they were claiming they had done. Thus, the Lord said, "I never knew you."

The Lord knows about all people and all things, though he has not appointed all people and everything that comes to pass. As pertaining to things, the scriptures say that "God is not the author of confusion." Certainly, he knows about confusion and sin, but he is not the cause of confusion and sin.

Our understanding of how God foreknew a people is illustrated for us in Jer. 1:5 when the Lord said unto Jeremiah, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." As we have pointed out before God knows about all people but he has only appointed some. God knew Jeremiah before he ever formed him in the belly. God knew him in a special way in that God had appointed him to be a "prophet unto the nations." This appointment took place before

Jeremiah had any existence except in the mind and purpose of God. Those that God foreknew in the covenant of redemption are those that God appointed before the world began to be his! Eph. 1:4 reads, "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." Thus, God made choice of a people before the world began to be his. In future essays we will study on what basis God appointed a people to be his, i.e., works, faith, or grace. We will also consider that God gave these he foreknew to Christ to redeem and wrote their names in the Lamb's book of life and that they were placed "in Christ" to fulfill God's covenant and look at the consequences of these actions of God.

We close this essay with a quote from I Peter 1:1, 2, "Peter an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you and peace be multiplied."

Elect on What Basis?

In this essay we will consider on what basis God foreknew or chose a people to be his covenant people.

One idea is that God looked down through the annals of time and saw who would do good or who would accept him or seek after him and thus chose them on that basis. God did indeed look down from heaven, but what he saw is recorded for us in Ps. 14:2, 3 and

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Ps. 53:2, 3 as follows: "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one." (Ps. 14:2, 3) The fact is that because of the total depravity of man there is none that had the capability of doing good or of seeking after God until God imparts a new spiritual nature within in the new birth. Thus we see that of all mankind there was none that understood, or that sought after God or that did good. Thus God's choice of a people could not be on the basis of their understanding and seeking God or of their doing something good.

Furthermore, that God's choice of a people is not of works is further illustrated for us in Rom. 9:9-13, "For this is the word of promise, At this time I will come, and Sarah shall have a son. And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac;

(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Based on this passage we make the following observations:

1. God's choice of Jacob over Esau was according to God's purpose of election.
2. God's election is not based on works, either good or evil.
3. God's choice was made before the children were capable of doing any works.

Again in Rom. 11:5, 6 we are told that God's choosing of a people is not based on works as follows: "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work." Thus we are told that God's choice of a people is by grace and not works. Furthermore, we see the impossibility of mixing grace and work in this choice. It is not part grace and part work. It is either all grace or all works and he tells us plainly that it is all grace. Now grace is defined as the "unmerited favor of God." Thus those chosen have done nothing to merit God's choosing them!

Finally we are told in Rom. 9:14-16 that God's choice of a people is not based on man's will (choice) or man's efforts: "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." From this passage we draw the following conclusions:

1. God's choice of a people manifests God's sovereignty.
2. God's choice of a people is pure and simply mercy and compassion toward them.
3. God's choice of a people is not based on their will or choice.
4. God's choice of a people is not based on their efforts (running).
5. It is not unrighteous for God to make a choice based on his sovereign will.

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In conclusion, God's choice of a people is by grace (unmerited favor) alone. God was under no obligation to choose any one, but he did and we should be extremely thankful that he did.

In our next essay we will look at how the elect were given to Christ and when and for what purpose they were given to Christ.

Elect Given to Christ

In this essay we will look at how the elect were given to Christ and when and for what purpose they were given to Christ.

First that the Father gave the elect to his Son is evidenced by the following verses of scripture:

A. Matt. 1:21 - "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.

B. John 6:37-39 - "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day."

C. John 10:28, 29 - "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

D. John 17:1, 2 - "...Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him."

E. Heb. 2:13 - "And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me." These verses of scripture are sufficient to prove that the Father gave to the Son a people.

Now let us look to when this gift was made. In Eph. 1:4 we read, "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." This verse teaches us that God made choice of a people to be his before the foundation of the world and gave them to Christ in covenant at that time. These then are the ones that God foreknew in Rom. 8:29.

Next, let us consider for what purposes the elect were given to Christ in covenant before the world began. In looking back at the scriptures we have already quoted we can make the following observations:

A. The elect were given to Christ that "he may save his people from their sins." (Matt. 1:21)

B. The elect were given to Christ by the Father that they all will come to him. (John 6:37)

C. The elect were given to Christ by the Father that none of them be "cast out." (John 6:37)

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D. The elect were given to Christ by the Father that none of them be lost. (John 6:39)

E. The elect were given to Christ by the Father that they all be raised up again at the last day. (John 6:39)

F. The elect were given to Christ by the Father that they all be preserved in Christ Jesus. (John 10:29)

G. The elect were given to Christ by the Father that he give eternal life to all the elect. (John 17:2)

H. The elect were given to Christ by the Father that all the elect should be holy and without blame before God in love. (Eph. 1:4).

Eph. 1:4-7 reads: 4 "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: 5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. 7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;" Also, Eph. 1:11 reads: 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:

Based on the above the elect were given to Christ by the Father that:

I. The elect be adopted into the family of God. (Eph. 1:5)

J. The elect be made accepted by God in Christ. (Eph. 1:6)

K. The elect have redemption through the blood of Christ, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of God's grace. (Eph. 1:7)

L. The elect obtain an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. (Eph. 1:11)

M. The elect should be created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. (Eph. 2:10: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.")

In all of the above we see where the Father gave the elect to Christ in covenant for the work that Christ would do on their behalf and thus procure all the blessings reserved for them in the covenant of redemption.

Lamb's Book of Life

We read of a time in the 10th chapter of Luke when the Lord sent out seventy disciples beside the twelve apostles to teach and preach in the cities of Judea. When they returned they were rejoicing because the devils were subject unto them through the Lord's name. Among the things the Lord told them after their return was, "Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." Among the lessons this teaches us are:

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A. There are those whose names are written in heaven.

B. To have ones name written in heaven is a cause of great rejoicing.

Next, we may ask ourselves when were those names written in heaven? The answer to this question is found in Rev. 13:8 and Rev. 17:8 as follows:

A. Rev. 13:8 - "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."

B. Rev. 17:8 - "The beast that thou sawest was, and is not;...and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world..." Thus we may conclude that there are those whose names were not written in the Lamb's book of life from the foundation of the world, which in turn, infers there are those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life from the foundation of the world. Since the Lord (Lamb of God) in covenant stood slain from the foundation of the world, then those who were chosen in Christ (Eph. 1:4) had their names in covenant written in the Lamb's book of life before the foundation of the world.

Furthermore, we now consider some of the blessings that are specifically tied to the Lamb's book of life:

A. Luke 10:20 teaches us it is a cause to rejoice.

B. Since the Lamb of God taketh away the sin of the world (John 1:29), then having ones name written in the Lamb's book of life is tantamount to having ones sins taken away.

C. According to Rev. 20:15 having ones name written in the Lamb's book of life exempts one from being cast into the lake of fire ("And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire").

D. According to Rev. 21:27 having ones name written in the Lamb's book of life enables one to enter into the holy Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God.

E. We read in Heb. 9:15-17, "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. 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." The Lamb's book of life is the Lord's testament. The Lord is both the testator and the mediator. Those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life are the heirs. When the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross as the "Lamb of God" then the testament came of force and those whose names were written therein became the legal heirs of the testator (Jesus Christ). Just as a person on earth may leave a "last will and testament" once that person dies his testament comes of force. It should be remembered names cannot be written into a testament AFTER it comes in force. In addition, once the testament is in force names cannot be stricken from the testament.

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All whose names are there at the time the testament comes in force are the legal heirs and that inheritance becomes sure to them.

Certainly the above are powerful blessings to having ones name written in the Lamb's book of life. How can you or I be assured that our names are written therein? Paul wrote in Phil. 4:3, "And I entreat thee also, true yoke fellow, help those women which labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow laborers, whose names are in the book of life." Now was Paul given an opportunity to look into the Lamb's book of life and see that those he mentioned were written in the book? Of course not! Paul knew their names were written therein because of the evidence. He could see by the evidences of their labors that they were children of God and therefore had their names written in heaven. When God grants us to see the evidence in our own labors that we are children of God then we can have the same assurance and confidence that our names are written in heaven.

Finally, those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life are the same ones whom God foreknew in the covenant of redemption because the ones he foreknew are the ones that are ultimately the heirs of glory. Next, we will consider God's elect in light of the bible teaching of the "seed of Abraham."

The Seed of Abraham

The word, foreknow, as used in Rom. 8:29, means to know or appoint beforehand. As we have previously studied, according to Eph. 1:4 God appointed or chose a people in Christ before the foundation of the world. God's foreknowing a people is the first of five things (foreknow, predestinate, call, justify, glorify) God is said to do in the covenant of redemption (Rom. 8:28-30). This principle of God's foreknowing a people is taught in the "seed of Abraham."

When God appeared unto Abram in Gen. chapter 12 he began to make promises to the patriarch. One of the promises God made to Abram was in Gen. 12:3: "and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." This is further expounded to us in Acts 3:25, "And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blest." Thus the blessing that would come to all families of the earth was thru the "seed of Abraham."

God further promised Abram in Gen. 13:16 a multiplication of his seed as follows: "And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered." Of course, the number of the dust of the earth is innumerable. This principle is further taught in Gen. 15:5 as God told Abram, "Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be." We now know that the stars cannot be numbered for multitude. Once again this promise of a multiplied seed is further elaborated in Gen. 22:17 as God promised Abraham, "and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven and as the sand upon the sea shore..." One thing that the dust, the stars, and the sand have in common is that they cannot be numbered for multitude!

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As God had previously promised Abraham that in his seed all families of the earth would be blessed so he promised again in Gen. 22:18, "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed..." Therefore, the promise of the blessing of the seed extends to all nations and to all families. If one family or one nation should not be blessed by the seed, then God cannot be believed, but of course, God cannot lie, and the promise is sure to all families, and to all nations.

An additional promise to Abraham concerning his seed was made in Gen. 22:18, "and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies." To possess the gate of ones enemies is equivalent to victoriously triumphing over those enemies. In comparison, Christ has victoriously triumphed over our enemies: death, hell, sin, devil, and the grave.

Now, we ask ourselves, who is the seed of Abraham to whom these great and glorious promises were made? The answer is found in Gal. 3:16, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to thy seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed which is Christ." Thus it is settled forever that the seed of Abraham to whom God made the glorious promises is Jesus Christ!

Next, we want to consider just how Christ (the seed of Abraham) is multiplied to be a great innumerable multitude such as the sand, dust, and stars so as to be innumerable. (Obviously this multiplication of the seed is not thru natural generation, but thru regeneration (new birth)). This we are told in Gal. 4:28, "Now, we brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise." All I have to do is figure out how Isaac was a child of promise and I learn how all the innumerable host are children of promise! Isaac was a child of promise in the following ways:

A. He was promised to be born before his parents ever conceived at God's set time (Gen. 17:6, 21).

B. Isaac's birth was contrary to nature as neither of his parents according to nature were able to produce a child: Rom. 4:19-21, "And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform." Please note it was God who promised, and it was God who performed according to the promise.

Isaac's birth was not according to the choice of Abraham, or Sarah, or Isaac, but was according to the promise of God. Isaac's birth was at God's appointed time and was completely contrary to nature. We, as the multiplied seed of Christ are promised beforehand in the covenant of redemption (Rom. 8:29) and that before the world began (Eph. 1:4). Our spiritual birth is at God's appointed time (John 3:8) and is contrary to nature (Eph. 2:1-3).

In Rom. 9:7-9 the seed of Abraham is tied to the doctrine of election as follows: Neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but in Isaac shall they seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children

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of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. For this is the word of promise, At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son." Thus, we conclude that the children of promise (God's elect) are the children of God.

The multiplied seed is shown to us in Rev. 7:9, 10 as follows: "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." This great multitude which no man could number is the multiplied seed of Abraham. The end result is that all praise, honor, and glory is given to God and the Lamb for their salvation from sin.

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Limited Atonement

Eternal Preservation of the Saints

To preserve means to keep safe, to keep from perishing or spoiling. The doctrine of eternal preservation of the saints means that the elect of God are never in danger of eternal damnation and are preserved into eternal life by the covenant work of Jesus. Several verses of scripture speak to us specifically about the eternal preservation of the saints:

1. Ps. 37:28 "For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are **preserved for ever**: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. 29 The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever."
2. Ps. 97:10 "Ye that love the LORD, hate evil: **he preserveth the souls of his saints**; he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked."
3. Ps. 145:20 "The LORD **preserveth all them that love him**: but all the wicked will he destroy."
4. 1 Thes. 5:23 "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your **whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless** unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."
5. 2 Tim. 4:17 "Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. 18 And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and **will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom**: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."
6. Jude 1:1 "Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and **preserved in Jesus Christ**, and called:"

The elect of God are preserved in the covenant work of Jesus Christ and are never in any danger of losing their eternal life or of eternally perishing. This covenant work of Christ is set forth for us in detail in Romans 8:29, 30 and in the 1st Chapter of the book of Ephesians. In Rom. 8:29, 30 we read, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." This covenant begins with God foreknowing a people and ends with those same people being glorified. The same ones that God foreknew are predestinated, called, justified, and glorified.

It is Christ who executes this covenant. He calls the elect into spiritual life: John 5:25 "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live." He justifies the elect with his atoning blood: Rom. 8:33, 34 "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." It is also Christ who will glorify the elect in the resurrection: 1 Thes. 4:16, 17 "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with

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the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

In Ephesians chapter 1 there is a phrase that appears several times: "*in Christ*" or "*in him*." This phrase shows how that we are preserved from before the foundation of the world unto an eternal inheritance:

1. Eph. 1:4-7 "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: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted *in the beloved*. *In whom* we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

2. Eph. 1:11 *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:

These verses positionally place us in Christ before the foundation of the world. Thus positioned in Christ we are predestinated in Christ unto the adoption of **children**; we are made accepted in Christ; we are redeemed in Christ; and we are given an inheritance in Christ. Thus, those chosen in Christ are never positionally out of Christ, but are preserved in Christ unto eternal glory.

Jesus told some unbelieving Jews in John chapter 10: John 10:25 "Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. 26 But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. 27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: 28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. 29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. 30 I and my Father are one." For one of God's elect sheep to perish it would be necessary to pluck them out of the hand of Christ and out of the hand of the Father. This is impossible for anyone to do. Therefore, we (the elect saints of God) are eternally preserved unto eternal life.

Limited Atonement

The doctrine of limited atonement states that Christ died for the sins of the elect only and not for the sins of all mankind. Under this doctrine, the sins of all the elect were atoned for by the sacrifice and shed blood of Christ. The blood of Christ was offered to God for the elect only.

This doctrine is consistent with the covenant of redemption stated for us in Rom. 8:29, 30: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and

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whom he justified, them he also glorified." In this covenant, there is an equality of each action verb. The same ones that God foreknew are the same ones that he predestinated, which are the same ones that he called, and are the same ones he justified, and that he glorified. There is no addition or loss from verb to verb. Thus, the ones that God foreknew before the world began are the ones that he justified by the blood of Jesus. We will study the covenant of redemption in much greater detail in subsequent essays.

The conclusion of the covenant of redemption is given to us by a question in verse 33: "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." God justified the elect. He did not justify the non-elect.

The next proof text for the doctrine of limited atonement is found in Matt. 1:21: "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." The message the angel carried from God to Joseph was that this Jesus would save his people from their sins. Thus, salvation from sins is limited to the people of God. He did not come to save those who were not his people.

There were a number of people that the Father gave to the Son to save as set forth by the following verses:

1. John 17:1 "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: 2 As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him."

2. John 6:37 "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. 38 For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. 39 And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day."

The phrase, "as many as," means not one more or one less, but the exact same number. That Jesus gives eternal life to "as many as" the Father gave him teaches us that the atoning blood of Christ is only for those that the Father gave him. If Jesus died for more than the Father gave him, then his blood for them was in vain. However, Jesus has never done anything in vain. Further, Jesus loses none that the Father gives unto him. If he lost any that the Father gave him, then he failed to do the will of the Father. Again, this is impossible.

Next, Jesus blood is said to be shed for many. If Jesus had died for all the fallen race of Adam, then it should be said that he shed his blood for all, not many:

1. Matt. 20:28 "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

2. Matt. 26:28 "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

3. Mark 10:45 "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

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4. Mark 14:24 "And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many."

5. Heb. 9:28 "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

Paul tied together the elect and the redemption work of Christ in the first chapter of Ephesians: Eph. 1:3 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: 4 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: 5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. 7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;" Thus, it is plain that the elect have redemption through his blood. No where do we find that the non-elect have redemption through his blood.

In the New Testament, the elect are referred to as God's sheep. In John chapter ten we read where Christ made a distinction between who he gives eternal life to and who he does not give eternal life to: John 10:26 "But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. 27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: 28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." Christ gives eternal life to the sheep (elect), but not to those who are not of his sheep. Further, Christ told us that he laid down his life for the sheep only: John 10:14 "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. 15 As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep."

In the book of Hebrews, we are told that Christ redeemed those who are sanctified or called:

1. Heb. 10:12 "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; 13 From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. 14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Therefore, his offering was for those that were sanctified only.

2. Heb. 9:15 "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. 16 For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. 17 For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth." Once the testator has died, names cannot be added or removed from the testament. The testament is fixed as to who is heir once the testator has died. The promise of eternal inheritance was inalterably fixed to the elect upon the death of Christ. This testament cannot now be changed. Therefore, Christ atoning blood was limited to those named in

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the testament before his death. The names were placed in the testament before the foundation of the world and written in the lamb's book of life.

Peter tied the atoning blood of Christ to the elect in 1 Pet. 1:1 "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied." Clearly, the elect are tied to the atoning blood of Christ.

Respecter of Persons

In several verses of scripture in the bible we read where God is "no respecter of persons." However, we also read in Gen.4:4, 5, "And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect." Also we read in Rom. 9:11-13 "(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, the elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Thus, it is apparent God showed partiality to Jacob over Esau, even as he had showed partiality to Abel over Cain. How can these, seemingly, two competing ideas, that God is no respecter of persons and that God shows respect to persons, be harmonized?

The principle Greek word translated "respect of persons" is "prosopolempsia" meaning "partiality." So the phrase that "God is no respecter of persons" means that God does not show partiality to persons. To reconcile the ideas there must be a way (ways) in which God does not show partiality to persons and a way or ways in which God does show partiality to persons. To understand and harmonize these ideas we must go to the context in which they appear.

First, we will look at those verses of scripture in which it is taught that God is no respecter of persons and see on what basis God does not show partiality:

A. Acts 10:34, 35 - "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." Peter said this at the house of Cornelius, a Gentile. Before this, Peter along with the other Jews had thought that God was partial to the Jews, because they were Jews. But God showed Peter that he had a people in every nation. Thus God is not a "respecter of persons" based on nationality.

B. Rom. 2:9-11 - "Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honor, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: for there is no respect of persons with God." This shows that God does not shew partiality in reward or punishment based on a person's nationality (Jew or Gentile).

C. Eph. 6:8, 9 - "Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. And, ye masters, do the same

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thing unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him." This shows us that God does not show partiality in judgment based on whether a person is bond or free or whether he is a master or servant. Thus God doesn't favor the master over the servant or the servant over the master.

D. Col. 3:25 - "But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons." In the verses just prior we read about relationships between husbands and wives, parents and children, and masters and servants. Thus, we must conclude that God is not partial in judgment based on whether we be husband/wife, parent/child, or master/servant.

E. James 2:1, 2 - "My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment..." This teaches us that God doesn't value anyone based on their economic status.

F. 1 Peter 1:17 - "And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." This teaches us that God is not partial in judging our work. Thus if our work is good, it will be so judged and if it is evil, it will be so judged without partiality to any one over another.

Thus, we see that God is not partial in judgment based on ones nationality, economic status, sex, societal position, position in the family, or whether he is bond or free.

In what manner does God have "respect of persons?" Let us now examine four passages that show us on what basis God has respect of some over others:

A. Ex. 2:24, 25 - "And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them." Here we see God favoring or being partial to Israel over Egypt based on a covenant he had made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

B. Lev. 26:9 - "For I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, and establish my covenant with you." Once again God is favoring Israel based on a covenant. This time it was the covenant he made with them on Mount Sinai.

C. II Kings 13:23 - "And the Lord was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast he them from his presence as yet." Again, we see God favoring Israel because of his covenant.

D. Ps. 74:19, 20 - "O deliver not the soul of thy turtledove unto the multitude of the wicked: forget not the congregation of thy poor for ever. Have respect unto the covenant: for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty." The psalmist is calling upon

God to favor Zion based on His covenant. Thus we conclude that God shows favor to some over others based on His covenant. It is on the basis of God's covenant of redemption that he was partial to Jacob over Esau and to Abel over Cain.

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In our next essay, we will begin to examine God's covenant of redemption as it is presented to us in the scriptures.

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Justification

Justification

In previous essays, we considered the subject of justification as it related to the covenant of redemption. This justification established our righteous standing before God. It was brought about by the redemption that is in Christ Jesus and by God's free and abounding grace. Rom. 3:23, 24 states this principle thus: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

There is more to the subject of justification than just being justified from our sins before God. If we do not follow the biblical rule of II Tim. 2:15, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth," then we will become hopelessly confused and think the scriptures to be contradictory.

The scriptures teach justification through the blood atonement of Jesus Christ by the free grace of God. The scriptures also teach that we are justified by faith without works. In addition, the scriptures teach that we are justified by works. Supporting verses for these last two principles are as follows:

1. Rom. 5:1 - "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. James 2:21, 22 - "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect.

3. Rom. 3:19, 20 - "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

While there may appear to be contradictions in the scripture, there are no real contradictions. When we make the proper application of the scriptures they will all harmonize. How do we harmonize what appears to many to be contradictions on the subject of justification? Are we justified by God's free grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus alone without any exercise of faith on our part or good works on our part? The answer is yes. Are we also justified by our activity of faith without works? Again the answer is yes. Are we justified by works? Again, the answer is yes.

In the next few essays, we will attempt to clarify the subject of justification and show the harmony in what on the surface appears to many to be contradictions.

One of the keys to understanding the subject of justification is to understand the meaning and use of the word itself. The word, justify, means to make or declare righteous. It is a courtroom term. It is generally used in connection with legal proceedings. For instance, when a person is tried in a criminal court on accusations of committing a crime and he is acquitted by the verdict of not-guilty, then he is justified. The word is used in the

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scriptures to mean the opposite of condemned or condemnation. Thus, when you are tried you are either justified or condemned.

To understand how that in one instance we are justified by the blood of Jesus through God's free grace and without works or faith on the part of those justified, in another instance we are justified by faith without works, and in a third instance we are justified by works, we need to know where the trial takes place and what we are being tried for.

There are three courtrooms in the scriptures in which the term justification is used. There is the courtroom of heaven. There is the courtroom of our heart and mind. In addition, there is the courtroom of men's opinions. In the next few essays, we will attempt to show how that in the courtroom of heaven we are justified by the blood of Christ by God's free grace alone. Then we will attempt to show how that in the courtroom of our heart and mind we are justified by faith in the atoning work of Christ without our works. Afterwards we will attempt to show how that we are justified by works in the courtroom of men's opinions.

Justification by Grace

As we have previously treated this topic, we will only present a brief overview of this subject at this time. For those who wish to consider in greater detail, I refer you back to the previous essays on the subject of "Justified."

As we stated previously "justification" is a courtroom term and means to make or declare righteous. The courtroom in which we are justified by grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus is the courtroom of heaven. In this courtroom, we are justified from the charge of sin before God.

First, we will establish that there is such a courtroom by establishing the presence of the elements of a courtroom. Any court of law is based on the giving of and presence of law. If there is no law then there can be no courtroom! The following verses of scripture declare God to be the "law giver:" Isa. 33:22; James 4:12; Gen. 2:16, 17; Ex. 20:1-17; Gal. 3:10; Heb. 8:10; Jer. 31:31; and Heb. 10:16.

Next, before a person can be tried for breaking the law there must be a penalty for breaking the law. The penalty for breaking God's laws are set forth for us in the following verses: Gen. 2:17; Rom. 6:23; Rev. 20:11-14; II Thes. 1:7-9; II Pet. 2:4-9; Jude 6-13; and Matt. 25:46.

Next, the accused must be apprehended and brought to the bar of justice. God is the ultimate apprehender of all sins and all sinners. This principle is set forth in the following verses: Heb. 4:12, 13; Job 26:6; 42:2; Gen. 6:5; Ps. 94:11; 69:5; 14:2; 53:2; Prov. 15:26; 15:3; Jer. 16:17; Matt. 10:26; I Cor. 3:20; and I Pet. 3:12.

Furthermore, God sits as the one and only judge in the courtroom of heaven. That God is judge is set forth in the following verses: Gen. 15:14; 18:25; Judges 11:27; Ps. 9:4,

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8; 10:18; 50:6; 58:11; 67:4; 72:4; 82:1, 8; 94:2; 96:13; Isa. 2:4; 3:13; 11:3, 4; 51:5; Job 21:22; Eccl. 3:17; John 5:30; II Tim. 4:1; I Pet 1:17; 4:5; and Rev. 20:9-15.

In addition, God that renders judgment as set forth in Rom. 3:19, 20; Matt. 25:41-46; and Rom. 5:12-19.

Moreover, God that executes judgment according to Rev. 20; Matt: 25:46; II Thes. 1:7-10; and II Pet. 2:4-9.

If the only basis of God's judgment were our deeds and actions then the judgment rendered would be as follows:

1. Rom. 3:19, 20 - "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."

2. Gal. 3:10 - "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.@

3. Gal. 2:16 - "...for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

Thus if the basis of judgment is our deeds and actions alone, then we come under the condemnation of the law.

Thankfully, there is the law of atonement whereby one who is qualified may stand in the place of another for the execution of judgment. It was Jesus, who stood in the place of the elect at the cross when God judged their sins. The following sample of verses of scripture set forth this principle:

1. II. Cor. 5:21 - "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

2. Gal. 3:13 - "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."

3. Heb. 9:26-28 - "...but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself...so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

4. Heb. 10:12-14 - "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God...For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

Therefore, based on the law of atonement, those for whom Christ died have had God's wrathful judgment executed upon Jesus as our sin-bearer at the cross. The execution of wrath for sin is satisfied for them. They now stand justified before God. The question is asked and answered in Rom. 8:33, 34, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

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That this justification from sin in the courtroom of heaven is by God's free grace is plainly set forth for us in Rom. 3:23, 24, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus..."

In our next essay, we will go into the courtroom of our mind and heart and see how that we are justified by faith.

Justification by Faith

The scriptures teach three courtrooms in which the subject of justification applies: the courtroom of heaven; the courtroom of our minds and hearts; and the courtroom of men's opinions. In our previous essay, we considered how we are justified in the courtroom of heaven by the grace of God through the blood atonement of Jesus Christ. In this essay, we will consider how we are justified by faith in the courtroom of our heart and mind.

When we are born of the Spirit, God establishes a courtroom in our heart and mind. According to Heb. 8:10; 10:16; and 2 Cor. 3:3 God writes his laws in our heart by the operation of the Holy Spirit directly into our heart and mind. In Heb. 10:22 we read where God sprinkles our heart from an evil conscience. Also in 1 John 3:20, 21 we read where our heart serves as the judge to either condemn us or justify us. Rom. 2:15 brings the elements of a courtroom together showing us that God has written his laws in our heart, our conscience serves as the witness, our thoughts serving as both the prosecuting attorney and defense attorney and our heart as the judge: "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." Thus, all the elements of a courtroom are present in us once we are born of the Spirit.

The courtroom of heaven deals with our judicial standing before God. The courtroom of our heart and mind deals with how we view ourselves (condemned or justified) before a just and holy God. The judgment in this second courtroom (of heart and mind) does not affect the judgment of the first courtroom (of heaven). In other words, whether we view ourselves as either justified or condemned in our heart and mind does not alter our judicial standing before God. However, how we see ourselves in the courtroom of our heart and mind greatly affects our emotional and mental state.

The order of proceedings in the courtroom of our heart and mind is as follows:

1. We are first tried and condemned based on our sins. We are convicted of sin in similar fashion as the publican in Luke 18:13, "And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner," or Isaiah who wrote in Is. 6:5, "Then said I, Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Being convicted of our sins we see ourselves under the condemnation of a just and holy God and worthy of everlasting judgment.

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2. Next, we try to get right (judicially) with God. We are as Israel in Rom. 10:3, "being ignorant of God's righteousness and going about to establish our own righteousness." We try to establish our righteousness through the works of the law. However, "by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." We may try to establish our righteousness through good deeds and righteous works only to find that Isaiah wrote "all of our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" before God. We may even try to hide behind a cloak of religious exercises only to find them as the fig leaves that Adam and Eve tried to hide their nakedness. We find that we are laboring trying to establish our own righteousness while heavy laden with a burden of sin-guiltiness. Nothing we attempt to do ever really gives us a feeling of true justification and consequent peace in our heart and mind.

3. It is only when we follow the Lord's admonition in Matt. 11:28, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," that we begin to see ourselves justified in the courtroom of our heart and mind. When we by faith that God imparted unto us in the new birth believe in the finished work of redemption by Jesus Christ, for "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth," then we see ourselves justified through the redemptive work of Christ. This principle is stated in Rom. 4:23-25, "Now it is not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for (because of) our offences, and was raised again for (because of) our justification." Thus when we believe that Jesus was delivered to redeem us from our sins and was raised from the dead because his work of justification was accepted of God, then God imputes righteousness into the courtroom of our heart and mind and we by faith in the finished work of Jesus declare ourselves just before God. We are justified by faith in the courtroom of our heart and mind, "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Justification by Works

The scriptures teach three courtrooms in which the subject of justification applies: the courtroom of heaven; the courtroom of our mind and heart; and the courtroom of men's opinions. In previous essays, we considered how we are justified in the courtroom of heaven by the grace of God through the blood atonement of Jesus Christ and how we are justified by faith in the courtroom of our heart and mind. In this essay, we will consider how we are justified by works in the courtroom of men's opinions.

How do other people view us in light of our profession of faith? Are we viewed as infidels or hypocrites, or are we viewed as sincere dedicated disciples of Christ? Now we may say that it does not matter how other people view us, but it does. We are admonished to "Let our light so shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify God." In addition, the true disciples are declared to be the "light of the world."

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In II Pet. 1:10 we are told to "give diligence to make your calling and election sure." Now to whom are we to make it sure? To God - no, He is the one who called and elected us! To ourselves and to others - yes, we assure ourselves and others of our calling and election by the good deeds and works we do.

James states in James 2:17, 18, "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works." The truth, so plainly stated here, is that good works are a manifestation of our faith. Faith cannot be manifested without good works. The evidence of our faith in the eyes of others is our good works. If people do not see good works in our lives what evidence do they have that we are truly people of faith? The question is asked in James 2:21, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?" How do we know that Abraham truly believed God? Was it not that he offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Thus, in our opinion, Abraham truly believed God for the evidence was manifest in his work of offering Isaac up on the altar. Therefore, in our opinions Abraham was justified as a man of faith.

Similarly, John the Baptist, was looking for evidence of repentance when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism as he said unto them, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance." John wanted to see evidence (good works) of a repentant life before he would consent to baptize them. Surely, this should be the pattern for the church to follow today in receiving someone for baptism.

The scriptures are abundant that warn us about false teachers and false prophets. The scripture also teaches us how that we can identify them. Matt. 7:15-20 reads, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit: but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them." Thus, we are able to identify the false teacher from the true. The true preacher or teacher will be justified in our opinions by the good fruits he manifests whereas the false prophet or teacher will be identified as such by his evil fruits.

In Mark 2:3-5 we read of four who carried a paralyzed man unto the Lord, "And they came unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son thy sins be forgiven thee." Now the scriptures said that Jesus "saw their faith." However, what was described to us was that the four friends of the palsied man lifted up the man and his bed to the roof, broke up the roof and let the man and his bed down before Jesus. In other words, their

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faith in Jesus was demonstrated by their charitable works toward the palsied man. They were justified as men of faith by the works they performed.

Finally, as people, especially God's people, view our lives what do they see? Do they see us as people of faith, as children of God, or do they see us as hypocrites who are playing religion? Our works will either justify us or condemn us in the courtroom of men's opinions.

Should not we strive to live godly lives that we may glorify our heavenly Father and not bring shame and contempt to that worthy name by which we are called?

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Predestination and Called

Predestination #1

In our study of the "covenant of redemption" which is set forth in Rom. 8:28-30, the second action of God listed in verse 29 is "predestinate." The five actions of God listed in v. 29 and 30 are foreknow, predestinate, called, justified, and glorified. According to Vines the Greek word "proorizo," which is translated four times into "predestinate," once "ordained before," and once "determined before," means to "mark out or determine beforehand." Thus the English word predestinate means to determine the final destiny beforehand. The four times predestinate is used in the scriptures it is used to denote the final destiny of those that God "foreknew" (Rom. 8:29) or "chose before the world began" (Eph. 1:4). It is never used in connection with anyone other than those whom God foreknew or chose!

