BASIC
BIBLE
Doctrines

Donald Webb
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Doctrines

What We Believe

Donald Webb
We thank the Lord for His help in bringing this book to completion and for His gracious provision of many faithful brethren who labored with us.
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Preface

Do we really need another book on Bible doctrine? What about all the other books on doctrine; aren't they good enough? I could easily answer these two questions by simply saying that *Basic Bible Doctrines* approaches Bible doctrine from a Pauline perspective. This means that Paul's words in Romans 11:13 are taken literally. “For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify my office.” Paul is the Apostle of God for this dispensation of grace, and that makes Paul's Epistles the key that unlocks the rest of Scripture. All Scripture must now be interpreted in light of the Pauline revelation the revelation given to him by the risen, glorified Lord Jesus Christ. Paul's writings are the only place in the Bible where we can read about this present dispensation of grace the interim between the stoning of Stephen and the coming time of Jacob's trouble. Yes, we do need another book on doctrine.

There is a continuing need for exposition and proclamation of the truths of Scripture. To expand our understandings of the great truths of the Word of God is what I have endeavored to do, I trust with God's help. I have sought to present the basic doctrines of the Bible in a concise and yet thorough way according the light and help God has given. May it not be the last such book written or read to gain further understanding of the Word of God.

To that end, may the volume itself draw you closer to the Lord Jesus Christ and to God, the Father, in your knowledge and appreciation of Him. May it result in a living testimony to Him, in accordance with the revelation so wonderfully committed to us.

Donald Webb
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Chapter 1
The Bible

The Bible is unique in all the world—it alone is the written Word of God! The word Bible comes from the Greek word bib-lius, which means a book; but what a book it is! It is absolutely supernatural and divine in every way. It was written in three different languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek) over a 1600-year period by over forty men and covered thousands of years of history; yet it stands as one book—perfect in continuity from beginning to end.

The Bible alone declares the glory of God in His triune Being and all His attributes. It alone declares His glory in creation and in the redemption of sinful man through the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible alone truthfully answers the age-old questions, “Where did I come from? Why am I here? Where am I going?”

The Bible calls itself “the Scripture” (Romans 4:3) and “the Holy Scriptures” (2 Timothy 3:15); and over and over it says, “Thus saith the Lord.” It calls itself the Word of Truth (2 Timothy 2:15) and, of course, the Word of God.

So, then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Romans 10:17).

For the word of God is living, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Hebrews 4:12).

Only the Word of God makes this claim of being living, powerful, and sharper than a twoedged sword, and that it divides
asunder (or really, lays open) the soul and the spirit. This verse is not saying the Word of God divides asunder, or divides apart, the soul from the spirit and the joints from the marrow. It is saying that the Word lays open the soul, lays open the spirit, lays open the joints, and lays open the marrow. The Word is a critic or a discerner and lays open the very heart and soul of man and all his thoughts and intents. Nothing can be hidden from the Word of God. The Scripture goes on to say:

\[\text{Neither is there any creature that is not made manifest in His sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do (Hebrews 4:13).}\]

Verse 13 gives clear commentary on verse 12. In both verses 12 and 13, God and His Word are declared to be one and the same. The Bible does not just contain the Word of God, but it is in its entirety the Word of God. Men may deny and disbelieve this, but they should not misunderstand: The Bible alone claims to be—and is—the Word of God.

The written Word is inseparable from the Incarnate Word—the Lord Jesus Christ—in that the written Word points to and declares the Incarnate Word. The Lord Jesus says:

\[\text{Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of Me (John 5:39).}\]

Just as the Incarnate Word—the Lord Jesus Christ—is God, so the written Word is the Word of God. When men read this book, they are dealing with God Himself.

The Bible also differs from all other books in that it is inerrant. The Lord Jesus said:

\[\text{Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth (John 17:17).}\]

As God is perfect and cannot lie, so His Word is also perfect and cannot have errors.

A proper study of the Bible covers at least these seven points:

Basic Bible Doctrines
• Revelation
• Inspiration
• Authority
• Illumination
• Interpretation
• Animation
• Preservation

Obviously, in this short chapter we cannot hope to address all seven topics in their entirety, but we will seek to address the main issues of several of these points.

REVELATION
The Greek word for revelation is apokalupsis, which means to uncover or unveil. Concerning the Word of God and its being God’s divine revelation, we offer this definition:

Revelation is the act of God imparting to the writers of the Bible truth incapable of being discovered by man’s unaided reason.

Revelation Is Divine
Though we understand that not all of the Bible is direct revelation (such as some historical accounts), all Scripture is nonetheless God-breathed. But concerning the Person and work (or purpose) of God, that truth can only be known by direct divine revelation.

Let us examine this first point about revelation.

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things [Greek = bathe, i.e., depths] of God. For what man knoweth the things of man, except the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now
we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 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 (1 Corinthians 2:9–14).

In this portion, the primary interpretation has to do with the Bible writers and revelation to them concerning God’s truth that only the mind of the Spirit can give. Natural man in his unaided reason could never know the deep things of God because only the Spirit of God knows such things of God; they had to be revealed by God’s Spirit. Verse 9 is a quotation from Isaiah that many apply to today. But the wonderful truth is that God has revealed these secret things, the depths of Himself (as Paul said in verse 10), to the Bible writers:

But God hath revealed them [the depths of God] unto us [the Bible writers] by His Spirit… (1 Corinthians 2:10).

In this passage, Paul was defending the fact that the revelation of the mystery—the secret things that he, Paul, had made known to the Corinthians—could not have been received or known by mere human minds.

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God... (1 Corinthians 2:14).

No amount of imagination could have come up with these ideas. God’s Word was revealed by the Holy Spirit.

Revelation Is Progressive
God’s revelation is progressive. God did not reveal all the truth at one sitting, but progressively unfolded His truth from the earlier to the later books of the Bible. We do not believe that God revealed stories and myths that eventually ended in truth. We believe that God revealed truth in progressive stages until finally the full secret purpose of His will had been made known.
Note Peter’s words:

Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you, Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, not unto themselves but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, which things the angels desired to look into (1 Peter 1:9–12).

Even the prophets themselves whom God used to reveal truth awaited further revelation for understanding. As the Lord preached the kingdom program to and through the Twelve Apostles, greater understanding was received. Later through another Apostle (the Apostle Paul) an abundance of revelations was given concerning what God calls “the mystery of His will” in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1:9).

The Bible is a dispensational book, and “progressive revelation is basic to the dispensational character of the Bible.”1 We know that not all the Bible is written to one group of people, nor does all the Bible concern one particular program; but rather, God has dealt with man under several different economies or dispensations. “The fact that one dispensation has succeeded another necessitates added revelation for the succeeding dispensations. In this sense, progressive revelation becomes almost synonymous with dispensationalism.”2

**Revelation Is Complete**

God’s revelation is complete. The Apostle Paul said:

Of which I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill [complete] the word of God, even the mystery which hath been hidden from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints (Colossians 1:25,26).
Paul declared here that he was a minister of the church of God, the Body of Christ, according to a special dispensation, a revelation given to him by God which he said was “given to me for you to fulfill the Word of God.” The word fulfill here means to fill full or to complete the Word of God. The revelation that God gave to Paul, even the revelation of the mystery, actually completed the Word of God. Thus, we reject all those who claim to receive extrabiblical revelation in this dispensation of grace. There are many who would claim to receive signs, visions, dreams, prophetic utterances, and even supplements to the Word of God (such as the Book of Mormon). We reject all these as false on the basis of this verse which says that the mystery (the revelation of God’s secret purpose in Christ) revealed by God through Paul completes the Word of God.

We understand there are those who would say that the Book of Revelation was written by John after Paul completed his Epistles. To that we would answer that the Book of Revelation completed the prophetic purpose of God. John wrote:

\[
\text{For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book; and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. (Revelation 22:18,19).}
\]

John’s revelation completed God’s dealings with the prophetic program and the nation Israel. The writings of Paul completed God’s full scope of revelation concerning His secret purpose in Christ Jesus. Thus, the Word of God stands complete, and no extra revelation will be given from God concerning either His earthly or His heavenly purpose and program.

**INSPIRATION**

The entire Bible in its original writings is verbally inspired of God and is of plenary authority. We offer this definition of inspiration:
Inspiration is God the Holy Spirit enabling the writers of the Bible to write down in God-chosen words, infallibly, the truth revealed.

Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual (1 Corinthians 2:13)

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16)

We believe in verbal inspiration—this refers to the exact words of Scripture. In the Greek the words given by inspiration of God are really one word, God-breathed. This verse is really saying “all Scripture is God-breathed and profitable.” It should be pointed out here that inspiration refers to words, not to men. God did not inspire men in some poetic sense. No indeed! The very words of Scripture were breathed out by God! Peter told us how God used the men who wrote down the Bible:

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not at any time by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved [borne along] by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20,21).

God did not inspire the men. He moved them or bore them along by the Holy Spirit, and He used them to write God-breathed words. Verses 20 and 21 have to do with Bible origination.

Verse 20 is really saying that no prophecy of the Scripture is of anyone’s own private origination (interpretive composition), but holy men of God were moved by the Holy Spirit and wrote down God-chosen, God-breathed words.

Of course, the Bible in its original writings was not written in English. The Old Testament was written mostly in Hebrew (with some Aramaic) and the New Testament was written in Greek. What we have now in our hands is a translation. However, we believe that God carefully guarded and preserved His Word down through the ages so that we can say that the Scriptures we hold in our hands, even now, are the Word of God. We want
men to know assuredly that when they face this book in whatever language, they are facing Almighty God.

**AUTHORITY**
We believe that the Bible is of *plenary authority*. The word *plenary* means full, complete, or absolute. Therefore, by definition, plenary authority means full, final, and complete authority. We believe that the Bible, not the visible church, is the final authority in all matters of truth and doctrine, of faith and practice.

We believe that the Bible is of plenary authority for at least three reasons:

• According to 2 Timothy 3:16, the Bible is God-breathed, and so it is authoritative in that it is the very Word of God.

• The Lord Jesus Christ attested to its authority.

• The Holy Spirit uses the Scriptures.

Note the words of the Lord Jesus:

...Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God (Matthew 22:29).

...These are the words which I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures (Luke 24:44,45).

Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of Me (John 5:39).

Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth (John 17:17).

Thus, the Lord Jesus Himself vindicated the authority of Scripture.

There are many other verses that indicate the Bible’s authority.

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 (Acts 17:11).
When it says “these were more noble than those,” it means these Jews in Berea were more noble than those Jews in Thessalonica in that they received the word (that would be the word spoken by Paul) with all readiness of mind and searched the Scriptures daily. The Scriptures were the authority. They did not go to the priest or some other man, but rather they went to the Word of God and searched diligently whether Paul’s words were so. The Apostle Paul wrote:

*Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth* (2 Timothy 2:15).

To study or to give diligence to God’s Word is what is required to be approved workmen. The Word of God is the only thing fit for this purpose.

*All scripture is given by inspiration of God [is God-breathed], and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect [complete], thoroughly furnished unto all good works* (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

Again, this clearly indicates the authority of Scripture. Turning again to 2 Peter, we read:

*We have also a more sure word of prophecy, unto which ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not at any time by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit* (2 Peter 1:19–21).

Peter was an eyewitness of the transfiguration of the Lord, yet he said to his readers “we have a more sure word” than his testimony, and that is the Word of God!

We believe the Scripture is of final or plenary authority because it is the only means that the Holy Spirit uses in the conviction and the salvation of sinners, and for the perfecting of the saints.
So, then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Romans 10:17).

The Scriptures never lose their authority or become out-of-date. The Psalmist wrote:

Forever, O Lord, Thy word is settled [or established] in heaven (Psalm 119:89).

God has preserved His Word. It is eternal and authoritative. We possess it, and we can obey it and proclaim it with confidence.

**ILLUMINATION**

The next point we will consider in our study of the Bible is illumination, which means to enlighten. The word illumination comes from the Greek word photizo, which literally means to lighten or turn the light on. This has to do with understanding. We offer this definition of illumination:

It is the act of God the Holy Spirit enabling believers to understand the truth given by revelation and recorded by inspiration.

In Ephesians we read:

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power (Ephesians 1:17–19).

Here Paul prayed that the eyes of our understanding might be enlightened and asked that God would give us the “spirit of knowledge and revelation in the knowledge of Him.” This is revelation in the secondary sense.

This is not God giving direct revelation to us as He did to the Bible writers. This is revelation in the sense that God would unveil His truth through enlightening, as it says in verse 18. We
need to understand first of all that this operation of enlighten-
ing is a work of the Holy Spirit, who indwells all believers, hav-
ing taken permanent residence in them the moment they were
saved. Paul asked:

_What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy
Spirit who is in you, whom ye have of God, and ye are not your
own (1 Corinthians 6:19)?_

Paul also stated:

_But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit
of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of
Christ, he is none of His. And if Christ be in you, the body is
dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness...the Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we
are the children of God (Romans 8:9,10,16)._ 

Thus, the Holy Spirit indwells every true believer, and one
of the ministries of the Holy Spirit is to enlighten. However, the
Holy Spirit cannot do this unless believers read and study the
Word of God.

_Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that
needeth not to be ashamed... (2 Timothy 2:15)._

Without our coming in contact with the Word of God, there
can be no understanding. In Ephesians, the Apostle Paul spoke
concerning the revelation of the mystery given to him:

_How that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery (as
I wrote before in few words, by which, when ye read, ye may under-
stand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) (Ephesians 3:3,4)._ 

As we read the Word of God, the Holy Spirit can enlighten
us. One thing that must be joined with our Bible reading is our
belief of and trust in the Word of God. Without accepting what we
read, the Holy Spirit is hindered from enlightening us to further
understanding. First, we must read the Word with a believing
heart, then study it, and then by faith practice it. We should
recall that the Bereans were more noble because “they received
the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures
daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11). Romans 10:17 also still applies:

So, then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

As believers we must be willing to receive and study the Word and then place our faith in what God says, even if it causes us to have to say we were wrong! We must be willing to believe and obey God’s truth that He seeks to teach us.

The Goal of Illumination
God wants us to have knowledge and understanding but with a certain view, a certain purpose. We would say emphatically that this view is our maturity and establishment in the Word in order to draw us closer to Him—our blessed Lord! In Colossians 1 we read:

...and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God to whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus (Colossians 1:9,10,28).

The word perfect in verse 28 refers to completeness, or a maturity of understanding in Christ Jesus. In this passage Paul was speaking of the body of truth that God had revealed to him, the truth which completed the Word of God, the mystery. This revelation of the mystery concerned our risen, glorified Lord whom Paul said we preach, warning and teaching every man, to present everyone mature in Christ Jesus. Paul went on to say:

[That we should be] rooted and built up in Him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving (Colossians 2:7).

Establishment in the Word comes with the full knowledge of the mystery of Christ, and this coupled with a walk of love and obedience to our loving Savior is the true Christian’s life and service. Paul also stated:
That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement [full knowledge] of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ (Colossians 2:2).

When accepted, this revelation brings a believer into maturity of wisdom and understanding concerning God’s purpose in this dispensation of grace. This establishes the believer and keeps him from being “tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine.” Keep in mind, however, that sometimes it is not more doctrine we need but rather, to obey the truth we already know and do so in genuine love for our Redeemer.

**How Illumination Is Hindered**

We ask, “What can hinder illumination?” There are several things. First of all, a lack of proper study of the Bible would hinder God from enlightening one to His truth. An unwillingness to accept what God has said will also hinder one’s illumination. This was the problem of those addressed in Hebrews 5:11–14. It is “by reason of use [believers] have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (verse 14). This *use* is to come to the Word, study and believe the Word, then of course to put it into practice. This passage in Hebrews also speaks of going on from the milk of the Word to deeper things of God’s fuller revelation of truth. Dullness of hearing will most certainly keep us from pleasing the Lord and progressing in our understanding of Him and His Word.

Another thing that can hinder the illumination of the Spirit is carnality. Paul said:

*And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with solid food; for to this time ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able (1 Corinthians 3:1,2).*

Carnality is living in the flesh. Immaturity can lead to carnality, and carnality can keep one immature. Carnality is a terrible state for the saint of God. Not only will it displease our heavenly Father and bring sorrow to our lives, it can result in being
able to assimilate only the milk of the Word. We trust that the Lord will help us to occupy ourselves with the Word of God, to hear it, to obey it, and to walk in the Spirit, so that we will please Him and be able to grow in service and knowledge of the Word of God.

INTERPRETATION
For the final point of our study, we will look at interpretation.

*Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth* (2 Timothy 2:15).

We have addressed this verse many times, but now we are going to expand and define this principle. What does it mean to *rightly divide*? Without a doubt, this is the most important principle in interpreting the Bible. Rightly dividing (Greek, *straightly cutting*) at the very least means to recognize the dispensational divisions and distinctions that God has revealed in His Word.

Some say *rightly dividing* really means to accurately handle the Word of God. We heartily agree with this, but does that detract from our above definition? Can we accurately handle the Word of God without recognizing the dispensational distinctions between God’s past dealings with the nation Israel under the kingdom program and His present dealings with the world and the Body of Christ under the dispensation of grace? Can we say Peter and Paul preached the same gospel and ministered the same dispensational program and be accurate? To say we could would be folly indeed. Failure to handle God’s Word accurately with regard to His dispensational instructions will surely bring His disapproval.

We would, however, not exclude that to rightly divide God’s Word means to give diligence to know, believe, and be true to all of its principles—in the light of its dispensational teachings and distinctions.

It is not man but God who has established these differences and divisions in His Word, and He asks us simply to recognize them. There can be nothing but confusion if we ignore this.
All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable... (2 Timothy 3:16).

Keep in mind that Paul gave this verse to Timothy in light of 2 Timothy 2:15. Right division of the Word goes hand in hand with 2 Timothy 3:16. The Word is profitable when it is rightly divided.

Another way to address this is to realize that all the Bible is for us, but it is not all to us or about us. People usually accuse dispensationalists of cutting up the Bible, throwing part of it away, and only recognizing a certain portion. This is incorrect. We do not throw away part of the Bible. We recognize the profit in all of the Scriptures—for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. Right division is the key that unlocks the Bible, puts everything into proper perspective, and makes it understandable. We believe that all the Scriptures are for us but that they must be interpreted in the light of Paul’s Epistles. We accept all the Scriptures as for us, but we recognize that a specific portion of the Bible is to and about this program of grace for today. In Romans we read:

For whatever things were written in earlier times were written for our learning... (Romans 15:4).

And yet, in contrast to this we read:

For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office (Romans 11:13).

For this cause I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles—if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me toward you (Ephesians 3:1,2).

We recognize that all Scripture is for our learning, and yet it was the Pauline Epistles that were written to and about the Body of Christ. We believe the confusion existing in the professing church today is the result of failure to apply this principle of right division. Many wonder if the Pentecostal sign gifts are still in order. Many wonder if water baptism is still in God’s program for today. We realize through right division that neither of these is part of God’s program for us today. Some wonder if the church,
the Body of Christ, will have to go through the tribulation. Again, through right division we see that the answer is “No”!

When believers recognize the authority of the Pauline Epistles, the confusion on all these issues vanishes.

We believe the most important division in the Bible is not between the Old and New Testaments, but rather between prophecy and the mystery. The fundamental professing church makes three serious mistakes in Bible interpretation:

- They begin the Old Testament at Genesis 1.
- They begin the New Covenant at Matthew 1.
- They begin the church, the Body of Christ, at Acts 2.

All three are mistakes in right division.

The Old Testament did not begin until Exodus 24 when the blood that inaugurated the covenant was sprinkled. In like manner, the New Covenant did not begin until Matthew 27 when Christ’s blood was shed. Both of these covenants had to do essentially with prophecy and the nation Israel.

The church, the Body of Christ, did not begin until the salvation of Paul and is only revealed in Paul’s Epistles.

This mystery was not revealed until God had proven the nation Israel in unbelief along with the Gentiles. It was only then that He began the ministry of reconciliation to all men without distinction or preference.

People often ask, “How can I understand the Bible?” The answer is to recognize the principle of right division between prophecy and the mystery. This will help make the Bible understandable.

Prophecy is that program which God made known through the prophets concerning the blessing of the earth through the nation Israel and her established kingdom. This is an earthly program. Luke 1:67–75 points out clearly that this is a program which God made known by the mouth of all His prophets since the earth began. We understand that most of the Bible has to do with this earthly program. The entire Old Testament, the four
Gospels, the Book of Acts (chapters 1–8), and the general Epistles (Hebrews through Revelation) all have to do with this prophetic, earthly program. Prophecy involved:

- The blessing of all the earth, including the Gentiles, through Israel and her established kingdom (Isaiah 60:3; Daniel 2:44; Zechariah 8:20–23).
- The message was the gospel of the kingdom as preached by the Lord and His Apostles (Matthew 4:23; 10:7).
- As a demonstration of the kingdom power, the Pentecostal sign gifts followed those who believed (Mark 16:17,18)
- There were Twelve Apostles to sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 10:2; 19:28).
- Water baptism was required (Acts 2:38).
- The hope, of course, was the hope of the earthly, millennial kingdom (Genesis 15:18–21; Isaiah 9:6,7; Acts 1:6; Revelation 20:4).