We will begin our discussion of God's predestination of the "elect" by considering to what God predestinated them. That is what do the scriptures say is the final destiny of the elect? Rom. 8:29 reads, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." Now when the verse says we will be "conformed to the image of His Son" it is not saying we will be "clones" of Christ. When Adam brought forth a son he was born in Adams image as Gen. 5:3 reads, "And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth." Now Seth was in the image of Adam but was not a clone of Adam. He possessed the same characteristics, qualities, and nature of Adam (a fallen nature) and thus was in the image of Adam. By nature we are all in the fallen image of Adam. Part of the final destiny of the elect is to be in the image of Christ. To understand what that image is we need to look at the characteristics, qualities, and nature of Christ that is different from our characteristics, qualities, and nature. In Heb. 7:26 we read, "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners..." In contrast by nature we are unholy, harmful, defiled, and sinners. Also the scriptures describe God to be "love" (I John 4:8), "a spirit" (John 4:24), and "light" (John 1:4) and this light is defined as eternal life. By nature we are completely selfish, having not the spirit of God, and absent of eternal life. In addition, the Lord is incorruptible, immortal, powerful, and glorious (I Cor. 15). Again, by contrast our natural being is corruptible, mortal, weak and dishonorable.

In contrast to what we are now, our final destiny will see us conformed to the image of Christ. At that time in body, soul, and spirit we will be holy, harmless, undefiled, righteous, love, spiritual, possessed of eternal life, incorruptible, immortal, powerful and glorious. It is in keeping with God's predestination that our final destiny will be conformity with the image of His Son.

Next, we read in Eph. 1:4, 5 "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, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according

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to the good pleasure of his will..." Now we are according to birth right in the family of Adam as we are all the off spring of Adam. However, God has declared that those chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world will have as a final destiny membership in the family of God. To accomplish this God has predestinated to adopt us into his family by Jesus Christ to himself. Adoption involves taking a person out of one family and placing that person in another family. We will discuss the mechanics of adoption in a later issue. At this point we note that God has predestinated us unto the adoption of children, thus it is our final destiny to be children of God not only in spirit, but also in body.

This brings us to the third thing God has predestinated the elect unto. In Eph. 1:11 we read, "In whom also we (the elect-VJ) have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Thus being the legal heirs of God by spiritual birth, adoption, marriage, and will we have an inheritance from God. In nature, the only lasting inheritance we have is a grave. Yet according to God's predestination we have an eternal inheritance. According to Rom. 8:16, 17 we read, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ..." Thus our final destiny is to be a joint-heir with Jesus Christ. Therefore, we will have by inheritance all that our elder brother has. This is absolutely amazing to consider that we won't be possessors of just a little corner of the glory world, but will be possessors of all that Jesus Christ is a possessor of! In our next issue we will consider those things about God that imminently qualify him as the only one who can predestinate.

Predestination #2

The fact that God purposes, counsels, or wills to do something and then does it is readily apparent from a review of the scriptures:

A. Isa. 46:10, 11 - "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it."

B. Dan. 4:25 - "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none shall stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"

Now this is not to say that we don't sometimes purpose, counsel or will to do something and then try to do according to what we purposed, counseled or willed. The differences between God and us is that God has the nature and abilities to always bring to pass what he has purposed, counseled, or willed, whereas we lack both the nature and the abilities to ensure what we have purposed, counseled, or willed will come to pass. When God determined the final destiny of those he foreknew beforehand (predestinated) because of his nature and abilities he ensured the elect will reach that final destiny. In this essay

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we want to consider those things about God that imminently qualify him as the only one who can predestinate.

Many times we attempt to do something but simply lack the power or ability to do it. This is never a problem with God for he has all power in heaven and earth (Matt. 28:18). This power is demonstrated in the creation of the universe by God simply speaking it into existence. Christ manifested that power by raising the dead, healing all manner of sicknesses, performing all manner of miracles, and manifesting his power over the elements. No force can stand against God or in opposition to God and prevail. By his power God can and will overcome all obstacles that could or would conceivably stand in his way of accomplishing his will.

Other times we make plans, but due to our limited knowledge fail to anticipate obstacles that derail or alter our plans. Since God knows all things past, present, and future there is nothing that can surprise him. The scriptures say that he knows our thoughts afar off, our down sittings, and our uprisings. The hairs of our head are all numbered and a sparrow does not fall without his knowing it. All things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do. Therefore God's purpose, counsel, or will cannot be derailed or altered by unknown past, present, or future happenings.

We as finite creatures are limited in space. We cannot be at more than one place at a time. We may make plans and while we are attending to one problem another may arise at a different place that we are unable to attend to. God has no such limitations. He is everywhere present and nowhere absent. He is omnipresent and thus able to overcome and perform everything needed to accomplish his purpose at all places and at all times.

Again as finite creatures we are not only limited in space but also in time. Our stay on earth is at best only a very short time and we pass from the scene of this life. Many plans of men have failed to come to fruition because they died before they were finished. God has no such limitations for he is eternal. He has neither beginning or ending. Thus what he purposed, counseled, or willed before the world began, he will still be around to accomplish even until time shall be no more on earth.

Thus based on God's omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, and eternal existence God is able to accomplish what he purposed, counseled or willed to do. As we will see, based on some things that God is unable to do, his purpose, counsel, and will are definitively assured to God's elect.

The first thing that God cannot do is lie. Titus 1:2 reads, "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." Likewise, Heb. 6:18 reads, "that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." Thus God's covenant promises stand on the fact that God cannot lie!

The second thing God cannot do is change. Mal. 3:6 says, "For I am the Lord, I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Similarly James 1:17 reads, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights,

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with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Thus, since it is impossible for God to change, he cannot change his mind. Those things which he has purposed, counseled, or willed to do will not be altered because God changed his mind. God cannot change!

The third and fourth things God cannot do is fail or be discouraged. This we read about in Isa. 42:4, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth..." Since God cannot fail, we are assured that what God purposes, counsels, or wills to do will be accomplished without failure. If God should ever try to do something and fail, then he would cease being God! Remember, it is impossible for God to fail. Likewise, since God cannot be discouraged, he will never give up or faint at the task. No task is too hard for the Lord. All that he purposes, counsels, or wills will come to pass without failure or discouragement.

The fifth thing God cannot do is deny himself. Paul wrote in II Tim. 2:13, "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself." For God to abandon his promises would be to deny himself. God, however, is faithful to his work and to his promises. He cannot deny himself regardless of what man may do.

The sixth thing God cannot do is be tempted with evil. This is proven by James 1:13, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." If a person can be tempted to evil, then he can succumb to evil. Since the man who executes God's counsel from a far country is Jesus Christ, he had to be perfect and keep the law perfectly to redeem his people. Thus, God's purpose, counsel, and will were never in danger of failure because Christ could not be tempted with evil. Likewise, the seventh thing God cannot do is sin (I John 3:9). It was impossible for Christ to sin. Therefore, our salvation is sure.

The final destiny of God's elect began with God's covenant promises, purposes, counsels, and will before the world began. Because of the nature of God and because of those things God cannot do, that destiny is sure. God has predestinated the elect to it.

In our next issue, we will begin to look at the works of God that are essential in order that the elect reach that final destiny. These works are listed for us in Rom. 8:30 as "called, justified, and glorified."

Called

As we continue our study of the covenant of redemption, in this issue, we will begin to look at the works of God that are essential in order that the elect reach the final destiny to which God has predestinated them. These works are listed as "called, justified, and glorified." In this issue, we will consider God's calling.

Previously, we have noted how God "foreknew" or "chose" a people to be his before the foundation of the world. Then we studied how God determined the final destiny of the elect beforehand (predestination). This final destiny is to be conformed to the image of Christ which is holy, harmless, undefiled, righteous, love, spiritual, possessed of eternal

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life, incorruptible, immortal, powerful, and glorious. In addition, our final destiny will include being adopted into the family of God and being joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. One of the works of God that work toward reaching this final destiny is God's calling. According to Rom. 8:30, "Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called..." Thus all that God foreknew and predestinated are also called of God.

The first thing we notice about God's calling is that God does the calling. It is not man's calling and is not a cooperative effort between God and man. It is HE who calls.

The next thing is this calling is an effectual calling. By "effectual calling" I mean that God calls by his power and the ones who are called are changed without exception as a result of this calling. That God calls by his power is manifest by the following verses:

1. John 5:25 - "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live."

2. John 10:27, 28 - "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life..."

3. John 17:1, 2 - "...Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him."

4. Eph. 1:19, 20 - "And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead..."

5. Eph. 2:1 - "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins..."

That those who are called are changed by that call is evidenced by such statements as:

1. "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and they that hear shall live."

2. "That he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him."

3. The mighty power that raised Christ from the dead is the same mighty power that enabled us to believe.

4. The statement "You hath he quickened" indicates God gave life to us when we were "dead in trespasses and sins."

Thirdly, we notice that those who are called of God are called as a result of God's purpose and grace to call them before the world began. II Tim. 1:9 reads, "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

Fourthly, we note that this calling is a direct calling from God to man. There are no intermediates between God and man in this calling. This calling is by the "voice" of God speaking directly to man. The following verses of scripture prove this principle:

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2. John 6:63 - "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life."

3. John 10:27 - "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me..."

4. John 10:16 - "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."

Finally, we notice that the change brought about by the "effectual calling of God" is to make those thus called holy and to impart unto them eternal life in the spirit. Furthermore it enables those thus called to "know the things freely given to them of God" (I Cor. 2:12).

For a further and more thorough discussion on this subject I refer the reader back to the several essays on the new birth.

In our next essay, we will begin a discussion on the subject of "justified" as the fourth thing listed for us in the covenant of redemption as stated in Rom. 8:28-30.

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The Four Callings

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The Call to Glory

Another one of the effectual calls of God is the Call to Glory. The term, "effectual," means that the cause brings about the desired effect without failure. Thus, when God calls the result is sure and will not fail. In the New Birth, God calls and the person whom he calls is born of the Spirit. This is effectual. The call to Glory is like the call of the New Birth. It is effectual. God calls and those who were dead in the grave rise to life. There is no chance of failure and this action is completely independent on the actions of men. This is also referred to as the "call to the resurrection."

Several verses speak of this effectual call to glory:

1. John 5:28 "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, 29 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."

2. 1 Thes. 4:16 "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ

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shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

3. Job 14:14 "If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. 15 Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands."

4. Job 19:23 "Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! 24 That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever! 25 For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: 26 And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: 27 Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me."

5. 1 Cor. 15:51 Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible 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. 55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? 56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

6. Dan. 12:1 "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. 2 And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

This doctrine of the effectual call to glory is consistent with the covenant of redemption: Rom. 8:29, 30, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." All of the elect will be changed at the great day of the resurrection and fashioned like the glorious body of Jesus Christ. There will not be lacking one of the elect that will be changed. This is an effectual call to glory.

The Lord himself makes this call to glory in the resurrection. It is he who descends from heaven and it is he who shouts and the dead come forth. It is by the power of the voice of the Son of God that the dead are raised up. This power was manifest in the resurrection of Lazarus from the grave: John 11:41 "Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. 42 And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of

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the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. 43 And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. 44 And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go."

Just as Job, we shall see the Lord in our flesh and we shall be glorified as a consequence of God's effectual calling to glory.

Gospel Call to Repentance and Service

Matt. 3:1 "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, 2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." John the Baptist first preached the gospel of repentance. He called on the children of Israel to repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. That which he called on them to repent from was the pollutions of the doctrines of men and from unrighteous living. Shortly thereafter, the Lord Jesus Christ came and preached in Matt. 4:17 "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." All the types and shadows under the law service and all the prophecies concerning Jesus Christ were about to be fulfilled and it was time for the children of Israel to turn from the worship of God under the law service to worshipping God in the kingdom of heaven which was at hand. This was a great change in the manner of worship.

The gospel has many purposes including saving God's people from ignorance and from an untoward generation and from the many pitfalls of life including false worship. We will cover the utility of the gospel later, but now we will focus our attention upon the use of the gospel to call God's people to repentance and service.

First, the gospel is directed to God's people. Mark 16:15 "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." The creature is the spirit born children of God. Eph. 2:10 "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." In addition, we read in 2 Cor. 5:17 "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Furthermore, Gal. 6:15 says, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." From these verses of scripture we conclude that the new creature is the born again child of God. The gospel is directed to born again children of God. They are the only ones who have spiritual ears and spiritual hearts by which they can receive the Spirit directed gospel. This is in harmony with the fact that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them for they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14). Therefore, only the spiritually born children of God can receive the gospel and respond to the call of the gospel.

Second, the gospel message calls upon God's people to repent:

1. Mk. 6:12 "And they went out, and preached that men should repent."

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2. 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."

Among the things that God's people are called on to repent from are these:

1. Self righteousness: Rom. 10:3 "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."

2. Ungodly living: Matt. 3:7 "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance."

3. Selfish priorities: Matt. 6:33 "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Next, the gospel calls God's people to serve the Lord. The Lord said in Matt. 11:28 "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Paul taught in Rom. 12:1 "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.

2 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." When we come to the knowledge of the truth about salvation by grace and all that the Lord has done for us, then we have an inward conviction that because of God's love toward us that we should serve him. The gospel teaches us that we ought to serve the Lord in his kingdom here on earth. Much of the new testament teaches us about our service towards God and how we ought to live our lives to God's honor and glory.

Additionally, the gospel calls us unto the fellowship of God: 1 Cor. 1:9 "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord."

Amos 3:3 asks the question, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" The answer is obviously no, two cannot walk together unless they are agreed. To have fellowship with God we must do as we are taught in 1 John 1:3 "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. 4 And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. 5 This then is the message, which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Fellowship with God comes with living our lives according to the word of God. The gospel calls us to have fellowship with God.

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Furthermore, the gospel calls us into the knowledge of the grace of Christ: Gal. 1:6 "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel." The gospel calls us to understand that salvation from sin is by the grace of God through the atoning blood of Christ and is according to God's eternal covenant of redemption, which he made before the world began.

Finally, men that God has called to preach the gospel make this gospel call: Rom. 10:14 "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach, 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!"

Call to the Ministry

While many people think that all it takes to be a gospel minister is for that person to go to a preacher's school and get a degree. However, there are several examples in the scriptures where God calls His ministers and sends them out to preach the gospel. Furthermore, there is no mention of schools for preachers in the New Testament except where it says "they shall heap to themselves teachers having itching ears." Preacher's schools are designed to heap together teachers to go teach the doctrines of men and not the doctrines of God.

The following verses of scripture set forth examples of God calling his ministers to preach the gospel:

1. Matt. 10:1 "And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease."

2. Acts 13:2 "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."

3. Rom. 1:1 "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God."

4. 1 Cor. 1:1 "Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother."

5. Heb. 5:4 "And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron."

6. Lk. 10:1 "After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come."

7. Jere. 1:4 "Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations."

God is sovereign in his choice of whom he calls to preach the gospel. His sovereignty is evident in his calling of Saul of Tarsus to preach: Acts 9:1 "And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the

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high priest, 2 And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. 3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: 4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? 5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. 6 And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

7 And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. 8 And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. 9 And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

10 And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. 11 And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, 12 And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. 13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: 14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. 15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: 16 For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

17 And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. 18 And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized."

The Lord taught us to pray for him to send forth laborers into his harvest: Lk. 10:2 "Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest."

The call to the gospel ministry is a gift that the Lord has given unto men: Eph. 4:8 "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. 9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) 11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:"

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Justified and Glorified

Justified #1

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." This passage of scripture is commonly referred to as the "covenant of redemption."

In our previous essays, we have considered God's foreknowing a people, predestinating those he foreknew, and calling those he foreknew and predestinated. In this essay, we will begin a study on God's justifying the people he foreknew.

The word, justify, means to make or declare righteous or just. It implies legal status. It is a court room term and is the result of a court room judgment. It means the opposite of the word condemn. In order to see how that we are justified it is helpful to go into "heaven's court room" and view the judgment of God.

There would be no judgment nor even a court room without law. Law is the basis for judgment. According to Rom. 5:13, "For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law." Without law, there can be no transgression of the law. For instance, if there were no speed limit then we could drive 100 mph on the freeway and could not be arrested for speeding.

Law derives from authority. Since God is the creator of all things, ultimate authority rests with God and He is the ultimate lawgiver. According to Isa. 33:22, "The Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king, he will save us." Also James 4:12 reads, "There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgeth another?" God, as the only lawgiver, gave commandment to man in the garden of Eden, "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 thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." In giving this law, God also set the penalty for transgressing the law. The penalty for transgression is death. Also, according to Rom. 6:23, "The wages of sin is death..." Sin is defined for us in 1 John 3:4, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." The penalty of death for breaking God's laws is more than just death of the body but is set forth in the following passages of scripture:

1. Rev. 20:11-14 - "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death."

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

3. Matt. 25:41, 46 - "then shall he say unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels...And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

The penalty for breaking the law is meted out for every sin. We read in Heb. 2:2, "For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward..." Thus, every transgression and disobedience comes before God for judgment. Every sin is judged by God and his wrath is executed upon every sin. There is no such thing as anyone ever getting away with anything before God. Furthermore, sin is more than the outward commission of sin, but also includes our inward thoughts:

1. Gen. 6:5 - "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."

2. Prov. 15:26 - "The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord..."

3. Prov. 24:9 - "The thought of foolishness is sin..."

4. Matt. 5:27, 28 - "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

In our next essay, we will consider the origin and extensiveness of sin and consider God as the one who apprehends us and our sins to bring us to judgment.

Justified #2

In this essay, we want to consider the origin and extensiveness of sin and consider God as the apprehender of sin to bring us to judgment.

In Rom. 5:12 we read, "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." God gave the law to Adam. Adam transgressed the law and died as the result of sin. However, this sentence of death was more than just upon Adam, but it was upon all his posterity as well. The sentence of death passed upon all men, for all men were in Adam when he sinned. According to Rom. 5:14 Adam as the head and representative of his race was a figure of Christ who is the head and representative of his elect people. In verses 15 thru 19 of this chapter we read of those things that happened to Adam's race as a result of the sin of Adam. We read that we are dead as a result of Adam's offence, and that we were judged to condemnation because of Adam's offense, and that death reigned over us because of Adam's offense, and that we were made sinners because of Adam's offense. Thus we see

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that sin in man originated with Adam and this sin nature and condemnation of sin passed upon all of Adam's race.

David said in Ps. 51:5, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." David pinpointed his being a sinner as starting at conception. Furthermore, in Ps. 58:3 David affirmed that we bear the fruit of that sin nature as soon as we be born. Paul said in

Rom. 7:18 that there is no good thing dwelling in the flesh. Thus sin is pervasive. It extends into the innermost thoughts of our heart. We are altogether filthy with sin.

Unlike in man's legal systems which are very imperfect, God's legal system is perfect. It has no flaws and results in perfect judgment and justice. In man's legal system most transgressions of the law are never apprehended. There are not near enough officers of the law to identify and bring every transgression of man's laws to justice. How many times, for instance, has the reader broken the speed limit for driving and never been apprehended for doing so because there was no traffic officer present to witness the transgression and ticket you? God has no such limitations. He is everywhere present and no where absent and has all knowledge. He is the perfect apprehender of His laws broken by fallen man.

According to Heb. 4:12, 13 God is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart and every creature is manifest in his sight for all things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do. According to Job 26:6, "Hell is naked before him and destruction hath no covering." Job also said in 42:2, "I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee." This is in harmony with Ps. 94:11, "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity." Also Prov. 15:26 testifies to the wickedness of our thoughts and that God knows them, "The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord." Lest we think we are not among the wicked 1 Cor. 3:20 says, "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain."

David lamented in Ps. 69:5, "O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee." Jeremiah recorded the words of the Lord in 16:17, "For mine eyes are upon all their ways: they are not hid from my face, neither is their iniquity hid from mine eyes." The Lord said in Matt. 10:26, "Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known." That nothing can be hid from God is manifest in Prov. 15:3, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the evil and the good."

Thus, we are made to conclude that God knows our every thought and our every action and thus our every sin. Not one of his laws are ever broken without his knowing it and without the sin being brought to the bar of justice for judgment.

Justified #3

Justified is the fourth of the five covenant things that work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. The five things are foreknew, predestinated, called, justified, and glorified. In previous essays, we have

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considered God as the "lawgiver" and the "apprehender" of sin. In this essay, we will consider God as the "Judge of all the earth."

Abraham in pleading for Lot before the Lord asked in Gen. 18:25, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Now let us consider the extensiveness of God's judicial reign:

1. He is said to be the judge of all the earth. The following verses also teach this lesson:

a. Ps. 9:8 - "And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness."

b. Ps. 94:2 - "Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth: render a reward to the proud."

c. Ps. 96:13 - "Before the Lord: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth."

d. Ps. 82:8 - "Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations."

2. The following verses show that he judges nations and between nations:

a. Gen. 15:14, "And also that nation whom they shall serve, will I judge..."

b. Judg. 11:27, "Wherefore I have not sinned against thee, but thou doest me wrong to war against me: the Lord the Judge be judge this day between the children of Israel and the children of Ammon."

3. Ps. 10:18 says that God judges the fatherless and the oppressed: "To judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress."

4. God judges the righteous and the wicked according to Eccl. 3:17, "I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work."

5. God judges those that are high. Job. 21:22, "Shall any teach God knowledge? Seeing he judges those that are high."

6. God judges gods. Ps. 82:1, "God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods."

7. God judges the quick and the dead as shown below:

a. II Tim. 4:1 - "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom."

b. I Pet. 4:5 - "Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead."

Unfortunately among men who judge among men there are those who pervert judgment, who judge for reward, who judge for political gain, who judge unrighteous judgment. However, our God is not so. According to Deut. 32:4, "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he."

God judges righteous judgment. God never perverts judgment. In judgment, God does not favor one class of people over another. In judgment, no one has an advantage

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over another due to social position, political position, nationality, gender, age, language, or skin pigmentation. God is perfectly just and perfectly right. That God judges righteous judgment is declared by the following verses:

1. Ps. 50:6 - "And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God is judge himself. Selah."

2. Ps. 9:8 - "And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness."

3. Ps. 67:4 - "O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth."

4. Ps. 96:13 - "...for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth."

5. Isa. 11:3-5 - "And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: for he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins."

Now this may seem scary to consider that a God who knows all things, sees all things, and judges righteous judgment should judge me personally, especially, as I know that I am a sinner. It is only when we factor in the representative of His people (Jesus Christ) that we can see deliverance from the execution of God's wrath upon us. Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.

In our next essay, we will consider the "basis of judgment" in God's court room of justice.

Justified #4

In our previous essays, we have considered God as the law-giver, God as the apprehender of his broken law, and God as the judge of all the earth judging righteously. In this essay, we will consider the basis of God's judgment in His court room of justice.

Jer. 32:19 reads, "Great in counsel, and mighty in work: for thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men: to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." Coupled with the above we read in Rev. 20:11-13, "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell gave up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works." Now it is very plain that the basis of God's judgment is according to man's works. Now there are two types of works of men. There are good works and there are evil

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works. Even in man's system of judgment we are not brought to judgment for our good works. We are brought to judgment based on our evil works (sin).

God's system of justice is an all or none system. By this I mean if you break even one of God's laws you are guilty of transgression of the entire law! James 2:10, 11 verifies this principle, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law." Thus if I had only broken just one small item in the law one time and had kept the rest of the law perfectly for all of my life then I am still guilty of the entire law!

As concerning the universal guiltiness of man under the law based on man's evil works we read in Rom. 3:19, 20, "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Likewise Gal. 3:10 reads, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

Based on our works we have nothing to plead before God that would justify us. Some have thought, "Aren't my good works weighed in the balance with my evil works and if the scale of justice tips toward the good, then will I be justified?" The answer is a resounding NO! Even in man's justice we can't argue that since I kept the law most of the time that I should be found not-guilty for the times I broke the law. We are judged for breaking the law, not for keeping the law. The scriptures are clear that our good works do not save us from our sins: II Tim. 1:9, "Who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." Likewise, we are not chosen of God to be his people based on our works:

A. Rom. 11:5, 6 - "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."

B. Rom. 9:11 - "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth." Additionally, we are not born of the Spirit based on good works:

A. Tit. 3:4, 5 - "But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

B. Eph. 2:8-10 - "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his

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workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

When it comes to God's justice and our standing before him based on performing works of righteousness Isa. 64:6 sums it up with these words, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities as the wind, have taken us away."

In our next essay, we will look at the case for our defense – Jesus Christ.

Justified #5

In our previous essays on this subject we have considered God as the lawgiver, apprehender of sin, and judge of all the earth. We have also considered the basis on which man is judged according to his works. In this essay we will consider Christ as the representative of his people at the court room of glory.

In Matt. 1:21 the angel declared unto Joseph, when he was considering what action he should take against his espoused wife, Mary, "Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." Thus we see Jesus was to come and save "his people" from their sins.

Numerous verses of scripture show us that Jesus came as the representative of his people. The following is a small sample of these verses:

1. Gal. 3:13 - "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." As we were under the curse of the law, Christ as our representative was made a curse "for us" to redeem us from the curse of the law.

2. II Cor. 5:21 _ "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." According to this verse, Christ, who knew no sin, became sin "for us" that we be made righteous in him.

3. Heb. 1:3 - "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins..." Here we see Jesus, as our representative, purged our sins by himself.

4. Heb. 9:11, 12 - "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." It was "for us" that Jesus obtained eternal redemption by the sacrifice of himself.

5. Heb. 9:24 - "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." Christ ascended into heaven to appear in the presence of God "for us." Thus at the court room of glory he appeared "for us." According to Heb. 9:26, "but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Thus we

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see, as our representative, Christ thru the sacrifice of himself appeared before God to put away our sin!

6. Heb. 9:28 - "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." It was for "the many" that Christ was offered to bear their sins.

7. Heb. 10:10 - "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Jesus Christ was offered for "all he foreknew." He was their representative and as their representative he sanctified all of them through the offering of his body.

8. Heb. 10:12-14 - "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Thus Jesus by the one offering of himself perfected for ever them that he represented.

9. Rom. 5:15-19 - "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 to 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 by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." The above passage of scripture gives us a comparison of Adam as the representative of his people (the Adamic race) and Christ as the representative of his people (the elect of God - those he foreknew). Just as Adam, by himself, brought condemnation upon the entire Adamic race, so Christ, by himself, brought justification upon his whole elect family.

Shouldn't we all be thankful that Christ represented us at the court room of glory?

In our next essay we will consider Christ as the perfect representative of his people.

Justified #6

In our previous essay we considered Christ as the representative of his people, as one who stood in their place before the court room of God's justice. In this essay we will consider Christ as the "perfect" representative.

God requires perfection. Anything less than perfection before a just and holy God is unacceptable.

God's requirement of perfection was demonstrated in the characteristics of the animal sacrifices that were offered to him under the law. Lev. 22:17-22, "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron, and to his sons, and unto all the children of Israel, and say unto them, Whatsoever he be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers in Israel, that

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will offer his oblation for all his vows, and for all his freewill offerings, which they will offer unto the Lord for a burnt offering; ye shall offer at your own will a male without blemish, of the beeves, of the sheep, or of the goats. But whatsoever hath a blemish, that shall ye not offer: for it shall not be acceptable for you. And whosoever offereth a sacrifice of peace offerings unto the Lord to accomplish his vow, or a freewill offering in beeves or sheep, it shall be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no blemish therein. Blind, or broken, or maimed, or having a wen, or scurvy, or scabbed, ye shall not offer these unto the Lord, nor make an offering by fire of them upon the altar unto the Lord."

Likewise, the principle of perfection was required for those who would serve as high priest: Lev. 21:16-23, "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron, saying, Whosoever he be of thy seed in their generations that hath any blemish, let him not approach to offer the bread of his God. For whatsoever man he be that hath a blemish, he shall not approach: a blind man, or a lame, or he that hath a flat nose, or any thing superfluous, or a man that is broken footed, or broken handed, or crook backed, or a dwarf, or he that hath a blemish in his eye, or be scurvy, or scabbed, or hath his stones broken; no man that hath a blemish of the seed of Aaron the priest shall come nigh to offer the offerings of the Lord made by fire: he hath a blemish; he shall not come nigh to offer the bread of his God. He shall eat the bread of his God, both of the most holy, and of the holy. Only he shall not go in unto the vail, nor come nigh unto the altar, because he hath a blemish; that he profane not my sanctuaries: for I the Lord do sanctify them."

Thus from the above examples we can see that God requires perfection both of the offering and of the high priest who offered it.

God's requirement of perfection goes beyond the physical attributes described above. The perfect representative of God's people had to be without sin. To this end Christ was born of a virgin (according to Rom. 5:12 sin passes from father to child). Having no earthly father his conception was perfect without sin. Concerning Christ's high priesthood, Heb. 7:26-28 states: "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore." Thus we must conclude that Jesus had no infirmities, i.e., sin and was separate from sinners.

That Jesus kept the law perfectly throughout his life on earth is proven by Matt. 5:17, 18, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." Thus we see that Jesus came to fulfill the law to its minutest detail and that he did.

Finally we see that Jesus because he was sinless was able to become sin for us that we might be delivered from God's wrathful judgment and be made the righteousness of God

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in him: II Cor. 5:21, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

In our next essay we will consider God's wrathful judgment upon sin and what Christ suffered for us on the cross.

Justified #7

In this essay we will consider God's wrathful judgment of sin and what Christ suffered for us on the cross.

According to the scriptures, "every sin and disobedience receives a just recompense of reward." There is no such thing as a sin going unpunished. God is just. Being just he "must" bring to judgment and to the execution of judgment every sin; otherwise God would not be just.

Now we may ask ourselves, "What is the penalty for sin? Several verses of scripture speak to this question:

- a. Rom. 6:23 - "For the wages of sin is death..."
- b. II Thes. 1:8, 9 - "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power..."
- c. Matt. 25:41 - "Then shall he say also to them on his left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."
- d. II Pet. 2:17 - "These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest: to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever."
- e. Jude 13 - "Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever."
- f. Rev. 20:10, 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...And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."
- g. Lk. 16:23, 24 - "And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame."

From the above verses we make the following observations:

- a. Eternal death is the consequence of sin.
- b. The punishment of sin includes everlasting separation from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power.
- c. The punishment of sin includes being cast into the blackness of darkness forever.

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d. The punishment of sin includes eternal torments and being cast into the lake of fire, for ever.

Next, we may ask ourselves; did Jesus suffer all that the punishment of our sins required to satisfy God's wrathful and righteous judgment? In the garden when Jesus was looking forward to the things that he would suffer said in Matt. 26:38, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Also in Lk. 22:44 it was written of Jesus that he was "in an agony" and it was said of him that "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." These things were written of Jesus when he looked forward to the horrible scene of God's wrathful judgment of sin at the cross. According to the scriptures beginning at the sixth hour of the day when Jesus was crucified there was darkness over all the earth for three hours and it was said that the "sun was darkened." God had turned out the lights for the punishment of sin. Abraham was given a glimpse of this scene as we read in Gen. 15:12, "and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him." Likewise one of the ten judgments that fell upon Egypt was darkness as described in Ex. 10:21, 22, "And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over all the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt. And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days." I am convinced that the darkness of God's judgment of sin is more than just natural darkness, but actually darkness on the very soul of the one who is being punished.

Next, we see Jesus separated from the glory of the Father as he cries out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Isaiah prophesied of the sufferings of Jesus at the cross when he wrote in Isa 53:4, 5, "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

It is abundantly clear that the sufferings of Jesus far exceeded the things man placed upon him in nailing him to the cross, beating him, ridiculing him and spitting upon him, mocking him, and plaiting a crown of thorns on his head. These things didn't redeem us from our sins. It is the sufferings of Jesus under the wrathful judgment of God during the three hours of darkness that satisfied God's wrathful judgment because of our sins. I am convinced that none of us for whom Christ died will ever fully comprehend the depth, or width, or breadth, or height of the sufferings Jesus suffered on our account. He suffered and died that we wouldn't have to suffer an eternal punishment of sin and that we would be made fit subjects for heavens glory world!

In our next essay we will consider the consequences of Christ's sufferings on the behalf of the elect.

Justified #8

In this essay we will consider the consequences of Christ's sufferings on the behalf of the elect.

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There are numerous verses of scripture that speak to us about the effects of Christ's sufferings, shed blood and death. A sampling of these verses follows:

a. Heb. 1:3 - "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty of high."

b. Heb. 9:26 - "...but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

c. Heb. 10:10 - "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

d. Heb. 10:12-14 - "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

e. 1 Pet. 1:18, 19 - "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold...but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

f. 1 Pet. 2:24 - "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."

g. 1 Pet. 3:18 - "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit."

h. II Cor. 5:23 - "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

i. Rom. 3:24, 25 - "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God."

j. Rom. 6:6 - "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."

k. Rom. 8:33, 34 - "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justified. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, year rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

l. Gal. 3:13 - "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."

m. Eph. 1:7 - "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

n. Eph. 2:13-16 - "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby."

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o. Eph. 5:2 - "And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour.

p. Eph. 5:25-27 - "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.

From the above passages of scripture we may clearly draw the following conclusions about the sufferings, death, and resurrection of Jesus:

- a. He purged our sins by himself.
- b. He hath put our sins away by the sacrifice of himself.
- c. He hath sanctified us through the offering of his body.
- d. He hath perfect for ever them that are sanctified.
- e. We were redeemed from our sins by the blood of Jesus.
- f. We are dead to the condemning effects of sins by the sacrifice of Jesus.
- g. Through the offering of the sacrifice of Jesus we are brought to God.
- h. Because Jesus was made to be sin for us, we are made righteous in him.
- i. We are redeemed, justified, and declared righteous through the redemption of Christ and the grace of God.
- j. The boy of our sins was destroyed in the crucifixion of Christ.
- k. No charge can be laid against the elect of God because God through Jesus has justified us.
- l. Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law by being made a curse for us on the tree of the cross.
- m. Through the redemptive blood of Jesus we have been forgiven of our sins.
- n. We have peace with God because of the shed blood of Christ.
- o. The offering of Christ is a sweet smelling savour to God.
- p. Through the redemptive work of Christ the church is sanctified, cleansed, glorious, spotless, and wrinkle less.