On the contrary, the mystery or secret program has to do with God’s purpose for the heavenlies. This program was kept secret within God Himself. This program was hidden from all previous ages and generations until finally revealed to and through one man—the Apostle Paul (Ephesians 3:1–9)—and his Epistles alone. We suggest a comparison between Ephesians 3:1–9 and Luke 1:67–75 to see the distinction between these two programs. Under the mystery or secret program, God is building the church, the Body of Christ. This church is made up of both Jews and Gentiles reconciled to God by the cross. This church is to occupy not the earth but the heavenly places themselves. Under the mystery we find:

- The nation Israel has been temporarily set aside and now to be looked upon as individuals, i.e., as individual sinners, the same as the Gentiles (Romans 10:12; 11:25).
• The gospel is the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24).

• The blessings are all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies (Ephesians 1:3).

• There are no sign gifts (1 Corinthians 13:8–10; 2 Timothy 4:20).

• We have only one Apostle, the Apostle Paul (Romans 11:13).

• We have only one baptism, not with water but spiritual as expounded in 1 Corinthians 12:13 and Ephesians 4:5.

• There is one hope, the secret calling away of the Body of Christ, which we call the rapture (1 Corinthians 15:51; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18).

We pray this brief study will help us to better understand, appreciate, and profit from the most unique book in all the world, God’s precious Word—the Bible! We also pray that our knowledge of the Bible would never be just a collection of facts but rather truths that will deepen our relationship with God Himself—our Father—and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior.


2. Ibid.
Chapter 2
The Godhead

The study of God is the most profound study that one can undertake. Many have done this based on speculation and human reasoning, which has resulted in mere philosophy. We must remember, however, that only in the Bible do we find divine revelation of truth. The Bible is the only divine revelation of the Person, the works, and the programs of God. Therefore, it is only in its pages that we can study about God.

We will approach this study in three points:

• God and His manifestation
• The unity and tri-unity of God
• The attributes of God

GOD AND HIS MANIFESTATION

We read in Hebrews 11:

But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is... (Hebrews 11:6).

The word *is* in the Greek is the verb of being. “He that cometh to God must believe that He *is*...” God forthrightly declares His existence, and man must accept this by faith. The Scripture has only one word for those who deny God’s existence, and that is the word *fool*:

The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God (Psalms 14:1).

God’s existence is manifest both *externally* through the physical creation and *internally* through the written Word of God. In
Romans 1:20 we learn that the creation makes known God’s eternal power and Godhead or divinity. This external evidence can be categorized in three ways:

- The cosmological proof, that basically refers to the apparent order and structure of creation
- The teleological proof, that says the design and purpose fulness (or integration) in creation demands a designer
- The anthropological proof, which states that the existence of man and his ability to think and to make moral decisions is unexplainable apart from special creation

These external proofs are intended to send man to God’s Word to find the internal proofs.

The Bible does not begin by explaining the existence of God, but by simply presenting God as Creator!

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1).

Based upon not only the apparent design, structure, and complexity of creation, but further, based upon the Word of God, we absolutely reject the theory of evolution:

For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is… (Exodus 20:11).

Those who believe that time and chance could account for the creation are simply refusing to believe the obvious declaration of both creation and Scripture! Such people have actually made “chance” their god and “time” his magic wand. Who (according to evolution) decided that amebas should have eyes anyway? How does reproduction occur (according to evolution) when two must come together (and all the physical processes must be working perfectly) before there ever is a third? It is easy to see that only the Scriptural account of the Creation can account for “heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is…”

God’s Word simply and forthrightly declares that God exists and that He is a Spirit:

God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).
God is separate and distinct from the physical creation. This refutes pantheism which says that God is the creation. Though God is a Spirit, this does not mean that He does not have substance. His substance, however, is not physical. God’s Word teaches that God is spiritual in substance, that He has personality, and that He has morality. References to this are:

God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).

For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse (Romans 1:20).

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 (Hebrews 1:3).

But without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).

THE UNITY AND TRI-UNITY OF GOD
Before we look further into the attributes of the Godhead, let us examine the unity and triunity or trinity of God. The Bible expressly declares that God is one, and also that He is triune! We believe that there is one God eternally existing in three Persons. The majority of cults in existence today are a result of a failure to believe this doctrine. Either attacking God’s oneness or His tri-unity (thereby denying the Deity of Christ and the Holy Spirit), they fall into fundamental error and thus are reprobate, i.e., not really Christian.

The Godhead is manifest in three distinct Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
The Fatherhood of God

God is called the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in Ephesians 1:3. Speaking of the fatherhood of God, Lewis Sperry Chafer said in his book *Major Bible Themes*:

>Theologians ever since the first century have wrestled with a precise definition of how God is the Father of the Second Person [of the Trinity]. Obviously the terms “Father” and “Son” are used of God to describe the intimate relationship of the First and Second Persons without necessarily fulfilling all the aspects that would be true in a human relationship of father and son. This is especially evident in the fact that both the Father and the Son are eternal.

In all that this relationship means, it does not in any sense mean that Christ is God’s offspring or that He was created.

God is also called the Father of those who believed in Christ. Romans 8:15 and Ephesians 4:6 support this. One thing that God is never called in the Bible is the Father of all men. Men in any age have come into the family of God only by believing the gospel that was respectively directed to them.

The Bible does teach in Acts 17:29 that men are God’s offspring, but this refers to the fact that men are the creatures of God; they are under His control, but He is not their Father until they are saved into His spiritual family.

The Oneness of God

The oneness of God refutes the theory of polytheism, which states that there are many gods. God commanded the nation Israel:

*Thou shalt have no other gods before Me (Exodus 20:3).*

*Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord (Deuteronomy 6:4).*

*Thus saith the Lord, the King of Israel, and his redeemer, the Lord of hosts: I am the first, and I am the last, and beside Me there is no God (Isaiah 44:6).*

*I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside Me... (Isaiah 45:5).*
One New Testament verse that points out the oneness of God states:

*But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things... (1 Corinthians 8:6).*

From these Scriptures we conclude that the Word of God declares repeatedly the unity or oneness of God.

**The Trinity**

While the unity of God is plainly taught in the Old Testament, it is more implied in the New Testament. The Trinity, however, is plainly taught in the New Testament, while it is more implied in the Old Testament.

When we say that God is a trinity, we would like to state that we do not mean that there are three Gods, but rather one God manifest in three Persons. The Scriptures plainly teach not only the unity of God but also the trinity of God, and they clearly ascribe attributes of Deity to all three Persons of the Godhead. Thus, while it is impossible for the human mind to fully comprehend this truth, the Scriptures nevertheless declare it; and therefore we believe it!

In an interesting book by Nathan Wood, *The Trinity in the Universe* (formerly called *The Secret of the Universe*), it is pointed out that we can see the structure of the Trinity imprinted again and again in the universe. For instance, in time—past, present, and future; in space—length, breadth, and height; in matter—solid, liquid, and gas. Thus, we say that while the Trinity has no real parallel in human experience, because it is part of divine revelation we accept it.

While the word *trinity* is never found in the Bible, it is nonetheless plainly taught. In the Old Testament where it is clearly implied, we turn to Genesis 1:1. In the Hebrew language, like English, nouns have number, that is, singular and plural. In the Hebrew, however, number is expressed in singular for one, dual for two, and plural for three or more. In Genesis 1:1 the word *God* is the Hebrew word *Elohim*. This word has a plural ending (though it is used as a singular noun), suggesting the trin-
ity of the Godhead. This same truth is again brought out in Genesis:

*And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness… (Genesis 1:26).*

This relates that God created man after His own triune likeness. Thus, we believe that man also is a tripartite being—that is, spirit, soul, and body. There are several other references in the Old Testament where God refers to Himself in this way:

*Come, let us go down, and there confound their language… (Genesis 11:7).*

*Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us… (Isaiah 6:8).*

Isaiah’s great answer was, “Here am I; send me.” How wonderful it would be if God’s people today would have this same attitude! Our last reference in this regard is Ecclesiastes where Solomon wrote:

*Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth… (Ecclesiastes 12:1).*

The word *Creator* here is in the plural, again suggesting the Trinity.

Turning now to the New Testament, we must remember that although the word *trinity* is not found it is expressly taught. In Matthew 3 where the Lord Jesus was baptized by John, the narrative declares that all three members of the Godhead were present:

*And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water; and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased (Matthew 3:16,17).*

Here the sinless Son of God submitted to a sinner’s baptism under the Jewish kingdom program to fulfill all righteousness. Many in this dispensation teach that we must follow the Lord in
this baptism, but this was a baptism that the Lord alone could fulfill. Not only is water baptism not for this day of grace, but this baptism was where Christ was numbered with the transgressors. This was where He was identified with sinful man so that He might bear our sins—the just for the unjust. That is what is meant when the Bible says that it “fulfilled all righteousness,” by working out God’s righteous method of remitting our sins.

Next we read:

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

Once again the reader will note that the three Persons of the Godhead are mentioned together. Most take this passage to be a formula for water baptism today. This, however, is not the case. This passage is actually referring to Christ giving the Twelve Apostles the authority of the triune Godhead to water baptize under the kingdom program. Seeing that the Apostle of this dispensation said in 1 Corinthians 1:17 that Christ sent him not to baptize, we would deny that this verse in Matthew even applies to us today. Even when it did apply, however, it was *not* a formula!

In John, we read where the Lord Jesus said:

*And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth...* (John 14:16,17).

Then we read one of the Apostle Paul’s most famous benedictions where the triune Godhead was addressed for the blessing of the saints:


In Ephesians 1 we see that the three Persons of the Godhead are referred to in relation to the believer’s redemption. Notice in verse 4 that the purpose of the Father was to choose us in Him (that is, the Son) before the foundation of the world.
Then in verse 7 we have redemption through the Son (that is, His shed blood resulting in the forgiveness of sins), and finally, we have the seal and earnest of the Holy Spirit in verses 13 and 14. Thus, the whole work of man’s salvation is totally dependent upon God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Father purposes it, Christ performs it, and the Holy Spirit regenerates and seals it. All that is required of us is to believe the gospel, that the finished work of Christ paid our debt in full:

...Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:3,4).

Through faith alone in this truth God will justify any man freely through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Let us look at one more reference in regard to the Trinity. One of the glorious truths that we are exhorted to guard in this next passage is the truth of the Trinity:

*There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all (Ephesians 4:4–6).*

The sevenfold unity of the Spirit spoken of here concerns the spiritual truths that we are to guard in this dispensation of grace. The Trinity, however, is an integral part of this portion. In verse 4 there is one Spirit. In verse 5 there is one Lord. In verse 6 there is one God and Father. Thus, we can see that the Scriptures offer abundant proof that God is triune. As we stated earlier, many cults have begun because of a rejection of these very truths.

There are also several verses that relate to both the oneness and the trinity of God. They refer to more than one Person of the Godhead in the same work or as being equal.

*I, even I, am the Lord, and beside Me there is no Savior (Isaiah 43:11).*

These words are very strong and conclusive. From this passage the Jehovah’s Witness cult dares to take their name. In verse
10 the prophet says, “Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord…” The word Lord is the Hebrew word Jehovah. So they claim to be Jehovah’s witnesses, while at the same time boldly denying the Trinity and the Deity of Christ. All one must do is to make two simple comparisons using this passage to dispel all error. First, it says here that beside Jehovah, there is no Savior. In Matthew it is said of Mary:

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21).

Indeed, the name Jesus is a transliteration of the Hebrew word Joshua and means Jehovah is salvation (cf. Titus 2:13). The second comparison we can make is from Isaiah 43:

…before Me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after Me (Isaiah 43:10).

This verse can be compared with another in this same book:

Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign; Behold, the virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14).

Here the name Immanuel literally means God with us! How then do people deny that both the First and Second Persons of the Godhead are referred to as one and the same? This verse is even quoted in Matthew (1:23) to show that the Lord Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of prophecy. Also in this regard is a verse found in Isaiah:

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, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).

Here the Son, that is, the Lord Jesus Christ, is called “The Mighty God” and “The Everlasting Father”! Once again, the three Persons of the Godhead are one and the same.

Another area in which the Persons of the Godhead are named as co-equal is in the Creation.

In the beginning God created the heaven[s] and the earth (Genesis 1:1).
It also goes on to say that the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, but we compare this passage with a verse found in John. Speaking of the Son, John wrote:

All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made (John 1:3).

Thus, it is the Second Person of the Godhead who is referred to here as the Creator God! To verify this all we need to do is turn to Paul’s Epistle to the Colossians where, speaking of the Son, we read:

For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers—all things were created by Him, and for Him (Colossians 1:16).

Many of these verses relating to the Person and work of the Son will be dealt with more fully in our chapter, The Person of Christ. Suffice it for now to say that in Colossians 1:15 Christ is even called “the image of the invisible God.” This concurs with the Gospel of John where it says of the Son, who is called the Word of God, “that the Word was God.” This can be the only meaning of such verses as John 10:30, where it says, “I and My Father are one.” This does not just mean that They are one in purpose, but rather it means that They are one in Nature and Deity.

The Holy Spirit is not to be left out of this oneness, and so we offer a reference to the co-equality of the Person of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 5:3,4 Peter who is filled with the Holy Spirit actually calls the Holy Spirit God.

But Peter said, Ananias, why hast Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land? While 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 5:3,4).

In this passage Ananias and Sapphira (who we believe were unbelievers) were trying to join themselves to the group of believers who were practicing the Lord’s instructions concern-
ing the kingdom program. Part of the instructions of that program were those given by the Lord where He specifically said:

Sell what ye have, and give alms... (Luke 12:33).

In view of the coming millennial kingdom, which was being offered as at hand, they were to seek their treasure in this kingdom. So, here in Acts 4 we read that, in obedience to the Lord, they had all things common and with great power the Apostles gave witness of the resurrection. This was the miraculous demonstration of spiritual power which was also consistent with that kingdom program. Therefore, we read in Acts 4:34 that as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them and brought the prices of the things that were sold and laid them at the Apostles’ feet.

Distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. Those who would like to obey the baptism of that kingdom program, as instructed in Matthew 28:19, should take note that the Lord also said:

Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you... (Matthew 28:20).

These things in the early chapters of the Book of Acts were just as surely a part of the Lord’s instructions for that kingdom program as was water baptism. The simple truth is that we today are not under that kingdom program. These instructions along with that entire program have been set aside while God is dealing with the world according to a secret program, the dispensation of the grace of God.

In Acts we read:

But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land?...Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God (Acts 5:3,4).

These verses absolutely establish that the Holy Spirit is a co-equal member of the triune Godhead.

It is important to have these and other verses ready to defend this important scriptural doctrine against all who pervert the truth. We should mark well that we are not as the Unitarians
who, while holding to the oneness of God, deny the Trinity, and therefore, deny the Scriptures!

THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD
As we said earlier, the attributes of Deity are ascribed to all three Persons of the Godhead. By attributes we mean simply characteristics or qualities possessed by and, therefore, attributed to God that declare His Deity.

Two interesting words that relate to the Godhead are found in the Pauline Epistles. The two words, though from the same root, express two different aspects of the Godhead. The first word is found in Romans 1:20 where the word Godhead means divinity and has to do with the eternal power and works of God. The second word is found in Colossians 2:9 where the word Godhead means Deity and has to do with His Person. We should note that in Colossians 2:9 we read that the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily in Christ! And so the divinity, that is, the eternal power of God, and the Deity, or the Person of God, are clearly manifest respectively through creation and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The attributes of God, then, make Him distinctively and exclusively divine! The attributes of God can be broken down into two basic categories. These are the moral and the nonmoral. Another way to say this is the communicable and the noncommunicable attributes. By communicable we mean those attributes that can be given to His creatures. Noncommunicable, of course, would then be those attributes that cannot be transferred and are only possessed by God.

Of the nonmoral or noncommunicable attributes we would list these, that are sometimes generalized as the immensity and the immutability (the infiniteness and unchangeableness) of God:

- Omnipotent
- Omnipresent
- Omniscient
- Eternal
• Infinite
• Self-existent
• Self-sufficient
• Sovereign
• Immutable

The moral or communicable attributes that are possessed in their perfection only by God are:

• Holiness
• Righteousness
• Love
• Grace
• Mercy
• Faithfulness

The Names of God

We shall first look at the nonmoral attributes and recognize their scriptural support. It is interesting to recognize that the names of God in Scripture bear testimony to His attributes. The three principal names of God in the Old Testament are:

• Elohim
• Jehovah
• Adonai

The name *Elohim* means *the Strong One*, or *Almighty One*, and points to His omnipotence. It is this name that is used in connection with the Creation in Genesis 1:1.

The name *Jehovah* means the *Self-existent* and *Self-sufficient One* and would point to those attributes. We receive this definition from Exodus where God declared:

…I AM THAT I AM: and He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent Me unto you (Exodus 3:14).
This is also the name that is connected with God’s covenant and redemptive purpose for Israel.

Last is the name Adonai. This name means Lord and Master and signifies total ownership and control. Thus, the names of God point out many different aspects of His Deity.

God’s Nonmoral or Noncommunicable Attributes
Let us note some scriptural examples of God’s nonmoral attributes.

Omnipotence. Omnipotence means all-powerful and has to do with God’s almightiness. God spoke to Abram in Genesis:

…the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before Me, and be thou perfect (Genesis 17:1).

Later in the Book of Genesis, God spoke to Jacob:

…I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins (Genesis 35:11).

In this same regard in Exodus God said to Moses:

And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by My name JEHOVAH was I not known to them (Exodus 6:3).

In the New Testament the Lord Jesus attested to God’s almightiness in Matthew:

But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible (Matthew 19:26).

Romans teaches that the creation manifests God’s eternal power:

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… (Romans 1:20).

Ephesians also says:

And what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who
believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead… (Ephesians 1:19,20).

This great power is declared to be in us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power! This is not power for miracle working in this dispensation, but power to live a victorious, God-honoring, and fruitful life! This is borne out by another verse:

Now unto Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us (Ephesians 3:20).

Looking at the Lord Jesus Himself, in the Epistle to the Colossians, Paul wrote:

And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist (Colossians 1:17).

Verse 16 teaches that the Lord Jesus created all things, and verse 17 declares that by Him all things consist or are held together (this is not atoms and molecules held together, but as in the context, all power and authority are controlled and held in place by Him). These verses attest to the fact that the Lord Jesus and the Father equally possess the divine attribute of omnipotence!

Finally, in Revelation we read:

And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, and like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of mighty peals of thunder, saying, Hallelujah! For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth (Revelation 19:6).

As the Book of Revelation looks beyond this present dispensation of grace, we see God in His omnipotence bringing to a glorious fulfillment His program for the earth through the establishment of Israel’s kingdom.

Through Christ’s glorious reign, the blessings of this kingdom will overflow to the Gentiles, and finally the kingdom will proceed into the new earth.

One important rule to remember in regard to the terrible
events of the Book of Revelation is that the book is all future to this present dispensation of grace. None of the things in the Book of Revelation can happen today because the events are God’s dealings with the earth under the prophetic program. God’s administration for the day in which we live was a secret and will be completed with the rapture of the Body of Christ—before the events of the Book of Revelation can begin.

**Omnipresence.** Considering God’s omnipresence, we note first that the word means *all present* or *everywhere present*. This can be seen in the Psalms:

*Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in sheol, behold, Thou art there* (Psalm 139:7,8).

Proverbs further states:

*The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good* (Proverbs 15:3).

A corresponding verse is in Jeremiah:

*Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord* (Jeremiah 23:23,24).

Here are truths that the finite mind cannot comprehend, and yet by faith we accept the Scripture’s revelation. How can God be in all places at the same time? Or, how can the Holy Spirit indwell every believer at once and still be in heaven? Indeed, these are truths too wonderful for us, and yet the Scriptures declare them to be so!

**Omniscience.** Let us look next at the omniscience of God. Omniscience means *all knowing*; and as God is infinite in power, He is also infinite in wisdom and knowledge. Speaking of God, Psalm 147 says:

*He appointeth the number of the stars; He calleth them all by

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their names. Great is our Lord, and of great power; His understanding is infinite (Psalm 147:4,5).

God makes known His infinite ability:

Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like Me, 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 (Isaiah 46:9,10).

At the end of verse 11 we should also note that God concludes by saying:

…I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it (Isaiah 46:11).

How glorious is our God! He knows all and has an eternal purpose about which, because of His almighty power, He says, “I will do it.” How remarkable to realize that these attributes of wisdom and power are possessed by all three Persons of the Godhead. We read in 1 Corinthians 1:24 that Christ is the power and wisdom of God and again in Colossians 2:3 that in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge!

**Eternal.** Considering the eternal nature of God, Deuteronomy says:

The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms… (Deuteronomy 33:27).

We read further in the Psalms:

Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God (Psalm 90:2).

As we consider the triune Godhead in this regard, we note in Revelation that it says, speaking of the Lord Jesus:

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty (Revelation 1:8).

In light of these words can any deny the Deity of Christ?
Three more times in the Book of Revelation the Lord is referred to as “the Alpha and the Omega,” and in Revelation 21:3–7 this title is assigned to both God and the Son.

**Immutable.** The last of the nonmoral attributes we will consider is God’s *immutability*. Immutable simply means *unchanging* or *unchangeable*. The great testimony of the Word of God is that God never can change, that all of His attributes both moral and nonmoral are timeless and sure. Psalm 102 says of the earth and the heavens:

*They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall become old like a garment; like a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall be changed. But Thou art the same, and Thy years shall have no end* (Psalm 102:26,27).

Malachi also says:

*For I am the Lord, I change not…* (Malachi 3:6).

It is worthy of note that this very passage is quoted in Hebrews 1, where from verses 8 through 12 this and several other attributes are directed toward the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The immutability of God’s counsel and Word or oath are attested to in Hebrews 6:17,18. Another reference to God’s immutability is in James, where we read:

...*the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning* (James 1:17).

It is also in this exact regard that the Lord Jesus is referred to in Hebrews:

*Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever* (Hebrews 13:8).

He is immutable in His attributes.

**The Moral or Communicable Attributes of God**

God’s **holiness**. Though all of God’s attributes are equal in importance, if we were to view His attributes as the wheel of a wagon with its spokes and rim and hub, we would equate the
hub of the wheel with the holiness of God. The other attributes would fit in like the spokes of the wheel, but at the center we would find His holiness.

The word holy as belonging to God refers to His absolute purity. God is absolutely pure and totally separate from everything impure. The Bible is literally full of the holiness of God. Perhaps one of the best places to begin is in Isaiah, where the seraphim cry:

…Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts… (Isaiah 6:3).

This is also an obvious reference to the three Persons of the Godhead. Under the law in Leviticus, God commanded Israel:

…ye shall be holy; for I am holy… (Leviticus 11:44).

Of course, under the law man is not able to obey this command. However, under God’s grace believers are now able to live godly lives because of the Holy Spirit that indwells them. It is on the basis of this principle of spiritual life that Peter could say to his hearers, as he quoted from Leviticus 11:

But, as He who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of life, because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy (1 Peter 1:15,16).

It is important to note that for everyone who has trusted Christ in this dispensation of grace, Christ has been made unto us sanctification (or holiness), and this is the very holiness of God.

God’s righteousness. God’s righteousness is His rightness. In view of His holy character, all His judgments and actions are right. There is no unrighteousness in Him. The Apostle Paul said:

…Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid (Romans 9:14).

It is this truth that caused Abraham to say in Genesis:

…Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right (Genesis 18:25)?
The scriptural references to the righteousness of God are too numerous to mention, but we note that it says in the Psalms:

Righteous art Thou, O Lord, and upright are Thy judgments...Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and Thy law is the truth (Psalm 119:137,142).

And in Romans we read:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For in it is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, The just shall live by faith (Romans 1:16,17).

The great proclamation of Scripture in this dispensation is that God justifies or declares righteous the sinner who simply trusts Christ as Savior.

God manifested the principle that faith is the basis of imputed righteousness through Abraham and even earlier, but Abraham became the father or chief example of faith. We read in Romans:

For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness (Romans 4:3).

It is now, however, by the revelation given through Paul that we learn that the obtaining of the righteousness of God apart from the works of the law is manifested, as Paul declared in Romans, chapter 3:

But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is manifested...even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe... (Romans 3:21,22).

We should note also from this passage that in this method of forgiving sins, it says:

To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness, that He might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus (Romans 3:26).

God dealt righteously with sin and can, therefore, justly
declare righteous any man who will simply trust Christ. Salvation is the complete remission of sins and the obtaining of God’s righteousness by grace through faith, bringing about peace with God. Thus, it says in Romans:

*Therefore, being justified [or declared righteous] by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1).*

**The love of God.** The *love* of God is another attribute we will consider. In the First Epistle of John we read:

…*God is love* (1 John 4:8).

The word for *love* is *agape*, and this word speaks of an entirely divine love. It is the unending, consistent interest and condescending concern of a perfect God toward entirely undeserving sinners. It is that perfect quality of God that gives without having first received. This love is giving sacrificially of one’s self for the good of another.

We must keep in mind, however, that God’s love never contradicts His holiness or His righteousness. In love God provided a holy, righteous means by which sin could be forgiven, and in love this is offered to all men. However, if a man rejects the offer of God’s love, the holiness and righteousness of God demand that judgment must fall upon the sinner!

The Scriptures declare many times that the greatest manifestation of the love of God is Christ dying for our sins upon Calvary’s cross. We read of this in Romans, where it says:

*But God commendeth His love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us* (Romans 5:8).

**The grace of God.** The *grace* of God must also be considered in the study of His attributes. It is this attribute that marks out this secret dispensation in which we live. *Grace* simply means *undeserved or unmerited favor.*

In 1 Peter 5:10 God is called “the God of all grace,” and indeed His grace has been manifest from the beginning. Genesis 6:8 says that “Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” God told Moses, “I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious.” John
says that grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. These are all manifestations of the attribute of God’s grace, but mark well that there is only one dispensation of grace! We might put it this way: There has been grace in every dispensation, but there is only one dispensation of grace.

This is a secret dispensation that God made known only through Paul. God is building a trophy of His grace called the church, the Body of Christ. This church is made up of both Jews and Gentiles reconciled into one Body by the cross. This reconciliation is accomplished by God’s grace through faith in the finished work of Christ alone. Ephesians 3:1–12 is one of the primary passages on this subject. Part of the glory of this grace is that this Body will occupy the very heavenlies with God for all eternity!

The faithfulness of God. The final attribute we will discuss is the faithfulness of God. Faithful means worthy of complete trust. The Scriptures declare that this is one of the unchanging attributes of the triune Godhead. In Deuteronomy it says:

Know, therefore, that the Lord thy God, He is God, the faithful God… (Deuteronomy 7:9).

The Book of Lamentations also declares:

…His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness (Lamentations 3:22,23).

Paul declared this in 1 Corinthians 1:9, saying, “God is faithful,” and also in Hebrews 10:23, “…For He is faithful that promised.” It is the fidelity (or faithfulness) of God that makes all of His promises sure. Indeed, our very salvation is based upon the faithfulness of God to His Word! It is in this regard that the Apostle Paul said:

Even the righteousness of God which is by faith [or the faithfulness] of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe… (Romans 3:22).

The salvation that our faith in Christ obtains is because of His faithfulness!
Chapter 3
The Person of Christ

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is true God and true man in the same divine Person. The Lord Jesus Christ is the second Person of the triune Godhead and called the Son of God. The subject of the Person and work of Christ is one of the key doctrines we must understand and accept in order to be fundamentally and scripturally correct. Indeed, if we do not accept the biblical presentation of who Christ is and what He accomplished, there can be no biblical salvation!

We will approach the study of the Person and work of Christ in three points:

• Incarnation (begotten of the Holy Spirit)
• Deity (Son of God)
• Humanity and servitude (Son of man)

INCARNATION

The Scriptures teach that the Lord Jesus was begotten by the Holy Spirit, conceived and born of the virgin Mary. To examine this, we turn to Luke, where we read:

And the angel answered, and said unto her, The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God (Luke 1:35).

The corresponding verse is in Matthew 1, where it was declared to Joseph:

…fear not to take unto thee Mary, thy wife; for that which is con-
ceived in her is of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:20).

The word *conceived* here is the same word as *born* in Luke 1:35. Therefore, the Scriptures plainly state that which was born of Mary was of the Holy Spirit.

As to being a virgin, Luke 1:27 states that an angel was sent to a virgin (cf. Matthew 1:23). The Greek word here means *a virgin*, that is, a woman who had never intimately known a man. Mary herself bore this out in Luke 1, where she said:

…How shall this be, seeing I know not a man (Luke 1:34)?

The important conclusion to these verses is that the incarnation of our Lord was completely miraculous and divine. There was no male involved in begetting Christ. We believe the *incarnation* of our Lord is a good term because it implies going from one form to another. Scriptural truth is that the Lord Jesus existed eternally as God prior to the incarnation. He was ever the eternal Son of God.

But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting (Micah 5:2).

Isaiah 9 says that this child which would be born would be called:


We should understand that the Lord Jesus took upon Himself the form of a man while still retaining His Deity. He did not turn into a man, but as it says in Philippians 2, He had been in the *form of God* (the essence and personification of God), and it was in that state that He:

…made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men (Philippians 2:7).

Thus, He veiled His glory and Deity and enveloped Himself in human flesh, but never did He cease to be God! Indeed, in Matthew 1:23 it says that His name would be called *Immanuel,*
which means *God with us*!

In the human body that the Lord took upon Himself, He was perfect man and perfect God in the same blessed Person! Philippians 2 goes on to say:

> And, being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2:8).

And so we learn that the reason He was made in the likeness of men was that as man—sinless and perfect—He could bear the sins of the human race in His own body, thus becoming the sinner’s substitute and paying our debt in full. At His resurrection His body was raised and glorified, and He became the first fruits of resurrection to all who would believe in Him. He did all this that He might be the Redeemer of mankind.

Mark well, if He had not been fully God and fully man, He could not have been the Redeemer. This is true because only God is perfect and sinless, as it says in Matthew 19:

> …There is none good but one, that is, God… (Matthew 19:17).

Therefore, only He could be the perfect man who would be the perfect sacrifice for our sins. Only the Lord Jesus Christ could bear the sins of others. He also had to be a man that He might die for men. Through the work He accomplished, the Lord Jesus Christ became the eternal Redeemer. We are reminded of 2 Corinthians 5:21:

> For He hath made Him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

**DEITY**

Those who deny the Deity of Christ must face the reality that if their Jesus be not God, then they do not have a Savior, and they are yet in their sins!

Two things should be noticed in Luke 1:31–35. Mary was told that she would bring forth a son and would call his name JESUS. We should note here that the name *Jesus Christ* is what is called a *transliteration* from the Greek, and in the Greek the name would read *Iesou Christou*. 

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The actual meaning of the name in English is *Jehovah is salvation, the Anointed. Jesus* means *Jehovah is salvation*, and *Christ* means *the Anointed One or the Anointed King*. The word *son* in verse 31 tells of His human relationship to Joseph and Mary.

Verse 32 goes on to say that He would be called the Son of the Highest. Here the word *Son* has nothing to do with being the offspring of God but rather means the very Person, or the personification, of the Highest. In verse 35 it says that He would also be called the Son of God. Here again the word *Son* does not mean offspring but the personification of God. In other words, these are distinct references to His Deity!

The word *Son* has this usage many other times in the New Testament, but suffice it to say for now that this meaning is borne out by such passages as in John, where the Lord said:

…*He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father…* (John 14:9).

This is also borne out in Colossians:

*For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily* (Colossians 2:9).

We will deal further with this term a little later in the chapter.

In Luke 1:31–35 Jesus is declared to be Jehovah Savior, the Son of God, and it says that He, Jehovah, would save His people. In verses 32 and 33 He is declared to be the King who shall sit on the throne of His father, David, and of His kingdom there shall be no end. Here we have the basic good news or the gospel of the kingdom.

These were the truths that the nation Israel became responsible to believe in order to be saved. This good news of the kingdom was that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, and that His kingdom was being announced *at hand*. This is exactly what Peter confessed concerning our Lord:

…*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God…* (Matthew 16:16).

Here we do *not* see Christ presented as the Head of the
Body of Christ. The Body of Christ was still a secret in the mind of God. Here He is presented prophetically as the King of Israel.

At this point let us examine some of the terms in Scripture concerning our Lord—which many have misunderstood in relation to His incarnation.

The term only begotten is certainly one of these. In John we read:

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

Here, the Lord is called the only begotten of the Father, and in verse 18 He is called the only begotten Son. This term, though if literally translated would be only born, must be understood figuratively as a term of endearment. An exact correlation to this is in Matthew’s Gospel where, at the baptism of our Lord, the Father declared:

...This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased (Matthew 3:17).

In John 1:14 the sense is that the Lord Jesus, the Word of God, became a man and dwelt among men, and His glory was as of an only begotten or dearly beloved with a father. This is His unique relationship with the Father, as both divine and yet now among men in human form in the same Person.

This word begotten is used again of the Lord in Psalm 2, where it says:

...Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee (Psalm 2:7).

However, in Acts 13:33 the Holy Spirit Himself interprets this word to be a specific reference to the Lord’s resurrection. Therefore, terms can be and are used figuratively, and this term certainly is.

The next word that has been a stumbling block to many is the word firstborn. In Colossians, speaking of Christ, we read:

Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation (Colossians 1:15).
Here, we do not have a reference to the Lord being created (for He was not created), but rather this is a specific title concerning His place of priority and preeminence over all creation. Verses 16 and 17 offer commentary on this term by saying:

For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers—all things were created by Him, and for Him; And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist (Colossians 1:16,17).

By Him—who is the image of the invisible God—all things were created, and by Him and for Him all things consist!

The Lord Jesus could not have been created because as God He is the Creator. Everything that was created was created by Him! Firstborn—or Pre-eminent One—is His title in relation to His creation.

The Lord is also called the firstborn from the dead, and this has to do with His position or rank in resurrection.

Looking specifically at the Lord’s Deity, we have already mentioned the verse in Isaiah 7:14, where it says that a son would be given who would be named Immanuel (God with us). We have also looked at Isaiah 9:6, which says that this child would be called The Mighty God and The Everlasting Father.

Another verse we can use with confidence to show the Deity of Christ is in John’s Gospel:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (John 1:1).

This verse has been heavily attacked by many who do not accept the Deity of Christ, but their attacks are false and unfounded.

First, we should say that the King James Version of John 1:1 is a perfectly accurate and reliable translation of the original Greek. The Jehovah’s Witnesses have sought to discredit this rendering, but they are completely without support. They claim that the absence of the definite article the in front of the last word God in verse 1 dictates that it should be translated: “...and the word was a god.” Not only is this wrong grammatically, but
it would also make two Gods, which would violate such verses as in Isaiah 45, where it says:

...There is no God beside Me... (Isaiah 45:5).

The Greek word order ends once and for all any argument the Jehovah’s Witnesses might present. In the original Greek in the last phrase of John 1:1 the word God precedes the verb was, and so the phrase reads “and God was the Word.” With this word order God being the predicate nominative in preceding the verb can take no definite article, and it refers to the same God in the previous clause. Therefore, the King James Version is accurate and reliable. The verse proclaims that the Word—the Lord Jesus Christ—was God. This is borne out by verse 3, where it says:

All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made (John 1:3).

This tells us that He is the Creator—God!

Another place where Christ’s Deity is declared is in John 10. Here the Lord said:

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

Many try to explain this as meaning that the Lord meant one in purpose, but the action of the Jews in verses 31 and 33 gave the answer. There we read:

Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him... For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy; and because that thou being a man makest thyself God (John 10:31,33).

Here we should make no mistake; the Lord from the beginning laid claim to Deity. Some say the Lord corrected the Jews and said that He was only the Son of God. But examining further we see that what the Lord did was to reaffirm His claim by saying:

Say ye of Him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God (John 10:36)?
In verse 38 the Lord said that through His works they could know and believe:

\[\text{...that the Father is in me, and I in Him (John 10:38).}\]

The Lord used the term \textit{Son of God} to emphasize His words “I and the Father are one.” The Jews again clearly understood His final words:

\[\text{Therefore they sought again to take Him... (John 10:39).}\]

The simple truth is that Christ claimed to be God, and they did not believe Him!

At this point we should make clear the meaning of the term \textit{Son of God}. One of the definite meanings of the word \textit{son} in Scripture is that of \textit{personification}. For instance, in Mark 3:17 James and John are called the \textit{sons of thunder}. This does not mean that thunder was their father, but that they were thunderous in their personalities. In Acts 4:36 Joseph was surnamed the \textit{son of consolation}. This does not mean that consolation was his father but that Joseph was conciliatory in his character or personality.

In Ephesians 2:2 unbelievers are labeled the \textit{children} (or in the Greek, the \textit{sons}) of \textit{disobedience}. Again, this does not mean that disobedience is their father but that men before they are saved are the personifications of disobedience to a holy God. This is why all men need the Savior—because they are dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1).

This is exactly the usage of the word \textit{son} in the phrase “Son of God” and also in the phrase “Son of man,” as we shall soon see.

The clear meaning of this term \textit{Son of God} will also be demonstrated in the next verses we will examine.

In a remarkable passage in John 8 the Lord spoke to a group of Jews who were contending with Him, and He said to them:

\[\text{Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews to Him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am (John 8:56–58).}\]
The Lord Jesus claimed to be the I AM of Exodus 3. There can be no mistake of His claim here; even the Jews he was addressing clearly understood what He meant:

Then they took up stones to cast at Him… (John 8:59; also, see John 8:24).

The reason they were going to stone Him was that according to the law of Moses the Lord Jesus was blasphemying if He were not truly God, and He was claiming to be God. The problem is that the Jews did not believe Him.

The next passage we will consider is Philippians 2:5–11. In this overall context the Apostle Paul exhorted believers to put on the mind of Christ in their dealings with one another. This mind had to do with the humility and obedient service of Christ to the Father’s will. This was a humility and obedience that was exercised in spite of persecution, suffering, and finally death, which the Father had seen fit to allow in accomplishing His purpose.

The glory of this passage is that Christ placed Himself in this position and manifested this humility though He Himself is Almighty God. Thus, the Apostle said:

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God (Philippians 2:5,6).

Here in verse 6 the words who, being in the form of God tell us of Christ’s Deity. The word form in the Greek means the external or outward appearance by which something is made visible. Christ is literally the external appearance of God. That is precisely why the Lord did not try to rob that position (think it robbery) to be equal with God—He was God! He is the visible form—the very substance and fullness of God. How wonderful to realize that in this position He took upon Himself the form of a servant!

Christ veiled His glorious form with the form of a servant. He never ceased to be God, though during the time of His humiliation He appeared as a man.

His humility and obedience took Him all the way to the death of the cross, wherefore it says that God has also highly
exalted Him. This exaltation does not mean that He is now exalted as God for He had that position before Calvary. This exaltation is that He accomplished, by becoming a man and by way of Calvary, the redemption of sinful man. Now, as the Son of God, He also reigns as the glorified Son of man, the eternal Savior. Thus, in His exaltation as Savior, Philippians says:

Wherefore, God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name, That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow… (Philippians 2:9,10).

Here we must understand that the phrase at the name of Jesus means at the name which Jesus possesses. Of Jesus is really in the possessive case and speaks of the name that Jesus owns or possesses.

And that every tongue should confess [and here is the name He has been given] that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God, the Father (Philippians 2:11).

The name that He has been given that every tongue will confess is Jesus Christ the Lord. The lordship of Christ means that as the Savior He is Lord or God and should be addressed always with that title of respect. We (whom He has so wonderfully redeemed) who know Him as our personal Savior should be happy to acknowledge His Deity or lordship over us. In contrast, it seems that one of the marks of the cults and even of many who wrongly divide the Word of truth is the consistent misuse of the name Jesus. We should mark well that even during the Lord’s earthly ministry the Apostles never addressed the Lord by the name Jesus. The narrative does many times, but the Apostles always gave Him a title of respect. Indeed, He said to them:

Ye call me Master and Lord; and ye say well; for so I am (John 13:13).

We ought not to follow the world’s example of constantly referring to the name of His humiliation, blessed as it is. We who do know Him as Lord should always give Him the honor of His name and address Him and speak of Him as the Lord Jesus.
We recommend a book on this subject by Sir Robert Anderson, called *The Honor of His Name*.

In the Colossian Epistle we have a verse that is a perfect correlation to Philippians 2:6. Speaking of the Lord Jesus, it says:

*Who is the image of the invisible God… (Colossians 1:15).*

This literally means that He is the visible image of the invisible God! We must ask, “Can words be plainer?” Does this not explain what the Lord meant when He said, “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father?” Or, when He said, “I and the Father are one?” We should stand ready to defend our Lord’s Deity with these verses.

We have already discussed the term *firstborn of all creation* as a reference to His Deity and preeminence over all creation, and we want to recall from this passage that verse 16 declares the Lord Jesus is the Creator-God.

*For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Colossians 2:9).*

This verse complements our previous references by saying forthrightly that the fullness of Deity is resident in Christ. It is a joy to know that we who have trusted Him are “complete in Him” (Colossians 2:10)! Nothing can ever be added to our position in Christ for in Him we are the righteousness of God.

Many of the thoughts of these other verses are restated in the Hebrews Epistle:

*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 (Hebrews 1:3).*

Notice clearly the words *being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person.* Is this not saying the same thing as in Philippians and Colossians? Indeed, it is; these are all clear references to Christ’s Deity. Now the meaning of the title *Son of God* should be crystal clear; He is the personification—the visible image—of the invisible God!
The overall context of Hebrews 1 should be taken into account as we read such phrases as found in verse 4:

*Being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they (Hebrews 1:4).*

In light of verse 3 these terms mean that He as God and man by way of Calvary became the risen Lord and Christ of Israel. He has not been appointed God for He already was God, but He has been appointed heir to David’s throne, the rightful Messiah and Redeemer of Israel. He has been fully declared to be “the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16). Hebrews states this clearly:

*But unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore, God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows (Hebrews 1:8,9).*

This anointing above His fellows has to do with the man Christ Jesus upon His resurrection being anointed and vindicated as the King of Israel and Jehovah God in the same Person. No wonder that all the angels of God are to worship Him as God and Christ!

These verses reveal the Father speaking to the Son through the Scriptures and addressing many aspects of His Deity and worthiness to be worshipped. In verse 8 the Son is literally called *The God!* In verse 10 He is called the *Creator.* In verses 11 and 12 He is proclaimed as the *immutable or unchanging God.*

As the Epistle to the Hebrews opens, the Hebrew saints, to whom the letter is sent, are faced with the Son—the Christ of God—the One to whom they must take heed. They must consider their present dullness of hearing and their need to go on to perfection or maturity in obedience and understanding concerning their New Covenant relationship with Christ.