As a final concluding summation on the subject of "justified," God has justified the elect through the redemptive work of Christ.

In our next essay we will consider the fifth of the five works of God in the covenant of redemption which is "glorified."

Glorified

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." In previous essays we have considered God's action of foreknowing a people, predestinating those he foreknew, calling those he foreknew and

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predestinated, and justifying those he foreknew, predestinated, and called. In this essay we will consider God's glorifying those that he foreknew, predestinated, called and justified.

In Rom. 4:17 we read where God "called those things which be not as though they were." God can do this because he is God and because his promises will come to pass just as He promised. Throughout the description of the covenant God has used the past tense to describe his actions. While we are not yet fully glorified in the way we will be glorified, yet in the mind and purpose of God it is as though it were already done.

When we were born of the Spirit we were given a perfect, glorified spiritual nature as we read in the following verses:

a. 1 Pet. 1:23 - "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God that liveth and abideth forever."

b. 1 John 3:9 - "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." Though we are glorified in spirit having the incorruptible seed within us, yet in body we are not yet glorified to the extent that we will be in the resurrection of our bodies.

A comparison is made in 1 Cor. 15 between our unchanged earthly body and what it will be like after the resurrection when our change comes. First (v.42) it is sown in corruption and raised in incorruption. That which is corrupted is brought into a worse condition. When sin entered into the world man was brought into a worse (fallen) condition. In the resurrection we will be raised incorruptible. Our state or condition will be perfect and it cannot be corrupted. Thus we will be in a perpetual perfect condition.

Second (v.43) we are sown in dishonor and raised in glory. Sin brought only dishonor or disgrace to us. It rendered us unfit for God's glory world, yet by the grace of God we shall be raised into a state of being without sin and without capability of sinning.

Third (v.43) "it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power." Sin has rendered us so weak that we cannot keep ourselves from dying though we try ever so hard. Furthermore once we die, we don't even have the power to bury ourselves as someone else must do that for us. Yet in the resurrection we will be raised up to die no more. Just how much power we will have, I know not, but it will be sufficient for our every need.

Fourth (v.44) "it is sown a natural body and it is raised a spiritual body." According to v.49: "as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." As we live in this life we bear Adam's fallen image. When we are raised in the resurrection we will bear the image of Jesus Christ. As Jesus was/is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, so shall we be holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. As Jesus is in his essential nature, so shall we be in our nature in the resurrection.

Fifth (v.54) mortality shall put on immortality. We currently live in timely bodies with every event marked by the passage of time. We are mortal having a beginning and an end. Yet in the resurrection these mortal bodies shall be changed into immortal bodies having no end. Because of the actions of God and his promise of glorification, we can say

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as Paul stated: "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.

How we should praise God for his covenant of redemption in which he chose us before the world began to be his and then by the terms of that covenant predestinated our final glorious outcome, calling us into spiritual life and justifying us from our sins that in the morning of the resurrection we might stand before him glorified and become possessors of that glorious inheritance that awaits us! May God add to your understanding of this wonderful covenant he made with himself before the world began.

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Kingdom of God

Overview of Kingdoms

While our main emphasis of this section of the bible study will be about the Kingdom of God, yet it is good to have a general understanding of kingdoms.

Kingdoms or nations are generally founded on a covenant. The United States has a constitution which was a covenant between the original 13 colonies or states. This has been the guiding document for the nation ever since. God made a covenant with the nation of Israel at Mt. Sinai when he gave them the Ten Commandments and the children of Israel ratified it. Likewise, the New Testament Kingdom of God has a new covenant as set forth in Hebrews chapter 8.

Kingdoms or nations will have three major branches or systems within their government. There will be the legislative section, the executive section, and the judicial section. Under kingdoms, much of this responsibility will be held by the king himself. However, the king can delegate some or most of the responsibilities to his subjects and bodies that he has established for that purpose. Also, these things can be spelled out in the covenant that establishes the kingdom.

Almost always there will be a governing or capital city where the king reigns and where the government is executed. In the United States, of course, this is Washington, D.C. Beginning with King David, Jerusalem became the capital city for Israel. In the New Testament kingdom, the capital city is known as New Jerusalem, which is a name representative of the Lord's Church.

Within the framework of legislation in a kingdom, laws are given to govern the people and to govern the operation of the government. God gave the laws to the children of Israel. He did this through his servant Moses. These laws and ordinances were to govern the people and to govern the operation of the affairs of their government.

Within the framework of the executive duties in a kingdom, certain offices and responsibilities are spelled out to execute the laws and ordinances in the kingdom. God gave to Israel 12 princes and 70 elders initially to serve as an executive and judicial arm of that kingdom. Also, God later gave judges unto Israel who served over the executive and judicial functions of the government. The 12 and 70 later became known as the Sanhedrin Court or Council.

All kingdoms have a ruling King. Initially God was the King over Israel. Later the people asked for a king like unto the other nations and God gave them Saul to be their king. When Saul rebelled God gave them David and then his sons to be the kingly line in Israel.

All kingdoms have a dominion or territory of which the kingdom exists and over which the king rules.

All kingdoms will have an army or military for defence and to fight the battles of the king and his people. God gave to the children of Israel the parameters by which men of a certain age were to be soldiers in the army and also God gave certain individuals to be captain of the host.

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There are citizens of kingdoms over which the king rules. Moreover, there is generally a pathway to citizenship to those strangers who come to dwell among the citizens of the kingdom.

In the Old Testament days, the king or kingdom had its own god that it worshipped and an organizational structure under which the worship was directed. God gave Israel the office of the High Priest, the priesthood, and sacrifices and ordinances the children of Israel were to observe. Moreover there was originally a tabernacle in which the service and worship of God was accomplished. Later the tabernacle was replaced by the temple in Jerusalem.

In most kingdoms, the king will have a residence known as a palace that will be befitting of the station of the king. King Solomon built the king's palace after building the temple.

The succession of the king is usually based on blood descendants and who is the closest blood descendant of the king.

Nation of Israel as a Type of the Kingdom of God

There are many parallels between the nation of Israel as God established her in the Old Testament and the Kingdom of God in the New Testament.

Kingdoms or nations are generally established based on a covenant. For instance, the United States was established based on a covenant between the original thirteen colonies or states. We know this covenant as the Constitution of the United States. Likewise God made a covenant with the children of Israel at Mt. Sinai when he gave them the Ten Commandments as recorded in the 20th chapter of the book of Exodus. Then God gave them the laws and ordinances to govern them as recorded in the remainder of Exodus chapter 20 through the first part of Exodus chapter 24. The children of Israel ratified this covenant when they said in Ex. 24:3 "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."

Likewise, God established the Kingdom of God with a covenant as we read in Hebrews 8:6-12 "But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when 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 when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the

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Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.”

In the Old Covenant the Ten Commandments were written on two tables of stone and the laws of God are written in the tables of the heart and mind in the New Covenant.

There are three major attributes of any government. There is the Legislative, the Executive, and the Judicial attributes. In the nation of Israel, God gave the laws to the nation, thus God was the sole Legislative body of the nation. Likewise, in the Kingdom of God, Christ has given us the laws and ordinances to govern and guide us in the New Testament. He is the sole Legislative body of the Kingdom of God.

In the executive and judicial attributes, God gave to the nation of Israel the regulator manual in which to carry out the execution of his laws and ordinances including giving judgment and executing judgment. Also, God established a council in which to oversee and direct the carrying out of this execution and judgment. He gave that each tribe would have a prince who would represent the tribe in the execution and judgment and affairs of the nation. In addition, he appointed 70 elders. The 12 princes and the 70 elders formed the Sanhedrin Council. In comparison, Christ gave to the church 12 apostles and 70 elders in the establishment of the Kingdom of God. These men were foundational as we are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone. Moreover, thru the apostles and prophets, God gave us the rules and ordinances and guidelines for the execution and judgment that the Kingdom church is to carry forth.

In any kingdom there is a king who rules over the kingdom. Originally, God was the king of Israel. However, after several hundred years the children of Israel asked to be governed by a king like unto the other nations and God granted their petition and gave them Saul as their king. After Saul’s rebellion, God gave Israel David to be king and subsequently his lineage to be kings over Israel after him. The Kingdom of God has Christ as her king: Acts 2:36 “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.” The word Christ literally means the anointed one. Kings are anointed to be king and thus Christ is our king.

In the nation of Israel two things were required for someone to be a citizen of Israel. One they had to be a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The second thing was that the males in the family had to be circumcised. Likewise, citizenship in the Kingdom of God is limited to only the elect family of God and only to those who have been circumcised with the circumcision made without hands. This is the spiritual circumcision of the heart and takes place in the new or spiritual birth.

In the nation of Israel there was a path to citizenship for those who were strangers sojourning in Israel. These had to be circumcised and agree to observe the laws and ordinances as handed down to Israel by the hand of Moses. In the Kingdom of God, everyone who is a citizen of the Kingdom comes through a path to citizenship. This will be discussed in a later essay.

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Nearly all nations have a city which is the seat of government. In the United States this is Washington, D.C. The nation of Israel had different cities that served as the seat of government until David established Jerusalem to be the permanent seat of government. In the Kingdom of God, the seat of government is the church.

A military is essential for the survival of any nation. God gave to Israel, the requirements for the men to serve in the army. The Lord has an army in the Kingdom of God as well. The members of the New Testament church make up the Lord's army. They are to put on the whole armour of God and to fight the good fight of faith.

In the Old Testament days, each kingdom had its own god. What separated Israel from the other nations is that their God was the true and living God. God gave to Israel the manner of their worship. He established the High Priesthood after the order of Aaron. Moreover, the priests were to be the sons or descendents of Aaron. There was another order of the service that was carried out by the descendents of Levi. Today, our High Priest in the Kingdom of God is Jesus Christ, a High Priest after the order of Melchisedec. The members of the church make up the priesthood as God has made them kings and priest unto God. They are to offer up spiritual sacrifices.

Israel first had a tabernacle and later in the days of Solomon a temple was built in which to worship God. In the Kingdom of God we worship in the church which is called the temple of God: Eph. 2:19-22 "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; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an **holy temple** in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

Various Aspects of the Kingdom of God

Paul told Timothy: 2 Tim. 2:15 "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." This admonition applies to everyone of us. If we do not rightly divide the word of truth then we will become hopelessly confused on just about every bible subject. This is true concerning the kingdom of God. There are various aspect of the kingdom of God and we will be confused on this subject unless we rightly divide it.

When we read about the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven, we should keep in mind that there are verses of scripture that speak about a kingdom established on earth today. Also, there are verses of scripture that talk about a kingdom of God known as paradise. Also, there are verses of scripture that talk about a kingdom of God in the past. Moreover, the scripture also talk about an internal kingdom.

Israel was a kingdom that God had established and he was her king until she asked for a king like unto the nations about her. God granted her request and gave Israel king Saul. Later after Saul had rebelled against God, God gave Israel David and his sons after him to be king over Israel. However, in the beginning God was Israel's king.

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In the Old Testament we find prophecies about another kingdom of God to be established. The most notable of these prophecies is found in 2 Sam. 7:12-17: “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. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever. According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David.” This prophecy was of an everlasting kingdom to be ruled over by a king that would be a descendent of David. When John came preaching, Saying, “Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” this was the fulfillment of that prophecy made to David.

Most of the New Testament mentions of the kingdom of God or kingdom of heaven deal with the kingdom on earth that Nathan prophesied to David. However, there are a few verses that speak of the kingdom in paradise or glory:

1. 1 Cor. 15:24 “Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.” Thus, we conclude that the kingdom is here on earth and in the resurrection the kingdom will be delivered up into paradise.

2. Matt. 25: 31-34 “When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:” This verse also speaks of the kingdom being delivered up into the glory world.

Moreover, there are verses that speak of the kingdom as being an internal kingdom: Luke 17:20-21 “And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.”

Most of our studies on the subject of the kingdom of God will deal with aspect of the church kingdom here on earth.

Time of the Establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven

The vast majority of the people who call themselves Christian today believe that the Kingdom of heaven or Kingdom of God is some future kingdom that Christ will come and establish some day. There are many different ideas that people have as to how and when this kingdom will be established.

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The problem with the above idea is that the Kingdom of Heaven has already been established and is present on the earth today. It is a spiritual kingdom and most people do not see it because they are looking for a future kingdom.

The question we should ask ourselves is when was the kingdom of heaven established?

The kingdom of heaven or kingdom of God as it is also called was established when Jesus walked on the earth in a human body. The present the following proofs:

1. Jesus, John the Baptist, and the twelve all taught that the kingdom of heaven was at hand during their day:

a. Matt. 3:1 "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

b. Matt. 4:17 "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

c. Matt. 10:7 "And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand."

To call on the Jews of that day to repent because the kingdom of heaven was at hand is proof that the kingdom of heaven was present in that day. The Jews were called on to repent of their legalism or law service and to press into the kingdom of heaven.

2. There were people during the days of John the Baptist who were pressing into the kingdom of heaven and this proves that the kingdom was present in his day:

a. Luke 16:16 "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it."

b. Matt. 11:12 "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John."

3. Jesus told some that the kingdom of heaven **is** theirs:

a. Matt. 5:3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs **is** the kingdom of heaven."

b. Matt. 5:10 "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs **is** the kingdom of heaven."

4. To others Jesus told that the kingdom of heaven had come nigh them:

a. Matt. 12:28 "But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you."

b. Luke 10:9 "And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come unto you."

c. Luke 11:20 "But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you."

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5. Paul called himself and others fellowworkers unto the kingdom of God: Col. 4:11 "And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellowworkers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me. Thus, Paul, Jesus, and Justus were fellowworkers unto the kingdom of God. They could not have been workers in the kingdom of God unless the kingdom of God existed in their day.

6. Finally, Jesus said that the kingdom of God would be taken from the Jews of his day and given to the Gentiles: Matt. 21:42 "Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the buiders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

We need not look for a future kingdom of heaven on earth. It is here now.

Christ – The King of the Kingdom of God

The following Old Testament passages of scripture prophesied of a coming king who would sit on the throne of David in an everlasting kingdom:

1. 2 Sam. 7:12 "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. 13 He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. 14 I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: 15 But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. 16 And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever. 17 According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David."

Acts 2:29-36 verifies the fulfillment of this prophecy as being Christ: "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

2. Dan. 2:37 "Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. 38 And wheresoever the children of

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men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold. 39 And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth.

40 And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. 41 And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. 42 And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. 43 And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.

44 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. 45 Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

The fourth kingdom is the Roman empire. The prophecy was in the days of the Roman empire the God of heaven would set up a kingdom that would never be destroyed or left to other people.

3. Is. 9:6 "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. 7 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."

4. Zec 9:9 "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."

The prophecy in 2 Samuel which was verified in Acts chapter 2 shows that Christ is the fulfillment of that prophecy and that he was sitting as the king at the time of the writing of the book of Acts. The prophecy in Daniel indicates that Christ would reign in the kingdom of God beginning in the days of the Roman Empire. The prophecy in Zechariah shows us that Christ came as a king when he ascended to Jerusalem riding on an ass. Thus, the above passages show us that Christ is the king of the kingdom of heaven and that he established that kingdom while he walked in a human body here on earth.

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In addition, there are several New Testament passages that prove that Christ is the king of the kingdom of heaven and that he is living and reigning in his kingdom now:

1. Matt. 2:1 "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, 2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."

2. Matt. 27:11 "And Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest."

3. Matt. 27:37 "And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS."

4. Matt. 21:4 "All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, 5 Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass."

5. Luke 19:37 "And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen; 38 Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest."

6. John 1:49 "Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel."

7. 1 Tim. 1:17 "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen."

8. 1 Tim. 6:14 "That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: 15 Which in his times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; 16 Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen."

9. Rev. 15:3 "And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints."

Since Christ sits as king in an everlasting kingdom that has no end and has been sitting as king since he tabernacled in human body, this negates the idea of a coming kingdom where Christ will one day sit as king. He is now king of kings in the kingdom of heaven and that kingdom will one day be delivered up into glory: 1 Cor. 15:24 "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. 25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." In the resurrection, Christ shall deliver the kingdom up unto glory. The kingdom started with Christ, it continues on unto the resurrection here on earth, then it continues on in glory.

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Dominion of God

As the creator of all things, Christ has dominion over all the earth:

1. John 1:1 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made."

2. Ps. 8:5 "For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. 6 Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet:"

3. Ps. 72:7 "In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. 8 He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth."

4. Ps. 103:22 "Bless the LORD, all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul."

5. Zec. 9:9 "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. 10 And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth."

Nebuchadnezzar declared to us that the Lord's dominion is an everlasting dominion: Dan. 4:34 "And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation:"

The Lord's dominion in the kingdom of heaven is set forth for us in the following New Testament passages:

1. 1 Pet. 4:11 "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

2. 1 Pet. 5:10 "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. 11 To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

3. Jude 25 "To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ever. Amen."

4. Rev. 1:5 "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, 6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

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Obviously, the dominion of Christ is over all in the earth as he is the Great Creator of the Universe. Yet he has a specific dominion over the inhabitants of the Kingdom of God. He is over us in a special way so as to refer to us as his people.

The Governor and Government of the Kingdom

Christ is the governor of the Kingdom of God as evidenced by the following scriptures:

1. Ps. 22:28 "For the kingdom is the LORD'S: and he is the governor among the nations."

2. Is. 9:6 "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. 7 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."

3. Matt. 2:6 "And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel."

The government of the kingdom is established by the King and is governed by his laws, rules, regulations, and authority. These laws, rules, regulation, and authority is set forth in the New Testament. Those who are governed by his laws, rules, regulations, and authority are the members of the church. When they entered into the church they agreed to be governed by his laws, rules, regulations, and authority.

The nature of the Kingdom is also set forth in the New Testament and especially where the Lord said, "The kingdom of heaven is like..."

Gospel Call to Enter the Kingdom of Heaven

The Lord has sent forth gospel preachers to call on his people to repent and enter the kingdom of heaven. This gospel call began with John the Baptist: Matt. 3:1,2 "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

This call to enter was sounded by the Lord himself:

1. Matt. 4:17 "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

2. Mk. 1:14 "Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, 15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel."

3. Matt. 7:13 "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: 14 Because

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strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

Next, the Lord sent the twelve apostles to publish the gospel call to enter the Kingdom of Heaven: Matt. 10:5 "These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: 6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 7 And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Further, the Lord sent another seventy to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God: Luke 10:1 "After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come."

In addition, we see several children of God who repented and entered the kingdom of God after hearing the gospel preached:

1. Acts 2:41 "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. 42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

2. Acts 8:12 "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."

3. Luke 16:16 "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it."

The Lord compares entry to the kingdom of heaven to a marriage feast: Matt. 22:2 "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, 3 And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. 4 Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. 5 But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: 6 And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. 7 But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

8 Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. 9 Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. 10 So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests."

From this we gather that entering the Kingdom of Heaven is something that we as children of God should do while we live here in this time world.

Entrance to the Kingdom of Heaven

Luke 16:16 "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it."

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John the Baptist, the Lord, the apostles, and the gospel ministry in general preach that we are to repent and be baptized for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. What are we to do in order to enter this church kingdom?

Before we can do anything to enter the kingdom of heaven (church) something must first be done unto us. The Lord had a conversation with Nicodemus in the third chapter of John: "There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: 2 The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. 3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. 4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? 5 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. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. 8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

Based on the above, we conclude that a person can neither see the kingdom of God or enter into the kingdom of God before he is born of the Spirit. Further, we are told that God (like the wind) is sovereign in bringing about the Spiritual birth. The kingdom of heaven is a spiritual kingdom and according to 1 Cor. 2:14 "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God, therefore he cannot see or enter into the kingdom. Preaching of the gospel will do the natural man no good: 1 Cor. 1:18 "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."

Furthermore, Paul asked people to pray for him that he might be delivered from the unregenerate:

1. Rom. 15:30 "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; 31 That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints."

2. 2 Thes. 3:1 "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: 2 And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith."

We must be born of God to hear God's words as the Lord taught: John 8:43 "Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word. 44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. 45 And because I tell you

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the truth, ye believe me not. 46 Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? 47 He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not because ye are not of God."

Once a person by the sovereign action of a sovereign God is born of the Spirit then he is capable of seeing and entering the Kingdom of God.

First, the gospel must be preached to him before he can understand the kingdom of God:

1. Lk. 16:16 "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it."

2. Matt. 3:1 "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea."

3. Matt. 4:17 "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

4. Matt. 4:23 "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people."

5. Matt. 10:5 "These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: 6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 7 And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand."

6. Mk. 3:14 "And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach,"

7. Matt. 28:19 "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

8. Mk. 16:15 "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

A born again child of God must believe the gospel before he can enter into God's church kingdom on earth:

1. Acts 8:26 "And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. 27 And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, 28 Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. 29 Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.

30 And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? 31 And he said, How can I, except some man should

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guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. 32 The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: 33 In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. 34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? 35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

36 And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? 37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. 38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. 39 And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing."

2. Gal. 1:6 "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: 7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. 9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."

3. Acts 8:12 "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."

4. Acts 11:20 "And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. 21 And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord."

5. Acts 17:10 "And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. 11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. 12 Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few."

6. Acts 18:8 "And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized."

Not only must a person who is born of the Spirit hear and believe the gospel, but he must also repent before he can enter into the Kingdom of heaven:

1. Matt. 3:2 "And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

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2. Matt. 3:7 "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:"

3. Matt. 4:17 "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

4. Mk. 6:12 "And they went out, and preached that men should repent."

5. Acts 2:37 "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? 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."

6. Acts 26:20 "But showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance."

A person must also humble himself before he can enter into the kingdom of heaven:

1. Matt. 18:3 "And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. 4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

2. Matt. 19:13 "Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. 14 But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Public confession of the Lord must be made before a person can enter into the Kingdom of heaven:

1. Matt. 10:32 "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven."

2. Rom. 10:9 "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."

Finally, a person must be baptized in water in order to enter into the kingdom of heaven:

1. Matt. 3:5 "Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, 6 And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins."

2. Mk. 16:15 "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

3. John 4:1 "When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, 2 (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,)"

4. 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

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the Holy Ghost. 39 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. 40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. 41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."

5. Acts 8:12 "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."

6. Acts 8:36 "And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? 37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. 38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him."

7. 1 Peter 3:21 "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:"

The King's Bride

The book of Isaiah prophesies of a coming bride for the Lord: Is. 62:1 "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. 2 And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name. 3 Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. 4 Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married.

5 For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee. 6 I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence. 7 And give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

John the Baptist spoke of a bride for Christ: John 3:28 "Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. 29 He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled."

The apostle John spoke of the bride of Christ as being New Jerusalem in the 21st chapter of Revelation:

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1. Rev. 21:2 "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

2. Rev. 21:9 "And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. 10 And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God."

It is in the writings of the Apostle Paul that we have the clearest statement of the identity of the bride of Christ: Eph. 5:21 "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. 22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. 23 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. 24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27 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. 28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. 29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: 30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

31 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. 32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband."

Thus we have no doubt that the king's bride is the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. The standard of conduct of a husband and a wife is to mirror the conduct of Christ, the King, and his bride, the church.

The King's City

Jerusalem was the city of the kings of Israel. David first established this reigning or ruling city as the ruling city: 2 Sam. 5:7 "Nevertheless David took the strong hold of Zion: the same is the city of David.

There were several Old Testament prophecies of a City of God:

1. Ps. 46:4 "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. 5 God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early."

2. Ps. 48:1 "A Song and Psalm for the sons of Korah. Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. 2 Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. 3 God is known in her palaces for a refuge. 4 For, lo, the kings were

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assembled, they passed by together. 5 They saw it, and so they marvelled; they were troubled, and hasted away. 6 Fear took hold upon them there, and pain, as of a woman in travail. 7 Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind. 8 As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God: God will establish it for ever. Selah."

3. Ps. 87:2 "The LORD loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. 3 Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Selah."

4. Ps. 101:7 "He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight. 8 I will early destroy all the wicked of the land; that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the LORD."

5. Is. 60:14 "The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel."

The Lord tells us in Matthew that the name of the King's city is Jerusalem: Matt. 5:34, 35 "But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King." However, this is not natural Jerusalem, but as we will see, it is spiritual Jerusalem.

We read in the book of Revelations of the King's city:

1. Rev. 3:12 "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name."

2. Rev. 21:2 "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

3. Rev. 21:10 "And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God."

The King's city in Revelations is called New or Holy Jerusalem. Further, it is identified as coming down from God out of heaven. Natural Jerusalem did not come down from God out of heaven. In addition, this New Jerusalem is compared to a bride adorned for her husband. This identifies the King's city as the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. She is also the bride of Christ. Christ rules and reigns in his church. The government of the Kingdom of heaven is established in the church. In the church, the laws of the King are established. When a person becomes a member of the Lord's church, he becomes a citizen of the Kingdom of heaven.

The King's House

In the Old Testament, the tabernacle was first called the house of God in Shiloh: Judg. 18:31 "And they set them up Micah's graven image, which he made, all the time that

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the house of God was in Shiloh. Also, the tabernacle is identified as the house of God in the following passages:

1. Judg. 20:18 "And the children of Israel arose, and went up to the house of God, and asked counsel of God, and said, Which of us shall go up first to the battle against the children of Benjamin? And the LORD said, Judah shall go up first."

2. 1 Chr. 6:48 "Their brethren also the Levites were appointed unto all manner of service of the tabernacle of the house of God."

Later, the temple that Solomon and the children of Israel built was referred to as the house of God:

1. 1 Chr. 22:2 "And David commanded to gather together the strangers that were in the land of Israel; and he set masons to hew wrought stones to build the house of God."

2. 2 Chr. 3:3 "Now these are the things wherein Solomon was instructed for the building of the house of God. The length by cubits after the first measure was threescore cubits, and the breadth twenty cubits."

3. 2 Chr. 4:11 "And Hiram made the pots, and the shovels, and the basins. And Hiram finished the work that he was to make for king Solomon for the house of God;"

4. 2 Chr. 5:14 "So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of God."

In the New Testament, the Lord's church is identified as the house of God:

1. 1 Tim. 3:14 "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: 15 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."

2. Heb. 10:21 "And having an high priest over the house of God; 22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)"

3. 1 Pet. 4:17 "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?"

Furthermore, the church is identified as the New Testament temple:

1. 1 Cor 3:16 "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"

2. 1 Cor 3:17 "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."

3. 1 Cor 6:19 "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?"

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4. 2 Cor 6:16 "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."

5. Eph 2:21 "In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:"

Therefore, we conclude that the church is the house of the King and the temple of the King whose name is Jesus Christ.

The King's Robe and the Garments of His Subjects

In the Old Testament David wore a ceremonial robe of white linen: 1 Chr. 15:27 "And David was clothed with a robe of fine linen, and all the Levites that bare the ark, and the singers, and Chenaniah the master of the song with the singers: David also had upon him an ephod of linen."

In mockery the Roman soldiers place on Jesus before his crucifixion a robe of scarlet or purple:

1. Matt. 27:28 "And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. 29 And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! 30 And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. 31 And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him."

2. John 19:2 "And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe, 3 And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands. 4 Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him. 5 Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man!"

John saw Jesus clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: Rev. 19:13 "And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God." The vesture dipped in blood was alluding to the fact that Jesus redeemed his people from their sins by his blood sacrifice.

Jesus revealed himself to three of the disciples on the mount of transfiguration as wearing a white robe:

1. Matt. 17:2 "And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light."

2. Mk. 9:3 "And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them."

3. Dan. 7:9 "I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire."

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White is the color in the scriptures that is associated with righteousness. We can conclude from the above that the robe of Jesus is righteousness and thus depicted as being a white robe. In his righteousness, he shed his blood to redeem his people from their sins: 2 Cor. 5:21 "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

Thus, Jesus is arrayed with the robe of righteousness and through his shed blood he redeemed his people from their sins and imputed his righteousness unto them:

1. Rev. 6:11 "And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled."

2. Rev. 7:9 "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;"

3. Rev. 7:13 "And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? 14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15 Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them."

4. Rev. 19:8 "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."

5. Rev. 19:14 "And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean."

In conclusion, the King's (Christ) robe is the robe of righteousness and his subjects are clothed with His imputed righteousness.

The King's Throne

In identifying the King's throne, we will look at the location of the throne and the characteristics of the throne.

Several verses of scripture that tell us that the throne of Christ is located in heaven:

1. Ps. 11:4 "The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD'S throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men."

2. Is. 66:1 "Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?"

3. Matt. 5:34 "But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: 35 Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King."

4. Matt. 23:22 "And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon."

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5. Acts 7:49 "Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest?"

6. Rev. 4:2 "And immediately I was in the spirit; and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne."

The nature of Christ's throne is described in the following verses:

1. 1 Sam. 2:8 "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them."

2. 2 Sam. 7:13 "He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever."

3. Ps. 9:2 "I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High. 3 When mine enemies are turned back, they shall fall and perish at thy presence. 4 For thou hast maintained my right and my cause; thou satest in the throne judging right."

4. Ps. 9:7 "But the LORD shall endure for ever: he hath prepared his throne for judgment. 8 And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness."

5. Ps. 11:4 "The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD'S throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men. 5 The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth. 6 Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup."

6. Ps. 45:6 "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre."

7. Ps. 47:8 "God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness."

8. Ps. 89:14 "Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face."

9. Ps. 97:2 "Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne."

10. Ps. 103:19 "The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all."

11. Is. 6:1 "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple."

12. Is. 9:7 "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."

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13. Jer. 3:17 "At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart."

14. Jer. 14:21 "Do not abhor us, for thy name's sake, do not disgrace the throne of thy glory: remember, break not thy covenant with us."

15. Jer. 17:12 "A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary."

16. Dan. 7:9 "I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire."

17. Matt. 19:28 "And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

18. Matt. 25:31 "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:"

19. Lk. 1:32 "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: 33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

20. Heb. 1:8 "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom."

21. Heb. 4:16 "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

The following conclusions can be made from the above scriptures concerning the nature of Christ's throne:

1. Verses 1, 11, 14, 17, and 18 describe the throne of Christ as being a throne of glory. Christ reigns as a glorious king in a glorious kingdom and sits upon the throne of his glory.

2. Verses 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 12, and 16 describe the throne of Christ as being a throne of judgment. On his throne, Christ judges the sins of his people which he atoned for by his blood and he judges the timely actions of his people to reward or chasten them as the situation may demand.

3. Verses 6, 9, and 20 refer to the throne of Christ as being a throne of righteousness.

4. Verses 2, 6, 12, 19, and 20 speak of the throne of Christ being an everlasting throne.

5. Verse 7 speaks of the throne of Christ being a throne of holiness.

6. Verse 21 describes the throne of Christ as being a throne of grace.

7. Verse 11 tells us that Christ's throne is high and lifted up.

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The High Priest of the Kingdom of Heaven

Jesus Christ is the High Priest of the Kingdom of Heaven. In the Old Testament, the High Priesthood was after the order of Aaron, who was of the tribe of Levi. There are both parallels and differences between the priesthood after the order of Aaron and the priesthood of Jesus Christ. In this essay, we will explore these parallels and differences between the two priesthoods.

First, the priesthoods are after two different orders. The priesthood in the Old Testament was as we pointed out after the order of Aaron. After the death of the High Priest, some male descendent of Aaron would become the High Priest. Thus, all the high priests in this order were male descendents of Aaron. The priesthood of Christ is after the order of Melchisedec. Melchisedec was a priest of God and met and blessed Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings. The order of Melchisedec is spelled out for us in Heb. 6:20-7:3: "Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually."

Christ, being a high priest after the order of Melchisedec, has no natural father or mother, he is not descended from anyone, he has neither beginning of days, nor end of life. He is the Son of God and abides as a priest continually. There is neither forerunner nor descendent of Christ. His priesthood is eternal, unlike the priesthood of Aaron which ended at his death and a new priest arose after his death.

The priests after the order of Aaron could not be kings. The kings were of the descendents of the tribe of Judah, whereas the priests were of the tribe of Levi. Christ as a high priest after the order of Melchisedec is also a King. Melchisedec's very name meant king of righteousness and he was king of Salem, which is king of peace. Christ is both the King of Righteousness and the King of Peace as well as our High Priest.

The High Priests after the order of Aaron were to have no physical deformities: Lev. 21:17 "Speak unto Aaron, saying, Whosoever he be of thy seed in their generations that hath any blemish, let him not approach to offer the bread of his God. 18 For whatsoever man he be that hath a blemish, he shall not approach: a blind man, or a lame, or he that hath a flat nose, or any thing superfluous, 19 Or a man that is brokenfooted, or brokenhanded, 20 Or crookbacked, or a dwarf, or that hath a blemish in his eye, or be scurvy, or scabbed, or hath his stones broken; 21 No man that hath a blemish of the seed of Aaron the priest shall come nigh to offer the offerings of the LORD made by fire: he hath a blemish; he shall not come nigh to offer the bread of his God. 22 He shall eat the bread of his God, both of the most holy, and of the holy. 23 Only he shall not go in unto

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the veil, nor come nigh unto the altar, because he hath a blemish; that he profane not my sanctuaries: for I the LORD do sanctify them."

The perfection of Jesus Christ is greater than the perfection of Aaron as we read in Heb. 7:26 "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;" While Aaron did not have the physical deformities listed above, yet he was a sinner and was defiled with sin. In contrast, Christ is undefiled from sin and is separate from sinners.

The High Priests after the order of Aaron offered up sacrifices for sins daily, first for his own sins and then for the sins of the people. However, the sacrifices he offered never did do away with sin, but only brought them into remembrance. In contrast, our High Priest, Jesus Christ made one sacrifice for sins forever. The effects of his sacrifice are set forth in the following verses:

1. Heb. 7:27 "Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself."

2. Heb. 10:12 "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; 13 From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. 14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

Therefore, by one offering Christ perfected forever the elect of God. The offerings of the priesthood after the order of Aaron never could satisfy God's divine justice for sin.