Next, we would like to present a summary of basic scriptural arguments defending Christ’s Deity. These can easily be thought of and conclusively used to show the truth on this subject.
There are several possibilities in this regard, but we suggest these five arguments:

- The Creator argument
- The Son argument
- The I AM argument
- The visible image and one God argument
- The Immanuel or incarnation argument

For the *Creator* argument, we suggest: Genesis 1:1; John 1:3,10; Colossians 1:16; and Hebrews 1:10.

For the *Son* argument: John 10:30,36; Mark 3:17; Romans 1:3,4; Ephesians 2:2; Colossians 2:9; and Hebrews 1:8.

For the *I AM* argument: John 8:58 and Exodus 3:14,15.

For the *visible image* argument: Isaiah 44:6; 45:5; Philippians 2:6; Colossians 1:15 and 2:9; Hebrews 1:3; and John 14:9.

For the *incarnation* argument: Matthew 1:21,23; Isaiah 7:14; 9:6; and also in this regard, the Lord Jesus and Jehovah are joined as the one Savior in Isaiah 43:11 and Matthew 1:21.

We should mention also that the Deity of Christ is attacked by those who say there are other beings in Scripture called both *sons of god* and *gods* and that these are created beings. For instance, it says in Genesis:

“...The sons of God came in unto the daughters of men... (Genesis 6:4).

It also says in Job:

Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them (Job 1:6).

From this it should be clear that angels are sometimes referred to as the *sons of God*. Nevertheless, in both cases the context clearly defines how this phrase is to be interpreted. We know that angels are created beings and have no claim to Deity, but on the other hand we know that the Lord Jesus is called “the fullness of the Godhead bodily” and “the visible image of the invisible God.”
In Hebrews 1 a clear distinction is made between the Son, who is the brightness of God’s glory and the express image of God’s person, and the angels who were created to be ministering spirits, who are commanded to worship the Son!

Such worship would indeed be blasphemy if Christ is not Jehovah God for only God is worthy of worship. In Exodus God said:

*For thou shalt worship no other god; for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God* (Exodus 34:14).

God also said in Isaiah:

*…My glory will I not give to another…* (Isaiah 42:8).

Another pertinent reference is 2 Corinthians 4:4, where Satan is called *the god of this world*. Here it is clear and obvious that Satan is the self-appointed god of this present evil age. He has tried to usurp the worship of men and angels away from God the Father, and through disobedience men have played into the hands of this wicked fallen angel. Nevertheless, the context again is clear as to exactly the proper interpretation of these terms. Indeed, if we continue reading the verse, it says:

*…the god of this age hath blinded the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them* (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Nowhere in Scripture is anyone ever referred to as a god or a son of god and denoted to have any form of Deity or equality with the Father except the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

**HUMANITY AND SERVITUDE**

Next, we address Christ’s title, the *Son of man*. Many have misunderstood not only this phrase but also this aspect of our Lord’s earthly ministry. This misunderstanding has led many to deny the Deity of Christ.

Our Lord’s favorite title of Himself was *the Son of man*. The Lord said:
The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head (Matthew 8:20).

As the Lord began to be rejected, He referred to Himself by this title more and more. As with the term Son of God, the term Son of man does not mean the offspring of man but the personification of man. He is the God-man, the perfect man, the man in whom was no sin.

Christ was fully God and possessed the nature of Deity to which was added a human nature. It was like our human nature in every respect except without sin. He had the nature of God and the nature of man. This does not mean that he became two different people, but that as God He now possessed a human nature and body, making Him both divine and human in the same Person. Contrast this, if you will, to the believer today. We are human in nature to which is added the new nature through the indwelling Holy Spirit. But this does not make us God. We are still human but now redeemed and given spiritual life. But Christ is God. He is Deity to whom was added human nature, and thus, in the same Person He is fully God and fully man.

It is as the Son of man (the very embodiment of perfection, He who was perfectly obedient to the Father’s will) that He will be the judge of men:

For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son (John 5:22).

As the Son of man He had a ministry to fulfill, and it was indeed a ministry of humility and suffering. This is one aspect of the work of Christ that many have had difficulty reconciling with His Deity.

Let us again begin with the truth of Philippians 2:6–8. The Lord Jesus, who was in the form of God, made Himself of no reputation and took upon Himself the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men.

Verse 8 continues:

And, being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. (Philippians 2:8).
Here, we see the Lord of glory from eternity past go through His humiliation and condescension and on to glorification as the man Christ Jesus. But now we must see that He also had to be a perfect servant to fulfill the Father’s will in providing not only redemption but also in being the perfect intercessor and helper of the believer in our human need. We learn from the Hebrews Epistle (concerning Christ’s high priestly work for Israel) that:

For we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15).

We must understand that this does not mean Christ can now sympathize with our sin—He does not. But He can be touched with the feeling of our infirmity, that is, our human frailties and weakness and our strivings in the path of obedience. The believer is exhorted to come boldly unto the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Continuing on:

Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered (Hebrews 5:8).

Some have thought that when Christ was on earth He did not feel sufferings like we do but was spared the pain of human existence. However, Hebrews 5:8 and other passages teach just the opposite. He felt even more keenly the same pain, sorrow, and infirmities as we! When He suffered on the cross, it was real; and the pain was real as He bore the judgment of God for our sins. Through His absolute sinless perfection, His suffering, and His perfect obedience, He became the perfect Savior—both as the sacrifice for our sins and as the intercessor for the saint in our human needs. How wonderful to think that the Lord of glory, Almighty God, would do all this for such sinners!

As we consider the perfect humanity and servitude of our Lord, we find ourselves faced with some remarkable limitations that He placed upon Himself. So perfect was His servitude and obedience that in John 14 He said:

…My Father is greater than I… (John 14:28).
Also, the Lord said:

*For I have not spoken of Myself; but the Father, who sent Me, He gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak* (John 12:49).

Again, we read in John:

*...I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father hath taught Me, I speak these things* (John 8:28).

Concerning His very knowledge, the Lord said:

*But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels who are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father* (Mark 13:32).

Christ voluntarily submitted Himself to the Father’s will:

*For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will but the will of Him that sent me* (John 6:38).

This will is plainly stated in Hebrews 10, where we read:

*Then said He, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second; By which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all* (Hebrews 10:9,10).

Yes, Christ was indeed the perfect servant. So perfect was His submission to the Father’s will that He was content, as a man, to not even know anything except what the Father had taught Him. But does this mean that He at any time ceased to be God? No, indeed, for we have seen too many other passages that teach the contrary. What our Lord did was to voluntarily humble and limit Himself as a servant—a perfect human servant—so that He might accomplish all the Father’s will in everything pertaining to our needs.

To draw our thoughts together, the Scriptures clearly present these three aspects of our Lord’s Person and work:

- His eternal Deity and equality with the Father
- His perfect voluntary humanity and service
- His glorification as the Redeemer, the man Christ Jesus
Those who would scoff at any of these aspects of the Lord’s Person would do well to consider the words of Thomas directed toward our Lord in John:

*And Thomas answered, and said unto Him, my Lord and my God (John 20:28).*

Finally, we are going to consider the many offices of our Lord in relation to the most important division in the Bible—prophecy and the mystery.

The most common three-fold division of the offices of Christ are:

- Prophet
- Priest
- King

While these offices are correct, it is important to remember that these are in relation to the prophetic program of God for the blessing of the earth through the nation Israel. The Book of Acts quotes Deuteronomy 18:18,19:

*...A prophet shall the Lord, your God, raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; Him shall ye hear in all things...And it shall come to pass that every soul, who will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people (Acts 3:22,23).*

Thus there can be no doubt that Christ was not only a prophet, but “that prophet.”

The Book of Hebrews points out again and again Christ’s high priesthood for Israel:

*Seeing, then, that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God... (Hebrews 4:14).*

And of course Luke 1:32,33 refers to Him as the One who would sit on the throne of David and be Israel’s King forever.

Christ’s present office, however, during this secret administration of grace is that of Head of the church, which is His Body.

*And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the*
head over all things to the church, Which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all (Ephesians 1:22,23).

From this we should gather two important facts. First, as the man Christ Jesus—the glorified Redeemer—He holds a place common to saints or believers of both programs. He is the basis of good news and the power of God unto salvation for all men. Christ is the foundation of all of God’s blessings to mankind, and the cross of Calvary is the only way of salvation for any man.

Second, the Scriptures present that Christ and His redemptive work can be preached according to two different programs. Luke 1:31–35,68–75 presents Christ according to prophecy, that is, a program that had been made known by the mouth of the prophets since the world began—that Christ is Israel’s Prophet, Priest, and King.

But Romans 16:25 presents Christ according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began. Under this program He is the Head of a secret church, which is the Body of Christ, made up of redeemed sinners whether Jews or Gentiles, reconciled through faith in the finished work of Christ alone.

Thus, the Lord Jesus Christ is the center of all God’s good news and the Lord and Savior of all the redeemed.

It can be stated that the Messiah of Israel is also the Head of the Body, that the King of the Jews is also the Lord of the Body of Christ. Nevertheless, there is a clear distinction to be made in the accurate preaching of Christ according to the right division of the Scripture. God clearly has a program for the earth which is centered in Christ and is the subject of prophecy. God also has a program for the heavenlies which is also centered in Christ and is the subject of the mystery. The first program was made known through the prophets, but the mystery was made known only through Paul.

Christ has one office common to both programs, and that is the office of Savior and Lord.

As Savior we primarily mean He who by means of His substitutionary, sacrificial death, burial, and resurrection redeemed
us from our sins and made possible our justification before a 
Holy God. This work Christ performed is directly applied to all 
who express faith in God’s revealed truth for their given dispen-
sation.

The fullness of this truth is revealed in the Pauline Epistles 
and is borne out in progressive revelation in the prophetic 
Scriptures. Acts 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:5,6; and Titus 2:13,14 are a 
few of the many references we might list.

Concerning the designation Lord [Greek, kurios] in the title 
the Lord Jesus Christ, we should note that the word Lord directly 
signifies His Deity and is equivalent to the word God.

A. T. Robertson in his Word Pictures in the New Testament, 
Volume 4, page 167, says, “The term kurios [Lord], as we have 
seen, is common in the LXX [Septuagint] for God.”

Sir Robert Anderson states it this way, “…we must remem-
ber that throughout the Septuagint [Greek] version of the Old 
Testament, upon which the language of the New Testament is 
formed, the same word (kurios) is used in every instance as the 
Greek equivalent of ‘Jehovah’ in the Hebrew Bible” (The Honour 
of His Name, pages 6,7).

The numerous verses we have examined that show Him to 
be God should be proof enough, but remember that in 
Philippians 2:10 it said that at the name Christ owns (Jesus Christ, 
the Lord) every knee shall bow and every tongue will confess 
Him as Lord to the glory of the Father. Also, remember 
Thomas’s confession in John 20:28, “My Lord and my God.”

Recognition of Him as Lord is also a necessity in salvation, 
for it says in Romans:

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus [or Jesus 
is Lord], and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised 
Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved (Romans 10:9; also, see 
1 Corinthians 8:6; 12:3; and Ephesians 4:4–6).

May we who have confessed Him as Lord and have been 
saved by His grace proclaim Him as such to others in our words 
and in our walk. May we yield to Him as the Lord of our lives 
and always seek both in word and in deed to give Him the honor 
due His name!
Chapter 4
Depravity

If there is any subject that can cause the gospel of grace to shine forth in all its glory, it is this one! Indeed, without an understanding and acceptance of this truth the human heart is unable to appreciate the gospel at all.

For this reason it is imperative that we fully understand God’s Word concerning man’s condition, that we might with boldness and clarity present men with the truth of their great need and then God’s marvelous provision.

Depravity is a word not found in the Bible, though the truth of it is found throughout its pages. We can safely say that depravity is a transdispensational issue; that is, men of all ages share in this condition.

A dictionary definition of depravity would be: the condition of being morally bad, corrupt, and perverted. The Scriptures confirm this definition while adding considerably more depth.

In Ephesians we have a clear presentation of what depravity is:

And you hath He made alive who were dead in trespasses and sins; In which 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 sons of disobedience; Among whom also we all had our manner of life 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 (Ephesians 2:1–3).

These verses tell us several things. Before salvation we were
dead in trespasses and sins. In that condition we were called the
children (in the Greek, sons = personifications) of disobedience, and we
were by nature children of wrath. Thus, man’s depravity has to do
with his sin nature, that is, his condition of being dead in sin.
Man is unable in and of himself to do any works pleasing to
God. We need to note what verse 1 means by dead in trespasses
and sins. The word dead in Scripture does not mean cease to exist
or annihilated, but rather it has the idea of separation. Colossians
offers a perfect commentary on this word dead:

And you, that were once alienated and enemies in your mind by
wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled (Colossians 1:21).

Here, the word alienated has the same meaning as dead. We
were spiritually separated or alienated from God’s life and bless-
ing because of our wicked works or our sin nature. This is the
state of every unsaved man—spiritually dead or separated from
a holy God. Ephesians 2:2 tells us that in this condition we were
the children or sons of disobedience. We have already discussed
this word sons and how often it means the personification of. Here
it tells us that our very nature was personified or characterized
by disobedience to God. Verse 3 says that we were by nature
children of wrath. This was our human nature—a sin nature—
which resulted in our being deserving of and headed toward the
wrath of God.

Even a small baby manifests a sin nature. We all know that
you do not have to teach a child to lie or to disobey. It is part of
their depraved nature to do these things naturally. The fact is
that we must teach them to do what is right. Right things require
training and discipline, not wrong things. We do what is wrong
instinctively because of our sin nature.

God’s only requirement is that we admit we are sinful and,
therefore, totally condemned. We should trust Christ as our
Savior and Lord, believing that He died for our sins, was buried,
and arose again the third day according to the Scriptures.

By completely trusting Him for salvation, we pass from
death to life. One might ask if a depraved man is able to believe
the gospel in light of such verses as:
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 (1 Corinthians 2:14).

The answer is that the natural man does not receive revelation from God—that is the context of this verse. Imagine a natural man without the instrumentality of the Spirit of God receiving and explaining the mystery! But can the natural man be confronted with the gospel and understand his lost condition and his need of Christ? We will let the Scripture speak in answer:

…The word is near thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith which we preach: That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed (Romans 10:8–11).

These verses say nothing about man being unable to understand. What they do say is that with the heart man (and that is the natural man) believes unto righteousness. They further say nothing about not being able to believe. Rather, verse 17 says simply that “faith cometh by hearing [or as in the Greek, faith is by hearing, which literally means faith can be expressed upon hearing] and hearing by the Word of God.”

But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above); Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). But what saith it? The word is near thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith, which we preach (Romans 10:6–8).

If we follow Paul’s reasoning in verses 6–8, the salvation of God and its offer should not be turned into an issue of our ability to respond but to the response itself. Paul shows that the issue is not one of hypothetical or stubborn questions but of believing what God says. It is unwise in light of this and other Scriptures to question man’s ability to respond.
Man’s depravity totally eliminates any thought that there is a spark of good in man. Human philosophy reasons that a little of God resides in every man—that little spark of good which only has to be fanned into a blazing fire of love! But the Scriptures answer these human reasonings in Proverbs:

*There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death* (Proverbs 14:12).

Paul said in Romans:

*For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing…* (Romans 7:18).

Jeremiah said:

*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it* (Jeremiah 17:9)?

Romans goes on to say:

*…There is none righteous, no, not one* (Romans 3:10).

By depravity we do not mean to imply that every man is a slave to every known despicable sin or that man is incapable of certain acts of human goodness. We know that man in his religious zeal can refrain from many outward appearances of sin and be very philanthropic.

But depravity means that all men, regardless of how outwardly good, are separated from God and enemies in their minds by wicked works (because of the sin nature) and are unable to save themselves from this sinful condition.

This condition (dead in sins) does not mean that men are too dead to respond in faith to God’s Word. While Romans 3:11 says there is none that seeks after God, this does not mean that man is incapable of the response of faith when God reaches out to him with the gospel. Romans 10:6–13 has given us proof of this.

Faith is not a mysterious thing, and it is not an entity. It is not a *thing* at all; it is a *response*! It is not even a good work; it is a response to either truth or error.
Therefore, the expression of faith does not conflict with God’s Word, which says:

...there is none that doeth good, no, not one (Romans 3:12).

As depravity is absolute, so the means of salvation from sin is absolute! It comes solely by the grace of God through faith apart from works! How glorious to read in Ephesians 2 that whereas we were the children of wrath:

But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love with which He loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath made us alive together with Christ (by grace are ye saved) (Ephesians 2:4,5).

Verses 8 and 9 continue:

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves [that salvation is not of yourselves], it [salvation] is the gift of God—[salvation is] Not of works, lest any man should boast (Ephesians 2:8,9).

Verse 10 then offers us the glorious summation:

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:10).

And so by faith, which is man’s response to the Word of God, man is reconciled to God by His grace on the basis of the finished work of Christ on Calvary.

This is why we say again that before man can appreciate the gospel of grace, he must understand the blackness of his sin in which he is helplessly dead or totally alienated from a holy and righteous God. Man must also understand the consequences of that condition.

The four categories we will address in the remaining portion of our study on depravity are:

- Its scope
- Its character
- Its consequences
- Its remedy
THE SCOPE OF DEPRAVITY

Concerning the scope of depravity we will go to Romans 5, where it says:

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

Here we learn that the scope of depravity is universal. Every man born of Adam has a sin nature. The verse just quoted bears this out. When Adam sinned, he plummeted the whole human race into sin because his whole nature was changed as a result of the Fall.

Genesis records the account of the Fall, that resulted in our first parents being cursed by God and bound by a nature of sin. It was after this that they came together and began to bear children. Thus, by one man sin entered into the world, and this word *sin* means sin that resulted in a sin nature. Verse 12 tells us that death (the curse and consequence of sin) came by sin, and so death passed upon all men for all have sinned or manifested a sin nature.

We should note here that men do not become sinners by sinning, but they sin because they have a sin nature. The proof of this is that from the beginning—from Adam on—men have died. This is why Paul said:

*For until the law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law* (Romans 5:13).

Sin was present in all men before the law. Verse 14 says:

*…Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses…* (Romans 5:14).

Thus all men from Adam to Moses had a sin nature and died because of it. Death reigned:

*…even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression…* (Romans 5:14).

Even those who did not copy Adam’s sin by disobeying a direct command manifested that they had a sin nature and, therefore, they died.
It is interesting to note as we go on in this context that the universal scope of sin is contrasted with the universal offer of the provision of grace. We will return here later when we deal with our final point, the remedy for depravity.

Before we go on, notice that the law is brought up twice in this context. Is Paul saying that the law was added that a man might have a way out, a way to please God? No, indeed, for Scripture goes on to say:

Moreover, the law entered, that the offense might abound… (Romans 5:20).

The law was given to manifest the awfulness of sin, to make crystal clear to man his sinful condition. Galatians 3:24 says the law was a schoolmaster or a tutor—until Christ!

Never has there been a way outside of the grace of God for man to overcome his sinful nature. In himself man is utterly helpless, and this is precisely what the law was given to show.

There are many other verses that verify the universal scope of the sin nature. Romans 3:9–20 offers a complete listing of the character of the sin nature common to all men:

...for we have before proved both Jews and Greeks, that they are all under sin (Romans 3:9).

Romans 3 goes on to say:

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

Thus, sin is completely universal. This condition would answer to the human nature received from Adam. In Romans 7:14 Paul also called it the carnal or fleshy nature and told that this nature was “sold under sin.” Paul even referred to this as a law in Romans 7, where he said:

I find then a law [or a fixed principle], that, when I would do good, evil is present with me (Romans 7:21).

Again Paul said:

But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members (Romans 7:23).
This law is that the flesh is sold under or completely controlled by the nature of sin. No wonder Paul cried out in verses 24 and 25:

Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord. So, then, with the mind [or the new nature] I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh [that is the fleshy or carnal nature], the law of sin (Romans 7:24,25).

Only the believer is free to choose not to sin, though we still do possess the sin nature. We have the indwelling Holy Spirit and a new nature that can live a consistent life honoring the Lord. Sin’s power has been broken, and we no longer have to sin. This we must accept and appropriate by faith. Indeed, on the basis of this we are exhorted by the Spirit’s power to reckon the flesh dead to sin and to live as instruments of righteousness.

THE CHARACTER OF DEPRAVITY
Next we will look at the character of sin. For a definition of sin we read:

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

One of the most common Greek words in the New Testament that is translated sin is hamartia (which means to miss the mark). This verse is saying all have missed the mark of the holiness and perfection of God. Ecclesiastes says:

For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not (Ecclesiastes 7:20).

No man has the ability to please God or attain to His perfect righteous standard. Do not forget—nothing less will do; only perfect righteousness can meet God’s standard. This is why Romans 3:23 says that we have come short of the glory of God. The glory of God is the radiance of His absolute perfection in all of His attributes. The Lord Jesus Christ manifested the glory of God in His earthly life, and no man is able to compare his
righteousness to the righteousness of Christ! No wonder God says we have missed the mark and come short!

Another verse that defines sin is 1 John 5:17, where it says:

*All unrighteousness is sin*…

The righteousness of God (the rightness of God) is the standard. This rightness of God is made known in all His right actions and judgments that are a result of His perfection and holiness. Our actions and thoughts are not right because of our sin nature, and therefore, we sin or miss the mark. In verse 18 John said something that has caused difficulty for many:

*We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not*… *(1 John 5:18).*

When interpreting this verse, it is imperative that we keep in mind both the dispensational and the immediate context. The last part of verse 16 says that there is a *sin unto death.* This sin concerns the future time of the tribulation age and cannot be committed today in the dispensation of grace. It seems likely that this sin is receiving the mark of the beast. In that age, if a man sees a brother—a fellow Jew—commit such a sin, he was not to pray for him. But John said of the believer in that day:

*We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not [and that would be sinneth not unto death], but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one touches him not* *(1 John 5:18).*

But considering again the unrighteousness of man, God has given man a comparative standard with which to judge himself; it is the law of Moses centered in the Ten Commandments. Concerning this aspect of sin, 1 John says:

*Whosoever committeth sin [or really practices sin] transgresseth also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law* *(1 John 3:4).*

The Greek says that sin is *lawlessness.* The sin nature is rebellious to God and His Word. Thus it follows that man is disobedient to the law of God. Man is incapable of obeying and is openly rebellious to God's law. The issue here is not whether a
man can occasionally keep some of the commandments. Because the nature of man is lawless and sinful, he is not even qualified to approach the law. That is why in the Old Testament the law was kept in an ark (the word really means a box or coffin) that was covered by a mercy seat sprinkled with blood.

Therefore, the Apostle Paul said in Romans:

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither, indeed, can be (Romans 8:7).

Men who think they are keeping the law are really at best only outwardly keeping certain commands, and even those are self-righteous and sinful efforts to rebel against God. John again appeared to speak of sinlessness when he mentioned in 1 John that:

Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not… He that committeth sin is of the devil… Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin… (1 John 3:6–9).

Keep in mind that the context of these verses is in the area of lawlessness. Verse 4 says that whosoever commits or practices sin practices lawlessness. This has to do with the habitual control of the sin nature. Therefore, John was saying that whoever abided in Christ sinned not or was not controlled by the lawless sin nature. Verse 9, therefore, is also saying that whoever is born of God does not commit sin or habitually practice lawlessness under the control of the old nature.

Another way sin is labeled in the Bible is selfishness. In 2 Timothy 3 one of the things that characterizes the sins listed is selfishness. There we read in verse 2 that men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud. It is this selfishness that resulted in the pride which caused Satan to fall. Our original parents sinned by disobeying God and selfishness and pride became part of their fallen nature as a result. Thus, it is one of the distinguishing features of the sin nature. It is significant to note that in 2 Corinthians this characteristic of sin has been gloriously overcome in Christ:

And that He died for all, that they who live should not henceforth
live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them, and rose again (2 Corinthians 5:15).

Before salvation man’s entire existence is a selfish desire to please the flesh. Everything man does comes from a heart that seeks self-pleasure, self-honor, self-gratification, self-glory. But now we are no longer bound to the selfish sin nature. We can live unto Him, our glorious Lord, and by the power of the Spirit walk in His glorious divine will instead of our human selfish will.

To review then, sin has been defined as missing the mark (and that would be the mark of God’s holiness and righteousness), then unrighteousness, next lawlessness, and finally selfishness.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF DEPRAVITY

The consequence of sin (depravity) is death. We have already seen a number of verses that have mentioned this principle, but in the Book of Genesis God said to Adam:

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die (Genesis 2:16,17).

In the Hebrew the last part of verse 17 reads, “Dying thou shalt die.” How long it was before this command was broken, we do not actually know; but it certainly was not long. At the close of chapter 1 we read that Adam and Eve were created on the sixth day, which completed God’s work in the Creation. It is very possible that immediately after the creation week Satan entered the garden and beguiled Eve. Nevertheless, chapter 3 records Satan’s lie and the fall of man into sin:

And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die (Genesis 3:4).

And verse 6 continues:

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat (Genesis 3:6).
The next thing we read is of God’s confrontation with the three involved and the subsequent curses upon each. Verses 17 through 19 record the awesome words of God upon man and all creation:

And unto Adam He said, Because thou hast harkened 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).

And so, after this curse the entire universe was changed. A process known as entropy or the decay and decline of all systems began. Paul referred to this very thing in Romans 8, where he said:

For the creation was made subject to vanity [or emptiness], not willingly but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now (Romans 8:20–22).

God did not willingly (that is, wantingly) subject the creation to the curse of death; but because of sin He cursed the creation and then subjected the same in hope—that is, the redemptive purpose He had centered in Christ. So man has been taught from the beginning that he is a dying, cursed creature and that he must look outside of the creation for God’s help. Yet man in his sin and rebellion has turned to himself and the objects of creation for refuge.

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin… (Romans 5:12).

Sin and death, in this sense, are referred to as a law in Romans 8:
For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2).

That sin always works death is a law or a fixed principle, and yet as this verse says the opposing law or principle of the Spirit is that of life in Christ Jesus. Just as confidently as we know that sin and death are in control of the natural man, so we know that for those who trust Christ as Saviour sin’s power has been broken and they possess eternal life through the regeneration of the Spirit. There are many verses that reestablish this truth of sin and its consequence of death:

*...the soul that sinneth, it shall die (Ezekiel 18:4).*

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

*...and sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death (James 1:15).*

We have already briefly discussed that death in Scripture is not cessation or extinguishment but separation. There are three different kinds of death presented in Scripture. All three are the direct result of sin.

First, is physical death. This is the separation of the soul and spirit from the body. The soul and spirit of man never cease to exist but can be separated from the body. Thus when God told Adam that he would return to dust, He meant his body would return to the ground. This state of the body is many times referred to in Scripture as sleep. However, at this separation the spirit returns to God for His disposition, as it says in Ecclesiastes 12:7.

Resurrection, then, is the reuniting of the soul and spirit with the changed body; and whether saved or lost, all men will have a resurrection.

The next kind of death that Scripture presents is spiritual death. In keeping with our definition of separation, this death is the separation of the spirit from the life, blessing, and fellowship of God. When Adam sinned, he immediately suffered both of these deaths. Dying spiritually, he began to die physically. This spiritual separation does not mean that the spirit is not active or irresponsive, but rather that it is alienated from and at
enmity with God. In this condition the spirit is totally unable to produce anything pleasing to God but brings forth only the fruit of sin.

Mark 7:21 says that out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornication, and murders. Because of man’s sinful, separated spiritual condition, he is only able to produce sinful fruit. This condition has the potential of being an eternal one if a man dies physically in his sins while spiritually separated from God.

This brings us to the last kind of death mentioned in Scripture, which is the second death:

*And death and hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death (Revelation 20:14).*

This death is the final separation of the lost (body, soul, and spirit) from God in the lake of fire. This death is irreversible, eternal, and will be upon all those who through rejection of God’s grace die in their sins. The Lord Jesus told the Jews:

*…if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins (John 8:24).*

All the people who appear at the great white throne of Revelation 20 will be those who have not received the forgiveness of sins. They will have died physically while still sinful and separated from God, and they are therefore doomed to be eternally separated in judgment from a holy and a loving God.

Some will ask, “How could a God of love do this to His creatures?” The answer is that God in love spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all (Romans 8:32). In love He offers salvation to anyone who will simply trust Christ as Savior and Lord. With provision so full and free, any who choose to remain in their sins and shun the grace of God will have to suffer the righteous judgment of God. He cannot overlook sin and cannot allow anything sinful to inherit heaven’s glory but will ultimately separate eternally in judgment all sin from Himself and His entire domain.

We want to make it clear that this law of sin and death is functioning in all men. Salvation occurs the moment we trust
Christ. At that point Christ’s death becomes our death, and we are raised and seated with Him in the heavenlies. In the Person of Christ the believer has died to sin, borne the judgment of God, and is spiritually alive. Someone once said, “If you are only born once, you will die twice; but if you are born twice, you’ll only die once.” To the latter we would add, “…if the Lord tarry, otherwise you will not die at all!”

The principle of sin and death still works in the believer’s life, both in the sense that we are still dying physically and in the sense that we still have the old fleshy nature with us. Though we now have a new spiritual nature within, we can still choose to sin. It is this fact that causes the Lord to repeatedly warn us to reckon ourselves to be dead indeed to sin but alive unto God and to mortify or put to death our members upon the earth.

Though, as in Romans 8:2, we are free from that law of sin and death (both as concerns the condition of our souls and sin’s dominion over the flesh), yet we must remember that the carnal mind is at enmity with God; that is true even in the believer’s life. They that are in the flesh cannot please God, as it says in Romans 8:7,8.

So then, these verses (in one aspect) have to do with the saved and their need to choose not to sin because of sin’s deadly results. Romans goes on to say in this regard:

> 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 (Romans 8:13).

This does not mean that a believer who sins will lose his salvation; that is impossible. But this has to do with reaping the results of sin in the flesh—that law of sin and death—in both physical consequences and the displeasure of our Heavenly Father (which results in Him not being able to use us to the extent that He would desire).

We might well classify the condition of a believer living in sin as yet a fourth kind of death, for in that state he is dead as to serving God with His blessing. Much in this same regard, Paul addresses the believing widow who lives in pleasure as being “dead while she liveth” (1 Timothy 5:6).
We who have been saved from the second death and who have been saved from the power of sin should, indeed, walk in that newness of life that we have in Christ! Concerning the unsaved, how very important it is for us who know the truth about sin and death to consider their plight and peril.

Let us review the three kinds of death. First, there is physical death:

*And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment (Hebrews 9:27).*

This is an appointment that no unsaved man is going to miss:

*And as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive (1 Corinthians 15:22).*

Second, the unsaved are spiritually dead:

*And you hath He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1).*

Third, the unsaved face the second death:

*And death and hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death (Revelation 20:14).*

May this knowledge of man’s depravity and its consequences touch our hearts and move us to proclaim the remedy while there is yet time.

**THE REMEDY FOR DEPRAVITY**

This brings us to the last point of our study—the remedy for depravity.

We have already touched on several aspects of the remedy and looked at the scope, nature, and consequence of sin. We would also like to consider the scope, nature, and consequence of grace. Turning back to Romans 5, we read in verses 12–14 of how through one man sin and death entered the world and passed unto all men. But verse 15 goes on to say, really by asking a question (as in the sense of the Greek), “*But shall not as the*
offense, so also be the gift?” The answer comes by way of one of Paul’s famous “much mores.” Paul said:

…For if through the offense of one many are dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many (Romans 5:15).

Death has come unto many; much more, God’s grace has abounded to many! How wonderful to consider that though the sin of Adam has had such far-reaching and devastating effects, God in His grace has far and above provided the remedy for every single man affected by the Fall.

It is much more in every way. Adam’s sin brought sorrow and pain to all, but God’s remedy brings forgiveness and joy to all who come under its provision. In verse 15 Paul gave the scope of grace; in verse 16 he gave the consequence or effect. Paul continued:

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 offenses unto justification (Romans 5:16).

By one sin many were condemned, so by the gift of grace those many offenses are turned to justification. Condemnation is turned to justification—indeed, this is much more than man could have asked for or deserved.

Next, we consider the nature of grace.

For if by one man’s offense death reigned by one, much more they who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ (Romans 5:17).

What is the nature of grace? Five times in Romans 5:15–17 Paul uses the term gift or free gift to define what God in grace has offered to those who simply receive it.

Sin and death passed upon all and reigned by one—one man and one sin. But they who receive the grace of God by believing His message of grace and trusting Christ shall reign in life by one—Christ! Could God have made salvation any more accessible? How can man shun God’s gracious offer? He does not ask for a single work; indeed, man is not allowed to work
because that would imply that man has some amount of moral righteousness, which he does not. God has made the gift of salvation accessible only by grace through faith—which the Scripture says is the opposite of works.

Just as all men are born dead in sins, all men have the opportunity and ability to receive what grace affords. They have the opportunity because God provided it by His grace through the finished work of Christ. They have the ability because God has eliminated works and made the provision completely based upon man’s faith (his response or his receiving of the offer).

*Therefore, as by the offense 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* (Romans 5:18).

Paul draws all these thoughts to a conclusion. He says that the offense of one was upon all to condemnation; even so the righteousness of one is upon all to justification of life. Again, all that is necessary is that men receive this abundant offer.

*For as by one man’s Adam’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one Christ shall many be made righteous* (Romans 5:19).

Again, it is the many who partake of the gift of grace. Verses 20 and 21 describe what we might call the *super-abounding victory of grace.* Paul adds the thought that the law entered that the offense might abound, that is, so the depravity of man would appear in all its awfulness. However, here we learn something a bit dispensational about depravity.

Paul says that where sin abounded grace did much more abound (Greek = superabound)! God progressively concluded man in unbelief—first without the law, where the Gentiles were proven in sin and disobedience. Then the chosen nation (Israel) under the law was brought under the condemnation of sin and disobedience, so that God could justly say that sin had now abounded.

But *when* did sin abound; that is, at what point historically and dispensationally did sin abound under the law? The answer can be none other than when Stephen, in a Spirit-filled rebuke of the favored nation, said:
Who have received the law by the disposition [or the dispensation] of angels, and have not kept it (Acts 7:53).

In the succeeding verses we learn of the third and final rejection of the nation Israel (God’s covenant people) as they stoned to death God’s spokesman. Here, indeed, is where, under the law, sin abounded. What will God do now? The depravity of man is fully manifested; Gentiles and Jews are all under sin. This was what Paul referred to when he said:

Moreover, the law entered, that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound (Romans 5:20).

It is precisely here that the grace of God superabounded, beginning a secret, unforetold dispensation of grace. It was the salvation of Paul himself that marked the revelation of God’s superabounding grace over man’s depravity or abounding sin. The revelation of God’s eternal purpose in Christ displayed the riches of His grace.

It is His present purpose to save by grace through faith plus nothing any man who will trust Christ as his Savior and Lord.

Sin abounded dispensationally in Acts 7 when Israel was concluded in unbelief, and grace superabounded with the salvation of Paul—thus beginning the dispensation of grace. So as the full depravity of man was manifested or made known, so was the full revelation of the remedy, the riches of God’s grace, now revealed through Paul.

Returning to Romans, Paul said:

That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ, our Lord (Romans 5:21).

Once, it was sin that reigned. Verse 17 said that sin reigned unto death. Sin and death certainly had the throne; they literally ruled over men. But now God’s righteousness received by grace through faith is fully manifested. Grace has taken the throne; now grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life.

What a message we have to take to the lost! What truth we, the saved, have to rejoice in and live by! There are, of course,
many other verses we could examine concerning God’s gracious remedy, but we will save these for our next chapter on *salvation*. 
Chapter 5
Salvation

The doctrine of salvation is of the utmost importance because it addresses man’s complete deliverance from his depravity—his sinful, lost, spiritually dead condition.

Every major denomination in Christendom has some form of teaching on the subject of salvation; however, here the similarity stops. There are numerous areas of disagreement and division—almost as many as there are different denominations.

The doctrine of salvation is a major area of confusion among denominationalists as a whole. For a doctrine of such great importance to every living person, this is a sad state indeed! We trust that by sound teaching we will be separate from those who distort the clear presentation of the gospel of the grace of God.

The word *salvation* in the New Testament is from the Greek word *soteria* and literally means *to deliver, to preserve, or to save*. *Salvation* as used in the Bible applies to many different areas. It can mean salvation from an enemy, from problems, from error, and of course, salvation from sin. This chapter is concerned with salvation from sin.

**A DISPENSATIONAL SUBJECT**

In all respects salvation must be considered a *dispensational subject*. Though God has always made known His intention to deliver man, God has progressively and dispensationally revealed how He saves.

Various aspects of salvation have also changed with God’s different dispensational programs. For instance, in the Old
Testament Israel under a covenant relationship with God was promised a salvation which, though we now know had a personal aspect, was national in character. It concerned the whole nation, collectively, and involved primarily physical blessings and physical deliverance from their enemies into a literal physical, earthly kingdom.

It is this national salvation or deliverance of which Paul spoke in Romans, where he said:

*Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers* (Romans 15:8).

In this dispensation of grace, however, salvation involves no present physical blessings and is personal and positional in character. Soul salvation, that is, the deliverance of a man’s soul and spirit from the penalty of sin, has always been an individual matter. From the beginning every individual since fallen Adam has been spiritually dead and in need of personal salvation. Every man has been responsible for his own sins and has been required to believe God’s appropriate message for the salvation of his soul. This was true in the Old Testament under the kingdom program, and it is true today in the program of grace. Men in the past did not necessarily understand this while God was dealing with them under a national plan of salvation, but theirs was also a personal need. This became clear through progressive revelation—first with Christ’s earthly ministry and ultimately through the fullness of revelation given through the Apostle Paul.

Today, with the full revelation of God’s secret purpose, we have the fullness of revelation on this subject of salvation as well. Today, therefore, we must emphasize that salvation is personal and individual. It involves eternal deliverance from judgment for sin and permanently places the believer into a glorified position in Christ—all by grace through faith plus nothing.

**A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING**

When we approach people about salvation, we want to make
sure that they understand exactly what we mean. When referring to God’s plan of salvation in this dispensation, salvation means saved from sin—saved from sin’s penalty (God’s judgment); saved from sin’s power (now we can live for the Lord); and one day saved from the presence of sin (we will be in glory with Christ).

People can misunderstand our terminology! When we witness, we must clearly explain every term we use. Do not just use words like saved and born again without explaining the Bible meaning; otherwise, many people may agree with you even if they do not understand what you mean. Understanding salvation from sin presupposes that men understand that they are sinners, dead in their condition, and headed for a Christless eternity. Once they admit this, then they can appreciate the salvation message God offers.

SAVED FROM WHAT?
We believe that salvation has three tenses. First is salvation from the penalty of sin. This happens the moment we trust Christ as Savior and is eternal in nature. Sin’s penalty is condemnation, death, and ultimately, the second death in the lake of fire. Every true believer is eternally saved from this penalty.

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:15).

In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14).

The second tense is salvation from the power of sin. We are being saved (present) from the power of sin. All true believers have died with Christ, are raised with Him, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, though the old nature is still with us, sin’s power has been broken, and we need no longer walk under its control.

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 (Romans 6:6).
For sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law but under grace (Romans 6:14).

The third tense is salvation from the presence of sin. We shall be saved from the presence of sin. This is in the future when we shall receive glorified, resurrected bodies and dwell forever in God’s presence.

Because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God (Romans 8:21).

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our lowly body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself (Philippians 3:20,21).

FORGIVENESS & JUSTIFICATION
The believers’ sins were laid on Christ, and He bore their judgment. The sin question has been forever settled at Calvary. Those who trust Christ are placed into His death—all their sins are paid for in full. Because the sins are paid for, God declares that man is righteous! The believer is dead, buried, and raised with Christ and is given Christ’s very righteousness. The Bible word for this transaction is justification.

Justified means to be declared righteous. It is a judicial act of God based upon His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

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

For He hath made Him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Bible salvation is an act of God whereby He justifies or declares righteous an ungodly sinner, having granted the complete forgiveness of sins. This salvation is a gift given by grace

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through faith and is based solely upon the merits of the cross. Perhaps you have heard the saying, “Justified means just as if I’d never sinned.” That saying is not what the Bible teaches about justification, so please do not use it. Justification is God declaring the sinner righteous because the debt of sin is paid and he is forgiven. It should be clearly understood, then, that salvation means the obtaining of the righteousness of God by faith through the forgiveness of sins.

For the remainder of this chapter, we will consider three aspects of salvation: the source, the ground, and the means.

**THE SOURCE OF SALVATION**

In the Roman Epistle we can find all three of these points. However, as we consider the source of salvation, we read:

> Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Romans 3:24).

The source of salvation is the grace of God. Grace is defined as unmerited favor. Someone once said that grace (thinking of the letters G R A C E) was “God’s riches at Christ’s expense.” This verse would indeed support that saying. We must understand that grace is the opposite of works; when there is a debt, it means that something has been earned through work.

> Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. (Romans 4:4).

If men could prove themselves to be perfect and sinless by good works, then God would be indebted or obligated to save them as a payment for their works. The whole point of Romans 3 is to show that just the opposite is true:

> ...There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God...there is none that doeth good, no, not one (Romans 3:10–12).

Finally the law was added:

> ...that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God (Romans 3:19).

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In Romans 3:24 we learn that men are justified freely (or without a cause). This justification is as a gift by God’s grace:

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 (Ephesians 2:8,9).

Because of man’s sinfulness, works have been eliminated; any form of boasting has been ruled out. The free gift of salvation by grace is the only possible way that sinful men can receive the righteousness of God!

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 Spirit, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ, our Savior, that, being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life (Titus 3:5–7).

It is in this exact regard that this day in which we live is called the dispensation of the grace of God.

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men (Titus 2:11).

We ask, “When did grace appear?” We know that God has always been gracious. We read in Genesis:

But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord (Genesis 6:8).

God told Moses:

…I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious… (Exodus 33:19).

Also in John we read:

…Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (John 1:17).