The High Priests after the order of Aaron had first to be anointed by some man before they could serve in the office of High Priest. In contrast, the Lord Jesus Christ was anointed by the Holy Ghost and anointed with the oil of gladness:

1. Luke 4:18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,"

2. Acts 4:27 "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,"

3. Acts 10:38 "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him."

4. Heb. 1:9 "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."

The High Priests after the order of Aaron went into the Holy Place in the Tabernacle and in the Temple to make their offerings. In contrast, the Lord Jesus Christ went into heaven itself into the very presence of God to make his one effectual offering to God: Heb. 9:11 "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more

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perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; 12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. 13 For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: 14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

The High Priests after the order of Aaron were to make intercession unto God on behalf of the people. Likewise, Christ as our High Priest makes intercession for us: Rom. 8:33 "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. 34 Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Unlike those after the order of Aaron who died and then after some time another high priest was anointed, there is no break in the priesthood of Christ for he "ever liveth" and maketh intercession for us.

Finally, the priesthood after the order of Aaron offered animal sacrifices according to the law. In contrast, Christ offered himself as the "lamb of God" to take away the sins of the elect world.

Holy Priesthood of the Kingdom of Heaven

God promised Israel in the wilderness that "Now therefore, if you 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" (Ex. 19:5, 6). God chose Aaron and his sons to make up the priesthood for the children of Israel. The priesthood consisted of Aaron as the high priest and his sons as the priests. The office of the high priest passed to one of the male descendants of Aaron who met the qualifications as given by the Lord.

To be a priest a man had to be a male descendant of Aaron. To serve in the office of a priest he had to be anointed according to Ex. 28:41: "And thou shalt put them upon Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him; and shalt anoint them, and consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office." In addition, the priest had to be washed: "And Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and thou shalt wash them with water" (Ex. 29:4). Furthermore, to minister in the priest office the priest had to be clothed with the holy garments: "And thou shalt bring his sons and put coats upon them. And thou shalt gird them with girdles, Aaron and his sons, and put the bonnets on them..." (Ex. 29:8, 9). Also the priest had to be consecrated to serve in his office (Ex. 29).

The primary function of the priest was to minister in the offerings and sacrifices of the people. There were seven principle sacrifices in which the priest ministered:

1. Sin or trespass offering.
2. Burnt offering.
3. Peace offering.

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4. Heave offering.
5. Wave offering.
6. Meat offering.
7. Drink offering.

These sacrifices or offerings are detailed in the book of Leviticus.

Similar to the sons of Aaron serving as priests under the old covenant, there is likewise a new testament priesthood:

1. 1 Pet. 2:5 - "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

2. 1 Pet. 2:9 - "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."

These to whom Peter was writing were said to be the "elect" of God. The "elect" are identified in Eph. 1:4, 5 as being chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world...to the adoption of children. Thus, all the elect are the children of their high priest, Jesus Christ.

According to 1 John 2:20: "But ye have an unction (anointing) from the Holy One, and ye know all things." Also 1 John 2:27 further teaches this anointing of the elect of God: "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teaches you of all things..." Thus as the Old Testament priests were anointed, so are the elect anointed.

The elect are also washed as we read in Rev. 1:5, 6, "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father..." In addition, Titus 3:5 reads, "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."

Furthermore, the elect are clothed with holy garments as we read in Rev. 7:9, "After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands..."

In addition, as the Old Testament priests were consecrated or sanctified, so are the elect of God as we read in Heb. 10:12-14, "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God: From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified."

In summation, the New Testament priests are the children of their high priest, are anointed by the Holy One, washed from their sins by Jesus Christ and the washing of regeneration, clothed with Holy garments of Jesus righteousness, and consecrated by the atoning sacrifice of Christ.

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In comparison to the Old Testament priests who ministered in the priest's office by offering animal sacrifices, the New Testament priests are to offer spiritual sacrifices. There are seven spiritual sacrifices set forth for us in the scriptures:

1. Sacrifice of a broken spirit - Ps. 51:17.
2. Sacrifice of righteousness - Ps. 4:5.
3. Sacrifice of joy - Ps. 27:6.
4. Sacrifice of thanksgiving - Ps. 107:22.
5. Sacrifice of communicating to the needs of others - Phil 4:18.
6. Sacrifice of faith - Phil. 2:17.
7. Sacrifice of doing good - Heb. 13:16.

Now all of these spiritual sacrifices can be summed up in Rom. 12:1: "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.

In conclusion, as the elect of God and the priests of God we each have the privilege of offering up the above spiritual sacrifices to the honor and glory of Him who hath made us kings and priests to God.

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Benefits of the Word

Introduction

Sometimes God's people question the benefit of studying the scriptures. As they view themselves as having busy lives and many responsibilities laid upon them, to what purpose should they set the reading and studying of the scriptures as a priority?

There are many blessings to the reading and study of God's word. First, the Lord told some unbelieving Jews to "search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life and they are they which testify of me." Thus the scriptures (old and new testament) are a continual testimony of Jesus. What child of God should not have a great interest in learning more about the one who saved him and gave him eternal life?

Second, the scriptures are spiritual food to the inner man. The Lord told Peter to "feed my lambs, feed my sheep, feed my sheep." Paul told the elders at Ephesus to "take heed unto thyself and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Peter admonished the elders to "feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof..." Job said, "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food." Thus our souls are fed spiritually by the word of God.

Third, the scriptures are according to Ps. 119:105, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." The scriptures not only illuminate the way we are presently living our lives, but guide us in the way we should live our lives. The Lord said, "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken unto a wise man who built his house upon a rock..." By reading and studying the scriptures and taking heed there unto we build our lives on a sure foundation that will secure us against the storms and trials of life.

Fourth, according to II Tim. 3:16, 17, the scriptures are a "thorough furnisher unto all good works." According to Eph. 2:10 God has created us in Christ Jesus unto good works, which he hath afore ordained that we should walk in them. Since we have been created unto good works, how will we know how to perform the good works without obtaining a good knowledge of the scriptures? We are told to "study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

Fifth, knowledge of the scriptures helps us in our warfare against sin. David said, "Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee." When Satan tempted the Lord three times in the wilderness the Lord responded each time with, "It is written..." In admonishing us to put on the whole armor of God, Paul told us to have our loins girt about with truth. Thus if we are to stand strong in our battle against sin, we need knowledge of God's word.

Sixth, knowledge of God's word brings us peace, comfort, rest, and hope. The gospel ministry preaches the gospel of peace thus giving peace to our war-torn soul as we learn that Jesus has reconciled us to God by his sacrificial atonement on our behalf. Thru

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knowledge of God's word we have rest from the burdensome toil of trying to get right with God when we learn that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness." The gospel of the grace of God comforts the children of God and gives us hope as we learn of God's sure promises in the covenant of redemption.

Seventh, the word of God sets us free. It sets us free from false worship, false works, false beliefs, and from the bondage of false teachers and false religious systems.

These are just a few of the blessings of reading and studying God's word.

Comforting God's Children

Is. 40:1 "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. 2 Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins."

Matt. 5:4 "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."

The above verses speak to us of the comfort that we derive from the gospel. The prophecy in Isaiah is of this gospel age and the need to comfort the Lord's people. The Lord's people who have been born of the Spirit of God have a warfare that they are engaged in. They are mourning over their sinful condition and trying to do war against their sins. They are trying to establish their own righteousness either through the deeds of the law or through their good works. The problem is neither their good deeds nor the deeds of the law can make them right with God. This war often rages in the heart and mind of God's people.

The comfort of the gospel to God's people is that the warfare is accomplished and their iniquity is pardoned. The war is over and there is no need to continue to fight this war. When Jesus died on the cross, he died to redeem us from our sins and to make us righteous before God: 2 Cor. 5:21, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." The false gospel teaches that Jesus died to make righteousness available to the masses and if you just keep fighting you may be able to attain to righteousness. The true gospel, however, teaches that the warfare of trying to establish ones righteousness is over and complete and we can rest from this warfare. The finished covenant work of Jesus Christ has established what we tried through our efforts to establish but were not able to establish.

Having mourned over our sins, we are now comforted to know that Jesus has redeemed us from our sins. We no longer feel the need to do something to get right with God. Now, instead of mourning over our sins, we rejoice in the finished work of Jesus Christ and what he has done for us.

In addition to the knowledge that our warfare is accomplished and that iniquity is pardoned, the gospel brings comfort to us concerning our trials and tribulations of life. This principle is set forth in 2 Cor. 1:3-7: Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the

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comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation."

The felt presence of the Lord in all of our trials and tribulations and the ability to see the working of His mighty hand of deliverance is a great comfort when we are often cast down and thinking our trials and tribulations are too great for us. The gospel tells us of God's working in our daily lives and encourages us to look for his deliverances and to cast our care upon him for he cares for us.

Furthermore, the true gospel brings knowledge to us that is a great comfort when we mourn the passing of a loved one: 1 Thes. 4:13 "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

The hope we have in the covenant promise of God of the resurrection of the dead eases our sorrow when we lose a loved one and encourages us as to their final destination.

Edify the Church

Edify comes from the Greek word oikodomeo and means: oikodome, oy-kod-om-ay'; fem. (abstr.) of a comp. of G3624 and the base of G1430; architecture, i.e. (concr.) a structure; fig. confirmation:--building, edify (-ication, -ing). Literally, edify means to build up.

There are several verses that show us that the gospel edifies or builds up the individual members of the congregation in the faith:

1. 2 Cor 12:19 "Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ: but we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying."
2. Eph 4:29 "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."
3. 1 Tim 1:4 "Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do."
4. Rom 15:2 "Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification."

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5. 1 Cor 14:3 "But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort."

6. 2 Cor 10:8 "For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed:"

7. 2 Cor 13:10 "Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction."

The gospel builds up the individual in the most holy faith and builds up their spiritual lives in the service of God. Yet, there is additional edification through the preaching of the gospel. This edification is the building up of the church as the body of Christ. The church consists of several individual members compacted together as the body of Christ. While the building up of each individual member is good for the church, yet the church itself is built up as a functioning body as well that includes the interaction and gifts of all the members working in harmony:

1. 1 Cor 14:5 "I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying."

2. 1 Cor 14:12 "Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church."

3. 1 Cor 14:26 "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."

4. Eph 4:12 "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:"

5. Eph 4:16 "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."

6. Eph 4:29 KJV) 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."

The gospel promotes the building up of each of the members of the church in the most holy faith and at the same time promotes the unity and use of the gifts of the church and the actions of the church as a body that the body itself may be built up in its worship and service to God and its ministry to the Lord's people.

Feeding God's People

The following verses of scripture tell us of the need that God's people be fed spiritual food:

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1. John 21:15 "So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. 16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. 17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep."

2. Acts 20:28 "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."

3. 1 Pet. 5:1 "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: 2 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; 3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock."

The spiritual food that God's people are to be fed is the word of God: 1 Pet. 2:2, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."

This spiritual food not only promotes spiritual growth, but satisfies the spiritual hunger of someone who is born of the Spirit of God: Matt. 5:6, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

The preaching of the word satisfies the needs of the lambs, the growing sheep, and the mature sheep: Heb. 5:11 "Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. 12 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. 13 For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. 14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

The pattern in which God's people are fed through the preaching of the gospel is illustrated in a natural miracle that the Lord performed when he fed a multitude of people:

Matt. 14:15 "And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals. 16 But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat. 17 And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes. 18 He said, Bring them hither to me. 19 And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. 20 And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that

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remained twelve baskets full. 21 And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children."

Just as in the miracle of the loaves and fishes, the Lord must take the meditations and thoughts of his gospel ministers and bless them and break them (to their understanding) and this is preached by the gospel messengers to the waiting congregation who eat of the spiritual food to the fill and then pick up the fragments and eat of that spiritual food during the coming week.

Give Knowledge of Salvation

As we shall see the gospel gives knowledge of salvation to God's people. It does not, however, give knowledge of salvation to those who have not been born of the Spirit:

1. John 8:43 "Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. 44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. 45 And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. 46 Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? 47 He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." A person that is not of God cannot hear God's words. To such a person the gospel has no meaning.

2. 1 Cor. 2:12 "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. 13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." A man must be born of the Spirit in order to know the things that are freely given to him of God. The natural man (one not born of the Spirit) receives not the things of the Spirit of God, nor can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned. The natural man cannot, therefore, receive the gospel which is of the Spirit of God.

In contrast, to those born of the Spirit, the following verses show that the gospel brings knowledge of salvation to their hearts and minds and causes them to rejoice in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ:

1. Luke 1:76 "And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; 77 To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins." It is to the Lord's people who have been born of the Spirit that the gospel gives knowledge of salvation by the remission of their sins.

2. Rom. 10:1 "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. 2 For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about

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to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Without the true gospel, God's people in ignorance go about trying to establish their own righteousness through the works of the law or through some man devised works system which can never make them righteous before God. The gospel causes God's people to understand that Jesus has already made them righteous through his covenant work of redeeming them from their sins.

3. 2 Tim. 1:8 "Be not thou 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; 9 Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, 10 But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." Notice that the gospel brings life and immortality to light. The gospel does not give life and immortality, but shines a light on what Christ has done for us in giving us life and immortality.

The gospel, however, does not cause us to know the Lord, but the Lord himself causes us to know him:

1. Heb. 8:10 "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: 11 And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. 12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." We do not teach our neighbor and our brother to know the Lord. The Lord himself teaches us to know him.

2. Matt. 16:13 "When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? 14 And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. 15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. 17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." The Lord told Peter that he was blessed because the Father had revealed to him the Lord. The Father reveals the Lord to our souls in the New Birth.

In summary, the gospel is directed only to born again children of God and gives knowledge to them of their salvation through the finished work of Jesus Christ. The gospel does not, however, cause us to know the Lord, but God himself reveals this to our soul.

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Gospel Call to Repentance and Service

Matt. 3:1 "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, 2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." John the Baptist first preached the gospel of repentance. He called on the children of Israel to repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. That which he called on them to repent from was the pollutions of the doctrines of men and from unrighteous living. Shortly thereafter, the Lord Jesus Christ came and preached in Matt. 4:17 "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." All the types and shadows under the law service and all the prophecies concerning Jesus Christ were about to be fulfilled and it was time for the children of Israel to turn from the worship of God under the law service to worshipping God in the kingdom of heaven which was at hand. This was a great change in the manner of worship.

The gospel has many purposes including saving God's people from ignorance and from an untoward generation and from the many pitfalls of life including false worship. We will cover the utility of the gospel later, but now we will focus our attention upon the use of the gospel to call God's people to repentance and service.

First, the gospel is directed to God's people. Mark 16:15 "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." The creature is the spirit born children of God. Eph. 2:10 "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." In addition, we read in 2 Cor. 5:17 "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Furthermore, Gal. 6:15 says, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." From these verses of scripture we conclude that the new creature is the born again child of God. The gospel is directed to born again children of God. They are the only ones who have spiritual ears and spiritual hearts by which they can receive the Spirit directed gospel. This is in harmony with the fact that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them for they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14). Therefore, only the spiritually born children of God can receive the gospel and respond to the call of the gospel.

Second, the gospel message calls upon God's people to repent:

1. Mk. 6:12 "And they went out, and preached that men should repent."
2. 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."

Among the things that God's people are called on to repent from are these:

1. Self righteousness: Rom. 10:3 "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."

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2. Ungodly living: Matt. 3:7 "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance."

3. Selfish priorities: Matt. 6:33 "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Next, the gospel calls God's people to serve the Lord. The Lord said in Matt. 11:28 "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Paul taught in Rom. 12:1 "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.

2 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." When we come to the knowledge of the truth about salvation by grace and all that the Lord has done for us, then we have an inward conviction that because of God's love toward us that we should serve him. The gospel teaches us that we ought to serve the Lord in his kingdom here on earth. Much of the new testament teaches us about our service towards God and how we ought to live our lives to God's honor and glory.

Additionally, the gospel calls us unto the fellowship of God: 1 Cor. 1:9 "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." Amos 3:3 asks the question, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" The answer is obviously no, two cannot walk together unless they are agreed. To have fellowship with God we must do as we are taught in 1 John 1:3 "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. 4 And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. 5 This then is the message, which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Fellowship with God comes with living our lives according to the word of God. The gospel calls us to have fellowship with God.

Furthermore, the gospel calls us into the knowledge of the grace of Christ: Gal. 1:6 "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel." The gospel calls us to understand that salvation from sin is by the grace of God through the atoning blood of Christ and is according to God's eternal covenant of redemption, which he made before the world began.

Finally, men that God has called to preach the gospel make this gospel call: Rom. 10:14 "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a

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preacher? 15 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!"

Guidance for our lives

Ps. 119:105 "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." This Old Testament passage tells us that the word of God is like a lamp unto our feet, showing us where we stand, and like a light unto our path, showing us the way to go with our lives. As children of God we need direction in our lives. The preaching and teaching of the gospel gives us this direction.

The Lord told us in Matt. 7:13, 14 "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." When we enter the strait or restricted gate of our lives by obeying the word of God and walk the narrow way of discipleship we find the abundant life in the kingdom of God. Otherwise, our lives will be filled with destruction and misery.

The Lord also taught in Matt. 7:24-27 "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." This teaches us that we are to build our lives on the teaching and doing of God's word. We receive much of that teaching through the preaching of the word of God.

The scriptures teach us that the scriptures are a perfect guide to our worship of God: John 4:23, 24 "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." Thus, through the preaching and teaching of God's word, we are taught the correct way to worship God.

The scriptures warn us about the destructive ways of this world and how that we should avoid the pitfalls of life: Acts 2:40 "And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation." The scriptures warn us against drunkenness, fornication, adulteries, and all kinds of carnal vices.

The scriptures teach us about how we are to conduct ourselves in our families. They teach that husbands should love their wives as Christ loved the church. They teach that wives should reverence their husbands. They teach that fathers should bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. They teach that mothers should guide the household. They teach that children should honor their fathers and mothers by obeying them.

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The scriptures also teach us the proper behavior for a disciple of the Lord. They teach us about forgiveness, kindness, upright living, etc. The scriptures teach us about how we should conduct ourselves among others, both within the church and outside the church.

The scriptures teach about how masters should treat their servants and how servants should honor their masters.

There are scriptures to guide us in all of our activities of life.

Peace in the Heart

Peace is a very important subject taught in the scriptures. Paul began each epistle he wrote except for the book of Hebrews with the mention of peace such as we find in 1 Cor. 1:3, "Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ."

The word, "peace," is translated from the Greek word, "eirene," meaning a cessation of war or fighting, quietness. The subject of peace must be rightly divided. First, there is a peace that exists between God and his covenant children that was brought about by the covenant work of Jesus Christ: Col. 1:20, "And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. This judicial peace that exists between God and his children was brought about by the sacrificial atonement of Christ on behalf of the elect. This peace is not dependant on what the children do, but was only conditioned on the blood of Christ. This peace is an eternal judicial peace that cannot be broken.

Second, Christ sacrificial atonement completed the old law service and brought about a peace in worship between the Jews and the Gentiles. Eph. 2:11-14, "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace." The prescribed manner of true worship for both the Jews and the Gentiles is now the same because of the atoning sacrifice of Christ.

Third, the preaching of the gospel brings peace to the hearts of God's sin troubled children. Once a person has been born of the Spirit of God, he begins to be convicted in the courtroom of his heart and mind that he is a sinner and stands condemned before a just and holy God. In our minds, we believe that God is at war against us and that we must do something to get right with God. However, this warfare continues regardless of what we do to try to get right with God. This warfare ceases when we hear and believe the true gospel of the grace of Christ. When we by faith believe the covenant promise that Jesus

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died for our sins and that his atonement set us right with God, then we have peace in the courtroom of our heart and mind:

1. Rom. 5:1, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

2. Rom. 10:15, "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!"

3. Rom. 15:13, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."

This peace is peace that passeth all understanding.

Perfecting of the Saints

In the fourth chapter of the book of Ephesians, the Lord gave the gifts of the gospel ministry. These gifts were given for three purposes. Eph. 4:11 tells us, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." One of the things the gospel preachers were given for was for the "perfecting of the saints." Notice the gifts were not given for the making of saints, but rather God is the maker of saints and the gospel preached by the gospel ministers is to perfect that which God has already made.

The word, perfect, has more than one meaning. It can mean "without spot or blemish as in being perfect without flaw. Only God can make us perfect without flaw. This is not the work of the gospel ministry. Another meaning of the word, perfect, is to be mature. This is the meaning in the phrase, "perfecting of the saints." The gospel is preached to perfect or mature the saints.

In addition, the purpose of the scriptures we are told in 2 Tim. 3:16, 17: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." The scriptures are given to mature the "man of God" so that he will be thoroughly furnished unto all good works. The "man of God" is the born again child of God. The scriptures, when properly applied bring the child of God unto a perfection or maturity in worship and service towards God and his people.

We, as children of God, need maturing in several ways:

1. Matt. 19:21 "Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me." We need maturing in our love towards our neighbor and in our love towards God.

2. Luke 8:14 "And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. 15 But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest

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and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience." We need maturing in our fruit bearing to the honor and glory of God.

3. 2 Cor. 7:1 "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." We need maturing in living Godly or holy lives before God.

4. Col. 4:12 "Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." We need maturing in our service towards God.

5. 1 Thes. 3:9 "For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God; 10 Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?" Our faith needs maturing in our service towards God.

6. Rev. 3:1 "And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. 2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God." We need maturing in our works as the Lord's servants that we may do that which is right and pleasing in His sight.

7. Heb. 6:1 "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, 2 Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. 3 And this will we do, if God permit." We need to mature beyond just a basic understanding of the fundamental principles and go on to a maturity in a godly and holy living before God and man.

The gospel teaches us and brings us to such perfection as stated above.

Providential Salvation

In previous essays, we have studied our eternal salvation from sin including salvation from sin's condemnation, salvation from sin's bondage, and salvation from sin's corruption and noted that God has sovereignly saved us by his grace. Then we proceeded to study many of the timely deliverance that come to God's elect including salvation from ignorance, salvation from a condemning heart, salvation from death of fellowship, and salvation from an untoward generation! We learned the importance of the faith and good works of God's elect in effecting these timely deliverance.

In this essay, we take an overview look at four providential deliverance (salvation) presented to us in the scriptures. God in his providence works in the daily lives of his children. Sometimes he delivers us from circumstances either to save our lives or to deliver our lives from what we would consider to be adverse circumstances. I invite the reader to

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consider the faith and works of God's obedient people that is demonstrated during these scriptural episodes.

The first episode we will look at is found in Matt. 8:23-27, "And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And he said unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then, he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. But, the men marveled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!"

The second episode is Matt. 14:25-31, "And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

The third episode we present is Luke 18:35-43, "And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging: and hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. And he cried, saying, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me. And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried so much the more, Thou son of David, have mercy on me: and Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him: and when he was come near, he asked him, saying, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee. And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God: and all the people when they saw it, gave praise unto God."

The fourth episode is found in Heb. 11:7, "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."

While I only chose four episodes the old and New Testament are full of such episodes of God delivering his people with such timely deliverance. I marvel when I hear some people say they don't believe in timely salvation. Are they reading the same bible I am reading? The

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fact is God is not only the God who has wrought our eternal salvation from sin, but he is the God who is with us in the midst of our lives and in the circumstances of our lives. He is not a God afar off, but one who is near. He has told us to cast our care upon him for he careth for us. If we would stop to consider God's providential mercy and grace upon each of us then we are drawn to the conclusion that we have been saved many times from many adverse circumstances and trials and tribulations in our lives. Furthermore, when we read of such deliverance in the scripture and consider our experiences of life and God's dealings with us in providence, then it encourages us to "lift up our eyes unto the hills from whence cometh our help" when we come face to face with future trials and trying circumstances.

Rest

God set forth the principle of rest for us in the book of Genesis. God created the heavens and the earth in six days and he rested on the seventh. He set the pattern for us. He commanded that we should work for six days and rest on the seventh. God did not rest until the work was completed. He completed the work in six days and then he rested. Likewise, we should do our work first and then rest.

Likewise, we read in Hebrews chapter 1:1 "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, 2 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; 3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Here, again, the Son of God performed a work, purged our sins, and then sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. Christ would not have sat down if the work was not completed. The work of purging our sins was completed on the cross and then Jesus sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

If our sins are not purged until we do something, then the work is not finished. If the work was not finished, I say again, Jesus would not have sat down! Many of God's people, however, do not have this knowledge and are going about trying to do something in order that their sins might be purged.

Jesus said in Matt. 11:28 "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Notice that the command of the Lord is to a people that are laboring and at the same time are heavy laden. It is apparent the Lord is not speaking of someone laboring on their job, but this is a much greater labor with a much greater burden. This has reference to a person who is laboring trying to get right with God and who is burdened with a heavy burden of sin-guiltiness. When we labor trying to get right with God and know ourselves to be vile unrighteous sinners in God's sight, then we have a very heavy load to bear. While we try to clean up our life, yet we still have a conscious condemning us of sin.

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All that we may try to do under the law or under the works systems of men cannot make us right with God nor give us a conscience void of offense.

Under these circumstances, there is no rest for us for we cannot complete our task of getting right with God. Furthermore, the burden of sin-guiltiness just keeps getting greater every day.

Jesus said to come unto him and he would give us rest. The rest we find in Jesus is the truth of the gospel that Jesus has made us righteous before God: 2 Cor. 5:21, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." In Heb. 10:14 we read, "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." With this gospel knowledge, we can cease our efforts of trying to get right with God, and have a conscience void of offense, because Jesus has saved us from our sins. Thus, we can rest in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, by heeding the gospel call to service, we yoke up with the Lord in service to Him and he bears the greater burden of our service. We then rest when a task of service is completed in the approval of our Master who says to us, "Well done thou good and faithful servant...enter into the joy of thy Lord."

Spiritual Growth

The bible plainly tells us that as children of God that we are to grow in grace, knowledge, faith, love, and fruitfulness of the works God has given us to do:

1. 2 Pet. 3:18 "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."

2. 2 Th. 1:3 "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;"

3. Luke 17:5 "And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith."

4. 2 Cor. 9:10 "Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness."

5. Eph. 4:16 "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."

6. 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."

7. 1 Th. 3:12 "And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:"

8. 1 Th. 4:10 "And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more."

The gospel promotes and encourages spiritual growth in God's people:

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1. Eph. 4:15 "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:"

2. 1 Pet. 2:2 "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:"

From the standpoint of the new believer, as newborn babes, we are to desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby. The milk of the word promotes and encourages spiritual growth in us.

From the standpoint of the gospel preacher, speaking the truth in love promotes spiritual growth in God's children, such growth as gives praise, honor, and glory to God in the lives of his people.

The scriptures teach us that we are created to do good works: Eph. 2:10, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Further, the scriptures teach us that our good works or good fruits glorify God:

1. John 15:8 "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."

2. Mat. 5:16 "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

May God help us to grow spiritually through the preaching and teaching of the word of God.

Testify of Christ

This purpose of the gospel should be self-evident to just about any bible student. The Lord said to some unbelieving Jews in John 5:39 "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." While many people think they have eternal life in the keeping of the scriptures, the Lord corrected this concept when he said that the scriptures are a testimony of him. Of course, the scriptures the Lord was referring to at the time were the Old Testament scriptures for the New Testament had not been penned at the time.

Since the scriptures are a continual testimony of Jesus and we are told to preach the word, then reason tells us that we are to testify of Jesus. It should be the desire of every spirit born child of God to know more about their savior. Also, to know about Him who is their Prophet, Priest, and King.

We do not teach people to know the Lord! Heb. 8:11 "And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest." The Lord's born again children know the Lord through the miracle of the new birth. Once they are born of God, they have the nature inwardly of God. They have eternal life, and they have the laws of love written in their heart, and they have received the spirit, whereby they cry "Abba Father." The Lord asked Peter who He, (the Lord) was and we read the answer in Matt. 16:15 "He saith unto them,

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But whom say ye that I am? 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. 17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” Flesh and blood did not reveal Christ to Peter, but the Father in heaven revealed him to Peter.

While we do not teach every man his neighbor and every man his brother, sayintg, “Know the Lord” we do teach about the Lord. The scriptures are a testimony about the Lord.

There are many things that we teach about the Lord:

1. We teach about the attributes of the Lord our God.
2. We teach about Him as our Creator.
3. We teach about Him as our Savior.
4. We teach about Him as our King.
5. We teach about Him as our High Priest.
6. We teach about Him as the executor of the Covenant of Redemption.
7. We teach about Him as our timely deliverer in the adverse circumstance of life.
8. We teach about Him as our Guide or Leader in life.
9. We teach about Him as our hope of eternal life.
10. We teach about Him as the Husband of his birde, the Church.
11. We teach about Him as the Lamb of God.
12. We teach about Him as the Federal Head of the elect family of God.
13. We teach about Him as the giver of Spiritual gifts.
14. We teach about Him as the Builder and Head of the Church.
15. Etc., Etc., Etc.

Every child of God in the Church has a Ministry

Eph. 4:11 “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:”

1248. diakonia, dee-ak-on-ee'-ah; from G1249; attendance (as a servant, etc.); fig. (eleemosynary) aid, (official) service (espec. of the Chr. teacher, or techn. of the diaconate):--(ad-) minister (-ing, -tration, -try), office, relief, service (-ing).

1247. diakoneo, dee-ak-on-eh'-o; from G1249; to be an attendant, i.e. wait upon (menially or as a host, friend or [fig.] teacher); techn. to act as a Chr. deacon:--(ad-) minister (unto), serve, use the office of a deacon.

Eph. 4:11, 12 tells us that one of the purposes that the Lord gave the gospel ministry is for the work of the ministry. That is the gospel ministry was given to instruct each member of the church in their individual ministry. Each member of the body of Christ has a ministry. While only a few of the church members are ever called to preach the gospel,

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yet every member of the congregation is given of the Lord, spiritual gifts and an individual ministry.

We are all familiar with the gospel ministry. Young preachers much be instructed in what and how they are to preach to the Lord's people and how to minister the word of God. Paul told Timothy: 2 Tim. 2:2 "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." The biblical pattern for training young gospel ministers is for an experienced elder to serve as a father to a young preacher to train the younger in the gospel and the church and the ministry. Paul served as a father in the ministry to Timothy, Silas, and Titus and perhaps to many other young preachers. Moreover, the pastor is to teach the young ministers and the church about the duties and qualifications of the men who are to occupy the office of elder and to teach them about the responsibilities of that office.

Acts chapter 6 sets forth for us the establishment of the office of deacon. Deacon comes from the Greek word "diakoneo" which means to minister unto or to serve. Thus, the deacon is a minister. We learn in Acts chapter 6 that the deacon is to serve the table of the needy, to serve the table of the gospel ministers so that they can spend their time ministering the word, and to serve the table of the needs of the local church. Again, the gospel ministers are to teach the deacons their duties and the requirements of the office as well as to teach them and the church the qualifications of those who serve in the office of the deacon.

Additionally each member of the church has a ministry. All the members are given spiritual gifts, some of which are outlined for us in Rom. 12:6 "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; 7 Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; 8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness. 9 Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. 10 Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; 11 Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; 12 Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; 13 Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality." Also, we read of spiritual gifts in 1 Cor. 12:4 "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. 6 And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. 7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. 8 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; 9 To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; 10 To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: 11 But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."

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Some examples of the ministry of individuals are set forth for us in the following passages of scripture:

1. Acts 9:36 “Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did. 37 And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber. 38 And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them. 39 Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them.”

2. Rom. 16:1 “I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: 2 That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also. 3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: 4 Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. 5 Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my wellbeloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ. 6 Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us.” In this passage Phebe, Priscilla, Aquila, and Mary are specifically mentioned as having a work to do in serving the Lord.

3. 2 Cor. 9:1 “For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you: 2 For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many.”

4. 1 Cor. 15:15 “I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,)”

5. 2 Cor. 9:12 “For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; 13 Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men; 14 And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you. 15 Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.”

6. Rev. 2:19 “I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.”

7. Acts 11:29 “Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea:”

Seeing as how each member of the congregation has a ministry, it is the duty of the gospel minister to preach and teach the members as to how to perform their ministry and encourage them in that ministry.

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Order of Worship

Christ the Builder of the Church

Matt. 16:13 "When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? 14 And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. 15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. 17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. 18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. 19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

In the above passage of scripture, the Lord asked, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? The Lord was sampling men's opinions of whom we was. The answer from men's opinions was John the Baptist, or Elias, or Jeremias, or one of the prophets. Public opinion was absolutely wrong. Then the Lord asked the disciples whom they believed he was. Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Peter was absolutely right, but he did not obtain this knowledge from man. The Lord said, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Peter's knowledge of whom Christ was did not come because some man taught him whom he was, but Peter's knowledge came by divine revelation from the Father.

Unless we think that Peter's knowledge of whom the Lord is is exceptional, the Lord went on to tell Peter that "upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The church is built upon the rock of revealed truth of Jesus Christ which comes from God. Jesus is that rock on which the church is built. The church is built upon the person of Christ, the work of Christ, and the word of Christ.

The person of Christ is that he is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Peter knew who he was because the Father revealed it unto him. This is also true for us. Flesh and blood does not reveal Christ unto us, but the Father reveals it unto us. We read in Heb. 8:10, 11 "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest." This passage teaches us that all the elect will know the Lord, but this knowledge does not come from man's teaching, but from the direct application of the new birth upon men's hearts, whereby the Father reveals the Son unto them.

Furthermore, the church is built upon the work of Jesus Christ. The work of Jesus Christ includes what he has already done, what he is now doing, and what he will yet do.