These, however, were God’s grace in past dispensations. There has been grace within every dispensation, but there is only one dispensation of grace! The Apostle Paul said in Ephesians:

If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is

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given me toward you, how that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery (as I wrote before in few words) (Ephesians 3:2,3).

God has revealed a new dispensation separate and apart from prophecy—an administration of grace in which, as proven sinners, both Jews and Gentiles now can be saved on the same ground by God’s grace. Thus, the gospel of this dispensation is called the gospel of grace (Acts 20:24). This is the good news that now both Jews and Gentiles are reconciled into “one new man” upon trusting Christ as Savior. This “new man” is called the Body of Christ (and the church which is His body) and is unique to this dispensation of grace which began with Paul.

When Titus 2:11 says that “the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,” we believe this grace is the supreme characteristic of a new dispensation that appeared first to and through the Apostle Paul.

Verses 12 through 14 of this same passage tell us that this grace not only saves but teaches believers to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age.

The usual accusation of those who believe in a works-oriented salvation is that grace is a license to sin. Nothing could be further from the truth! Grace that saves also teaches the denial of ungodliness and sin. Grace operates upon a completely different principle than works to accomplish this. Grace manifests the love of God toward hell-deserving sinners. Through faith alone grace imparts the very righteousness of God to men who are dead in trespasses and sins. Grace saves and motivates by Christ’s love, and this love constrains us to yield our hearts and lives to Him.

Turning back to Romans we read:

Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Romans 3:24).

Notice that what grace has given is justification. We have already explained that justification means to be declared right-
eous by God. Therefore, we have been declared righteous by God’s grace—the teaching of this whole context.

But now the righteousness of God apart from the law, is manifested… (Romans 3:21).

This verse means that now (this word now is a dispensational indicator and tells us that now something is different) through the revelation given to Paul God has made known that the receiving of the righteousness of God is possible. How is it received?

Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference (Romans 3:22).

What does the grace of God afford? Nothing less than His very righteousness, and it is unto all and upon all who believe. This should settle once and for all the question of what it really means to be saved in this dispensation of grace. It does not mean that we are on probation. It does not mean that we are not sure until the end. It means that upon believing the gospel of grace we are justified and possess the righteousness of God.

Verse 23 continues by explaining why this is applicable to all men—that none can be saved any other way:

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

No man is outside of the need of God’s pure grace for deliverance from judgment and the lake of fire. But redemption full and free is the theme of grace and the proclamation of the gospel.

In our study of the Pauline Epistles we find that a number of terms are synonymous with salvation in the soul sense. Justification is one of these terms.

Another is this term redemption. Two basic Greek words are translated by this term, and both have to do with being purchased by payment of a ransom.

Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Romans 3:24).
The word redemption here is the Greek word *apolutrosis*, which literally means *to be loosed by payment of a price.*

For ye are bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s (1 Corinthians 6:20).

In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace (Ephesians 1:7).

Therefore, redemption means that we have been purchased and loosed from sin (both its penalty and control) and placed into Christ—again by God’s grace. Another word that can apply to salvation is the word *reconciled.*

And you, that were once alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled (Colossians 1:21).

The word reconciled means the eliminating of the differences between two persons, resulting in peace where there once was enmity. Thus, in Christ we have been brought to a place of fellowship and peace with God because our sins are forgiven. Our sins were a wall of alienation between us and God that separated us from His life and presence. But because of God’s gracious provision, we can be personally reconciled to Him, born anew into God’s family and kingdom by believing the gospel.

One last word we will consider is the word *sanctification.* The word sanctified means *to be set apart,* and by the grace of God every believer is set apart from sin and placed into Christ.

Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, both theirs and ours (1 Corinthians 1:2).

These believers at Corinth were sanctified or set apart in Christ and called to be or, more literally, called saints. To be saved is to be sanctified—to have a set-apart position in Christ, possessing His righteousness. This is what enables one to be called a saint. A saint is not a dead Roman Catholic but a living believer who, by grace, is in Christ.

Another aspect of sanctification is the practical one, that is, having to do with our state.
For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication (1 Thessalonians 4:3).

Later in this same Epistle Paul said:

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 (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

These verses do not directly refer to our position in Christ but rather to our walk—that it might be equal to our position, that we might be set apart in our daily lives, and that we might constantly be a testimony for Him. In this practical sense sanctification is progressive because we grow more and more set apart and Christ-like in our walk with each day—or at least we should!

THE GROUND OF SALVATION

In Romans 3 we will begin to look at the second point of our study, the ground of salvation. Speaking of Christ we read:

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; to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness, that He might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus (Romans 3:25,26).

Verses 25 and 26 go together as time verses. They are not referring to time in your life but rather to dispensational time. They have to do with the ground of justification—the shed blood of Christ.

Concerning salvation, God set forth Jesus Christ to be a propitiation by His blood (that is a mercy seat or a satisfaction) through faith. With man God was not satisfied. Man had broken the law and had proven in every respect that he was unrighteous.

But with Christ and the work He accomplished, God was fully propitiated (satisfied). Christ’s righteousness was perfect, and His shed blood marked the acceptable payment for sin. Like
the blood-sprinkled mercy seat in the holy of holies in the tabernacle, Christ’s shed blood (signifying His death) was the only thing that could truly satisfy the righteous requirement of a holy God.

*And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission (Hebrews 9:22).*

From the very beginning God has required the shedding of blood. We read in Genesis 3 that God made coats of skins to clothe Adam and Eve. In Genesis 4:4 Abel brought an offering of the firstlings of his flock, and it says that God had respect unto his offering.

God’s dealings with the nation Israel were based upon blood sacrifices, beginning with Abraham, then Moses, and the Passover and proceeding on to the sacrifices and offerings of the law of Moses, all of which (we later learn) were a type of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As God led Israel under the First Covenant, He made provision for them to come into His presence only once a year into the holy of holies and only through one man, the high priest, and only with blood, which was to be sprinkled before and on the mercy seat that covered the law.

*But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which be offered for himself, and for the errors of the people, The Holy Spirit thus signifying that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while the first tabernacle was yet standing (Hebrews 9:7,8).*

The holy of holies was closed off with a heavy curtain or a veil which was there to say, “Keep out!” The veil blocked the way to God because He is holy and man is sinful and cannot in that condition come into His presence. Only the sacrificial blood in the hands of the high priest could allow God to overlook the sins of the people. But why blood? What was so significant about blood? The reason is that shed blood signifies death, and death is the only payment for sin.

Blood signified the death of the sacrificial animal under the First Covenant, but this only atoned for sin (temporarily covered
the sin thus maintaining the covenant). The shed blood of Christ also signified His death—the perfect lamb of God dying for the sins of others. However, His blood that was shed once for all is the heart or basis of the New Covenant. This is precisely why Paul said:

_In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace (Ephesians 1:7)._

In 1 Corinthians we find one of the most important references to Christ’s death in relation to our salvation. That Christ died for our sins is literal, as is attested to by the fact that His blood was shed:

_For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:3,4)._

Here, the great truth of why His blood was shed is fully understood. If any one passage should be memorized and used to win the lost, it is this one. Christ’s blood was shed, and He died for our sins. He did not die for His own sins. He did not have any sins to die for, but God made Him who knew no sin to be made sin for us. It was our sins that He bore and our debt which He paid—in full. His death, burial, and resurrection are foretold in the Scriptures and are the basis of soul salvation for men of all ages.

The death of Christ is not the mystery of which we so often read in the Pauline letters. But the death of Christ is *the central aspect* of salvation whether under the kingdom program or under the mystery program of grace. The revelations given to Paul, however, give us the full understanding of Christ’s death and all that was accomplished concerning God’s secret purpose in Christ. It is in this regard that the Apostle Paul said in Romans:

_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 (Romans 3:25)._
It was His death, the blood He would shed, that allowed God to remit the sins of men before the cross.

Though men did not understand how God was able to save, God was looking to the cross all the while; and it was on the basis of the blood of Christ that was to be shed that God could accept men’s faith and save them by His grace.

Verse 26 addresses the declaration of these very truths for the now time, for this time:

\[\textit{To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness, that He might be just, and the justifier of Him who believeth in Jesus (Romans 3:26).}\]

Thus, because Christ’s blood was shed, because God was propitiated or satisfied, He is now declared to be just (that is, just and righteous in His method of salvation). God’s righteousness was not compromised in saving sinful men. God can justly declare the believing sinner justified (righteous) as an act of His grace without compromising or wrongdoing in any way. We can, therefore, declare from our understanding of His substitutionary death that soul salvation always involves being united with Him in death, burial, and resurrection.

It is in this regard that Paul says in Colossians 2:10 that “we are complete in Him who is the head of all principality and power.” Our completeness is our position in Christ, and we received that position by way of death—a death that signified our debt of sin was paid. Our sins are no longer between us and God because Christ paid for them. We can never be judged for our sins (as regards redemption) because for us judgment is past. Death is the end or payment for sin, and we died with Christ, were buried, and raised with Him. Therefore, God has given us His righteousness and an eternal position as members of Christ’s Body, the church of this dispensation of grace.

This is what is meant by this passage in Colossians when it says that we are “complete in Him.” Men will try to tell us that we must do good works to be saved. They will tell us that if we stop believing we will be lost, but the Scripture says our position is “complete in Him.”
Colossians 2:11,12 goes on to explain exactly what the completeness is. Verse 11 says that we are “circumcised with the circumcision made without hands.” This is a reference not to the Jewish rite of circumcision on the eighth day (which was a cutting off of the flesh of the foreskin), but this is a figurative usage and is actually a reference to the cross where Christ was cut off from the land of the living. This refers to His death and says that we were circumcised or cut off with Him—we died with Christ.

Verse 12 says that we were then buried with Him in baptism. This is not a reference to any water ceremony. It really means we were buried with Him by identification with His death, in which we are also risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God. Mark well that each of these actions is the operation of God—not the clergy!

Titus 3:5 states that we were saved by the washing of regeneration, or the washing of new birth, even the renewing of the Holy Spirit. These are the things that happen to every person the moment they trust Christ as their Savior. 1 Corinthians 12:13 says that “by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body,” and that is also a reference to the instant we believed. Thus, Paul declares that our completeness in Christ is that we died, were buried, and were raised again with Christ. How much more complete could salvation be? Christ is the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and we are fully complete in Him, a completeness that rests not on our works or our worthiness but on the operation of God—performed the moment we believed!

Returning our thoughts to the blood of Christ, we have seen that if His blood had not been shed, if He had not died, then we would have to die for our own sins. But in that He did die, the just for the unjust, we know that God can justly save any man; and any who are saved have died with Christ and their sins are paid for—and that means all of their sins: past, present, and future.

THE MEANS OF SALVATION
The means of salvation is faith.
Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1).

Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay, but by the law of faith (Romans 3:27).

This is a very pertinent question that the Apostle asks in relation to salvation. “Where is boasting then?” In other words, can any man boast in his own works, his own merits, or his own righteousness? The answer is a very simple one: “It is excluded.”

Both without law and under law man has been proven helpless and sinful. Therefore, the salvation that God has provided by His grace is the only possible way for a man to be accepted with God. All other means or attempts are excluded. No man can boast or glory in anything except the finished work of Christ. Paul says that boasting has been excluded by a law, i.e., “the law of faith.”

The law or principle of works is that if a man could keep the law perfectly, if he could manifest a perfect righteousness by works, then God would indeed save him! Paul said concerning the works principle:

To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life; But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath (Romans 2:7,8).

Verses 9 and 10 repeat this law saying:

Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Greek; But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek (Romans 2:9,10).

Paul’s next statement should be an awesome declaration to those who choose this avenue:

For there is no respect of persons with God (Romans 2:11).

Any man who is evil will receive tribulation and anguish. Keep in mind that Scripture says:

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23)!
We can clearly see why the law of works cannot save any man. Boasting is excluded by the law of faith.

*Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay, but by the law of faith* (Romans 3:27).

What exactly is the *law of faith* that excludes our boasting? Scripture says it is “the righteousness of God, ...unto all and upon all that believe” (Romans 3:22). It is the principle that faith in God’s Word brings His blessing. This is a principle that God has manifested from the very beginning. In Genesis 4:4 it says that Abel brought an offering of the firstlings of the flock and that God had respect unto his offering. Hebrews offers commentary on that very event saying:

*By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he being dead yet speaketh* (Hebrews 11:4).

The Scripture says that Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

And so God set a precedent from the beginning that this principle of faith was the only way to please Him. As further proof of this, we read:

*But without faith it is impossible to please Him* (Hebrews 11:6).

Outside of faith there is only man’s feeble efforts to uplift his own righteousness, which is as filthy rags in God’s sight. But through faith God is able by His grace to operate on the basis of Calvary and gloriously save the sinner.

We should ask at this point, “Exactly what is faith?” Faith is believing God! Faith is not a *thing*, that is, not an *entity* that is given to us or taken from us, but rather faith is a *response*. It is the response of man’s intellect (his spirit) to that which is made known. Faith is simply an affirmative answer to God based on His statement of truth.

*He that hath received His testimony hath set to his seal to this, that God is true* (John 3:33).
The individual receiving (expressing faith in) God’s testimony (His Word) sets his seal that God is true, i.e., that His Word is true!

Although faith sees the invisible (as with Moses who Hebrews 11:27 declares, “endured, as seeing him who is invisible”), faith is not blind. Man does not place his faith in nothing; faith is rather a response to revelation. Faith is based upon facts of knowledge; it is not a leap into the dark.

An excellent verse to show faith in action or the characteristics of faith is in Hebrews.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1).

The word substance [Greek, hupostasis] means the understanding or foundation, i.e., the assurance, of things hoped for; and the word evidence [Greek, elegchos] means the proof or conviction of things not seen.

There are a number of words that are synonymous with the word faith that will help in our understanding. The Greek words involved are pīstis (a noun that is almost always rendered faith) and pisteuo (a verb that is almost always rendered believe). These two words are forms of the root word peitho (to persuade, to cause belief in a thing). This word is translated by a number of English words in the New Testament, some of which include: persuade, obey, trust, and believe.

Thus the words faith, believe, and trust all have the same basic meaning and are all used in relation to salvation. There are several passages where this can be demonstrated.

But without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).

Here these words faith and believe are used interchangeably.

Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law (Romans 3:28).

Notice that the phrase justified by faith is the same truth as the
last part of verse 26, which says: “…that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.”

Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference (Romans 3:22).

Here again, the words believe and faith are used interchangeably.

Faith in relation to salvation is not mere mental assent, i.e., mere recognition of historical facts. Many believe that Jesus was an historical figure but have not believed the truth of the gospel, i.e., personally believed that Christ died for their sins and is their risen Savior and Lord.

For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe (1 Corinthians 1:21).

Faith unto salvation is belief in God’s Word about who Christ is and what He has accomplished.

As to whether or not a man can believe the gospel, we quote from the chapter on Depravity:

“But can the natural man be confronted with the gospel and understand his lost condition and his need of Christ? We will let the Scripture speak in answer:

“…The word is near thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith which we preach: That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed (Romans 10:8–13).

“These verses say nothing about man being unable to understand. What they do say is that with the heart man (and that is the natural man) believeth unto righteousness. They further say nothing about not being able to believe. Rather, verse 17 says simply that ‘faith cometh by hearing [or as in the Greek,
faith is by hearing, which literally means faith can be expressed upon hearing] and hearing by the Word of God.’

‘But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above); Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). But what saith it? The word is near thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith, which we preach (Romans 10:6–8).

“If we follow Paul’s reasoning in verses 6–8, the salvation of God and its offer should not be turned into an issue of our ability to respond but to the response itself. Paul shows that the issue is not one of hypothetical or stubborn questions but of believing what God says. It is unwise in light of these and other Scriptures to question man’s ability to respond.”

Returning to our previous thought, it is the law (the principle) of faith not the principle of works that saves.

For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness (Romans 4:3).

And again in verse 5 we read:

But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness (Romans 4:5).

God’s Word could not be clearer on this matter. In this dispensation of grace justification is to him who does not work but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly. In this passage we see the doctrine of imputation clearly taught. By faith righteousness is counted to (put to the account of or imputed to) the believer. Abraham was the chief example, the father of this principle, and now God has declared it in its fullness—righteousness is imputed by grace through faith alone!

As we made mention earlier, it is this one issue with which God has always been concerned—the issue of faith. God has always had a message for man to believe. There has always been gospel or good news from God to man. Though God’s messages of good news have changed as the dispensations unfolded, we now know that the center of all God’s good news is
Christ. Nevertheless, whatever God required men to believe, it was their simple faith in His Word that gained them righteousness and acceptance with Him.

To Noah God’s good news was to build an ark to the saving of his house. To Abraham God’s good news was “in thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” To the people of Israel the good news preached by our Lord and the Twelve Apostles was the good news of the kingdom. Here we would like to pause for just a moment to say that this gospel of the kingdom is not the gospel that God is sending forth for men to believe today.

This gospel concerned the millennial kingdom that Christ will establish to bless the earth through the nation Israel, and of course, faith in Him will still be the requirement. But under that gospel the Jews were first. They were expected to believe that the kingdom of heaven was at hand and that Jesus was the Christ (the Messiah), the Son of the living God. They were to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). There were also signs and wonders that would follow those who believed that gospel of the kingdom.

Today the gospel of salvation is consistent with the dispensation of grace. Today there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek:

For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved (Romans 10:12,13).

The gospel today, then, is simply “believe and be saved”:

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (Romans 10:9,10).

Both the heart and the mouth in this verse are a reference not to a literal mouth or the heart muscle but to the inner man (the spirit and mind) trusting Christ as Savior.
Today, God is not offering the kingdom under the prophet-
ic program but is rather offering salvation from sin, that is, jus-
tification to any man by grace through faith alone according to
the revelation of the mystery. This gospel for today is specifically
called the gospel of reconciliation and the gospel of the grace of God.

REPTENCE
Though repentance is somewhat inseparable from faith, God
does not today preach repentance as part of the gospel as he did
to Israel. Israel’s gospel included the aspect of repenting: first,
before the cross from their waywardness from God under the
First Covenant, and second, after the resurrection from crucify-
ing their Messiah.

Today, however, these are not aspects of the gospel of
grace. All men are approached as sinners and exhorted to be
reconciled to God by the death of His Son.

COMMON TERMS
One term that is common to both gospels is the term everlasting
life. To be saved from sin in any dispensation is to have eternal
or everlasting life.

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son,
that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have ever-
lasting life (John 3:16).

And again we read:

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that
believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God
abideth on him (John 3:36).

The Apostle Paul also used this same term:

… [those] who should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting
(1 Timothy 1:16).

Faith then is the means by which all men can be saved, or
have this everlasting life, in the person of Christ.

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that [salvation] not
of yourselves, it [salvation] is the gift of God—not of works, lest any man should boast (Ephesians 2:8,9).

Here we see again that salvation is the gift of God; it is not of ourselves, not by our works, but by grace through faith. God provides salvation; Christ procures salvation; and faith possesses salvation.

Salvation is the complete forgiveness of sins and the obtaining of God’s righteousness. We believe that salvation is an event not a process, that it happens the moment a person believes the gospel, and that it is of eternal duration. All of these points can be seen in the following passage:

In whom ye also trusted, after ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also after ye believed, [or literally, having believed,] ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, Who is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory (Ephesians 1:13,14).

Salvation was purposed by the Father, purchased by the Son, received by faith, and enacted and sealed (guaranteed) by the Holy Spirit. This salvation and seal are not just until we slip but rather until the redemption of the purchased possession. May the Lord help us to hold forth these precious truths and to walk worthy of this glorious calling, living as becometh saints.
Chapter 6
Eternal Security

The Bible teaches that all the saved are eternally secure in Christ!

_Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,...until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory._ (Romans 5:1; Ephesians 1:14).

Eternal security is really a continuance of the subject of salvation. When we say _eternal security_, we are really saying _eternal salvation_; and we are, of course, speaking of soul salvation.

We specifically choose to use these terms _eternal salvation_ and _eternal security_ over such terms as _once saved, always saved_ or _the perseverance of the saints_ because of the implications of these latter two.

To say _once saved, always saved_ rightly expresses the thought of salvation being forever; but at the same time, it can imply a disregard for the present aspect of salvation from sin’s power. It matters a great deal to God that we walk in victory over sin’s power. This victory was given us in Christ the moment we were saved.

When we speak to others, we want to be careful that we do not use terminology that will imply some wrong thought. The term _perseverance of the saints_ can imply the thought that we will persevere or continue to do the right works in order to keep our salvation; this would be completely in error. That is not how God saves men, and the continuance and security of our salvation would be hopeless indeed if it were based for even an instant upon our performance. How much better to say that we believe that all the saved are eternally secure or that we believe in eternal salvation! Indeed, when salvation is by grace through
faith, there is no other kind of salvation but eternal! The word *eternal* is the way the Bible refers to soul salvation. John 3:16 and 36 both say that he that believes on the Son has “everlasting life.” Romans says it this way:

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

1 Timothy 1:16 says that those who believe on Him have “life everlasting.” Some would object that the word *everlasting* does not mean *without end* but only applies to a specific age of time. To these we would say that the same words translated *everlasting* and *eternal* are also used over and over of God to describe His eternal Person, power, and glory. The simple truth is that to understand salvation is to understand eternal security.