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What he has already done is redeem us from our sins. What he is now doing is calling those elect who are dead in trespasses and sins into spiritual life. What he will yet do is raise the dead in the morning of the resurrection and take the elect to glory. All of this work is done according to the covenant of redemption spelled out for us in Rom. 8:29, 30: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Thus, thru the calling, justifying, and glorifying, the Lord accomplishes this covenant work.

In addition, the church is built upon the word of Christ. According to 2 Tim. 3:16, 17: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." The scriptures being a thorough furnisher means that we have everything we need for the proper functioning of the church and for true worship of the Lord. We do not have to, nor should we, add anything to what the Lord has given us in his word.

Thus, the Lord is that rock or foundation on which he builds the church. Next, he is the builder of the church. Ps. 127:1 "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." A builder can build a structure all by himself or he can be the director and overseer of the building by directing others in their work and overseer what they are doing. When it comes to our home in heaven, the Lord does all the work. When it comes to the building of the visible local church, the Lord is the director and overseer of that work.

In the building of the local church, the Lord has given us the government of the church: Is. 9:6 "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."

He has given us the rules for entrance into the church:

1. John 3:3 "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

2. 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."

3. Acts 8:36 "And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? 37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

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4. Mark 16:15 "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

He has given us the spiritual gifts of the church:

1. Rom. 12:5 "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. 6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; 7 Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; 8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness."

2. 1 Cor. 12:4 "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. 6 And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. 7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. 8 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; 9 To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; 10 To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: 11 But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

He has given us the offices of the church. These offices are the office of bishop or elder and the office of deacon. The office of elder is taught throughout the New Testament. The office of deacon was given in Acts Chapter 6. The qualifications of men who occupy these offices are set forth in 1 Timothy Chapter 3 verse 1-13.

He has given us the gifts of the gospel ministry and their work: Eph. 4:8 "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. 9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) 11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:"

He has given us the details of how that we are to worship in the church. The Lord told the woman at the well: John 4:21 "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. 22 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. 23 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. 24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. "

He has given us the details of how we are to conduct ourselves in the church: 1 Tim. 3:14 "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: 15 But if I

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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."

Further, the Lord has given us the desire to worship and serve Him: Phil 2:13 "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." He also has given us the Holy Comforter or Holy Spirit: John 16:13 "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come."

In addition, the Lord molds the local church into a functioning body:

1. 1 Cor. 12:13 "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. 14 For the body is not one member, but many. 15 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? 16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? 17 If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? 18 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him."

2. Eph. 4:15 "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: 16 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."

3. Eph. 2:19 "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; 20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; 21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

4. Rom. 12:3 "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. 4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: 5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."

5. 1 Cor. 12:24 "For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: 25 That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. 26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. 27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."

6. Eph. 1:22 "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, 23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

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7. Eph. 3:4 "Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) 5 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; 6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:"

Christ has also given us the ordinances of the church. He has given us the ordinance of water baptism and the ordinance of the communion service.

Truly, the Lord is the builder of the true church.

Order of Worship in the New Testament Church

In establishing New Testament worship, we use the New Testament as our rule. We do not go back unto the Old Testament to establish New Testament worship or practice. This principle is set forth for us when Paul wrote to the churches of Galatia in Gal 5:3 "For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law." This plainly shows us that to bring in even one element of the law service makes us a debtor to perform all elements of the law service.

The proper elements of worship in the New Testament Church are singing, prayer, and preaching. The following verses are used to prove that singing is a part of the New Testament worship:

1. Eph. 5:19 "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;"

2. Col. 3:16 "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."

3. 1 Cor. 14:15 "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."

4. Heb. 2:12 "Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee."

5. Mat. 26:30 "And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives."

From the above we gather that the disciples sang in the midst of the church, they were teaching and admonishing one another in song and in the church they were singing both with the spirit and with the understanding. Clearly, singing is an essential part of New Testament worship.

Next, the following scriptures are a few that show us that prayer is a part of New Testament worship:

1. Mat. 21:13 "And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves."

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2. Acts 1:14 “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.”

3. Acts 12:5 “Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.”

4. Mat 9:38 “Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.”

5. 1 Cor. 14:15 “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. 16 Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?”

6. 1 Th. 5:25 “Brethren, pray for us.”

7. 2 Th. 3:1 “Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you:”

Finally, the scriptures teach that preaching is a part of New Testament worship:

1. Acts 15:35 “Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.”

2. Acts 20:7 “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.”

3. Acts 5:42 “And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.”

4. Gal. 1:8 “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. 9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”

These verses plainly teach that preaching is a part of New Testament worship.

Some things that are not set forth in the scriptures as a part of New Testament worship are dancing, Sunday schools, or church auxiliaries.

Modern Innovations

Primitive Baptists have long held that the scriptures are our only rule of faith and practice. This belief is proven to be correct by 2 Tim. 3:16, 17: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” This clearly teaches us that the scriptures are a thorough furnisher. Thus, there is nothing in the way of good works that is not taught in the scriptures. Further, the scriptures teach us that we cannot bring Old Testament practices into the New Testament worship and service: Gal. 5:3 “For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.” Thus, to bring circumcision or any other Old Testament practice into

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our New Testament worship and service makes us a debtor to do all the Old Testament practices. This would include such things as animal sacrifices, the Old Testament priesthood, males appearing three times a year at the appointed feasts in Jerusalem, etc.

There are two schools of thought towards modern innovations. One is that where the scriptures are silent, then silence gives permission. Those, who practice using musical instruments in their worship service, or who have established Sunday schools, or who have embraced modern missionism, or a hierarchy from of church government, etc. use this school of thought to justify their additions. However, using this school of thought would conceivably lead to any innovation that is not specifically prohibited by the scriptures. Thus, such things as dancehalls, sacrificing of animals, pot smoking parties, etc. could be justified using that school of thought.

The second school of thought is embraced by the Primitive Baptists and that is that adding practices that are not specifically authorized by the scriptures is strictly prohibited by the silence of the scriptures. The verses cited above clearly teach this principle.

I have attached two articles (one by Elder Don Watson and one by Elder J. H. Oliphant that clearly teach why we sing a cappella in our worship and use no musical instruments.

Musical Instruments in the Church

Elder Don Watson

"I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also" [1 Corinthians 14:15]
How are we to praise our Savior through song? Let's study the beginning, use, and ending of musical instruments in praising our Lord.

David, around 970 BC, making Solomon his son King over Israel, "gathered together all the princes of Israel with the priests and Levites. Now the Levites were numbered from the age of thirty years and upward: and their number by their polls, man by man, was thirty and eight thousand. Of which twenty and four thousand were to set forward the work of the house of the Lord; and six thousand were officers and judges: Moreover, four thousand were porters; and four thousand praised the Lord with the instruments which I made, said David to praise therewith" [1 Chronicles 12:2-5]

Throughout the Psalms, David instructs praise to the Lord with the instruments which he had made.

How were they used? Hezekiah provides detail. "And the Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priest with the trumpets. And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering upon the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also with the trumpets, and with instruments ordained by David King of Israel. And all the congregation worshipped and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded; and all this continued until the burnt offering was finished." [Notice that the musical instruments began playing when the burnt offering began and stopped when the offering was finished.]

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"And when they had made an end of offering, the King and all that were present with him bowed themselves and worshipped. Moreover, Hezekiah the King and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord with the words [not instruments - the offering was finished] of David and Asaph the seer. And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped." [2 Chronicles 29:26-30]

Remember the words of Christ while upon the cross, "It is finished" [John 19:30]. The perfect sacrifice is finished. The perfect offering: "Christ who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God" [Hebrews 9:14]. We have an altar - which is Christ. "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" [Hebrews 13:10-14].

The prophet Amos, preaching 785-740 BC, speaking of this better time "though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace offering 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 5:22-23]. No burnt offerings, no meat offerings, no peace offering of fat beast, and no instruments for melody with the songs. Not only are we instructed to take those instruments away, the Lord does not hear the melody made by them.

Further, "Woe to them...that chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of musick like David." [Amos 6:1,5] - we are instructed not to sing to instruments or invent new instruments to praise using David to justify their use. If melody is not to be made with instruments, then how?

The Apostle Paul to the church at Ephesus; "speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." [Ephesians 5:19] The Lord Himself sang without instruments; "And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives." [Matthew 26:30]

God's children should not sit quietly during the song service because we are afraid someone will hear our imperfect singing voice. We are not singing to those around us, but to the Lord. Let us raise our voices, the harps the Lord has made, in singing to Him.

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." [Colossians 3:16]

Entrance to the Kingdom of Heaven

Luke 16:16 "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it."

John the Baptist, the Lord, the apostles, and the gospel ministry in general preach that we are to repent and be baptized for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. What are we to do in order to enter this church kingdom?

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Before we can do anything to enter the kingdom of heaven (church) something must first be done unto us. The Lord had a conversation with Nicodemus in the third chapter of John: "There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: 2 The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. 3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. 4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? 5 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. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. 8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

Based on the above, we conclude that a person can neither see the kingdom of God or enter into the kingdom of God before he is born of the Spirit. Further, we are told that God (like the wind) is sovereign in bringing about the Spiritual birth. The kingdom of heaven is a spiritual kingdom and according to 1 Cor. 2:14 "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God, therefore he cannot see or enter into the kingdom. Preaching of the gospel will do the natural man no good: 1 Cor. 1:18 "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."

Furthermore, Paul asked people to pray for him that he might be delivered from the unregenerate:

1. Rom. 15:30 "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; 31 That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints."

2. 2 Thes. 3:1 "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: 2 And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith."

We must be born of God to hear God's words as the Lord taught: John 8:43 "Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word. 44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. 45 And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. 46 Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? 47 He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not because ye are not of God."

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Once a person by the sovereign action of a sovereign God is born of the Spirit then he is capable of seeing and entering the Kingdom of God.

First, the gospel must be preached to him before he can understand the kingdom of God:

1. Lk. 16:16 "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it."

2. Matt. 3:1 "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea."

3. Matt. 4:17 "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

4. Matt. 4:23 "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people."

5. Matt. 10:5 "These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: 6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 7 And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand."

6. Mk. 3:14 "And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach,"

7. Matt. 28:19 "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

8. Mk. 16:15 "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

A born again child of God must believe the gospel before he can enter into God's church kingdom on earth:

1. Acts 8:26 "And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. 27 And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, 28 Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. 29 Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.

30 And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? 31 And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. 32 The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: 33 In his humiliation his judgment

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was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. 34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? 35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

36 And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? 37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. 38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. 39 And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing."

2. Gal. 1:6 "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: 7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. 9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."

3. Acts 8:12 "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."

4. Acts 11:20 "And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. 21 And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord."

5. Acts 17:10 "And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. 11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. 12 Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few."

6. Acts 18:8 "And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized."

Not only must a person who is born of the Spirit hear and believe the gospel, but he must also repent before he can enter into the Kingdom of heaven:

1. Matt. 3:2 "And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

2. Matt. 3:7 "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:"

3. Matt. 4:17 "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

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4. Mk. 6:12 "And they went out, and preached that men should repent."

5. Acts 2:37 "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? 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."

6. Acts 26:20 "But showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance."

A person must also humble himself before he can enter into the kingdom of heaven:

1. Matt. 18:3 "And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. 4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

2. Matt. 19:13 "Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. 14 But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Public confession of the Lord must be made before a person can enter into the Kingdom of heaven:

1. Matt. 10:32 "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven."

2. Rom. 10:9 "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."

Finally, a person must be baptized in water in order to enter into the kingdom of heaven:

1. Matt. 3:5 "Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, 6 And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins."

2. Mk. 16:15 "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

3. John 4:1 "When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, 2 (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,)"

4. 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. 39 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. 40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. 41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."

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5. Acts 8:12 "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."

6. Acts 8:36 "And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? 37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. 38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him."

7. 1 Peter 3:21 "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:"

Ordinances of the Church

The word "ordinance" comes from the Greek word, "paradosis" and is defined as: paradosis, par-ad'-os-is; from G3860; transmission, i.e. (concr.) a precept; spec. the Jewish traditionary law:--ordinance, tradition. Most of the time in the New Testament the word is translated tradition. An ordinance is a tradition. The ordinances of the church are traditions handed down to us from God.

A number of times, the traditions of men used in place of the commandments of God are condemned by the Lord. There is a difference from the traditions of men and the traditions given to us by God. We should never follow the traditions of men to the exclusion of the traditions of God.

Paul delivered the ordinances of God to the New Testament church: 1 Cor. 11:2 "Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you." The ordinances are church ordinances. They are not the preachers ordinances as some have thought.

The ordinances of God, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, were representative in nature. For instance, the Passover feast was a representation of the atoning work of Christ on the cross. Likewise, the morning sacrifice and the evening sacrifice were representative of Christ death for his people on the cross. The morning and evening sacrifices were similar to our communion service in the New Testament in that the meat offering was unleavened bread and the drink offering was wine.

In the New Testament the church is given two ordinances to observe: water baptism and the communion service. Water baptism is essential before one can become a member of the Lord's church here on earth. Water baptism represents the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ: 1 Pet. 3:21 "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:" It also is a declaration of the one being baptized to turn from the former walk of life to walk in newness of life: Rom.

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6:4 “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.”

The second ordinance is the communion service. The communion service consists of the eating of unleavened bread; the drinking of wine; and the washing of the saints feet. This practice is set forth for us in Matt. 26:26; Mk. 14:22; Luke 22:17; 1 Cor. 11; and John 13:4-17. The Lord tells us that the unleavened bread represents his body; the wine represents his blood; and the washing of the saints’ feet signifies our humility in service to one another.

Offices of the Church

When the Lord established the church he gave her two offices. These two offices are the office of Elder or Bishop and the office of Deacon. He did not give the church the office of Sunday School Superintendent or the office of Music Director or the office of Youth Director. There is no mention of these offices in the scripture and therefore they are unbiblical.

According to Acts 6:3, 4 the elders are ministers of the word and the deacons are ministers of the physical needs of the church: Acts 6:3 “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. 4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.”

All four types of gifts of gospel ministers (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers) are part of the office of the elder or bishop. Peter, an apostle, confirmed this to us in 1 Pet. 5:1 “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...” Peter confirmed that he was an elder or bishop in the church, even though he had the gift of an apostle.

The scriptures set forth the qualifications and works of each type of officer. We will examine these in future essays.

Elder - Choosing, Calling, and Sending

When it comes to the choosing, calling and sending of an elder there are many schools of thought. Some think that it is up to the individual to choose to become an elder or preacher. Others think that a gospel preacher is sent by a bible college, seminary, or mission board. Even some others think that the gospel preacher is chosen, called, and sent by the local church. All of these schools of thoughts are wrong according to the scriptures. Only God has the authority to choose, call, and send a gospel minister.

The following verses of scripture prove that the Lord chooses those who are to be ministers of the gospel:

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1. Eph. 4:8 “Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. 9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) 11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;”

2. Mk. 3:13 “And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him. 14 And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach,”

3. John 15:16 “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.”

4. Lk. 10:1 “After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.”

5. Jere. 1:4 “Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 5 Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.”

Next, the Lord calls those that he chooses to be gospel ministers as the following scriptures show:

1. Mk. 3:13 “And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him.”

2. Matt. 4:18 “And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. 19 And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. 20 And they straightway left their nets, and followed him. 21 And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. 22 And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.”

3. Matt. 10:1 “And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.”

4. Mk. 6:7 “And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits;”

5. Lk. 6:13 “And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles;”

6. Acts 13:2 “As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.”

7. Rom. 1:1 “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,”

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8. 1 Cor. 1:1 “Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,”

9. Heb. 5:4 “And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.”

Next, that the gospel minister is not sent to preach the gospel by some board or church or other organization, but by God alone is made abundantly clear by the following verses:

1. Matt. 10:5 “These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: 6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 7 And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

2. Matt. 21:33 “Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: 34 And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. 35 And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. 36 Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. 37 But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. 38 But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. 39 And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. 40 When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?”

3. Lk. 9:1 “Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. 2 And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick.”

4. Luke 10:1 “After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.”

5. John 1:6 “There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. 8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.”

6. Acts 13:4 “So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus. 5 And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister.

7. Rom. 10:13 “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. 14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach, 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!”

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8. 1 Cor. 1:17 “For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.”

9. Acts 16:6 “Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, 7 After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. 8 And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas. 9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. 10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.”

10. Acts 20:26 “Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. 27 For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. 28 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.”

Therefore, we conclude that it is God alone who chooses, calls, and sends men to preach the gospel.

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Duties of the Ministry

Duties of the Ministry Part 1 Feed the Sheep

The Lord's people are often referred to in the scriptures as sheep. One of the chief responsibilities of the gospel ministry is to feed the Lord's people with spiritual food. The following passages teach us the importance of this responsibility:

1. John 21:15 "So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. 16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. 17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep."

2. Acts 20:28 "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."

3. 1 Pet. 5:1 "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: 2 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; 3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock."

The Lord illustrated the manner in which his people were to be fed in a miracle that is recorded for us in all four gospels. Here is the miracle recorded for us in the book of Matthew: Matt. 14:15 "And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals. 16 But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat. 17 And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes. 18 He said, Bring them hither to me. 19 And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. 20 And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full. 21 And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children."

Notice that the Lord blessed and brake the fishes and bread and gave to the disciples who in turn distributed to the multitude who were gathered in companies. Similarly, the Lord blesses and breaks his word to his gospel ministers, who then preach his word to the people who are gathered in the companies of the churches.

Duties of the Ministry Part 2 Perfecting of the saints

An important duty of the gospel ministry is to preach and teach to the Lord's people

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in such a way that it promotes and encourages their maturity or perfection in the service of the Lord. The following verses teach this principle:

1. Eph. 4:11 “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:”

2. Col. 1:28 “Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: 29 Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.”

3. Col. 4:12 “Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.”

4. 1 Thes. 3:9 “For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God; 10 Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?”

5. 2 Tim. 3:16 “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 7 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

A gospel minister must be aware of the spiritual state and knowledge of each member of the congregation and pray that the Lord will direct him as to what is needed to help each member to become more mature in his worship and service to God.

Duties of the Ministry Part 3 Work of the ministry

The scriptures teach that each member of the congregation has a ministry to perform in the service of the Lord. They also teach that the gospel ministry is to instruct the congregation concerning each members ministry: Eph. 4:11 “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:”

The following verses of scripture detail the ministry of several of God’s people who are not gospel preachers or deacons:

1. Rom. 15:27 “It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.”

2. 1 Cor. 16:15 “I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,)”

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3. Heb. 6:10 “For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.”

4. 1 Pet. 4:10 “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 11 If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

5. Acts 9:36 “Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did. 37 And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber. 38 And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them. 39 Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them. 40 But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up. 41 And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive.”

The gospel ministry is to encourage the members to use the gifts that God has given them and to labor in the service the Lord directs them to do. The gospel ministers also point out how this service is to be performed.

Duties of the Ministry Part 4 Edifying of the Church

The word, edify, means to build up. To edify the church is to build up the church. The gospel ministry is through preaching, teaching, and example is to build up the church and each member of the church. The following scriptures teach us this work of the ministry and its importance:

1. Eph. 4:11 “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:”

2. 1 Cor. 3:9 “For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. 10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. 11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; 13 Every man's work shall be made

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manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. 14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. 15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.”

3. 1 Pet. 2:5 “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.”

4. Eph. 2:19 “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; 20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; 21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord”: 22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

5. 1 Cor. 14:3 “But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. 4 He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church. 5 I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.”

The gospel minister needs to preach and teach so as to not only built up each member, but also to build up the members together so that the whole church is being built up as a witness and example unto the community around them.

Duties of the ministry Part 5 Teach

Teaching is a vital part of the work of the gospel minister. Nearly everything he does in his ministry involves teaching. One of the qualifications of a gospel minister is that he must be apt to teach. There are many ways to teach. The gospel minister should be prepared to teach even as the Lord gave us an example when he walked in humanity upon the earth. The Lord taught through preaching, he taught through group teaching, he taught through individual instruction, and he taught by example. Moreover, through the Holy Spirit he has taught us in the written word. If we follow his example we will teach through preaching, through group teaching, through individual instruction, by example, and by written means as I am attempting to do in this writing.

The following verses teach us both the duty of the gospel ministry and need for teaching:

1. Matt. 28:19 “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

2. Acts 5:42 “And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.”

3. 1 Cor. 4:17 “For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways

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which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church.”

4. 1 Cor. 14:19 “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.”

5. 1 Tim. 3:2 “A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;”

6. 1 Tim. 6:2 “And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort.”

Duties of the Ministry Part 6 Comfort

One of the chief duties of a gospel minister is to comfort the Lord’s people as Is. 40:1 plainly tells us: “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. 2 Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.” This was a prophecy of the New Testament age and the instruction is to comfort the Lord’s people who are mourning over their sins and fighting a warfare to try to get right with God. The message is that Christ has already accomplished what the Lord’s people are trying to do and therefore they can rest in the finished work of salvation.

However, there is more comfort found in the preaching and teaching of the gospel as the following verses attest to:

1. Rom. 15:4 “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.” Our knowledge of the scriptures gives us hope both in eternal life, but also in the accomplishment of the promises of God concerning our daily lives.

2. 2 Cor. 1:4 “Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. 5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.” Tribulations, trouble, and sufferings are the lot of God’s people. The preaching of the gospel brings comfort to the Lord’s people in the midst of their tribulations, troubles, and sufferings.

3. 2 Cor. 2:7 “So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.” This verse is about a man who had committed a greivous sin and then repented and subsequently, the church forgave him and comforted him.

4. Phil. 2:1 “If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, 2 Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.” This teaches us that with what comfort, consolation, fellowship, inward affections and mercies that we have received in the church and in the preaching and teaching of the gospel, we should

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strive to comfort, console, have fellowship for, have inward affections for, and be merciful to others as well.

5. 1 Thes. 4:18 “Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” The context of this verse is to comfort those whose loved ones have died.

The gospel ministry have an important duty in comforting the Lord’s people.

Duties of the Ministry Part 7 Call to repentance and service

An important duty of each gospel minister is to call the Lord’s people to repent, press into the kingdom of God and serve the Lord. The following verses speak to us of these principles:

1. Matt. 3:1 “In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, 2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

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

3. Mk. 6:7 “And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits; 8 And commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse: 9 But be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats. 10 And he said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place. 11 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrhah in the day of judgment, than for that city. 12 And they went out, and preached that men should repent.”

4. 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. 39 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. 40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. 41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”

5. Acts 17:30 “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:”

6. Acts 26:20 “But showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.”

7. Matt. 16:24 “Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”

8. Mk. 10:21 “Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.”

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9. Lk. 9:23 “And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.”

10. Lk. 16:16 “The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.”

Duties of the Ministry Part 8 Preach gospel of the kingdom

All four of the gospels have a lot to say about the kingdom of God or kingdom of heaven. The Lord taught the disciples to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is the Lord’s church kingdom on earth and we as children of God have a need to know about the structure, government, worship and service of this kingdom. The gospel ministry has an important duty in teaching the Lord’s people about the kingdom.

The following scriptures speak to us of the need to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God:

1. Matt. 10:7 “And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

2. Matt. 16:19 “And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

3. Mk. 1:14 “Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,”

4. Mk. 1:15 “And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.”

5. Lk. 8:1 “And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him,”

6. Lk. 9:1 “Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. 2 And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick.”

7. Lk. 9:59 And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. 60 Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.”

8. Lk. 16:16 “The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.”

9. Acts 8:12 “But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.”

10. Acts 19:8 “And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.”

11. Acts 28:23 “And when they had appointed him a day, there came many

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to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening.”

12. Acts 28:30 “And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, 31 Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.”

Duties of the Ministry Part 9 Watchman over the flock

The nature and duties of a watchman or overseer are set forth for us in the following two passages of scripture in the book of Ezekiel:

1. Ezek. 3:17 “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. 18 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. 19 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. 20 Again, When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand. 21 Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered...”

2. Ezek. 33: 2 “Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman: 3 If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people; 4 Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. 5 He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul. 6 But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand. 7 So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. 8 When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. 9 Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.”

The gospel ministers are like the watchmen in the book of Ezekiel in that they have

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responsibility to watch over the flock (church) and give warning and guidance to the members of the church. Moreover, God holds them responsible, just like he did the watchmen in Ezekiel. The following verses show forth the watchmen responsibility of the gospel ministers:

1. Acts 20:26 “Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. 27 “For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. 28 “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. 29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. 31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.”

2. 1 Pet. 5:1 “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: 2 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; 3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.”

3. 1 Tim. 3:1 “This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. 2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;”

4. Luke 2:8 “And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.”

5. 2 Tim. 4:3 “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; 4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. 5 But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.”

6. Heb. 13:17 “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.”

Duties of the Ministry Part 10 Deliver from error and false worship

There are many false teachers, false prophets, and preachers who preach things that they ought not for filthy lucre's sake. Moreover, people have grown up under systems of belief and practice that are not supported by the word of God. To worship the Lord it is necessary that a person worship God in Spirit and in truth. One of the chief duties of the gospel minister is to bring God's people out from under the bondage of legalism and false worship and practice to an understanding and belief of the true gospel of Jesus Christ.

The following verses teach us the need for God's people to be delivered from error and false worship:

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1. Rom. 10:1 “Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. 2 For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.”

2. 1 Tim. 1:3 “As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, 4 Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do.”

3. Matt. 15:7 “Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, 8 This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. 9 But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”

4. James 5:20 “Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.”

5. 2 Cor. 6:14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? 15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? 16 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. 17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, 18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”

6. John 4:19 “The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. 21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. 22 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. 23 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. 24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

7. Eph. 4:13 “Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: 14 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; 15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:”

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Duties of the Ministry Part 11 Bring to timely salvation

One of the things that separate the Primitive Baptists from most other groups of people is a belief in the biblical teaching of two types of salvation. Primitive Baptist believe that eternal salvation from sin is solely by the grace of God through the atoning sacrifice of Christ. In addition, the Primitive Baptists believe that there are many timely or gospel deliverances taught in the word of God that are dependent on the actions of the child of God. It is the duty of the gospel minister to preach the gospel in order that God's people may have gospel or timely salvation.

The following verses of scripture teach about these gospel, temporal, or timely salvations:

1. Acts 2:40 "And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation."

2. Mk. 16:15 "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. 17 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; 18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."

3. 1 Pet. 3:21 "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:"

4. 2 Tim. 2:10 "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."

5. Acts 2:47 "Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

6. Acts 11:12 "And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house: 13 And he showed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; 14 Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved. 15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning."

7. Rom. 1:16 "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. 17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."

8. Rom. 8:23 "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. 24 For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? 25 But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it."

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9. Rom. 10:1 “Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. 2 For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.”

10. 1 Cor. 1:18 “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. 20 Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? 21 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.”

11. 1 Cor. 9:19 “For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. 20 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; 21 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. 22 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. 23 And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.”

12. 1 Cor. 15:1 “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; 2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.”

13. Phil. 2:12 “Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. 13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

Ordaining and Qualification of Elders

Elders are ordained in the church and not outside the church. The church determines the qualifications of an elder and if they have found the man has proven both that he is called of God and that he is sound in doctrine and practice and that he meets the qualifications given by the scriptures, then the church should call for his ordination. In most cases this will include calling upon sister churches to send their ordained help to form a presbytery to examine and ordain the brother to the office of elder.

The following verses show that the brother that is to be ordained is to be ordained in the church:

1. Acts 14:23 “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.”
2. Acts 13:1 “Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain

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prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. 3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.”

3. Acts 1:22 “Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.”

Moreover, these verses show that a presbytery is to be formed for ordaining to the office of elder:

1. 1 Tim. 4:14 “Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.”

2. 1 Tim. 5:22 “Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure.”

3. Acts 13:1 “Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. 3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.”

4. Heb. 6:2 “Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.”

Next, the qualifications of an elder are bishop are set forth for us in the following passages:

1. Tit. 1:5 “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: 6 If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. 7 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; 8 But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; 9 Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. 10 For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: 11 Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.”

2. 1 Tim. 3:1 “This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. 2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; 3 Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; 4 One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; 5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) 6 Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. 7

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Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.”

Additionally, it is the responsibility of the church to determine if the brother meets the qualifications as set forth in the above passages. The following definitions from Strong’s Hebrew-Greek dictionary can be helpful in determine the meaning of the qualifications listed above:

1. Blameless - 410. anegkletos, an-eng'-klay-tos; from G1 (as a neg. particle) and a der. of G1458; unaccused, i.e. (by impl.) irreproachable:--blameless.
2. Steward - 3622. oikonomia, oy-kon-om-ee'-ah; from G3623; administration (of a household or estate); spec. a (religious) "economy":--dispensation, stewardship
3. Selfwilled - 829. authades, ow-thad'-ace; from G846 and the base of G2237; self-pleasing, i.e. arrogant:--self-willed.
4. Given to wine - 3943. paroinos, par'-oy-nos; from G3844 and G3631; staying near wine, i.e. tippling (a toper):--given to wine.
5. No striker - 4131. plektes, plake'-tace; from G4141; a smiter, i.e. pugnacious (quarrelsome):--striker.
6. Given to filthy lucre - 146. aischrokerdes, ahee-skhrok-er-dace'; from G150 and kerdos (gain); sordid:--given to (greedy of) filthy lucre.
7. Lover of hospitality - 5382. philoxenos, fil-ox'-en-os; from G5384 and G3581; fond of guests, i.e. hospitable:--given to (lover of, use) hospitality.
8. Lover of good men - 5358. philagathos, fil-ag'-ath-os; from G5384 and G18; fond to good, i.e. a promoter of virtue:--love of good men.
9. Sober - 4998. sophron, so'-frone; from the base of G4982 and that of G5424; safe (sound) in mind, i.e. self-controlled (moderate as to opinion or passion):--discreet, sober, temperate.
10. Just - 1342. dikaios, dik'-ah-yos; from G1349; equitable (in character or act); by impl. innocent, holy (absol. or rel.):--just, meet, right (-eous).
11. Holy – set apart by God and in actions.
12. Temperate - 1468. egkrates, eng-krat-ace'; from G1722 and G2904; strong in a thing (masterful), i.e. (fig. and reflex.) self-controlled (in appetite, etc.):--temperate.
13. Blameless - 423. anepileptos, an-ep-eel'-ape-tos; from G1 (as a neg. particle) and a der. of G1949; not arrested, i.e. (by impl.) inculpable:--blameless, unrebukeable.
14. Vigilant - 3524. nephaleos, nay-fal'-eh-os; or nephaios, nay-fal'-ee-os; from 3525; sober, i.e. (fig.) circumspect:- sober. (Note: Sober, adj.- 1. [Solemn]- restrained, earnest, grave, serious.
15. Of good behaviour - 2887. kosmios, kos'-mee-os; from G2889 (in its prim. sense); orderly, i.e. decorous:--of good behaviour, modest.

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16. Apt to teach - 1317. didaktikos, did-ak-tik-os'; from G1318; instructive ("didactic")--apt to teach.

17. Patient - 1933. epieikes, ep-ee-i-kace'; from G1909 and G1503; appropriate, i.e. (by impl.) mild--gentle, moderation, patient. (Note: Gentle, adj.- 1. [Soft]-tender, amooth, sensitive. 2. [Kind]- tender, considerate.

18. Brawler - 269. amachos, am'-akh-os; from G1 (as a neg. particle) and G3163; peaceable--not a brawler. (Note: Brawler, n.- fighter, contestant, contender, party to a quarrel, warrior, soldier, combatant, belligerent, assailant, aggressor, antagonist, feudist.

19. Not covetous - 866. aphilarguros, af-il-ar'-goo-ros; from G1 (as a neg. particle) and G5366; unavaricious--without covetousness, not greedy of filthy lucre.

20. Ruleth well his own house - 4291. proistemi, pro-is'-tay-mee; from G4253 and G2476; to stand before, i.e. (in rank) to preside, or (by impl.) to practise--maintain, be over, rule.

21. Novice - 3504. neophutos, neh-of'-oo-tos; from G3501 and a der. of G5453; newly planted, i.e. (fig.) a young convert ("neophyte")--novice.

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Gifts of the Church

Four Gifts of the Gospel Ministry

Eph. 4:8 "Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. 9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) 11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." In the above scripture we see the four gifts of the gospel ministry. These four gifts are:

1. Apostles
2. Prophets
3. Evangelists
4. Pastors and Teachers.

It is the Lord who gave these gifts and it is the work of the Holy Spirit to call men to the work of those gifts.

There are similarities and differences in all four of these gifts.

The similarities in these four gifts include the fact that they are all called of God and send of God and preach the same gospel in power and demonstration of Spirit and all are laboring in the Kingdom of God and are working to the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry and for the edifying of the body of Christ. They all are attempting to feed God's people with the spiritual food of God's word. There truly are more similarities than differences between the four gifts.

The main difference between the four gifts of the gospel ministry is the extent of their work. First the apostles had to be eye witnesses of the resurrected Christ. They were given authority that the other gifts weren't given in the establishment of church government and ordinances that were given them from the Lord. They like the apostles had a direct revelation of God's word to deliver unto the people. There were also signs which were associated with the apostles that the other gifts of the gospel ministry did not have. They, like the prophets, and the evangelists went forth to various locations doing the work of evangelists in carrying forth the gospel.

The prophets did not have to be eye witnesses of the resurrected Christ, but they were given a revelation from God of His word to deliver to the people. They like, the evangelists went forth to various locations doing the work of evangelists in carrying forth the gospel.

The evangelists did not have to be eye witnesses of the resurrected Christ, nor were they given a revelation of God word to deliver to the people. They did go forth to various locations doing the work of the evangelists in carrying forth the gospel.

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The pastors and teachers did most of the work in the church of which they were made overseers by the Holy Spirit. Their work is primarily in that location until or if the Holy Spirit directs them to another location. They have the responsibility in that location to teach and preach to God's people to edify and build them up in the most holy faith that was once delivered to the saints. In this location, they also do the work of the evangelists, but don't generally go to various locations as the evangelists, prophets, and apostles did.

When the canon of scripture was completed, then there ceased to be the need for apostles and prophets and thus today we have the two gifts that remain of evangelist and pastor and teacher.

Seven Gifts in the Church

By Elder Michael Ivey

In I Corinthians 12 Paul identified several gifts, some of which were sign gifts that are unique to the first century church, such as the miraculous ability to speak a foreign language without any prior knowledge of the language. In Ephesians 2:20 Paul distinguished the foundational gifts of prophets and apostles that were also unique to the first century church. In Ephesians 4:11 he identified the ministerial gifts of evangelist and pastor/teacher that yet exist. In Romans 12 Paul identified seven additional gifts which are yet found in the church. They are, prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, ruling, and showing mercy.

The context of Romans 12 indicates that these gifts are not restricted by church office. They are found among the membership in general. He makes no distinction as to the value of one category of gift over another, indicating that the gifts are given as a measure of God's grace. He suggests that not every member has every gift and also notes that there are different administrations of the same gifts. That is, the use or application of the same gift may be different from one person to the next. Paul tells us that gifts are to be used in proportion to one's faith. From this we may conclude that God directs the proper use of gifts. The numerous administrations and operations of these seven gifts attend to the physical, emotional and, to a certain degree, spiritual necessities of church members. There is no circumstance of essential physical or emotional need that, from a godly perspective, cannot be addressed by the various ministrations of one or more of the gifts.

In this regard, Paul's metaphor of the human body and the church thoroughly applies. The human body requires natural food and water by which it supplies each component with nourishment. The body of the church is supplied with spiritual food from God, which is administered by the functionality of gifts. The human body is sustained by proper functioning of each of its component systems. A church is sustained by proper ministration of each gift. The human body, using various physiological systems, breaks down natural food and supplies it to each component of the body to maintain physical and mental health. The church, through faithful operations of administrations of gifts by each member, supplies each whatever measure of physical support and/or spiritual

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encouragement needed to maintain spiritual health and overall Christian functionality. Each component or system in the human body has a specific, irreplaceable function that serves the common good of the whole body. Each church member, utilizing the gift God has given, also has a specific and vital function that serves the common good of the whole church.

The seven gifts God gives in the churches are exercised by administrations and operations of seeable, touchable faith in the community of the church. Members use their respective gifts to aid and support one another. The ability to administer gifts differently in various operations means that the same gift may be used in numerous ways, as defined by need and spiritual direction. Thus, every challenge the church faces, either collectively or as a single member, has the potential of being addressed by every gift of every member. No one is left out. In this, the church is analogous to the human body: To function properly both need all their parts doing their respective jobs. These seven gifts are given by God according to the grace he gives us. One or more are given to each child of God. They are revealed as aptitudes, which very often are used in our secular vocations. God allows this. However, His primary intent, in the context of Romans 12, is that they be used to the edification of the church and the glory of God. When a member faithfully exercises his gift he can reasonably expect the ministrations or, ways it is exercised, to increase; with faithful ministration he grows in grace. Further, based upon the parable of the talents in Matthew 25, it is also reasonable to believe that when a member faithfully executes the responsibilities of his gift God will impart a new gift, whereby he may also grow in grace.

These gifts are the context for seeable, touchable faith. It is through their ministration that members manifest their faithfulness to God. They are the framework whereby faith is shown by works. Vertical fellowship with God is accomplished and demonstrated by the horizontal fellowship of a seeable, touchable good works faith toward one another. This cross index of faithfulness places church members in the central position of rendering out flowing services of faith to one another, whereby upward flowing faith to God occurs as devotional glory. The Savior taught the reality of the principle of God receiving upflow glory from outflow rendered services in Matthew 25:3440. He said that as often as one child of God renders a service to another child of God he considers the service as being rendered to him. Rendering service to one another confirms faithful discipleship to Christ Jesus. Thus, cutting timber, clearing land, building cabin's and generally seeing to the needs of one another, as demonstrated by the church community of Sandy Creek Baptist Church, was seeable, touchable faith which edified the church and glorified God.

Prophecy

Prophecy is defined as the ability to foretell events. In the Bible this includes both Old and New Testament prophets who, by divine revelation, were able to accurately detail future occurrences. The definition also includes preaching the gospel by divine liberty. I

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have chosen not address these administrations of the gift. The gift of prophecy, as it is given to members of the general assembly, is an ability to wisely discern the consequences of decisions or actions. It is the gift of wise counsel. This gift is often manifest as steadfastness. The brother or sister who carefully weighs consequence before taking action possesses this gift. It is the spiritually directed ability to know what to say and when to say it. It may include insight into cause and effect relative to human nature. At the same time, it is not judgmental. The gift is not meant to be used to judge or condemn people. It is a support which may help others sort out thoughts and events and determine a proper course of action. It does not direct or invoke. It gently identifies potential dangers or blessings based upon various actions that might be taken in a given situation.

Solomon was blest with the gift of prophecy as it now exists in the church. The most revealing example of his possession of this gift is recorded in I Kings 3:25. There, he commanded that a sword be brought to him. He expressed his intention to divide an infant and give one half to each of two women who were fighting over it. Solomon was able to discern the consequence of expressing an intent to give each woman one half of the baby. By spiritually directed discernment he understood that a loving mother would give up her child rather than see it harmed. Solomon was not gambling with the child's life, because his understanding of the consequence of expressing an intent to divide the child was a faithful operation of the gift of prophecy. The Lord gave him spiritual enlightenment to foretell the consequence of his expressed action. That is how the gift of prophecy works. Such a gift is invaluable to the church. It provides spiritual counsel as the church deliberates. It reveals unseen pitfalls. It contributes spiritual enlightenment for every decision the church must make as a whole. Individual ministrations would include counseling troubled members or those who are prone to pursue error. Prophecy is God's method for day-to-day practical and specific application of divine principles. This gift may be found in both male and female members. Acts 2:17 and I Corinthians 11:5 plainly indicate that a woman may possess the gift of prophecy. The inclusion of women does not mean that they are called to preach, since the gift of prophesy and some of its administrations are not exclusive to the office work of preaching the gospel.

Ministry

Ministry is defined as giving aid. It carries a connotation of servitude. Acts 6:1 reveals that ministering as a servant is one qualification of a deacon. This gift is very common in the church. It extends beyond the duties of deacons. But considering the example of Acts 6:1, we find a principle of addressing the physical needs of others. That is, this gift includes the idea of rendering a service of physical labor. There is also a principle of organized activity related to the gift. This is revealed in the text I Corinthians 16:15. The whole house of Stephanus had "*addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints.*" The word addicted (tasso, gr.) is translated; to arrange, assign, or order. This definition indicates organization. Those who possess the gift of ministering understand

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that there is a goal in mind as they labor. They work to accomplish that goal. It may be to perform a specific task, such as painting the meetinghouse. Often it relates to providing for the necessities of some member. For instance, if a member is ill, and unable to perform some needed task such as caring for her children, the ministers in the church might provide the labor necessary to accomplish the goal of child care. This applies to every labor related necessity that a member may have but is unable to perform because of some adversity or affliction.

Ministering saints in the church receive joy from rendering a service of physical activity. Their joy of service is to physically spend themselves helping those who are in need. Further, Peter indicates that ministering to others glorifies God. *"If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Christ Jesus..."* (I Peter 4:11). The fact that God is glorified by the physical activity of faithful ministering is proof enough of the importance of this gift. However, a church cannot properly function without it. It is Brother and Sister Minister who maintain the meetinghouse and see to the necessities of destitute or afflicted members. Sister Minister plans menus and brings food to church as needed.

A quiet spirit is often an evidence of the gift of ministering. This is so because the first requirement of faithful ministering is understanding need. Those who are most attentive in their listening habits are usually the first ones to comprehend need in others. Also, this trait often characterizes the service of ministry. Brother and Sister Minister do not make a show of their labors. Often the only people who know that a service has been rendered is the brother or sister in need and the ministering saint who quietly renders service.

Teaching

Teaching is a very common gift in the church. In Colossians 3:16, Paul gives a general admonition which indicates the responsibility members have to teach one another. *"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."* Every category of church member, male, female, younger, older, fathers, mothers, even children have a responsibility to instruct others. Some instruction is done formally, as the preached word. But the greater portion, both in numbers of teachers and administrations, is based upon social interactions among the membership of the church. When Paul, in Titus 2:26, left instruction that the older women teach the younger women and the older men teach the younger men he was not implying that formalized sessions of instruction take place. Rather, he was speaking to the day-to-day interaction that church members should have with one another. This teaching is to be based upon both wise counsel and example. Older women were to teach younger women how to love their husbands by simple, applicable suggestions. However, the greater thrust of their instruction was based upon the example the older women provided to the younger women. This type of instruction cannot occur unless there is frequent social interaction among church members.

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Children are a vital part of the social interaction of teaching in the community of the church. Their primary responsibility is learning from the instruction and example of older members. However, they also teach by example. In I Corinthians 14:20 Paul indicates that children instruct by example as to how adults are to behave when they disagree. He said that in malice, adults are to follow the example of children.

Fathers and mothers are responsible for their children receiving godly instruction IN THE HOME! A few years ago, while doing research for a book, I review many seventeenth and eighteenth century associational minutes. Some contained queries, or questions directed to the associations from member churches relating to a father's responsibility to conduct a nightly family devotion. The associations said that it is a father's responsibility to instruct his children in the word of God. They said that a father who neglects this responsibility should be brought before the church to be instructed and disciplined as necessary. Fathers are to raise their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." This means they are to instruct their children in the word of God and counsel them in the ways of godliness. Paul's praise of Lois and Eunice, Timothy's mother and grandmother, indicates that mothers share the responsibility of teaching their children Christian principles. From this it may be concluded that the activity of teaching one's children may be shared by father and mother. However, as the head of the family, God holds a father accountable for the spiritual welfare of his children. It is to our shame that this responsibility is so generally neglected.

Exhortation

To exhort means to call near. Its definition includes the idea of urging one to acceptable conduct. Exhortation may also have a connotation of comforting. It always denotes sincere, or earnest recommendation. Those who exhort in the church are spiritual cheerleaders. They encourage and coax us to laudable conduct. Exhorters are reassuring. They comfort us when we have doubts.

Joshua and Caleb are examples of those who possess the gift of exhortation. They urged the Israelites to enter Canaan. They did so based upon a faithful conviction that God would bless the effort. Exhorters have a special way of looking at challenges. They see them as opportunities. Joshua and Caleb saw the same things that the other spies saw which were sent into Canaan. Yet, the other spies brought back a report that the enemy was too strong and the land could not be taken. Joshua and Caleb urged the Israelites to take the land, assuring them that God would deliver the victory. Brother and sister Exhorter have confidence in God's ability. They are the positive thinkers in the church. They always seem to have a word of encouragement no matter how great a trial or tribulation the church may be facing. Brother Exhorter may relate a scriptural example of God's providential deliverance when others were faced with a similar challenge. Often, Brother Exhorter has a special gift for public prayer and/or relating experiences. This is because the gift of exhortation includes the aptitude to call one near. He calls upon the Lord with deep respect and reverential fear; yet with confidence that God will hear his prayer and respond. He

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relates experiences of God's providential mercies as a way to encourage others. Sister Exhorter may use her gift to comfort a brother or sister who is in distress over some circumstance in their life. She reassures that God is able to deliver them from every affliction of tribulation. She may confirm the soundness and happy consequence of the brother or sister heeding Brother Prophets good counsel in some matter.

Brother or Sister Exhorter may also be found encouraging Brother and Sister Minister as they engage in their labors. They tell them of the good effect their work is having and how pleased God must be with their efforts. Sister Exhorter might compliment Sister Teacher on the excellent example she is setting for the younger sisters.

Giving

The gift of giving is the aptitude to be spiritually directed as to when and what to share with others. It carries a connotation of sacrifice of ones goods. It is a gift of ability. When God provides this gift he also provides the means to exercise it. God does not give one the gift of giving and then leave them destitute and unable to give. Relatively speaking, twentieth century churches have many members who have the gift of giving. Many churches have members with more financial wealth than is needed to provide for their own basic necessities of food, raiment and shelter. The increase which God has given them is evidence of their ability to give.

Brother Faithful Giver is unpretentious. He does not make a show of his ability to give. Neither does he compare his giving to others. He understands that the widow's mite is more than he has given and is humbled by her faithfulness. He is happy to give. He does not consider giving to be a burden of church membership. Rather, he receives genuine joy when that is able to give.

The Lord has given Brother Faithful Giver a heart to give. He is not covetous. He views his own financial means as a tool by which God allows him to render a small service. He is attentive to the financial welfare of the church. He wishes her to have comfortable facilities in which to meet. He desires that the pastor be well cared for. At the same time he uses his gift in a responsible manner to assure that he is able to respond as needs arise. He is attentive to the necessities of the widows and those who are destitute.

Ruling

The gift of ruling includes an aptitude for presiding. It also includes an inclination toward organizing. It may involve the ability to direct others. Rulers have good people skills. Deacons and preachers must have an aptitude to rule. However, since ruling is a gift, and not an office, there are various administrations of this gift that are outside the office work of deacons or preachers. The scriptural connotation of the gift of ruling is that of a father governing his family by organization and example. He loves each one and is careful to respect their concerns. He does not seek special privilege or exemption for himself because of his position. Rather, he understands that each member of the family will be

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looking at the example that he sets. Therefore, he is very careful about his own actions and also what he asks others to do.

Rulers are not dictatorial, neither are they bureaucratic. In fact, they do not formally exercise their gift unless there is a specific need. There were no deacons in the church until a specific need arose. This point identifies a principle of limited rule. Rulers are not appointed church aldermen. They do not claim more authority or respect than ministers, teachers, exhorters, givers, etc.. They simply have a gift that inclines them toward organizing and directing others.

Rulers may be brothers or sisters. Remember, this gift is not limited to church office. One brother may exercise his gift of ruling during a church building project. He may have special planning abilities or be skillful in the building trades. Another brother may exercise his gift of ruling on some church committee. He may have special organizational skills; or, perhaps he has people skills that are particularly needed to handle some difficult situation. Often this brother is a deacon; but, since a brother is to prove his qualifications before he is chosen as a deacon, the leadership of ruling may be seen in some who are not deacons.

Since many ministrations of the gift of ruling are informal, and are exercised on an "as needed" basis, a church may have several male members who possess this gift. They will not all be exercising their gifts simultaneously. Sisters also possess this gift. In Romans 16, Paul's instruction to the church concerning Phebe plainly indicates that she was to be involved in some form of directing other members. Her gifts evidently included rendering service. However, it appears that she was to help Rome church by organizing their efforts to help others. The fact that Paul instructed Rome Church to provide assistance at her request indicates that in addition to the gift of ministering she also possessed the gift of ruling. The administration of her gift of ruling was in the area of directing people in the activity of ministry, or rendering service.

Showing Mercy

One who has the gift of showing mercy has the unique ability to suffer together with another; that is, to show genuine empathy, and yet remain functionally capable of caring for the one suffering. This is a unique gift. It is different than the gift of ministering. This gift specifically relates to addressing the needs of a member who is ill, or who is suffering grief.

Doctors and nurses often possess this gift. They are able to genuinely care about a patient's suffering and yet accomplish difficult procedures to help the person. This is because they look at suffering from the unique perspective of sympathy and correction. Some people cannot show mercy. They are so overcome by another person's suffering that their emotions make unable to help. An example: Two people stop at an auto accident. The first person sees the victim's injuries and faints. The second person sees the injuries and

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renders first aid. The first person was incapable of showing mercy because he was overcome with emotion.

Consider the parable of the Good Samaritan. Both the priest and the Levite passed by the traveler who had been beaten and left for dead. Whatever their reasons, they did not lend assistance. When the good Samaritan found the man he had compassion for him and immediately initiated a plan to care for his wounds. The Samaritan considered the wounded traveler from a perspective of sympathy and attending to his wounds. He gave little regard to the fact that touching the man might soil his clothing, or that assisting him could cost the Samaritan money. He saw someone suffering and was compelled by his compassion to give assistance. He carried the traveler to safety where his wounds could be dressed. And though the Samaritan continued on his own journey he assured the traveler that he would return to see about him. The Samaritan had the gift of showing mercy.

Working Together in the Community of the Church

Sister Show Mercy makes it her business to know when a brother or sister is in need. She always has a positive attitude, a kind word, and healing methods. She is the member who brings getwell cards to church for everyone to sign. She visits the sick. If they need special care she volunteers to help. Brother Exhorter comes by with a few encouraging words. Sister Prophecy offers suggestions about a careful convalescence. Brother and Sister Minister are there to help with the children, do outside chores to clean the house. Brother Giver will bring by a bill of groceries. Sister Rule is scheduling members to bring meals, watch the children or house cleaning so that necessary tasks are distributed among the entire membership. Sister Show Mercy is there caring for Sister Afflicted. She is seeing that pills are taken and that Sister Afflicted is eating plenty of healthy food, getting enough rest, and doesn't get too excited about the fact that almost every member of the church has been by to see her in the last week. Sister Show Mercy is right there. With a smile on her face and cheerful demeanor, she is comforting and caring for sister Afflicted.

These are the seven gifts God has given to the church. However, this description is not exhaustive. The intent in listing certain characteristics and examples for each gift is to develop some understanding of each gift; to show how, in concert, they edify the church as the bride of Christ. They display her loveliness, as a social band that is both a family of believers and the body of Christ. When each member faithfully exercises his or her gift as God intends the church is truly most beautiful to behold. She is like an army with banners unfurled. She is beautiful for situation. She is glorious to behold as an everlasting kingdom.

Firstfruit Giving (A Principle of Financial Stewardship)

Elder Michael Ivey

The Bible has a great deal to say about how we are to use the things God gives us: Not the least of which is His instructions on how we are to manage and distribute His financial blessings. The primary focus of this work is firstfruit giving, which is one element of our

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financial responsibilities to God. Examination of instructions and examples found in God's word reveals firstfruit giving is a biblical practice that applies to everyone who strives to be a faithful follower of Christ. Scriptural examination of the topics listed below suggests firstfruit giving is an essential part of discipleship.

1. Stewardship in God's kingdom
2. What are firstfruits
3. How much should we give
4. Firstfruit giving is a form of worship
5. Proper motive and attitude for giving
6. Firstfruit giving impacts the quality of our fellowship with God
7. Firstfruit giving produces greater blessings

Firstfruit giving is the practice of worshipping God by faithfully giving back to Him the initial products of our labors. In the Old Testament, it was incorporated into Mosaic Law service as a required duty of the children of Israel. In the New Testament, it is presented as a principle that makes first giving back goods and finances to God a priority of financial stewardship. It places serving the Lord with one's finances ahead of all other financial obligations. Firstfruit giving establishes a way of worshipping God by putting Him first in our discipleship of giving. In both the Old and New Testaments firstfruit offering is characterized as faithful giving. In the Book of Ecclesiastes Solomon portrays faithful giving as first casting bread upon the water (Ecclesiastes.11: 1) which will then return in many ways as God's blessings to liberal givers. The same principle of faithfully giving to God first and then God giving blessings in return is indicated in Luke 6:38. "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."

Stewardship in God's kingdom

In order to better understand the scriptural teachings of firstfruit giving it is important we recognize its relationship to biblical stewardship. In Luke 12: 42-43 the Savior stated: "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? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing." This text indicates a steward is a ruler, or overseer of another's goods and possessions. In the context of the lesson, the Savior is teaching God's disciples are His stewards on earth. Strong's Concordance provides this definition for a steward: "*a house-distributor (i.e. manager), or overseer, i.e. an employee in that capacity; by extension, a fiscal agent (treasurer); figuratively, a preacher (of the Gospel):— chamberlain, governor, steward.*" Scriptures in both the Old and New

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Testaments support Strong's definition that fiscal agency, or financial oversight is an element of stewardship.

The principle of fiscal, or financial stewardship is not limited to management of church finances. It also includes spiritually directed management by each follower of Christ in all matters of their personal finances. This is so because in the broadest sense God's kingdom includes all He created and over which He retains ownership. John wrote, "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." (John 1:3) The idea of stewardship in relation to God's material possessions was first presented to the children of Israel when God delivered them from Egyptian bondage. In Exodus 19:5 Moses cites God's dominion over all people in that everything on earth belongs to Him. "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..." If all the people of the earth belong to God (contextually, not as His children, but as His possessions) and earth and everything on earth was made by Him and thereby His possessions; then everyone who uses his possessions is accountable to God as to how they are used. This means money, the fiscal product of commerce, belongs to God, is under His rule as part of His created earthly domain, and is used correctly in keeping with God's word. This is so because we use God's physical possessions of land, water, and air through vocations such as farming, fishing, mining, carpentry, et cetera, to earn money. It is also true in our use of God's intellectual possessions, the products of our minds, (which minds belong to Him because we are His possessions) when we write books, or software programs, or by the practice of Law or medicine or engaging in any other intellectual endeavors to earn money. In all cases, God ultimately provides both the necessary raw materials and the intellectual properties used in commerce.

New Testament scriptures teach the practice of giving the Lord the firstfruit of our labors is a principle of Christian stewardship. I Corinthians 16:2 identifies it as a New Testament Church practice. The Apostle Paul instructed Christians to give the first products or profits from their labors to the Lord. "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." The principle of stewardship also may be inferred from the text. The phrase "as God hath prospered him" indicates God provides us with the things we are to give. This point is supported in II Corinthians 9 where Paul instructed the church to make a collection for the poor before he arrived. He implies the principle of stewardship by noting God provides the necessary "seed" and also gives increase so Christ's disciples may liberally give back to Him by ministering to others.

Simply stated, all we possess, including all our money and goods, belong to God. He made them and retains ownership. In Haggai 2:8 the Lord expressly declared His ownership of

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money with regard to the gold and silver used in rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem. “The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts.” This point is made with even greater emphasis in Psalms 50:10-12 where, thru the Psalmist, God declares: “For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof.” Therefore, it is altogether appropriate for God to direct how we use His silver and gold together with all the goods he has entrusted to us according to the principles of Christian stewardship and more specifically fiscal or financial stewardship, as taught in His written word.

What are firstfruits?

A fundamental principle of firstfruit giving is priority. Scriptures in both the Old and New Testaments instruct us to give to God first. They teach what and how much we give Him is the highest priority in determining how we use our finances and goods.

In the Old Testament, firstfruits are identified as the first products of the harvest and the firstborn of herds and flocks that were given to the Levites as offerings to God. In I Corinthians 16:2 the Apostle Paul presents the concept of firstfruit giving in the New Testament as laying up in store the first day of the week. Examination of this text reveals similarity in principle to the precepts of Old Testament firstfruit giving. The text reads: “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.” In the generally agrarian societies of Old and New Testament times giving firstfruit could be literally practiced. People could give the proceeds from the first days of harvest, or the first lambs or calves born. However, in modern societies where most of us receive an hourly wage or salary and are paid weekly or monthly, it is difficult, if not altogether impossible, to know what are the first dollars we earned for the pay period, the firstfruits of our labors. However, the phrase “Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store” identifies a principle of *first priority* as an essential element of firstfruit giving in any circumstance. Therefore, according to scripture, when we budget the distribution of our finances and/or goods our first priority is what we will give back to God to be used in His service.

The phrase “as God hath prospered him” affirms the stewardship principle that money or goods we are to give come to us as the results of God prospering, or giving increase. The increase is God’s. We know this because it is God who gives it to us. But He does not give it with the understanding we can use it for any purpose we imagine. All the increase belongs to God. He graciously prospers us to supply our needs. Our greatest, or first need is to worship and thank Him. Therefore, it is fitting that we, as God’s stewards, use the firstfruits to specifically honor Him. And, according to God’s word, the way we do this is by making giving back to God our first priority: He prospers our labors with increase,

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whether it is in terms of money, crops, livestock, etc.; and, before we make any other decisions as to how we will use these resources to supply our own needs we are instructed to worship God in praise and thanksgiving by giving a portion back to Him.

How much should we give?

The question of how much we should give back is addressed in various ways in scripture. In the Old Testament Mosaic Law instructed the children of Israel to give a tithe, a tenth part, to the Levitical priesthood to supply their needs. (See Leviticus 27:30-32) In turn, the Levites were instructed to give a tenth of what they received as a heave offering to God. (See Numbers 18:26-29)

There are no specific instructions or examples in the New Testament suggesting tithing was a prescribed practice of the first century Church. Scripture does indicate a different standard. It is the standard of sacrifice as personified in Christ's death at Calvary. Jesus said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. (John 15:13) He set the standard for loving by sacrifice when he offered himself to God at Calvary as the sacrifice for the sins of the elect. In the same narrative, He commanded we love one another even as he loves us. Connotation suggests He commanded we do so with sacrificial love. Apparently, the early church understood sacrificial love extends to firstfruit giving. Acts chapter 4 provides a picture of members of the early church giving much more than a tithe to the Apostles. They sacrificed by giving all. They sold their possessions and gave the proceeds to the Apostles who distributed to all in common according to their needs: "Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need." (Acts 4:35-35)

The account of a poor widow giving two mites, recorded in the gospels of Matthew and Luke, is a praiseworthy example of faithful giving. It demonstrates faithful self-denial and sacrifice are essential elements of firstfruit giving. Despite giving a small amount of money, the Savior commended the widow's generosity. "And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had." (Luke 21:1-4) She obviously gave her firstfruits because giving "all the living that she had" includes firstfruits, plus everything else. Her intent to sacrifice is also clear because her giving "all the living she had" left her without any money to supply her own needs. This is understood to be an example of faithful giving for two reasons: 1. The savior commended the widow's giving. 2. Giving all required the widow rely on God's providence for her immediate needs.

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The Acts 4:36-37 account of Barnabas, a Levite, selling land and giving all the proceeds from the sale to the Apostles is another example of self-denial and sacrifice in firstfruit giving. In contrast, Acts 5:1-10, tells how Ananias and Sapphira sold their land but kept a portion of the proceeds back; while acting as if they had given all. Their holding back a portion suggests they measured how much they wanted to keep for themselves before determining how much they would give to God. It also indicates they were motivated by covetousness and used deceit to hide their motive. Peter described their covetous deceit as lying to the Holy Ghost. “But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?” (Acts 5:3) Peter’s response and God’s judgment against Ananias and Sapphira (they were both struck dead) indicates the seriousness with which we should approach our decisions of how much we should give back to God. However, Peter’s response also suggests Ananias and Sapphira were not obligated by church rule or the Old Testament practice of tithing to give the church a specified percentage or fixed amount from the proceeds of the sale of their land: “Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.” (Acts 5:4) The phrase “was it not in thine own power” suggests they were not compelled by church edict to give any of the proceeds from the sale.

How then, according to the scriptural principles of first priority, self-denial, and sacrificial giving, do we determine the specific amount that makes up our firstfruit to be given back to God? The Apostle Paul supplies the governing principles for making the determination. We are to give faithfully as God impresses us to give. This point is addressed in II Corinthians 9:7 “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give....*” Purposing in our hearts implies seeking direction from God. This is so because an effect of the new birth is God’s laws are written in our hearts. (See Hebrews 8:10, 10:16)

Having God’s laws written in our hearts allows us to understand and have the ability to do His will in all matters, including determining how much we should give back as firstfruit offerings. This point is supported by Paul’s teachings in Romans 2:13-15 “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;” together with his instruction from Philippians 2:12-13 “Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” These texts indicate in new birth the design and object of God’s will, which is to love and please Him

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thru faithful obedience, resides in our new creature spirit; and we are to use it to govern understanding and behavior.

An effect of new birth is creation of spiritual life that is energized, or powered by the Holy Spirit. “Worketh” in the phrase “God which worketh in you” from Philippians 2:13 identifies God as the power source of life in the new creature. It is translated from the Greek word “energeo” and means: *1) to be operative, be at work, put forth power 1a) to work for one, aid one; 2) to effect; 3) to display one’s activity, show one’s self operative* (Thayer’s Greek/English Lexicon of the New Testament). After regeneration, our new creature spirit is enabled and empowered (“both to will and to do”) by the energy of God in us to convey moral affirmations thru the witness of conscience to our minds. The affirmations are motivated by love of God that produces a desire to please by doing His will, “of his good pleasure,” in specific situations or circumstances.

In the matter of giving, we are informed by God’s written word to be firstfruit givers. However, scripture does not tell us the amount we should give. The amount is determined as a function of purposing in our hearts (II Corinthians 2:9) and the conscience bearing witness to God’s will (See Romans 2:15). This is done by prayerfully contemplating the “work of the law” of God written in our hearts in respect to how much we should give: What is the morally acceptable amount we should give to demonstrate our love for God in fulfilling the principles of firstfruit giving according to His written word? In purposing in our hearts we take the matter to the Lord since the law of God, His will, is written there (See Hebrews 8:10, 10:16). When the amount He wants us to give satisfies His moral law for giving, as witnessed in our conscience, our thoughts excuse, or give us peace and satisfaction with the decision.

This method of determining how much of our money or goods are firstfruits takes the focus away from a specific amount, such as the tithe, and places it on a love motivated, faith driven procedure governed by God’s moral laws. These laws do not produce a one-size-fits-all fixed percentage or mathematic formula for giving. Rather, they serve to help us calculate our giving based upon honesty, giving to God as our first priority, giving that produces self-denial and genuine sacrifice, and absence of covetousness. Thus, we understand how much we are to give thru prayer and meditation, in which our conscience bears witness to God’s moral laws written in our heart and His specific will, and we are persuaded by peaceful and comforting thoughts the amount we purpose to give is acceptable to God.

How much should we give? There is no fixed percentage, no set amount mandated by scripture. We are instructed to give to God first, as we purpose in our hearts under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. The amount is not a measure of wealth, but of love for God,

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of putting Him first, of commitment to worship God by serving the needs of others, of faith in His providence and mercy. We give the correct amount when we purpose in our hearts to deny our own wants and needs and make genuine financial sacrifices by first giving to the Lord.

First Fruits Giving is a form of Worship

In the Old Testament, financial stewardship as worship is presented in the details of Mosaic Law service in giving the firstfruits of our labors to God. The Lord states in Exodus 22:29-30 “Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors: the firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me. Likewise shalt thou do with thine oxen, and with thy sheep: seven days it shall be with his dam; on the eighth day thou shalt give it me.” In Deuteronomy 26:10 God illustrated the attitude of worship firstfruit givers should have and how presenting their firstfruits offerings to Him is worship. “And now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land, which thou, O LORD, hast given me. And thou shalt set it before the LORD thy God, and worship before the LORD thy God. In Leviticus 2:12 firstfruits offerings are said to be oblations. “As for the oblation of the firstfruits, ye shall offer them unto the LORD: but they shall not be burnt on the altar for a sweet savour.” An oblation is a sacrifice and more specifically, a sacrifice or offering to God as an act of submissive worship. When the children of Israel obeyed God’s decree to bring the firstfruits to the Temple they were offering the first products of their labors as an act of worship and submission to God’s authority and rule over their lives.

The New Testament also identifies giving as an element of worship. The earliest instance of giving as a method of worshipping Christ is the three wise men that came from the east. They brought gifts from their treasures to the Lord. “And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.” (Matthew 2:11)

Giving as a method of direct worship of God is implied in Paul’s grateful response for gifts he received from the Church at Philippi. “But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.” (Philippians 4:18) This statement identifies giving as sacrificial worship. The term, “odour of a sweet smell” is a reference to burnt offerings to God under the provisions of Mosaic Law. (see Exodus 29:18-41, Leviticus 1:9-17) In Ephesians 5:2 Paul uses similar language to describe Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. “And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour”

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Paul also affirms liberal giving can cause those who receive gifts to engage in worship by praises of thanksgiving to God. “Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;) Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.” (II Corinthians 9:10-11) Ministering to others and giving thanks to God are both forms of worship. (See Matthew 25:34-36, Psalms 100:4, Hebrews 13:15)

Several scriptures indicate firstfruit giving is faithful worship. In Ecclesiastes 11:1 faith is inferred in that we are instructed to first give and then expect blessings from God in various ways. “Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.” Another example that ties faithful giving to worship is the account of the poor widow who gave two mites previously discussed. The widow was in the Temple and engaged in worship when she cast her two mites into the treasury. In Matthew 12:43, Jesus mentioned the extent of her giving in relation to faith. The phrase “but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living” implies her gift was an act of faith. She willingly gave all to God trusting He would provide for her needs.

Giving is good work worship. This is apparent from the Savior’s exchange with His disciples when they criticized the woman who anointed Jesus with expensive ointment. “There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat. But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor. When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me.”(Matthew 26:7-10) The woman’s gift was a good work. She gave precious ointment in anointing Jesus for his burial. Her act depicts the personal nature of all firstfruit giving. It is administering gifts to God. The Savior indicated how important it is to God when he announced she would be remembered and praised for her good work gift wherever the gospel is preached. “For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.” (Matthew 26:12-13)

All firstfruit giving is worship directed to God. The fact Jesus has returned to heaven does not prevent His accepting our firstfruits as acts of worship. When we give of our goods and finances for God’s service they are accepted as oblations given directly to Him. The Savior affirmed giving to benefit others as a form of worship in His description of the king’s response to those who in the resurrection will “inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” They questioned when they had fed, given drink, clothed, etc. the Son of man who will return as Lord and King. “...Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a

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stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? (Matthew 25:34-36) Jesus' description of the King's response verifies giving is an essential form of worship to God: "And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." (Matthew 25:40)

Proper Attitude for Giving

The principle motive for firstfruit giving is love for God. Its engine is faith. Scriptural example instructs us to faithfully give because we love the Lord. The Hebrew letter explicitly identifies love as the motive for giving in commending those who minister to the saints of God. "For God *is* not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister" (Hebrews 6:10). According to Thayer's Greek/English Lexicon "minister" in this text means: "*to supply food and the necessities of life.*" The text indicates the Hebrews' giving was a work or "labour of love" that God remembers. Since faith works by love (see Galatians 5:6), it is reasonable to infer faith produced their works of ministering to the saints. This inference is also supported by James point that good works are performed by faith (see James 2:14-20).