For people to believe they can be saved and then lost is to have an inadequate view of what was accomplished in salvation. Others believe you cannot *know* if you are truly saved until the end (death). This is also an inadequate view of what salvation is and how it is received. The subject of knowing *now* that you are saved is really called the *assurance* of salvation. The assurance (security) of salvation will be clear if we understand the following points.

**SALVATION’S MAIN POINTS**

**By Works or by Grace**

Salvation in this dispensation really comes down to one of two basic issues: Either it is by works, or it is by grace.

The law of works is mentioned in Romans 3:27 and expounded in Romans 2:6–8. There, briefly, it states that if a man can live a perfect, righteous life, God will give him eternal life. But on the other hand, if he cannot—that is, if a man is evil and sins even once—then he will receive indignation and wrath from God.

The Scriptures declare every man to be sold under sin (see chapter 4: *Depravity*). The only answer to this dilemma (that salvation cannot be earned no matter how much time is involved) is that salvation must be given freely as a gift. It must be given
without merit for man can never merit or deserve it. Furthermore, because of the sinful, lost, and alienated condition of every man, salvation must be the product of the redemption of a righteous Savior.

God’s Word plainly states that salvation is by grace through faith and based upon the finished work of Christ alone:

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 (Ephesians 2:8,9).

Concerning works and grace, we want to note that there can be no mixing of these two principles:

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 (Romans 11:6).

The logic of this verse is very simple and conclusive. It must be either one or the other! Either salvation is earned, or it is a gift of God’s grace. Since we know that it cannot be earned, then grace is all that remains:

Therefore, we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law (Romans 3:28).

Romans also expressly states:
But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness (Romans 4:5).

We quote again from Ephesians:
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 (Ephesians 2:8,9).

We could add many more verses that say the same thing: Salvation can only be received by the gift of God through faith.

An Event
Salvation is an event, not a process. Salvation takes place in an instant of time (the moment that a person trusts Christ as Savior) and is of eternal duration. A person is not required to
repent and show a changed life to be saved. He is not required to maintain some period of good works to be saved. Though both a changed life and good works would be the result of salvation, they are not required to be saved. There is no probationary period of any kind connected with salvation.

*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 Spirit (Titus 3:5).*

Note that this is past tense: “He saved us.” Again we read:

*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved... (Acts 16:31).*

We read in Ephesians:

*In whom ye also trusted, after ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also after ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise (Ephesians 1:13).*

All these verses emphatically teach the truth that upon believing the gospel, God does the saving and the securing.

*For by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body... (1 Corinthians 12:13).*

This verse involves our salvation—not a ceremony—and tells us that the Holy Spirit places us (baptizes us) into the Body of Christ the moment we believe.¹ Therefore, salvation involves the complete identification of every believer with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

Romans 6:3–5 refers to this baptism into Christ and verifies that it involves being placed into His death (also His burial and resurrection). Death is the end—the judgment for sin, and in Christ we have died the death that the law said we must. The law said, “The soul that sinneth it shall die,” and this means not only physical death but spiritual death as well!

Christ suffered both of these deaths for us, and having been identified with Him at Calvary, we were gloriously raised and seated with Him in the heavenlies (Ephesians 2:5,6). We must not forget that the result of this act was justification, which means...
that we are *declared righteous* (given the righteousness of Christ). Colossians 2:10–12 teaches that based upon our death, burial, and resurrection with Christ we are *complete* in Him.

-Colossians says:

*If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory* (Colossians 3:1–4).

For the believer, death and judgment are past. Our sins are gone, just as if we had died (which we did in Christ), and that everlasting penalty has been paid for us. When the Bible says that our sins are forgiven and remitted, it is on the basis of this truth: the substitutionary death of Christ.

We must emphasize that it means *all* of our sins (past, present, and future) because death takes into account all possible sin, and burial and resurrection seal the transaction. Remember, too, that *all* of our sins were *future* when Christ died for us.

*For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures* (1 Corinthians 15:3,4).

To sum up these points briefly: First, salvation cannot be by works but only by grace. Second, it happens as an event in time with eternal consequences and is not a process of time and works. Third, it involves the forgiveness of all our sins resulting in justification, based upon our death, burial, and resurrection with Christ.

The above points also answer the possibility of receiving salvation by grace through faith but having to maintain and secure it by our works. This, of course, is *impossible* because in this body we are just as incapable of perfection now as before we were saved. The flesh is “sold under sin” (Romans 7: 14). Paul verified this in Galatians where he said:
This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh (Galatians 3:2,3)?

A salvation like this would not really be salvation at all because you do not have God’s salvation (eternal life) if it is not eternal—right? Therefore, we conclude that salvation cannot be received, maintained, or secured by our works.

The Purpose of the Father
We again point out from Ephesians 1 that salvation is based upon the purpose of the Father, the work of the Son, and the regeneration or baptism and seal of the Spirit.

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 (Ephesians 1:11).

Verse 10 already stated that God’s purpose is to gather together in one all things in Christ. This is why it says that we should be to the praise of His glory in verse 12.

Ephesians 1 opens with the statement that we have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ. To find out what all these spiritual blessings are, all we have to do is read verses 3 through 14. These blessings have to do with the purpose of God to eternally bless those who believe in Christ.

For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe (1 Corinthians 1:21).

Concerning this purpose of God, verse 4 says we were chosen in Him to be holy and without blame. Verse 5 says that we were predestinated to the adoption of sons. Verse 6 adds that we are accepted in the beloved one. Verse 7 says that we have redemption and the forgiveness of sins. Verse 11 says that we have obtained an inheritance, and verses 13 and 14 tell us that we have the indwelling Holy Spirit as the seal and earnest of our salvation. All of this God has worked out according to His purpose, which Scripture says cannot be thwarted or changed:
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 (Isaiah 46:10).

In keeping with this, we read:

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 (Romans 8:28).

This verse is saying that God is working together all the circumstances in the believer’s life for his ultimate spiritual good. The believers in this verse are those who love God, and they are the called according to His purpose. Reading on, it says:

For whom He did foreknow [and the foreknown are the called of verse 28], He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son… (Romans 8:29).

1 Corinthians 1:21 says that God chose by the foolishness of preaching to save those that believe. The conclusion we draw from this verse is that God foreknew those who would believe in accordance with His purpose. These, it says, God predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son. This is our glorious position in Christ. This is a reference to our salvation or our sonship that we received as an eternal inheritance by believing the gospel:

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 (Romans 8:30).

1 Peter 5:10 speaks of the God of all grace who hath called us [Jewish kingdom saints] unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus. Thus, the saved are partakers of God’s glory and righteousness, eternally, by His grace through what the Lord Jesus Christ has accomplished.

This gives a clear look at the terms of salvation that the Father purposed. All this is the result of the believer’s faith and the gift of the grace of God. The stage was set for the questions Paul asked in Romans 8 in direct defense of the eternal nature of salvation:
Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? Shall God that justifieth (Romans 8:33)?

Paul asked here, “Who will dare bring an official indictment of sin or imperfection against one that God has declared righteous?” If any part of salvation were based upon the performance of man, we could well understand charges being brought against an individual. But who is prepared to question the work of God? It is based upon His purpose and work that He makes the declaration of righteousness.

Who is he that condemneth? Shall Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us (Romans 8:34)?

Since justification is God’s purpose and is accomplished by Christ’s death and resurrection, who will dare to say that His death was not enough? God says concerning Christ:

Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification (Romans 4:25).

This means that God was satisfied with all Christ’s work, and resurrection marked that the means of justification was now fully accomplished. Thus, we read:

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

This peace is the peace of knowing that God has declared righteous the believer in Christ and that his sins will never again separate him from God because they are gone. We are now in Him and possess His eternal life.

Now Paul’s questions come into clear focus. Who could possibly condemn any of what God has gloriously accomplished? Paul’s last question in Romans 8 deals not with the judicial aspects of security—that has been adequately answered.

What shall separate us from the love of Christ?… (Romans 8:35).

The sin question is not the issue here. Justification is complete. But Paul now turns to the experiential, the circumstantial, by asking basically: Is there any thing, any circumstance, any
power, any creature in the entire universe that could cause us to be separated from the love of Christ? Paul answers, “No—in tribulations, we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.”

The source of these things (these persecutions and distresses) is really from a higher sphere—that of principalities, powers, and angelic hosts. Paul says that none of these things are able to harm our position in Christ, and verse 39 concludes:

Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creation [or as it means in the original, nor any other created thing], shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord (Romans 8:39).

THE BELIEVER AND SIN
But what about when the believer sins? When a believer does sin, it is an issue between him and God his Father. It is a family issue; it involves service not salvation. Salvation is complete and secure. From that time the Christian life is a matter of an eternal loving relationship with the Father (of growth and tender care of grace and, yes, even discipline) “until the redemption of the purchased possession…” Will we have to answer for sins committed as believers? Yes. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:10 that we must answer for the things done in the body whether they be good or bad. But this involves rewards and loss of rewards, not salvation. We refer the reader to chapter 10, The Believer’s Walk, for a further discussion of the believer and sin.

OBJECTIONS
In examining objections to eternal security, we will consider two areas: first, human experience, and second, misunderstood and misapplied Scriptures.

Human Experience
By human experience we mean those people who, based upon either what they see someone do or what they have heard someone did, judge the condition of that person’s soul. Of course,
the obvious danger of this is that unbelievers can present themselves as very religious, outwardly, by their good works. Also, believers are still capable of sin because they still have the sin nature.

No believer should live in sin—we have been liberated from sin’s dominion. Nevertheless, the Pauline Epistles are full of exhortations not to sin, as well as examples of believers who chose to sin and disobeyed God. This, however, does not affect a believer’s eternal position in Christ. Sin does affect our usefulness to God, our joy in walking with the Lord, and will surely affect our rewards at the judgment seat of Christ. But sin cannot bring God’s wrath upon us because Christ bore the wrath of God for all our sins.

The only proper answer to this whole problem is to remember that a man is not saved by what he does but by believing the gospel. Furthermore, we cannot positively judge the condition of a man’s soul by outward appearance because of our human limitations. All we can do is base our opinion on a man’s testimony. However, we must consider that if his actions do not match what he says he believes, then we are responsible to either discipline in accordance with Scripture or, practically, to continue to clearly present the gospel to him. All the while we must live before that one as a true believer should and treat him as a novice or a weaker brother. We should leave the condition of his soul with the Lord.

While it is true the Scripture says, “By their fruits (or works) ye shall know them,” we must allow that a scripturally accurate and sincere testimony of believing the gospel would be one of the fruits.

We can almost hear the story that those who base salvation upon works would use to prove their claim. They would say, “I once knew a man who professed to believe, and he lived an exemplary life. He even taught Sunday School and had a Bible study in his home, until one day he fell into sin and disappeared and has never been back. Surely this man is not still saved. Surely the Lord will not allow this man to enter heaven!” In answer we must say that there are only two possibilities for these
kinds of situations. First, it is possible that the man is saved and living in disobedience and sin; or second, the man was never saved at all. One thing is certain: Once a man is truly saved he can never be lost. One passage that would apply here is found in Matthew:

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 name? And in Thy name have cast out demons? And in Thy name have done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from Me, ye that work iniquity (Matthew 7:21–23).

Though this passage has to do with the kingdom dispensation, we can nevertheless see a principle that is true even today. This principle is that a mere profession of belief in God, or an adherence to mere religious facts, does not constitute one a true believer.

In the kingdom dispensation, when signs and miracles were in order, it was possible for one to even claim miracle-working power in the Lord’s name and still be a worker of iniquity or an unbeliever. We site Judas Iscariot as an example of that. The reason for this is, as the Lord clearly states in verse 21, that only those who do the will of the Father will enter into the kingdom of heaven. And what was the will of the Father? It was for the Jews to believe that Jesus was the Son of God and that He was their Messiah or Christ:

Jesus answered, and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent (John 6:29).

It was this truth that those in this passage had failed to accept—they were never saved at all. 1 John refers to this same kind, saying:

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us (1 John 2:19).
We must keep in mind that it is possible for a person to go to church every Sunday, even be a Sunday school teacher, and yet not be saved because he has not personally trusted Christ as his Savior.

**Misunderstood and Misapplied Scriptures**

For the second area of objections to security we turn to misunderstood and misapplied Scriptures. These Scriptures fall into several possible categories, but we offer these as examples:

- Those applying to other dispensations or having a dispensational theme
- Those talking to or about unbelievers
- Those applying to service and not to salvation
- Those that refer to reward or loss of reward
- Those that are not talking about soul salvation at all

With this subject, as in all areas of doctrine, failure to rightly divide and rightly apply Scripture has resulted in much confusion in the professing church, as well as in the hundreds of different Protestant denominations.

**Instructions to other dispensations.** There are numerous examples we could list. In Genesis 17:14 God made a covenant with Abraham that all his male descendants had to be circumcised on the eighth day or be cut off from among the people. In Exodus God made a covenant agreement with Israel, saying:

> 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 (Exodus 19:5).

These covenants were made with Israel to show them to be no better than the Gentiles. This would ultimately prove that salvation can only be by faith alone. Even at that time salvation was not actually based upon works. Works were only to demonstrate faith, which has always been the means of salvation in God’s eyes. Failure to keep or to maintain any of the precepts
of these covenants would not have canceled anyone’s salvation. Failure to obey would have resulted in the prescribed physical punishment for that particular sin.

Still other numerous verses under that same covenant had to do not with loss of salvation but with physical death for disobedience to the law. One example of this group would be in Ezekiel:

> When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered, but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it (Ezekiel 33:13).

Thus, sins like blasphemy, adultery, and homosexuality were always punishable by death under that economy.

Moving up to the time when the Lord and the Twelve Apostles ministered the kingdom program to the nation Israel, we see it was said:

> He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned [judged]. And these signs shall follow those who believe... (Mark 16:16,17).

If we were to apply these verses for today as many wrongly do, we would not only teach baptism for salvation, but we would expect to see these signs displayed in those who believe. If not, we would certainly doubt that they were saved at all.

Let us consider next a passage that has a dispensational theme and is often used to teach loss of salvation. Romans 11:20–22 can be a real stumbling block if the dispensational nature of this context is not kept in mind. Paul’s language here is very specific and would certainly seem to be a conclusive argument for loss of salvation except for the fact that *individuals* are not in view here, but rather *nations* are the subject.

We must be especially careful to notice that in this chapter national Israel and her relationship to the other nations of the world are in view. This whole passage from verse 16 to verse 26, which talks about the tree and the branches, is really an explanation of verses 12 and 15. This has to do with the fact that the nation Israel has been set aside. Because of their fall or unbelief,
the offer of God’s blessing has gone to all the nations of the earth and Israel has now become but one of them. They are not God’s favored nation during this present dispensation of grace but are on the same ground as Gentiles. Paul said that by Israel’s national fall salvation was offered to all nations through the gospel of grace. In answer to verse 1 of this chapter, Paul said:

For if the casting away [setting aside] of them [the nation Israel] be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them [Israel] be, but life from the dead (Romans 11:15).

If through Israel’s national unbelief and resulting fall God has reconciled the world (including individual Jews like Paul) to a position whereby they can be saved by grace through faith, what will it be when he receives Israel back into His national favor but life from the dead! This, of course, is a reference to the establishing of the millennial kingdom at the return of Christ, as in verse 26, where it says:

And so all Israel shall be saved as it is written… (Romans 11:26).

This helps us to understand a previous verse where it says:

Well, because of unbelief they were broken off… (Romans 11:20).

This is a reference to the present diminishing of Israel’s national status of favor, which is the offer or promise of God’s blessing. As a nation they must now wait until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in before they will receive their national mercy or blessing as in verse 31. So also we read:

For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee (Romans 11:21).

Paul wrote this to the nations of the world as a group. If the Gentiles do not take heed to their opportunity to be saved by grace while there is yet time, they then like Israel now will be put back outside the offer of God’s blessing, and the present dispensation of grace will be over. God will then resume His dealings with the nation Israel under the kingdom program.

Continuing on we read:
Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off (Romans 11:22).

This is not referring to individual believers but to the Gentile world as a whole and their relationship to the offer of salvation. This warning is given lest the Gentile nations become wise in their conceits, that is, conceit as they consider the position of Israel’s present disfavor. Blindness has happened to Israel only for a season!

We see that this context has nothing at all to do with the believer’s salvation.

**Scripture talking to or about the unsaved.** Now we will consider verses applying to the unsaved.

*For this ye know, that no fornicator, nor unclean person, nor covetous man (who is an idolater) hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God (Ephesians 5:5).*

This verse is not a reference to the believer losing his inheritance but to what will keep the unsaved out of heaven. Verse 6 goes on to tell what is going to happen to them because of their sins.

*Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were once darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of light (Ephesians 5:7,8).*

We who are saved should no longer live as the unsaved do, knowing God’s displeasure with those things.

Another popular verse with those who deny the security of the saint is in Hebrews:

*For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, And have tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the age to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame (Hebrews 6:4–6).*

Here again, these verses are not speaking about believers
losing their salvation or those once saved not being able to repent. This passage is speaking about those who were never saved at all. These are the same kind that the Lord referred to in Matthew, to which He will say:

...I never knew you; depart from Me, ye that work iniquity (Matthew 7:23).

When it says they “were once enlightened…tasted of the heavenly gift…were made partakers of the Holy Spirit [the power of not the Person of]…and have tasted …the powers of the age to come,” it refers to those unbelieving Jews who were a part of the audience during the ministry of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. These Jews actually partook in the circumstances of this event. They were right in the midst of great spectacle and opportunity. After witnessing the blessings of that time, they turned away from that gospel and rejected Christ.

The reason it is impossible to renew them to repentance is that after rejecting the greatest display of kingdom power that had ever been witnessed, it was simply impossible to do anything greater to bring them to a place of repentance. Verse 6 in the original has the sense of “and who fell away” as it is in the aorist tense. This also shows it was a specific group who had already chosen the sacrifices of the law over faith in Christ. This is why it says that they crucify the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame.

The true Hebrew believers were being exhorted to go on from an elementary belief in Christ to perfection or maturity, that is, to a full trust in their New Covenant relationship with Christ. They were to leave behind all the dead works and sacrifices of the law. Of course, for those who had not believed the gospel of the kingdom but who had fallen from their opportunity, it was impossible for them to leave the dead works of the law behind. But the writer said of these saints:

But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak (Hebrews 6:9).
These believers were being urged to leave behind the attitudes and practices of the unbelievers who had chosen the sacrifices of the law. Believers were to go on to maturity.

Turning to Hebrews 10, we have another portion under this topic:

*For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries (Hebrews 10:26,27).*

Loss of salvation is not in view here. This *sin* is that of an unsaved Jew rejecting Christ and going back under the Old Covenant after having been fully informed as to the person and work of the Lord Jesus, hence “the knowledge of the truth.” The primary meaning is toward unbelieving Jews. The “we” here is editorial and means *the nation Israel.* The secondary meaning is to deter saved Jews from even thinking of adding the old things—the dead works—of the law into their present walk with Christ. Such an action would result in God’s displeasure but never in loss of salvation. The whole thrust of the Hebrews Epistle is to bring Jewish believers on to spiritual maturity and to rest in their full New Covenant position under their great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ. They are being exhorted to leave the religious sacrificial system of the law behind.

**Service and not salvation.** We must stress that this area is one of the fundamental principles of the doctrine of security. Failure to see this distinction has caused many to think that salvation is based upon service when in reality the opposite is true: Service is based upon salvation. Salvation is a one-time, finished act, and from that point on it is never in question. The believer’s concern from that point on should be service for the Lord. Our service is referred to many times in the Pauline Epistles as *good works.* Here we learn the place of good works in relation to salvation: They are not for salvation but the fruit of salvation.

*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:10).*
We have been saved or created *unto* good works, not saved *by* them. Good works are what we do for others that enable us to minister the gospel to them. These works manifest Christ living in us and cause us not only to edify one another but to represent Christ to others. God has foreordained that we should walk in them. God’s will is that we who are saved should live different from the world.

Other passages which refer to this principle are 1 Timothy 6:17,18; Titus 2:7; and also Titus 3:8, where we read:

*This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men* (Titus 3:8).

These good works do not gain or secure salvation but are the result of salvation and maintain a good testimony before the lost.

*And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful* (Titus 3:14).

“Necessary uses” are both for the benefit of the saints and toward the unsaved that there might be fruit (such as souls won for Christ).

**Reward or loss of reward.** 1 Corinthians 9:27 is a very popular verse used by the opponents of security:

*But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway* (1 Corinthians 9:27).

The word *castaway* is a real problem for many. Upon examining the Greek, we find that it means *disapproved*. Paul was referring to the judgment seat of Christ when, after a life of service, he might be disapproved as to rewards if he had not lived according to the truth. Salvation is not the issue at the judgment seat of Christ.

Paul likened himself to a runner in the games who must carefully observe the rules or be disqualified at the end and not able to wear the crown. That crown in this context is a crown of
rewards. Paul said that he ran, not uncertainly, and he kept his body under control and kept it in subjection to the Spirit lest when rewards for faithful service were handed out he found himself disapproved.

In Galatians 5 Paul wrote to Gentile believers who were in danger of submitting to the law because of false teaching:

Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace (Galatians 5:4).