If the primary motive for firstfruit giving is love of God and it is carried out through faith, what is the appropriate attitude? What traits do loving faithful disciples display when they give? The Apostle Paul mentioned several in his instructions concerning ministering to the saints in II Corinthians, chapter 9. "For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you: For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many. Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready: Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting. Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as [a matter of] bounty, and not as [of] covetousness.) But this [I say], He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. 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 Corinthians 9:1-7) The text identifies zeal, preparedness, compassion, steadfastness, liberality, and joy as characteristics of those who faithfully give in response to their love for God.

Paul portrayed the Corinthians' giving habits as zeal; "your zeal hath provoked very many." He characterized their zeal as forwardness of mind or, readiness to give. The

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phrase “it is superfluous for me to write to you” implies their zeal, eagerness to give, made it unnecessary for him to generally encourage the Corinthian Church about the importance of them willingly and liberally giving money and substance to supply for the needy. He evidently thought they already possessed godly zeal in this area of discipleship. The eagerness of the Corinthians is also indicated by Paul’s mention that a year prior they committed to give financial assistance to needy saints, probably in Judea.

However, he did give them instructions concerning preparedness by instructing the church to make a collection and give the funds to brethren Paul sent ahead so no collection would be made while he was there. Their readiness and planning to give, even before they knew when and how the funds would be delivered, also demonstrates the great compassion they had for God’s saints who were suffering want.

In addition, Paul’s instruction reveals the characteristic of steadfastness in their resolve to faithfully give from a motive of love. The Corinthians’ were steadfast, settled in their minds that giving is an appropriate way to faithfully love God. Paul’s statement relating their year long “forwardness of mind” infers their eager desire to give was not a whimsical and passing notion. Neither was it merely an emotional, spur-of-the-moment response to impassioned pleas. They were not impulsive givers. Their mindset for giving stood the test of time. Despite a yearlong delay, their resolve to give had not wavered. They remained steadfast. In addition, Paul’s willingness to boast to others, to use the church at Corinth as an example for firstfruit giving, suggests they were steadfast in their practice and attitudes of giving.

Liberality is a characteristic of cheerful giving. It is a noble quality exercised in one’s decorum or whole behavior as a matter of grace, including the grace of generosity. Simply stated, liberality is a practice of godly grace. Strong’s Concordance defines it *1) singleness, simplicity, sincerity, mental honesty 1a) the virtue of one who is free from pretence and hypocrisy 2) not self seeking, openness of heart manifesting itself by generosity*. The general concept of liberality as absence of pretence and hypocrisy, and openness of heart is presented by the Savior in Matthew 6:1-4. “Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.”

It is likely Strong’s last signification, *openness of heart manifesting itself by generosity*, is what Paul had in mind in II Corinthians, Chapter 8 when he introduced the principle of

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liberality in leading up to his comments in chapter 9. In disclosing that gifts from the churches of Macedonia were sent to the saints in Jerusalem, Paul indicates how God bestowed grace upon the givers for their liberality. “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. 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. Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also.” (II Corinthians 8:1-6)

The quality of liberality as generous giving is expressed in three ways in Paul’s instructions to the Corinthians in chapter 9. First, their eagerness to give a year prior logically infers they would be generous givers. Secondly, eagerness to give reasonably includes liberal giving. It does not make sense they would be without covetousness with regard zeal to give and at the same time be covetous as to how much they would give. Paul also specifically implies the necessity of liberality with the statement, “He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.” It is apparent from this statement that God reserves abundant harvests of His blessings for those who abundantly give. Finally, Paul criticizes giving tactics that are influenced by covetousness with the statement, “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity”

In context, the last characteristic Paul attributes to faithful givers is joy. In verse 7 he notes, “God loveth a cheerful giver.” An effect of the grace of liberality is joy, which is characterized by Paul as cheerfulness. Love motivated, faithful giving is spiritually pleasant, an experience of joy for the giver. Paul made this association in chapter 8 with the phrase, “How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.” John Gill, in his commentary of II Corinthians, describes joy in this text as “*cheerfulness of their spirits in contributing to the necessities of others.*” The churches in Macedonia, despite trying affliction and deep poverty, had abundant joy. Their joy abounded, or was greater in measure in contrast to their affliction and poverty. In other words, their liberality in giving with simplicity and singleness of mind and without pretense or hypocrisy, in contrast to their affliction and poverty, brought them a greater measure of joy, which is cheerfulness of spirit.

The attributes then, for biblical giving practices are rooted in love for God. They proceed to action by faith. Godly givers are forward leaning in their eagerness, their zeal to serve. They do not wait to the last moment to think about what they will give. Their zeal includes

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preparedness. With every new financial blessing from God as wise stewards they think about what portion they will give back. Their love for God extends to His saints as genuine compassion. They look upon those in need with kindness and care and consider how their giving can help. Those whose giving practices are fixed in their love of God are in the habit of giving. They are steadfast, reliable givers. They give sincerely, without pretence. They are generous, uninfluenced by begrudging impact of covetousness that transforms this act of faith, worked by love of God, to a legalistic ritual of necessity. Finally, the generous nature of spiritual liberality expresses joy. Cheerful givers experience God's loving approval and rejoice to deny themselves and make genuine sacrifices to promote the cause of Christ thru ministering to His saints.

Firstfruit giving impacts the quality of our fellowship with God

The link between obedience and fellowship with God is undeniable. Those who disobey God have little to no fellowship with Him. Those who seek to know and do His will are blest with many rich and rewarding experiences with their heavenly Father.

The first example in scripture of a connection between obedience and quality of fellowship occurred in the Garden of Eden. As long as Adam and Eve obeyed, the Lord abundantly blest them with protection and easily attained provision. (See Genesis 2:8-15) When they disobeyed the quality of their fellowship with God deteriorated. After they ate from the Tree of Knowledge Adam and Eve became ashamed and afraid to face God. Shame and fear plainly diminished their quality of fellowship with Him. . "And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden." (Genesis 3:8) God's response to their willful sin further eroded fellowship. He expelled Adam and Eve from the garden and removed the ease by which they attained food and protection. "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." (Genesis 3:17-19)

The link between quality of fellowship and obedience includes faithful firstfruit giving. An early example of the link is found in the narrative of Cain and Abel making offerings to God. "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." (Genesis 4:3-5) Cain brought his gift "in process of time." The Hebrew word in the text

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for “process” is “*kates*.” It means: end. Since Cain offered “fruit of the ground” it is reasonable to assume the phrase indicates he waited until the harvest had ended before choosing what he would give to God. Abel offered the “firstlings,” or firstfruits of his flock. His offering was faithful because he gave firstfruits, before he knew how many offspring his flock would produce. Cain waited until the harvest was complete before choosing what and how much he would give. He was not faithful. Cain knew how much of the harvest he would keep for himself when making his offering to God. The Lord had respect to the offering made by faith (firstlings or firstfruits) and had not respect to the offering that was made without faith (after the harvest).

The account of Abraham offering Isaac is an example of how faithful firstfruit giving elevates the quality of one’s fellowship with the Lord. While he experienced close fellowship with the Lord throughout his life, Abraham’s most intimate and no doubt most satisfying fellowship occurred in consequence of him offering firstfruits to the Lord. The Lord commanded Abraham to take his “only son Isaac,” the firstfruit of God’s promise to bless all nations thru Abraham, and slay him as an offering to God. “And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.” (Genesis 22:2) Although God spared Isaac, the narrative indicates Abraham was unwavering in his resolve to faithfully obey the Lord. The Apostle James indicates Abraham’s willingness to obey God’s command was fulfillment of the statement “Abraham believed God and it was imputed unto him for righteousness and he was called the Friend of God.” (See James 2:21-24) The statement, that the scripture was fulfilled, carries a connotation of completeness. In other words, Abraham’s unwavering faith to offer Isaac was his highest, or most comprehensive expression of trust in God. The use of capital letters of the phrase “Friend of God” suggests James used it as a title given to Abraham; similar to adding “Sir” to a man’s name when he is knighted. By obeying the Lord Abraham was dubbed Friend of God Abraham. (See II Chronicles 20:7, Isaiah 41:8) The title “Friend of God” infers an elevation in status of Abraham’s fellowship with the Lord. This is confirmed by the Savior’s testimony to His disciples. In John’s gospel Jesus indicated knowing and doing God’s will does, in fact, elevate the status of one’s fellowship to that of Friend of God: “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.” (John 15:14-15)

The Lord takes notice and elevates the quality of fellowship He has with those who seek Him as faithful, generous givers. This is affirmed by Jesus’ fellowship with Zacchaeus. When the Lord saw the wealthy publican he beckoned Zacchaeus to come down from the Sycamore tree. Jesus chose to spend the day with him. (See Luke 19:2-6) The decisive

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factors for the Lord's day of fellowship with Zacchaeus are indicated by the exchange between the two. "And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham." (Luke 19:8-9) In keeping with scriptural connotations of Luke's narrative, the reasons for Zacchaeus' experience of close fellowship with Jesus are: 1. He was a son of Abraham, which implies his inclusion in the promise God made to the patriarch; and 2. He specifically sought to be with the Lord. 3. He obeyed God's will by generously giving to the poor and also by not abusing his power and authority as a tax collector for the Romans. Zacchaeus was a child of God who obeyed God's will by faithful, generous giving. Therefore, Jesus chose to spend the day with him.

Not all giving insures close fellowship with God. This can be inferred from the example Jesus gave with regard to self-serving self-righteousness in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican recorded in Luke 18:9:14. In the parable the Pharisee arrogantly bragged to God, "I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." In contrast, the publican humbly begged God for mercy. "And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." Jesus' conclusion indicates self-denial by faithful trust in God in all matters, including our giving, is necessary for fellowship with the Lord. "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Those who give for reasons other than love of God do not have fellowship with Him. Conversely, one who abases self and seeks to do God's will enjoys fellowship with God that produces experiential declarations that assures one he is just before God by the blood of Christ.

The Savior expressed the fact of fellowship with Him in connection with faithful giving in Matthew 25. He noted the generosity and compassion of those who "inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" in that they gave to the needy. Jesus referred to occasions of compassionate fellowship He enjoys with those who minister to others by declaring; "For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me." (Matthew 25:35-36) He described the manner and instance of these numerous experiences of personal fellowship with Him by noting "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." (Matthew 25:40) The Lord accepts and responds to ministering to His needy children as ministering to Him personally. Thus, every time His followers, in love for the Lord, give money or substance to help those in need their actions become occasions of close, personal fellowship with our Lord.

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Firstfruit giving produces greater blessings

There is an often-repeated adage, “you can’t out give God.” The logic of this saying is obvious. Since God created all things, whatever we give Him came from Him. This makes it impossible to give back to God more than He gives us. However, the saying implies much more than God giving more than He requires in return. It points to the fact that “he is a rewarded of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6); including rewarding those who diligently seek Him by practicing faithful giving. The rewards God has promised include material, emotional and spiritual blessings. In the thirty-seventh Psalms, David observes the blessings bestowed on those who seek to do God’s will in their daily walk. “The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand. I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed.” (Psalms 37:23-26) The text teaches God has determined the moral (righteous) path, or way of living His children should pursue; and upholds those who walk in His prescribed ways through assurance, encouragements and provisions.

In the Old Testament the Lord promised Israel a superabundant return for faithful giving “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that *there shall not be room enough to receive it.*”(Malachi 3:10) Like those who faithfully tithed under Mosaic Law, the Lord promised abundant blessings to faithful firstfruit givers. “Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.” (Proverbs 3:9-10) In the New Testament the Savior confirmed abundant blessings for faithful givers when He instructed His disciples; “Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.” (Luke 6:38) He promised rewards to alms givers who give in service to God and not as a means to impress men. “Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.” (Matthew 6:1-4) Additional scriptures affirming God’s blessings towards those who are liberal givers include: Psalms 41:1, Proverbs 11:25, 22:9, 28:27, Ecclesiastes 11:1, Isaiah 58:10, Luke 14:14.

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While Lord promises material blessings such as wealth and provisions to faithful stewards in His kingdom, scriptural examples of spiritual rewards such as comfort, assurance and consolation are mentioned with more frequency. For instance, while it is true Abraham was blessed with financial prosperity, the narrative of his life in the Old Testament and examples of his faith presented in the New Testament stress the spiritual rewards God gave him. Jesus said of the patriarch of Israel, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. (John 8:56) This text indicates the Lord blest Abraham to know something of Christ Jesus; and in knowing, he received the comforts of joy and gladness; which God gave in response to his faith. The Savior did not indicate specific details of when and how Abraham became aware. However, there are several instances, all in relation to his faith, in which characteristics of the work of Christ were presented to Abraham. For instance, it can be inferred Abraham saw Christ as the head of God’s elect family in the promise a large number of people from all nation’s would be forever blest through a single seed. (See Genesis 13:15-16, 15:5-6, 17:7, 22:16-18, Romans 9:6-13, Galatians 3:16) Abraham could likely have seen Christ as the sacrifice for sins when God commanded he slay Isaac as an offering. (See Genesis 22:1-13) He could have understood Christ’s victory over sin through resurrection in the miraculous conception of Isaac when Abraham was one hundred years old and Sarah ninety. (See Genesis 21:1-7, Romans 4:9-22) From these examples we can conclude those who faithfully obey God receive rich spiritual blessings that bring them closer to the Lord through comforting, assurances and consolations in hope of eternal life in Christ.

Faithful Boaz is another example of an obedient servant who was a generous, compassionate giver. The Lord abundantly blest him with spiritual rewards. When he noticed Ruth, who came to glean in his fields, he took compassion on her and said, “Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens.” (Ruth 2:9) He then told his reapers, “Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not: And let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not.” (Ruth 2:15-16) God rewarded Boaz’ generosity with blessings. In his old age the Lord blest him to redeem Ruth, who was a godly young woman and a faithful wife to Boaz. He was also blest to beget with Ruth a son named Obed, who was king David’s grandfather.

A New Testament example of a generous alms giver who was greatly blest by God is Cornelius, the first Gentile to receive the gospel. It cannot be said his charitable giving is the reason why God specifically chose Cornelius to be the first Gentile to receive the gospel. However, when in a dream the angel of God instructed him to send for Peter, he specifically noted the centurion’s alms giving. “And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God”(Acts 10:4) Cornelius was the first non-Jew to hear the good

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news that Christ's sacrifice for sins includes the sins of elect Gentiles, "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.(Acts 10:34-35) Through the power of God, this man who worked righteousness by giving "much alms to the people" received the gift of the Holy Ghost. "And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 10:45) He was blest with gospel conversion, becoming a disciple of Christ Jesus and a member of His church. (See Acts 10 47-48)

Conclusion

Firstfruit giving is a fundamental principle of stewardship for followers of Christ. It is an important, even essential way we serve God by ministering to others. It is characterized by giving back to God as a first priority of financial management. It is practiced by faithfully engaging in self-denying, sacrificial giving. There are no fixed amounts or percentages associated with firstfruit giving. Faithful givers seek God's will and direction through prayer and study of scripture in order to purpose in their hearts how much of their income or goods constitutes firstfruits. God does not require firstfruit givers to give back more than He blesses them to receive from Him. They are liberal and steadfast in their giving habits. With godly zeal they use their firstfruits to serve the Lord by ministering to others. Those who faithfully exercise these principles experience a closer walk with the Lord. They are blest with greater spiritual insights into the depth of His love. This is because firstfruit giving involves many of the same fundamental qualities of righteousness the Savior demonstrated when he died for our sins at Calvary. Those who faithfully give firstfruits to the Lord are cheerful givers. They do not give from a legalistic perspective of necessity: I don't want to give but am required to do so. Neither is their giving characterized by an attitude of covetousness that begrudges the gift as if it is a loss. Their motive for giving is love for God. However large or small a gift might be in monetary terms, because it is freely offered in obedience to God's will with genuine self-denial and sacrifice, faithful firstfruit givers are blest to understand their gifts are given by them and accepted by God in love.

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Church Succession

The verses below teach that there would be a continuous unbroken succession of the New Testament Church Kingdom:

1. Matt. 16:15 "He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. 17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. 18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Since, the Lord said that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church, the conclusion that must be drawn is that there would never be a time that the church ceased to exist.

2. 2 Sam. 7:11 "And as since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies. Also the LORD telleth thee that he will make thee an house. 12 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. 13 He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever." Since the king reigns over a kingdom and the kingdom is for ever and this is referring to the Lord and His church we must conclude that the church will exist unbroken forever.

3. Acts 2:29 "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. 30 Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; 31 He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. 32 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. 33 Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. 34 For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, 35 Until I make thy foes thy footstool. 36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." This is the fulfillment of 2 Sam. 7:11-13.

4. Dan. 2:44 "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." If the kingdom could cease to exist then it would not be forever.

5. 2 Pet. 1:11 "For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

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6. Jude 3 "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."

The phrase, "The Faith," can be defined as that system of doctrine and practice established in the New Testament for the New Testament Church. There is only one "The Faith." The following verses show us the connection between the Lord's church and "The Faith:"

1. Acts 6:7 "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."

2. Acts 13:8 "But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith."

Acts 14:22 "Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."

3. Acts 16:5 "And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily."

4. Rom. 1:5 "By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:"

5. Rom. 14:1 "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations."

6. 1 Cor. 16:13 "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."

7. 2 Cor. 13:5 "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"

8. Gal. 1:23 "But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed."

9. Gal. 3:23 "But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed."

10. Eph. 4:13 "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:"

11. Phil. 1:27 "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;"

12. Col. 1:23 "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;"

13. Col. 2:7 "Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving."

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14. 1 Tim. 1:2 "Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord."

15. 1 Tim. 3:9 "Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. 10 And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. 11 Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. 12 Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. 13 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.

16. 1 Tim. 4:1 "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;"

17. 1 Tim. 5:8 "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."

18. 1 Tim. 6:10 "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

19. 1 Tim. 6:20 "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: 21 Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen."

20. 2 Tim. 2:18 "Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some."

21. 2 Tim. 3:8 "Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith."

22. 2 Tim. 4:7 "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:"

23. Tit. 1:12 "One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. 13 This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; 14 Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth."

24. Tit. 3:15 "All that are with me salute thee. Greet them that love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen."

25. 1 Pet. 5:8 "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: 9 Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."

From the above, we establish that the faith was once given unto men and therefore if it were lost and then reestablished, it would be given unto men more than once. Moreover, the church is identified by the faith and if some bodies of people have departed from the faith then they have ceased to be the church.

Moreover, this system of doctrine and practice of the New Testament church is handed down from generation to generation by preachers and teachers to faithful men who

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in turn hand it down to others: 2 Tim. 2:1 "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

Entrance into the New Testament church is by water baptism and this is administered by those elders that have been ordained by the church. That the elders are ordained in the church and that baptism is performed by those elders so ordained by the church is set forth by the following scriptures:

1. Mk. 3:14 "And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach,"

2. Acts 2:37 "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? 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. 39 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. 40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. 41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."

3. John 4:1 "When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, 2 (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,)"

4. Acts 1:22 "Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection."

5. Acts 14:23 "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."

6. 1 Tim. 2:7 "Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity."

7. Acts 13:2 "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. 3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away."

8. Matt. 28:16 "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. 17 And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

9. Mk. 16:15 "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

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The church is described as the pillar and ground of the truth: 1 Tim 3:15 “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.” A departure by a body of people from the truth means that they would cease to be the church.

From the above principles of unbroken kingdom, church entrance through water baptism administered by those elders who were ordained within the church, “the faith” being once delivered to the saints and being handed down by generation to generation by faithful men who in turn taught additional faithful men in the church, we see the scriptures teach a continual unbroken church succession throughout the ages.

Biblical Evangelism

According to the 4th chapter of Ephesians when the Lord gave the gifts of the gospel ministry he gave four types of gifts: Eph. 4:8 “Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men... 11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers...” The word “evangelist” means “a preacher of the gospel.” The same could be said for all the other three gifts of gospel ministers. They are all preachers of the gospel.

Philip is the only preacher in the New Testament that is specifically called an evangelist, although several others are alluded to: Acts 21:8 “And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him.” We will use Philip as an example of an evangelist.

The only gifts that are present in the church today are the gifts of evangelist and pastor/teacher. The word pastor comes from a Greek word that is translated 17 other times in the New Testament as shepherd. The pastor is the under shepherd of the flock (local church) and he has oversight over the flock. His duties are much like the duties of a shepherd who watched over a flock of sheep.

The work of the evangelist is indistinguishable from the work of the apostles and prophets, except the evangelist does not have the word of God revealed to him like it was to the apostles and prophets. Moreover the evangelist does not possess the authority of the apostles. However, like the apostles and prophets, the evangelist work is to go to people and places where the gospel message is unknown by the Lord's people.

In Acts chapter 8 we read where Philip went to the city of the Samaritans and preached the gospel to the Samaritans: Acts 8:5 “Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. 6 And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake...12 But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.” The gospel had never before been preached to God's people in Samaria. Philip was the messenger to bring the gospel of the grace of Christ to the Samaritans, just

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as Peter brought the gospel to many of the Jews and Paul brought the gospel to many of the Gentiles.

The manner in which Philip was directed is also set forth in the 8th chapter of Acts: 8:26 “And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. 27 And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, 28 Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. 29 Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. 30 And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? 31 And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.

32 The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: 33 In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. 34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? 35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. 36 And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? 37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. 38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.”

We see in the above passage that Philip was not directed by the church or by a mission board or by a seminary as to where he was to go. He was not following a plan developed by a group of men as to where he would go. However, he was directed by the Holy Spirit as to where he was to go and as to whom he was to speak. This is the pattern for evangelists both in that day and in every day.

Additionally, Philip did not wait to see if he could raise the money or if someone would finance his trip, but he went depending on the provision of the Lord for his journey. This same principle holds today.

It is the natural inclination and wisdom of man to make plans. If he runs a business then he has a business plan. He makes the plan and then goes about trying to execute the plan. In my contacts with people of other faiths, I have noticed that many of them are big into plans for evangelism or mission work. However, the bible does not uphold this manner of evangelism. In Acts chapter 16 we read of the proper way in which we are to go forth with the gospel: Acts 16:6 “Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, 7 After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. 8 And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas. 9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the

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night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. 10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.”

From the above we can conclude the following things:

1. The Holy Spirit closed the doors to Paul and the brethren with him to preach the gospel in Asia and Bithynia. While they thought about going to those places (men’s plans), yet they were forbidden to preach the word in Asia and not suffered to go into Bithynia.

2. The Holy Spirit opened the door and gave direction for Paul and the brethren with him to go to Macedonia.

When it comes to biblical evangelism, the Lord is the only one who can open the door for the gospel to go forth: Rev. 3:7 “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; 8 I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.” The Lord can open a door and he can open a door. If he opens a door, then no man can shut it. If he shuts a door, then no man can shut it.

Paul spoke of doors being opened to him to preach the gospel:

1. Acts 14:27 “And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.”

2. 1 Cor. 16:9 “For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.”

3. 2 Cor. 2:12 “Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord,”

From the above we conclude that the Lord is the door opener for the gospel going forth. Only the Lord can open these doors. Man is totally unable to open a door by himself.

As members of the church our responsibility towards biblical evangelism is to pray. We are to pray that God will send forth laborers and we are to pray that God will open doors of utterance and the following passages point out to us:

1. Col. 4:3 “Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:”

2. Matt. 9:35 “And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. 36 But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. 37 Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the

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labourers are few; 38 Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.”

While the scriptures set forth the gift of the evangelists, yet the work of evangelism also extends to the pastors. Paul told Timothy: 2 Tim. 4:5 “But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.” In the locale of the local church, the pastor is to do the work of an evangelist, that is, he is to go forth with the gospel to those who are not members of the congregation where the Spirit leads him and opens a door of utterance to him.

A passage of scripture that shows forth the great need for and the benefit of gospel evangelism is set forth in Rom. 10:1-4: 10:1 “Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. 2 For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” Paul's hearts desire and his prayer to God was that these brethren and sister would be delivered from their ignorance and from their efforts to try to get right with God and would come to an understanding that Christ through his atoning sacrifice had made them right with God. This should be our heart's desire and prayer to God today for God's people who are in their ignorance trying to establish their own righteousness through some works system.

Worship

From the verses quoted below, we see that the formal worship of God consists of singing, prayer, and preaching. We also see that true worship must be in Spirit and in truth. To follow the teaching or commandments of men makes worship vain or empty or truly no worship at all. Furthermore, worship is to proceed from the heart and not just with the lips. Our worship is to be directed toward the Lord and not to anyone or anything else. Further, the scriptures are a thorough furnisher unto all of our worship. To add to the scriptures means that we are questioning the wisdom of God. Those who add Sunday schools, or Tract Societies, or Bible Auxiliaries, or Mission Boards, or Bible Schools or Seminaries, or Musical Instruments to their formal worship or the structure of the church are questioning the wisdom of God as he gave us none of these things.

Matt. 4:10 Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

Matt. 15:7 Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, 8 This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. 9 But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

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Mk. 7:6 He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. 7 Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. 8 For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. 9 And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.

John 4:20 Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. 21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. 22 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. 23 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. 24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

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

Matt. 7:21 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. 22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Acts 24:14 But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: 15 And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. 16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.

Phil. 3:3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

Rev. 4:10 The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, 11 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. 11:16 And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, 17 Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty,

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which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.

Acts 2:41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. 42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, 47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

Acts 12:5 Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.

Matt. 21:13 And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.

Acts 1:12 Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey. 13 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. 14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

1 Thes. 5:25 Brethren, pray for us.

2 Thes. 3:1 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you:

James 5:16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

Rom. 15:9 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. 10 And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. 11 And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people.

1 Cor. 14:15 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.\

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Eph. 5:18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; 19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

Col. 3:16 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.

Heb. 2:12 Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.

Rev. 15:3 And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.

Acts 5:42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

Acts 15:35 Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

Rom. 1:15 So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

2 Cor. 10:14 For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ:

Gal. 1:8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. 9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

2 Tim. 4:2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. 3 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; 4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

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Statement of Beliefs

1. We believe the scriptures of the Old and New Testament are together and solely the inspired written word of God. It is inerrant and infallible as the thorough furnisher for every good work and only rule of faith and practice. *II Timothy 3:16; Act 8:35*
2. We believe there is one true and living God who is eternal, immutable, the Creator of all things, visible and invisible, who governs all things in righteousness, according to the counsel of His own will. He has revealed Himself in the scriptures as Father, Word, and Holy Ghost. The Word is Jesus Christ the Son of God who, while dwelling on the earth in the flesh, made sacrificial atonement on the cross for God's elect by suffering death for their sins. He is God incarnate, the fullness of the Godhead manifest bodily. *Isaiah 43:11, Deuteronomy 33:27, Malachi 3:6 John 1:1-4, Daniel 4:35; Ephesians 1:11. I John 5:7. John 1:14-17, Colossians 2:9*
3. We believe in total depravity: God created Adam good and upright; but by Adam's disobedience he became dead in trespasses and sin. As the fountainhead of humanity, Adam passed his depraved nature to all mankind so that none are righteous, making them unwilling and unable to change their own hearts and be saved from eternal condemnation. *Genesis 1:26-28. Genesis 2:16-17, 3:17-19, Romans 5:12-19, Romans 3:11-18*
4. We believe in election: God, before the foundation of the world chose by His own sovereign will, and not by foreseen merit in any who were chosen, a definite number of persons in Christ Jesus to salvation while passing by others, leaving them in their reprobate condition. He thereby demonstrated His sovereignty and power for the purpose of His own glory by having mercy on whom He will have mercy. *Romans 9:11-15., Ephesians 1:4, Romans 8:33; John 10:27-29, Matthew 7:21-23; Jeremiah 18:4; Romans 9:21, II Timothy 2:10; I Peter 5:10-11, Romans 9:15-16*
5. We believe in regeneration: All elect persons in all ages are born again in the same manner by the operation of God's Spirit, which is a direct, immediate, and irresistible work of the Holy Ghost, void of intermediate means or instrumentalities. Regeneration changes the heart and creates a new spirit in Christ Jesus in all who are born again so that, as God's workmanship, they are able to and should do good works as God before ordained. All who are thus quickened are preserved in Christ and shall never fall from grace. *John 3:5-7, Colossians 2:10-15, Matthew 27:44 Luke 23:40-43; Acts 9:3-4, John 3:6; II Corinthians 5:17-21, Ephesians 2:10., John 10:27-28*
6. We believe in the doctrine of justification: The declaration of righteousness by God. Eternal justification is God's declaration of righteousness of all the Elect through His faith in Christ's blood; so that all for whom Christ died, those living both before and after his atonement at Calvary, God forever justified by the blood of Christ. God also counts the walk of faith of the saints as righteousness in a timely, or experiential way; whereby they are comforted by strong consolation through full assurance of their hope in Christ. *Romans 3:24-28, Romans 4:24-25, 5:1; I Corinthians 6:11; Titus 3:5-7, Romans 4:2-16; Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 3:23-28; Galatians 2:16*

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7. We believe the gospel as recorded in and preached in spirit and in truth from God's inspired written word is the principal means by which the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith. It is the power of God unto salvation of many and various temporal deliverances to everyone who believes, in that it calls on regenerates to repent and be converted. The gospel is an instrument of evangelism and evangelism is an expression of conversion. *Romans 1:16-17; Philippians 1:7, Romans 1:16; Acts 13:48, Acts 3:19, II Timothy 4:2-5; Mark 16:15; Acts 16:9-10. Psalms 51:10-13; Galatians 1:16-17.*

8. We believe the visible Church of Christ is a local assembly composed of a body of baptized believers with Christ as the head, who have obtained fellowship by submitting themselves to the Lord and each other in regularly assembling and worshipping together and keeping a godly discipline according to the word of God alone. The church receives all its authority from, and is wholly accountable to Christ alone in all matters of faith and practice. *Acts 2:44-47, 8:1, 14:27, 15:6-35, I Corinthians 12:18-27, Ephesians 1:22, 5:23-24. Acts 2:46-47; Hebrews 10:24-25., I Timothy 5:20; I Corinthians 5:4-8; II Corinthians 2:6-8; II Thessalonians 3:6, Revelations: 2:1-5.*

9. We believe Baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances in the Church that are administered by appropriately ordained ministers of the gospel; and, washing the saints feet is a duty incumbent on those who are properly baptized and thereby privileged to partake of the Lord's supper. *Act 2:41-47 I Corinthians 1:16. Luke 22:15-20, I Corinthians 10:15-17, 11:23-26, John 13:14, I Timothy 5:9-10*

10. We believe those who are born again, profess faith in Christ, and make it known by their fruits of repentance and good works are fit subjects for baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. *Acts 8:36-38; Acts 8:12-13; Matthew 3:7-11. Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38, 8:12, 10:47-48.*

11. We believe the proper mode of baptism is immersion. The proper administrator is one called of God to preach the gospel and properly ordained, having come under the hands of a presbytery. *John 3:23; Romans 6:3-4; Matthew 28:19; Acts 8:37, Acts 19:1-6; Matthew 28:19; Acts 13:2-3, I Timothy 4:14.*

12. We believe in a general bodily resurrection of the dead, including both the just and the unjust, at the Second Coming of Christ when God shall declare His judgment toward all. The wicked shall be raised to receive an eternal punishment of fiery torment in hell for the things they have done. The righteous, by virtue of the shed blood of Christ, shall be raised in immortal, incorruptible bodies and shall forever reside with God and thereby receive eternal blessings. *Matthew 25:31-46; John 5:28-29; II Thessalonians 1:6-9., Revelations 20:12-14; Romans 9:22-24, Philippians 3:19:21; II Thessalonians 1:10; I Corinthians 15:51-57, I Thessalonians 4:16-17.*

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Deacons

Deacons Part 1 Establishing the Office

The office of the deacon was established when there arose a murmuring of the Greeks against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily ministration. At first this work was being overseen by the gospel ministry. However, the work had begun to affect the time and quality of the work of ministering the word and the time for prayer of the gospel ministry.

Acts chapter 6 gives us the details of the establishment of the office of the deacon in the church: Acts 6:1 “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. 2 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. 3 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. 4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. 5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: 6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.”

While there was a need that the tables of the needy be served, yet the gospel ministry did not need to leave the word of God and serve those tables. The apostles gave direction to the church that the church should look out from among them seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, which the gospel ministry would appoint over the business of serving the tables of the needy.

Deacons Part 2 The work of the deacons

The work of the deacon is outlined for us in Acts chapter 6: Act 6:1 “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. 2 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. 3 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. 4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. 5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: 6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.”

First, providing for the table of the needy is an important part of the work of a deacon. The deacons of the church have responsibility both to determine who the needy are in the congregation and what it is that they need. This should be an active work on their part. During times of recession or depression, even young families can be in need. Most often the elderly and sick will have needs that the church should be cognizant of and when necessary should provide help where it is needed.

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The deacons are appointed by the gospel ministry over this work. It is not the responsibility of the deacons to do all the work, but they are appointed to be “over this business.” They are to take a leadership role and, of course, enlist other members where needed in providing for the needs of the needy. Sometimes, they may enlist some of the sisters to cook food, or they may enlist some of the younger members to mow the yards of the elderly who cannot do it themselves. Sometimes an elderly widow may need plumbing work and cannot afford to have it done. The deacons may either do the work themselves or if there is a member of the congregation who is good at plumbing, they may encourage that member to assist in the work.

Moreover, the church membership has a responsibility towards the deacons and towards the needy. The membership of the church should ensure that there are sufficient funds in the treasury to provide for these needs and if possible to have a reserve for emergencies. The deacons are to bring financial needs before the congregation and encourage the church membership to cheerfully give to meet those needs.

Sometimes the needy are sick members or members in hospitals or nursing homes. The deacons should know about the conditions of these members and visit them and encourage the membership to visit them in their condition. A nursing home can be a very lonely place for the elderly. One of the greatest needs of the elderly in nursing homes is the visitation of the church members.

The deacons also have a responsibility toward the gospel ministers. One of the great purposes for the office of the deacon was so that the gospel ministers can give themselves to the ministry of the word and prayer. The deacons should encourage the membership to give of their finances so that the pastor can give more of his time to the ministry of the word and to prayer. The pastor or preachers in the church often have many expenses in their ministry that the membership in general of the church does not incur. They often incur many expenses in visiting in the homes of the members, performing weddings, preaching funeral services, visiting and encouraging God’s children outside the church to come and attend the worship service, being hospitable to others who have come to visit the church for special meetings or otherwise, visiting the hospitals, nursing homes, the homes of the elderly, etc. The deacons should call attention to the church the need to help the pastor or preachers with their financial burdens they incur do to their ministry.

Moreover, the deacons have a responsibility in seeing to the needs of the meeting house and yard. These are expenses and work required to maintain, operate, and keep up the church facilities. Every member of the church has a financial responsibility and work responsibility to the maintenance, operation and keeping of the church facilities. The deacons should provide a leadership role in seeing that these responsibilities are carried out.

The deacons do not have a responsibility to determine who will fill the pulpit. The pastor is the overseer of the church and has a watchman responsibility to the members of the church. Thus, it is ultimately the pastor’s responsibility to determine who will or will not preach at the church. However, at special meetings or annual meetings, the pastor may enlist the advice, counsel, and recommendations of the deacons if he chooses to do so. Even if the pastor appoints a preaching committee, it is still his responsibility as to who will preach.

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Deacons Part 3 Qualifications of the Deacon

The qualifications of a deacon are set forth for us in the following passages of scripture:

1. 6:3 “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.”

2. 1 Tim. 3:8 “Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; 9 Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. 10 And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. 11 Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. 12 Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. 13 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.”

Strong’s Greek Hebrew dictionary gives the following definitions:

1. honest report - 3140. martureo, mar-too-reh'-o; from G3144; to be a witness, i.e. testify (lit. or fig.):--charge, give [evidence], bear record, have (obtain, of) good (honest) report, be well reported of, testify, give (have) testimony, (be, bear, give, obtain) witness.

2. full - 4134. pleres, play'-race; from G4130; replete, or covered over; by anal. complete:--full.

3. wisdom - 4678. sophia, sof-ee'-ah; from G4680; wisdom (higher or lower, worldly or spiritual):--wisdom.

4. grave - 4586. semnos, sem-nos'; from G4576; venerable, i.e. honorable:--grave, honest. (Note: Grave, adj.- 1.[Important]- momentous, weighty, consequential, earnest, far-reaching. 2.[Dangerous]- critical, serious, ominous. 3. [Solemn]- thoughtful, deliberate, austere, dignified, no-nonsense, awe-inspiring, reflective.

5. doubletongued - 1351. dilogos, dil'-og-os; from G1364 and G3056; equivocal, i.e. telling a different story:--double-tongued.

6. greedy of filthy lucre - 146. aischrokerdes, ahee-skhrok-er-dace'; from G150 and kerdos (gain); sordid:--given to (greedy of) filthy lucre.

7. pure - 2513. katharos, kath-ar-os'; of uncert. affin.; clean (lit. or fig.):--clean, clear, pure.

8. conscience - 4893. suneidesis, soon-i'-day-sis; from a prol. form of G4894; co-perception, i.e. moral consciousness:--conscience.

9. proved - 1381. dokimazo, dok-im-ad'-zo; from G1384; to test (lit. or fig.); by impl. to approve:--allow, discern, examine, X like, (ap-) prove, try.

10. blameless - 410. anegkletos, an-eng'-klay-tos; from G1 (as a neg. particle) and a der. of G1458; unaccused, i.e. (by impl.) irreproachable:--blameless.

11. slanderers - 1228. diabolos, dee-ab'-ol-os; from G1225; a traducer; spec. Satan [comp. H7854]:--false accuser, devil, slanderer.

12. sober - 3524. nephaleos, nay-fal'-eh-os; or nephalios, nay-fal'-ee-os; from 3525; sober, i.e. (fig.) circumspect:- sober. 13. ruling - 4291. proistemi, pro-is'-tay-mee; from G4253 and G2476; to stand before, i.e. (in rank) to preside, or (by impl.) to practise:--maintain, be over, rule.

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Chosen

Christ the Chosen One of God

There are several verses of scripture that speak directly of Christ as having been chosen of God to perform certain works and offices in the salvation of God's elect and in the Kingdom of God:

1. Isa 42:1 "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles."

2. Luke 23:35 "And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God."

3. 1 Pet 2:4 "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious."

4. Mat 12:18 "Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles."

5. 1 Pet 2:6 "Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded."

Jesus Christ was chosen of God to be the "Lamb of God" that "taketh away the sin of the world:"

1. John 1:29 "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

2. John 1:36 "And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!"

In addition, the angel declared to Joseph as he meditated on what he would do to his espoused wife Mary. Mary was with child of the Holy Ghost: "But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."

That he was chosen to deliver His people from their sins the Lord also testified: John 6:37-39, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day."

Jesus Christ was also chosen of God to be "the High Priest after the order of Melchisedec:

1. Heb 5:6 "As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."

2. Heb 5:10 "Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec."

3. Heb 6:20 "Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."

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4. Heb 7:11 "If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?"

5. Heb 7:15 "And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest,"

6. Heb 7:17 "For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."

7. Heb 7:21 "(For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:)"

As the High Priest after the order of Melchisedec, Christ not only made the sacrifice that atoned for the sins of his elect, but he also ever liveth and maketh intercession for them.

Christ was also chosen to be the King of the Kingdom of God. God made promise to David that in the seed of David one would arise to sit upon the throne in an everlasting kingdom: 2 Sam. 7:12-17, "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. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever. According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David."

Peter informed us that had been fulfilled in Acts 2:29-36, "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

Furthermore, Jesus was chosen to be the foundation and chief corner stone on which the church is built. Jesus said unto Peter, "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." The Lord is that rock on which he has built the church. Also, he is the chief cornerstone of the church:

1. Isa 28:16 "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste."

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2. Eph 2:20 "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;"

3. 1 Pet 2:6 "Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded."

In conclusion, in studying the doctrine of elections, we must start with Christ as being "the elect, precious, chosen one of God."

Unconditional Covenant Election unto Glory

According to the Covenant of Redemption set forth in Rom. 8:29, 30 God elected, predestinated, called, justified, and glorified a people to be His in this covenant made before the foundation of the world: Rom. 8:29, 30, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

We are told in Eph. 1:4 that this election or choice of a people took place before the foundation of the world: Eph. 1:4-6, "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: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."

Also, in Rom. 8:33, 34 we are informed that there is no charge that can be made to God's elect because they stand justified by the sacrificial atonement of Christ: "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

Furthermore, we are informed in the following verses that God's election of a people was not based on anything that they did, but solely by the grace of God:

1. Rom. 9:10-13, "And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."

2. Rom. 11:5, 6, "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."

The end result of God's election of a people by his grace is that those chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world will stand before God glorified in the morning of the resurrection. Again, this is set forth in Rom. 8:29, 30 and Eph. 1:4, 5 above.

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Many are Called, but Few are Chosen

There are two passages of scripture in which the subject phrase is found:

1. Matt. 20:1 "For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. 2 And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. 3 And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, 4 And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. 5 Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. 6 And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? 7 They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.

8 So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. 9 And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. 10 But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. 11 And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house, 12 Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. 13 But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? 14 Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. 15 Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? 16 So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

Matt. 22:1 "And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, 2 The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, 3 And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. 4 Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. 5 But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: 6 And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. 7 But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

8 Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. 9 Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. 10 So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. 11 And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: 12 And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. 13 Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer

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darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 14 For many are called, but few are chosen."

The calling and choosing that took place in the above passages was not the same election and calling to glory of God's people in the covenant of redemption. We know it is a different calling and choosing for the following reasons:

1. In the covenant of redemption, all that are elected before the foundation of the world are called into Spiritual life. There is an equality of numbers in all five actions in the covenant of redemption. The same ones that God foreknew are also predestinated, called, justified, and glorified.

2. In the covenant of redemption, the election took place before the calling. They were elected and then called, not the other way around. In the above passages of scripture, the calling takes place before the choosing.

3. In the covenant of redemption, the one doing the calling is God. In the above passages of scripture, the ones doing the calling are the servants of God.

4. In the passage in Matthew chapter 22, the servants were to "call" the "bidden" to the wedding feast. The Greek word for "call" and "bidden" is the same word, "kaleo." In other words the servants were to "call" the "called." This is what happens in the gospel call to the children of God to take up their cross and press into the Kingdom of God. The children of God are called by God into spiritual life. Once they are born of the Spirit, then they are capable of responding to the gospel call to service.

5. In the passage in Matthew chapter 20, the steward was to call the laborers and give them their hire. They were already laborers in the Kingdom of God, but because some were proud and greedy and jealous, they were not chosen to continue on in the blessings of service in the kingdom here in time.

In conclusion, the gospel call to service does not make one a child of God. But rather it calls those who are already children of God to enter into the gospel kingdom and to serve the Lord in his kingdom and to worship God in Spirit and in truth. Many of God's children hear the gospel call, but of that many few are chosen because of obedience to uphold that service.

Chosen to Salvation

2 Thes. 2:13 "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:" Some have thought this verse to teach that this is the way that God choses people to be his people. Some in an effort to make this verse say something that it does not teach go further and say that God looked down through time and determined who would believe him and then he chose them to be his.

God did indeed look down through time upon the children of men, but this is what he saw recorded for us in Ps. 14:2, 3 "The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one." Thus, the idea that God looked

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down through time and chose those that would believe the gospel to be his is destroyed by what we read in Ps. 14:2, 3. Before a person can believe and obey the gospel, he must first be born of the Spirit. Thus, the gospel cannot be a means of being born of the Spirit.

In 2 Thes. 2:13 the subject is "God." The verb is "hath chosen." The object to which they were chosen is "salvation." The means through which God chose them was "through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." Therefore, the ones chosen to this salvation were first born of the Spirit and believed the truth. They were born of the Spirit and believed the truth as a cause for God choosing them. Obviously the salvation to which they were chosen cannot be the New Birth. It was through the Spirit sanctifying them (New Birth) and their belief of the truth that they were chosen to salvation. It stands to reason that you cannot be chosen of God to be born again through the Spirit causing you to be born again and then you believing the truth. Yet, if the salvation in 2 Thes. 2:13 is the New or spiritual birth, then, the sentence would be non-sense.

Rather than the New Birth, the salvation in 2 Thes. 2:13 is deliverance (salvation) into the service and true worship of God. The only ones who can truly serve and worship God in Spirit and in truth are those who are already born of the Spirit and then believed the truth. When an individual, who has been born of the Spirit, hears and believes the gospel and then obeys the gospel, he is chosen of God to carry on the service and true worship of God in the gospel Kingdom of God. Thus, God from the beginning of their hearing, believing, and obeying the gospel, chose them to be delivered (saved) to the true worship and service of God through the sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.

This is in contrast to the many of God's children who do not ever hear the gospel. In addition, there are many who do hear the gospel, which do not believe the gospel, but rather are captured into a perverted gospel and false worship system. Also, there are those who hear and believe the true gospel of Jesus Christ, but who do not obey the gospel and submit themselves to water baptism and the service and true worship of God in his church kingdom here on earth. None of these is chosen of God to carry on the true worship and service of God in his church kingdom. Only those who believed and obeyed the truth are chosen to carry on in the true worship and service of God in his church kingdom.

General PBC Doctrines

1 Christ the Governor of the Church

There are several Old Testament verses of scripture that prophecy of the coming of Christ and for him to be the governor of the Church Kingdom of God:

1. Is. 9:6 "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. 7 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."

2. Is. 22:20 "And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of

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Hilkiah: 21 And I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. 22 And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. 23 And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house. 24 And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons."

3. Ps. 67:3 "Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. 4 O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth. Selah."

4. Ps. 110:1 "A Psalm of David. The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. 2 The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. 3 Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth."

5. Is. 40:10 "Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him."

6. Zec. 6:12 "And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: 13 Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both."

The Lord is a great King and the scriptures call him King of kings and Lord of lords. Not only does he rule over all his creation, but especially he rules over his church. The government is upon his shoulders. He rules upon the everlasting throne of David in an everlasting kingdom.

A king rules by his word. Most often, this word is written down so that the subjects may know how they are being governed and what they are to do. The word includes laws, ordinances, and commandments. It includes how the subject is to conduct himself. It includes the relationships between the subjects and their king and the relationships between the subjects. In the Lord's kingdom church he has set forth how we are to worship Him, how we are to live our lives to the praise, honor, and glory of his name. Furthermore, he has instructed us on how we are to have fellowship within the body of the church. Also, he tells us how we are to have interchurch fellowship, how we are to deal with personal trespasses, how we are to deal with public trespasses, and the rules of conduct in the church. In addition, he tells us what offices are in the church and who is qualified to occupy those offices and how they are to conduct themselves within those offices. Furthermore, he tells us our responsibilities to the church, to one another, and to those of God's people without the church.

The Lord has told us these things in his word: 2 Tim. 3:16 "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." According to this passage, the scriptures furnish us everything that is needed in the church, in our

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lives, and in how that we are to perform all good works. Since, the Lord has given us his word to govern ourselves; we are not to make changes to his word. We are not to add to his word, nor are we to take from his word. Where the scriptures are silent, we are not to add to them. Where the scriptures teach us to do something, then we are duty bound to do that.

The scriptures are silent about Sunday schools, bible colleges, theological societies, mission boards, and using musical instruments in the church. Thus, we are not to have any of these things. In addition, the scriptures teach us that we are not to use titles such as Father, Master, Rabbi, or Reverend. Therefore, we should not call preachers by these titles.

The local church has no organization above it on earth. The Lord's church has only one head:

1. Eph. 1:22 "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church."

2. Eph. 4:15 "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:"

3. Eph. 5:23 "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."

4. Col. 1:18 "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."

5. 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." Therefore, any organization that claims a headquarters anywhere on earth cannot be the Lord's true church.

In future essays, we will consider different aspects of church government.

2. Personal Conduct in the Church

There are many verses of scripture that teach us how that we are to conduct our personal lives in the church. We will only touch on a few of these scriptures. The majority of the New Testament deals with this subject. We will only very briefly deal with a few of the scriptural lessons.

First, the scriptures teach us that we are created unto good works and that good works glorify God:

1. Eph. 2:10 "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

2. John 15:8 "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."

3. Mat. 5:16 "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

Second, the scriptures teach us that we are to discipline ourselves in His church:

1. Mat. 28:19 "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things

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whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

2. Rom. 8:13 "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

3. Col 3:5 "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:"

4. Rom 12:1 "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."

Further, the scriptures teach us to put off certain activities and to put on others:

1. Eph. 4:22 "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; 23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; 24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. 25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. 26 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: 27 Neither give place to the devil. 28 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. 29 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.

30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: 32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. 5:1 Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; 2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. 3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; 4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. 5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

2. Col. 3:8 "But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. 9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; 10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: 11 here there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all. 12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; 13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. 14 And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. 15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. 16 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

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with grace in your hearts to the Lord. 17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

Third, the scriptures teach us how that we are to interact within the family:

1. Eph. 5:22 "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. 23 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. 24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. 25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27 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.

28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. 29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: 30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. 31 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. 32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband."

2. Col. 3:18 "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. 19 Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them."

3. Col. 3:20 "Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. 21 Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged."

4. Eph. 6:1 "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. 2 Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; 3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. 4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

5. 1 Tim. 5:14 "I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully."

Fourth, the scriptures teach how that masters and servants are to interact:

1. Eph. 6:5 "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; 6 Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; 7 With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: 8 Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. 9 And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him."

2. Col. 3:22 "Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: 23 And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; 24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. 25 But he that doeth wrong shall receive

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for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons. 4:1 Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven."

Sixth, the scriptures teach how that we are to interact with those who have authority over us:

1. Rom. 13:1 "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. 2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. 3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: 4 For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. 5 Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. 6 For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. 7 Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour."

2. 1 Tim. 2:1 "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; 2 For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."

Seventh, the scriptures teach that we are consider all that are in the church as brothers and sisters in Christ:

1. Acts 9:17 "And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost."

2. Acts 21:20 "And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law:"

3. Rom 14:10 "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ."

4. Rom 14:10 "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ."

In conclusion, we are a church family and should treat one another as brothers and sisters.

5. Rom 14:15 "But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died."

6. Rom 14:21 "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak."

7. Rom 16:23 "Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother."

8. 1 Cor 1:1 "Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,"

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9. 1 Cor 5:11 "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat."

10. 1 Cor 6:6 "But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers."

11. 1 Cor 7:12 "But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away."

12. 1 Cor 7:15 "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."

While we have barely scratched the surface of this subject, yet we have shown a small sampling of how that God has provided a complete furnishing of those things needed for our personal conduct as a disciple of Christ.

3. Our Responsibility to those outside the Church

The Lord said to the disciples: Matt. 5:14 "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. 15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. 16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

The "world" the Lord is referring to is the "world of his born-again children." They are the only ones that could see the spiritual light of Him and the disciples. A light attracts and makes manifest. The church is a collection of born-again children of God who have pressed into the church kingdom of God and have pressed into service and discipleship. These collectively are a city (church) that is set upon a hill (Kingdom of God). The light of the city goes out to the travelers and passerby's. It attracts and make manifest the spiritual kingdom of God. It is the responsibility of each of the members of the church to "let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." The Lord told us in Eph. 2:10: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." In living our lives according to the teaching of God's word we are letting our light shine in such a way that men may see our good works and glorify our Father which is in heaven. Therefore, it is our responsibility to live our lives according to the teaching of God's word.

When the Lord had cast out the legion of unclean spirits in the man called "Legion" he told the man in Mark 5:19: "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." Likewise, we as the disciples of the Lord, out of whom the Lord has cast out our legion of unclean spirits should go home and tell our friends "how great things the Lord hath done for us, and hath had compassion on us." Peter said in 1 Pet. 3:15 "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." We should prepare ourselves to answer the questions of our friends and all that would ask us of the reason of the hope that is in us.

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Matt. 9:35 "And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. 36 But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. 37 Then saith he unto his disciples, the harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; 38 Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest." When the Lord saw the multitudes outside the kingdom, he was moved with compassion toward them. They were scattered abroad as sheep that have no shepherd. Then he told the disciples (those in the church) to "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest." Thus our duty as disciples in the church is to be constantly praying that God will send forth labourers into his harvest that those outside the kingdom of God's born-again children may be gathered into the visible church kingdom on earth.

Likewise, Paul prayed in Rom. 10:1-4: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Paul's heart's desire and prayer to God was that God's children among Israel might be saved from their ignorance and quit trying to establish their own righteousness and that they might come to the knowledge of truth that Christ has already made them righteous. Similarly, we should be praying for God's people today that they may be saved from their ignorance and from trying to establish their own righteousness through the myriad of systems that men have taught that you must follow in order to become children of God and be saved from your sins. The Lord said, "ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." The truth sets men free from the man-made works systems so that they may worship God in spirit and in truth.

Furthermore, we are to pray for the gospel ministry that God would open doors of utterance that they may go forth and preach and teach those currently outside the gospel church:

1. 2 Thes. 3:1 "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you:"
2. Col. 4:3 "Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:"

4. Interchurch Fellowship

The bible clearly teaches fellowship between local churches. Examples of this fellowship is found in the last chapters of most of Paul's letters to the seven churches he wrote to. The best example of this is found in the letter to the church at Colosse. Col. 4:7 "All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord: 8 Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts; 9 With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things which are done here. 10 Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you,

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and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;) 11 And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellowworkers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me.

12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. 13 For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea and them in Hierapolis. 14 Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you. 15 Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house. 16 And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea. 17 And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it. 18 The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you. Amen."

From this, we gather the following examples of interchurch fellowship:

1. Paul had his membership in the church at Antioch and was writing to the church at Colosse. He was sending the preacher Tychicus to preach to the church at Colosse and to declare his state unto them.

2. Paul was also sending Onesimus to labor at the church at Colosse, who before had been a member of the church at Colosse.

3. Different members of the church at Antioch saluted the brethren and sisters of the church at Colosse.

4. Epaphras, who came from the church at Colosse, was now a member of the church at Antioch. Both he and Onesimus had moved their membership from Colosse to Antioch thus indicating the churches were in fellowship with one another.

5. Paul asked that the letter to Colosse also be read by the church of the Laodiceans and that the letter to Laodicea be read by the church at Colosse. This indicates that the churches at Antioch, Colosse, and Laodicea were all in fellowship with one another.

Interchurch fellowship does not mean that one church has any power of government over another church. Christ is the head of each local church and each local church is to answer to her head. Each local church answers to Christ, who only has the power to remove the candlestick (church). This is well illustrated in the letters the Lord had John send to the seven churches of Asia (Revelations chapters 2 and 3). The Lord pointed out to those seven churches the things that were wrong in those churches and how that they were to repent of those sins and errors. He also pointed out the things that were right in those churches. The Lord never told one church what steps they were to take to correct another church.

There are, however, some hindrances to interchurch fellowship. Amos 3:3 "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" It is implied in this verse that walking together (fellowship) must be on the basis of agreement. Where we as individuals disagree with one another is the point at which we do not have fellowship with one another. Likewise, where churches differ on doctrine and practice, they cease having fellowship with one another.

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If the church I am a member of has the true gospel of Jesus Christ and another church (so-called) has a perverted gospel, then those two bodies cannot have fellowship with one another. Eph 5:11 "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." Departures from the gospel of the grace of Christ and departures from the order of worship and government of the New Testament Church are part of the unfruitful works of darkness. When a church departs from the true gospel or when a church departs from the true order of worship or government, then we are to have no church fellowship with them.

Rom. 16:17 "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." Sometimes, gospel ministers arise who cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine of the bible. These men are to be marked and we are to avoid them. We avoid them by not using them in our pulpit and by not going to their pulpit to preach. Failure to mark and avoid them will result in their good words and fair speeches deceiving the hearts of the simple.

Sometimes a problem can arise that can be worked out between the affected churches. This was the case in Acts chapter 15 when a problem arose between the church at Antioch and the church at Jerusalem. Acts 15:1 "And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. 2 When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question." To resolve this issue the church at Antioch sent the elders of the church to Jerusalem to counsel with the elders of the church at Jerusalem about this question. In the council at Jerusalem the problem was resolved and the churches remained in fellowship with one another.

Interchurch fellowship is good and strengthens the brethren and sisters who have it. However, we cannot have interchurch fellowship with those who have departed from the faith and teach another gospel or depart from the true worship of God.

5. Charges against an Individual

Both gross public sins and private sins or trespasses against an individual require two or three witnesses in order for them to be considered by the church for discipline. This was both an Old Testament principle under the law and is a New Testament principle to govern the church as set forth by the following verses of scripture:

1. Deu. 17:6 "At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death."

2. Deu. 19:15 "One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established."

3. Mat 18:16 "But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established."

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4. 2 Cor 13:1 "This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established."

5. 1 Tim 5:19 "Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses."

6. Heb 10:28 "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:"

This requirement that there be at least two witnesses before a charge can come before the church for discipline is a safeguard to the individual. If two witnesses are required then just because someone is mad at you and wants to do you harm, he cannot do it alone. Further, it is a safeguard to the church so that the church not take action based on the word of one individual, of which, the church cannot be expected to know the motive. However, if two witnesses accuse the brother, then there is far less likelihood that anger or jealousy would be the motive and the accusation is far more likely to be true.

The requirement that an accusation against an elder not be received without two witnesses is especially good for the church. An elder is quite vulnerable to the accusation of a single individual. Many charges can be laid to an elder that would not necessarily be laid to other members of the church. Accusations such as preaching heresy, teaching false practices, dividing the church, etc. are much more frequently laid against the elder than against other members of the church. Evil motives can sometimes lead to an individual in the church bringing a false charge against an elder. The church, therefore, is blessed to have the requirement that a charge not be received against an elder without at least two witnesses. The elder is also blessed for this requirement in that his ministry would be easily overthrown or made of non-effect by the designs of a single wicked man.

6. Private Trespasses

Trespasses by their very nature are either public or private. We will deal with public trespasses in another essay. In this essay, we will deal with private trespasses between individuals in the church.

Prov. 14:12 "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." The way of the world seems right unto man, but the consequence of following that way in the church is that it will result in death of fellowship. The way of the world manifests itself in matters of private trespasses with at least one of four different reactions:

1. Go home and pout that our feelings have been hurt. Have nothing to do with the offending party or with anyone who would fellowship with the offending party.
2. Extract revenge on the offending party by offending them back.
3. Try to force an apology from the offending party and when one is received, reluctantly forgive but not forget.
4. Play a political game by telling other members of the church how the other person offended me and is not worthy of being in the church.

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Isa. 55:9 "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." All four of the reactions listed above are worldly carnal reactions and will result in death to fellowship. The Lord's way is so much better than the our ways.

The Lord gave us wonderful instruction on how to deal with personal trespasses between individuals in the church in Matt. 18:15-17: "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican."

Throughout this eighteenth chapter of Matthew, the Lord laid the groundwork for the instruction in how to deal with personal trespasses. In the first part of the chapter, the Lord told us how that we are not to seek greatness, but we are to humble ourselves as a little child. Next, the Lord instructed us that we are to be very careful not to offend one of God's little children. Moreover, the Lord taught us that it was not his will that one of his sheep should perish. Following this was the instruction set forth above about how to deal with personal trespasses. In the final portion of this chapter, the Lord deals with the great need of forgiveness.

"Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." We should first be sure that a brother has trespassed against us before we accuse our brother of a trespass. Often times we assert motives to people's action that are simply not true. But once we are sure that the brother has trespassed against us then we are duty bound to go to that brother in humility (remember the earlier teaching in the chapter) and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. Notice the word "alone." This teaches us that we are not to tell anyone else about it until we have first gone to the brother and told him his fault alone. The scriptures also tell us that we are to restore someone in the spirit of meekness. If we go to our brother in a proud manner and began to make proud accusations against him, the likelihood is that we cannot make reconciliation. Remember, the Lord said that it is not his will that one of his little ones perish. Therefore, we should go to our brother with the desire to restore fellowship, not to destroy fellowship.

When we approach our brother in this manner, the vast majority of times the issue will be satisfactorily resolved at that time. However, if it is not resolved, then we are to go to step two: "But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established." When asking a couple of brothers to go with us, we are not to inform them of the details of the problem beforehand. We are asking them to judge the matter between myself and the offending brother. It is not right for me to try to cloud their minds before they hear the matter from both of us at the same time. Once the witnesses have heard the matter and given their judgment then hopefully the matter will be resolved at that time.

"And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." This step is to be taken only if the

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first two steps have been unsuccessful in resolving the matter. It is not to be brought before the church before the first two steps have been taken. A brother who brings a matter of personal trespass before the church before the first two steps have been taken is himself trespasses against the church and should be reprimanded for it. Once step three has been taken, hopefully the matter will be resolved and fellowship between the two parties will have been restored. If the offending brother neglects to hear the church then the only thing that is left is for the offending brother to be removed from the fellowship until he repents.

7. Public Offenses

If all of God's people were perfect and never sinned, then we would not have to deal with the issue of public offenses in the church. This, however, is not the case. We must all admit that we are sinners and that we have a constant warfare against sin as the flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit the flesh.

When a person joins the church through water baptism, he is setting forth, among other things, his desire to walk in newness of Spirit and to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. Furthermore, through this act of water baptism, he has joined himself in covenant with the highest ecclesial authority on earth, the Lord's church. He has submitted himself to "observe all things, whatsoever the Lord has commanded us." Thus, he has submitted himself to the authority and standards of conduct of the Lord's church as has been set forth for us in the scriptures.

The church is the "light of the world" the "city that is set upon a hill that cannot be hid." We are to let our "light so shine before men, that they may see our good works and glorify our Father which is in heaven." The church is to praise, honor, and glorify God. Sin by the membership is a blot against the church. Rather than glorifying God, it brings reproach to the name of God and to the church.

The church is in the public spotlight and is observed by both its friends and its enemies. The enemies of the church rejoice to see public trespasses of God's people in the church that they may bring ridicule to the Lord's church. Those who would be sympathetic to the teachings of the bible and drawn to the church are turned off when they see the gross sins of some who are members of the church.

The Lord in his government of the church has given the church ways of dealing with the public trespasses of his servants. This government of the church protects the integrity of the church and the effective witness of the church and brings praise, honor, and glory to the name of the Lord.

Contrary to some beliefs, the sins of the Lord's people are not all the same in their effect. Some gross sins are an open rebuke to the church. There are sins of omission and sins of commission. There are sins committed through ignorance. There are sins of thought that no one else even knows about. There are sins of trespasses between individuals that only the two parties know about. There are sins of habit. There are willful sins. Since there are many kinds of sins, it stands to reason that not all sins are dealt with in the same way.

First Corinthians chapter five tells the church how to deal with gross sins. Gross sins are listed for us in this chapter as "fornication, drunkenness, covetousness, idolatry, railing, and

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extortion. The example given us in that chapter is of one who committed adultery with his father's wife. The church's first reaction was wrong. They were puffed up because of this sin, and had not rather mourned that the individual might be taken away from among them. It is a time of mourning when someone commits one of these gross sins. It is a time of mourning for the individual and for the need to withdraw fellowship from that individual.

The gross sins are compared to leaven which leavens the whole lump. If left unchecked the gross sins will pervade the entire body of the church and so corrupt the church. The church will be a reproach to the name of Christ and the church will lose her witness to the cause of Christ.

The example above also shows us that the exclusion of the offending member is in the best interest of the offending member as well. Paul told the church to take the following action: 4 "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, 5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." The action of the church led the man who had committed adultery to repent and to be restored to fellowship as we read in 2 Cor. 2:6 "Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. 7 So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. 8 Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him."

By putting the man away, the church testified that such offenses are not acceptable behavior by a disciple of Christ and that the church would not fellowship with such behavior. Further, by forgiving the man after his repentance, the church testified that as Christ has forgiven us, so we are to forgive one another.

Next, there are sins that a public rebuke is needed. The following examples are given us in the scriptures:

1. Gal. 2:11 "But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. 12 For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. 13 And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. 14 But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?"

2. 1 Tim. 5:19 "Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. 20 Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear."

3. Tit. 1:10 "For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: 11 Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake. 12 One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. 13 This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; 14 Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth."

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Other sins, especially sins of omission, or sins of ignorance, or sins of thought are to be handled through the rebuke of preaching God's word:

1. 2 Tim. 4:2 "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."

2. Tit. 2:15 "These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee."

When one of our brethren has a habit or fault that needs to be corrected Paul gives us the following solution: Gal. 6:1 "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

Private conversations can also be effective in restoring a brother from a sinful error from the truth: James 5:19 "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; 20 Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

8. Disputes between Church Members

We have separated this subject from the one on private trespasses. The one on private trespasses dealt with a personal and direct trespass of one member against another member. Sometimes members involve themselves in business transactions or other contractual transactions with one another. In doing this, sometimes disputes arise and both parties may believe themselves to be correct in the dispute. The Holy Spirit led Paul to deal with this problem in the church at Corinth: 1 Cor. 6:1 "Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? 2 Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? 3 Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? 4 If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. 5 I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? 6 But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. 7 Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? 8 Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren."

"Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?" The first thing we notice is that Paul condemns the practice of one member going to law against another member in a worldly courtroom. The relationship between brethren in the church should be such that love would be the foremost motivating factor. Rather than bringing the matter into a worldly court, Paul tells them that those in the church (the saints) would be better suited to judge the matter.

"Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?" The nations of the world enact various laws and rules and oftentimes these laws and rules are contrary to the word of God. For instance, the laws dealing with divorce in this country are different from the law concerning divorce in the bible.

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As members of the church, we judge the laws of this country to be wrong and we hold to a standard of the law concerning divorce given to us in the bible.

Another example is the courts of this country hold that a woman may willingly cause the abortion of her unborn child. The church judges the courts to be wrong and we hold to the principle that willing abortion is the murder of the unborn child according to the scriptures. In this way, we judge the world and we hold to the perfect standard of the bible.

"Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?" The Greek word translated angels is sometimes translated messenger. The meaning of angel is messenger. The angels of the seven churches in the book of Revelation are the pastors of the seven churches. The church at Ephesus judged men who claimed to be apostles in Rev. 2:2: "and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars." Sometimes pastors are brought before the church because of their actions to be censored or chastened by the church. This is the judging of angels (messengers).

Since the church members are called on to judge the world and to judge angels, it seems quite reasonable that they would be capable of judging matters between brethren.

"If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. 5 I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?" Paul affirms that there are wise men in the church that are capable of judging between brethren and the church should set them aside to judge the matter between brethren.

It has been my experience that this happens quite rarely that there are brethren in the church that have disputes that come before the church. However, the Lord has provided for the church a way to handle such disputes by the church when the need arises.

"Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren." Paul said that it would be better to be defrauded by a brother than to take the matter to a worldly court. He also said that to take a matter to a worldly court is committing fraud against the brother and the brethren.

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