Fallen from grace means fallen away from grace teaching and the peace and joy of resting in Christ's finished work. These believers had the idea they could be justified by the law. Under the law there is only bondage, fear, and condemnation. They had not fallen from salvation but from the pure teaching of “justification by grace through faith alone.” Salvation is “the gift of God—not of works” (Ephesians 2:8,9). Justification is by faith! This verse has to do with their practical walk and their need to stand for the liberty they had in Christ, even as they were exhorted in verse 1 of chapter 5:

Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty with which Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage (Galatians 5:1).

Not talking about soul salvation. Turning next to Matthew, we will deal with verses that are not talking about soul salvation:

But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved (Matthew 24:13).

Some have thought from this verse that salvation is an endurance contest; but as we have already learned, nothing could be further from the truth. This verse is talking about being saved alive or delivered alive through the great tribulation. The interpretation cannot even apply to us of this dispensation. It applies to Israel during the tribulation or time of “Jacob’s trouble.” Those Jews who obey the Lord’s instructions will receive God’s protection and will endure or be saved from physical death to walk into the millennial kingdom.

Philippians contains another passage where salvation does not refer to the soul:
...Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12).

Were this verse referring to soul salvation, it would be a direct contradiction of Romans 4:5, where it says:

But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness (Romans 4:5).

Philippians 2:12 is referring not to soul salvation but to deliverance from problems among the brethren. Paul says that they had always obeyed in his presence, but now in his absence they were to work out their own problems (as it says in verses 13 through 16). They were to do this without murmuring and disputing so that they might be blameless as to the reproach of the unsaved.

One other passage in this regard is in 1 Timothy. Paul exhorted this young believer to continue in a careful, God-honoring walk according to the doctrine of the grace message. By doing so Timothy would save or preserve (in a faithful walk) himself and those he taught:

Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee (1 Timothy 4:16).

This verse has to do with salvation from error and is not a reference to soul salvation at all. We close with a verse from Philippians:

Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6).

How wonderful to know that every aspect of the security of our salvation is based upon the faithfulness of God to His Word! We trust these truths will cause rejoicing in the everlasting possession we have in Christ.

1 This baptism is the “one baptism” of Ephesians 4:5 and is the only baptism of this dispensation of grace. Thus, we believe that water baptism (a Jewish ceremonial cleansing into their national priesthood) would make two baptisms and, therefore, has no place in this dispensation.
Chapter 7
The Holy Spirit

We believe in the *personality* and the *Deity* of the Holy Spirit! By *personality* we mean that the Holy Spirit is not some mysterious force or just an influence; the Holy Spirit is a Person. By the *Deity* of the Holy Spirit we mean that He is the third Person of the triune Godhead. We believe in one God, eternally existent in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We believe the Scriptures teach that all three members of the Godhead are co-equal and all possess the attributes of Deity.

Those who deny the personality and work of the Holy Spirit can in no way be considered fundamental or even scriptural, regardless of how closely they agree with us on other doctrinal or dispensational issues.

Let us more closely examine these two points: the personality and the Deity of the Holy Spirit. Then we will address the work of the Holy Spirit.

**THE PERSONALITY AND WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

The Scriptures present that the Holy Spirit is a Person in that He possesses the attributes of personality; that is, He does things that only a Person can do.

Three attributes of personality would be *intellect*, *will*, and *emotion*. The Holy Spirit displays all of these in a wide range of characteristics as attested in the Scriptures. For example, the Spirit *knows*:

*But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit; for the Spirit*
searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, except the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:10,11).

The Holy Spirit wills:

But all these worketh that one and the very same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will (1 Corinthians 12:11).

The Spirit loves:

Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the love of the Spirit... (Romans 15:30).

The Spirit speaks:

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly that, in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons (1 Timothy 4:1).

The Holy Spirit also authored the Word of God:

For the prophecy came not at any time by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21).

The Holy Spirit reproves or convict (John 16:8). He teaches (John 14:26). He can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30). He can be quenched (1 Thessalonians 5:19). Under the kingdom program He can be blasphemed (Matthew 12:31).

The things that make up the work of the Spirit are: conviction, regeneration, baptism, indwelling, sealing, enlightenment, empowerment, and intercession. All these characteristics in and of themselves should be enough to convince anyone of the Spirit’s distinctive personality.

We should note that in spite of the fact that the word Spirit [or Ghost] in the Greek is in the neuter gender, a number of times the nouns, pronouns, and adjectives used describe the Holy Spirit are in the masculine gender and, therefore, teach that the natural gender of the Holy Spirit is masculine. For example, He is called the Comforter (a masculine noun in John 14:16), and in
John 16:7–15 the masculine pronoun He and Himself are used several times.

**THE DEITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

Considering next the Deity of the Holy Spirit, we note that He is actually called God in Acts 5:3,4. There Peter asked:

> But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land? While 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 5:3,4).

In Hebrews 9:14 the Holy Spirit is called the *Eternal Spirit*, and in 1 Corinthians 2:10,11 the Spirit knows all God knows, which makes Him infinite. The attributes of Deity are ascribed to the Holy Spirit just as to the first and second Persons of the Godhead.

In several different passages the Holy Spirit is mentioned with the Father and the Son in a way that indicates personality and Deity. Matthew 28:19 and 2 Corinthians 13:14 are two examples where the Holy Spirit is treated as a separate personality, inasmuch as both the Father and the Son are treated as separate Persons and the Holy Spirit receives no separate distinction. Also, both passages indicate a co-equality or oneness in authority that clearly points out the Deity of the three Persons of the Godhead.

The Holy Spirit is referred to by several different names in the New Testament, among which are:

- The Comforter (John 14:16; 16:7)
- The Spirit of truth (John 14:17)
- The Spirit of grace (Hebrews 10:29)
- The Spirit of glory (1 Peter 4:14)
- The Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9)
- The Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 3:16)
There are also several symbols used to portray the Holy Spirit in the Bible:

- **Wind**—unseen power (Ezekiel 37:9–14; John 3:8)
- **Dove**—purity and peace (Matthew 3:16)
- **Oil**—light, healing, and God’s anointing (1 Samuel 16:13; Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38; Hebrews 1:9; James 5:14)
- **Water**—life and cleansing (Isaiah 44:3; John 7:38,39)

**THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

The main ministry of the Holy Spirit during the kingdom program was to speak of and glorify the Father and the Son. The Spirit never glorified Himself:

> Nevertheless, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth; for He shall not speak of Himself, but whatever He shall hear, that shall He speak; and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify Me (John 16:13,14).

It is also necessary to recognize, especially in the Acts ministry, a difference between the Person and the power of the Holy Spirit.

It is much more consistent to believe that what Israel received on the day of Pentecost was the power of and not the Person of the Spirit. The Lord said in Luke 24:49 that they would be endued with “power from on high,” and Acts 1:8 says they would receive power after the Holy Spirit had come upon them.

The Lord said concerning the Spirit:

> ...for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you (John 14:17).

When the New Covenant is literally fulfilled at Christ’s Second Coming to establish Israel’s kingdom, the Holy Spirit will permanently indwell believers in accordance with Israel’s kingdom program. This is clearly taught in Ezekiel 36:24–28 and 37:13,14.

When the Comforter came, it was His power and presence that would never leave. Had Israel received the offer of the kingdom, He would have permanently indwelt them because the
Lord would have returned and inaugurated His kingdom.

Though the present ministry of the Holy Spirit is to permanently indwell every true believer, we must be careful not to necessarily interject this truth into a previous program. Though God no doubt has always given spiritual life to the saved, we must also remember that the Spirit came upon and departed from people in accordance with God’s will. David said:

*Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me (Psalm 51:11).*

Today in this dispensation of grace we find the Spirit’s ministry quite different in that respect. Some aspects of the Spirit’s work are transdispensational (apply to the redeemed of all ages). However, rightly dividing the Word on this subject will reveal that a number of aspects of the Spirit’s work are unique and peculiar to the dispensation of the kingdom, while others are unique to the dispensation of the grace of God for today.

In this dispensation of grace there are a number of subjects in the Bible where an indiscriminate collection, combining, and application of all the verses on a subject without recognizing dispensational similarities and distinctions will lead into error as to obedience to the faith. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is certainly one of these subjects.

Due to the somewhat recent rise and flourishing of what is called the charismatic or Pentecostal movement, it has become especially necessary to make a clear distinction between the kingdom and Body of Christ ministries of the Holy Spirit. Two things that would be considered common to both programs are the *conviction* and *regeneration* of the Holy Spirit.

**CONVICTION**

*And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment (John 16:8).*

This speaks of the Holy Spirit’s advent at Pentecost as the Comforter. *Reprove* here speaks of *conviction* and is the same root word that is translated *reproof* in 2 Timothy:

*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for*
doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16).

These two verses together are significant in that it is the Holy Spirit who convicts through the Word of God. In John 16:8 it was as the Word of God was preached to the Jews at Pentecost that the Holy Spirit would bear witness with signs and miracles and convict the hearts of the unbelieving nation Israel. We believe this is always the case; that is, the Holy Spirit works through the Word of God to convict men of their sin and their need of the Lord Jesus Christ. We would term this the Spirit’s work upon the heart; if the person heeds this conviction and believes the Gospel, he is then regenerated or saved.

The Kingdom Program
As we consider the overall context of John 16:8–11, keep in mind the kingdom or Jewish aspect of this particular passage. Verse 8 says that when the Comforter was come, He would convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. The world here is the world in relation to the prophetic program—Israel first, and then after their acceptance of the truth, the Gentiles second. The three things of which the Holy Spirit would convict the world can be directly applied to the earthly ministry of the Lord toward the Jews. He presented himself as their God and their Messiah, and they rejected both His claims.

Thus, Pentecost is the direct answer to the timing of this passage, and the message of Peter answers to this threefold conviction. In John 16:9–11 the Lord explained exactly what He meant by sin, righteousness, and judgment, and all three had directly to do with the rejection of Christ by the nation Israel.

He said the Holy Spirit would convict “of sin, because they [the Jews] believe not on me.” The nation Israel rejected Christ as their King, and they crucified Him as a result. It is consistent that Peter accuses them of this very thing in his Pentecostal address (Acts 2:23).

Next, the Lord said He would convict them “of righteousness because I go to my Father.” We must remember that He was convicting them of some problem in relation to righteousness,
the result of which was that He would go to the Father. This again was in the area of their rejection of Christ, and the issue of righteousness was their lack of it, i.e., their unrighteousness. They had failed to be righteous in their handling of Christ, the just and righteous One, and were in need of repentance from that sin.

The Lord’s final point in verse 11 was that the Holy Spirit would convict them “of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.”

The problem with judgment was the Jews had made a false judgment, a wrong judgment, a sinful judgment, for which the Spirit was going to convict them. The result of their wrong judgment was that someone was judged. It is commonly held that this individual is Satan and that Israel’s sin was that they followed Satan in crucifying Christ, but that it actually worked out to Satan’s demise.

While that thought is true and can be verified by Scripture, it must be considered that all three verses point to Israel’s rejection and crucifixion of Christ. As we look to the early Acts ministry of the Holy Spirit, we see the nation Israel being convicted of these very things. This extends from chapter 2 (where Peter accused them of crucifying Christ, and declared His resurrection, and even demonstrated it with miraculous power) to chapter 7 where Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, said:

Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them who showed before of the coming of the Just One, of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers (Acts 7:51,52).

We can now understand Peter’s words, when he said:

Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36).

In verse 38 he went on to declare:

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 Spirit (Acts 2:38).

The repentance this verse speaks of is repentance from the specific sin of rejecting and crucifying their Messiah. This is a specific part of the gospel relating to the kingdom program—not the gospel we preach today. This was not the preaching of the cross as good news to all men without distinction. Peter’s words were in response to the conviction of these Jews for having crucified their Christ. They spoke of His resurrection and offer of forgiveness to the Jew first.

While the principle of the Spirit’s conviction is clearly taught in John 16, we want to be sure that we do not misunderstand its proper interpretation for the kingdom program.

Conviction Today
We believe that today in this dispensation of grace the Holy Spirit convicts of sin through the Word of God (Romans 10:17; Ephesians 6:17; 2 Timothy 3:16). Today, the Spirit does not convict of the specific sin of crucifying Christ but rather our personal sin that results in our being lost and condemned by wicked works. The good news today is that God is not imputing men’s sins to them but is offering full reconciliation (without national distinction) by grace through faith in the finished work of Christ.

REGENERATION
The word regenerate is used in Titus, where we read:

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 Spirit (Titus 3:5).

The word for regeneration here is literally born again and answers to the washing of rebirth. As the verse says, this is strictly a work of the Holy Spirit and takes place the moment one believes the gospel. This rebirth is a spiritual birth and is the impartation of spiritual life. The receiving of this spiritual life is
synonymous with being saved, and thus we often speak of salvation as regeneration.

The Lord used a similar term in John where He said to Nicodemus:

*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 (John 3:3).*

Here the words *born again* are slightly different in the Greek than in Titus 3:5 and mean *born anew* or *born from above.* The basic thought, however, is the same as illustrated in verse 5, where we read:

*Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God (John 3:5).*

Thus, we believe that spiritual birth is common to all the saved because the depraved lost condition is common to all men, as is the inability of any man to save himself from this spiritually dead condition.

Under the kingdom program, however, it seems consistent to believe that just as they waited for the kingdom to receive the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the practical aspect of their new birth is fulfilled the same way, that is, when they enter the kingdom. Isaiah 66:7–14 speaks of this time when the nation Israel will be reborn in one day. This would mean that they as well as all Old Testament saints had the positional blessing of spiritual life, though not the actual indwelling of the Spirit and a new nature.

We in this dispensation, however, have both the positional and the practical or actual, permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit from the day of our salvation on. We firmly believe that men must have two births, or two birthdays if you will: one of the earth and the other by the Spirit.

Physical birth places one into the family of Adam, and spiritual birth places the believing sinner into Christ. Spiritual life is called a *law* in Romans, where it says:
For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2).

The law of the Spirit is that “of life in Christ Jesus,” and this means that all who believe in Him receive spiritual life as an eternal possession.

THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
Examsing the baptism of the Holy Spirit will give us an excellent opportunity to consider a major area of distinction between the Spirit’s ministry in this program of grace and His ministry under the kingdom program.

Baptism today is by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ:

For by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body… (1 Corinthians 12:13).

This is not a water baptism; this baptism takes place upon believing and is simultaneous with the other works of the Spirit in relation to regeneration (regeneration, baptizing, indwelling, and sealing). All these take place at once and accompany salvation in this dispensation. Ephesians 1:13–14 makes this plain. Thus, we were baptized or placed into Christ as an operation of the Spirit at which time He took up permanent residence in us.

This is the only acceptable interpretation for passages such as Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27; and Colossians 2:12. We believe that this is the one baptism of Ephesians 4:5 for this present dispensation of grace. Adding the kingdom commission’s water baptism to this would make two baptisms, which would be unscriptural.

Contrast with this the baptism of or with the Holy Spirit:

John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to loose; He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire (Luke 3:16).

At Pentecost it was the Lord Jesus who did the baptizing, He was the baptizer and He baptized them with the Holy Spirit, i.e., with the power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit’s ministry there was
to comfort and convict through miracles and wonders to bear testimony of Christ’s resurrection.

How different from today when the Holy Spirit is the baptizer who places us into Christ upon believing. Water baptism has never been a type of Spirit baptism (or a type of death), whether Israel’s baptism with the spirit or our baptism by the Spirit. The present practice of water baptism stems from a failure to follow the Lord’s instructions to us through our Apostle—Paul (1 Corinthians 1:17)—and a complete misunderstanding of the meaning of the word baptism itself in relation to Romans 6:3,4. The word baptism means thorough identification and does not imply a water ceremony at all. Believers of the nation Israel were being ceremonially washed (by men) and identified with their national priesthood (Exodus 19:5,6). Today, it is the Spirit who identifies men with the death and resurrection of Christ upon believing the gospel (Romans 6:3,4 cf. 1 Corinthians 12:13).

We want to emphasize that the Spirit’s baptism in this dispensation is unique in that it is forming the church, the Body of Christ. This Body is quite different from the church that was being formed on the day of Pentecost—both in makeup and in marching orders.

Under the kingdom program, the Spirit’s ministry was consistent with the prophetic Scriptures as Peter, quoting from Joel, said:

> But this is that which was spoken by the prophet, Joel: And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; And on My servants and on My handmaidsens I will pour out in those days of My Spirit, and they shall prophesy (Acts 2:16–18).

This is what the Lord meant when He said:

> And, behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high (Luke 24:49).
Under that program we see how universal was to be the Spirit’s miracle-working ministry in those kingdom saints:

And these signs shall follow those who believe: In My name shall they cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues; 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 (Mark 16:17,18).

How wrong it would be to bring any of these promises or instructions into this dispensation of grace today, and yet that is exactly what the Pentecostals are trying to do. Not understanding the change in this aspect of the Spirit’s ministry, they wrongly try in vain to practice that Pentecostal program today.

In this dispensation of grace men are not being baptized with the power of the Spirit, and we are not going forth to the Jew first with the gospel of the kingdom. God has set that program aside while this secret dispensation of grace is intervening. The Spirit’s ministry manifesting Christ to Israel has also been set aside along with that program.

Today we see a work consistent with the program God is administering: all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies, accomplished by the operation of the Holy Spirit (in) through the inner man and understood not by outward signs but by faith.

**SEALING AND INDWELLING**

At the precise moment the Holy Spirit baptizes or places one into the Body of Christ, He also seals and permanently indwells the believer. This is taught in many passages in the Pauline Epistles, but in two particular places He is called the seal and earnest or pledge:

Now He who establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts (2 Corinthians 1:21,22).

In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, Who is the earnest
of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory (Ephesians 1:13,14).

The word seal has the idea of a royal assurance or guarantee. This seal is the result of God’s completed work of salvation. He sanctifies us or sets us apart unto Himself, through death, and raises us in Christ. He then indwells us eternally in the Person of the Holy Spirit. We have been purchased and made new—forever one with Christ. Paul verified this plainly in 1 Corinthians:

> What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s (1 Corinthians 6:19,20).

This is also borne out in 2 Corinthians, where it says:

> Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Once God performs this action, He places His eternal seal upon the individual, which signifies His redemptive ownership and guarantees by His own almighty power that we are forever His. The only way this seal can be broken is for someone mightier than God to challenge it. That, of course, is impossible! The Holy Spirit, therefore, is that seal and earnest.

The word earnest literally means a down payment or a pledge. This word was used to describe the earnest money that one gave to signify the sincerity of his intentions to perform an agreement. So the seal or guarantee of salvation is confirmed by the down payment or the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit. He becomes this guarantee by taking up permanent residence in the believer as soon as he believes the gospel.

We emphasize that there is no tarrying or waiting for this to take place, and no one has to “pray through” or wait for a “second blessing.” These are all misconceptions of those who have wrongly divided the Scriptures on this subject and have therefore confused many with their false teaching. The Lord told the
Apostles to wait or tarry in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high. That was in accord with their kingdom program, and they only did it once as a group. Once the day of Pentecost had come, the tarrying was over.

In this dispensation of grace no such instructions or promises of miracle-working power are given. Rather, in Ephesians 1:13,14 we understand conclusively that the Spirit’s seal and earnest or indwelling takes place at the moment of salvation. There we read:

In whom ye also trusted, after ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also after ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, Who is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory (Ephesians 1:13,14).

These verses leave no room for two basic errors. The first is that you have to keep on believing to remain saved. This error says that if you backslide or in some other respect stop believing, then you will be lost. But verse 13 teaches that belief in the gospel is a one-time action that results in regeneration and sealing.

The second error is that of supposing that after you have been saved you have to seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Again this passage teaches that at the moment of salvation we receive the Person of the Holy Spirit permanently and that includes His empowerment to live a godly life. There are no other blessings that need to be added. Ephesians 1:3 says that we have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies. These blessings are not physical in nature, and we do not have to wait for them. Rather, they are all positional in nature, and they are all received at the moment of salvation. Thus, the indwelling and seal of the Holy Spirit are two of our spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ.

And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, by whom ye are sealed unto the day of redemption (Ephesians 4:30).

How wonderful to know that nothing can break that seal;
nothing can keep us from that day of redemption when God will catch us up into the air and with glorified bodies we shall ever live in His presence.

The indwelling of the Spirit is also called the first fruits of the Spirit in Romans 8:

\[
\text{And not only they, but ourselves also, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, that is, the redemption of our body (Romans 8:23).}
\]

First fruit means *a sampling or a representation of something that is coming*. The Holy Spirit represents what we have and the assurance of its completion. There are numerous other verses that attest to the truth of the indwelling of the Spirit. Some of these are: Romans 5:5; Romans 8:9,11; and 1 Corinthians 3:16.

The reader is encouraged to look up the word *spirit* in a concordance, if one is available, and to document all the references to the indwelling of the Spirit in the Pauline Epistles.

Another aspect of the Spirit’s indwelling is that once the Holy Spirit indwells us, we are said to be a *new man* or a *new creation*. We believe this establishes that all believers have a new nature which is inseparably linked to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

\[
\text{And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness (Ephesians 4:24).}
\]

God did not somehow make over or refine the old man, that is, the flesh, but rather He made a new creation within us. Within the body of this flesh dwells a new creation, and at the day of redemption the body will be glorified to complement our new nature.

We believe that all things done for the Lord can only be accomplished through the power of the Holy Spirit or the new nature. Anything done in the flesh will only yield the fruit of sin. This is why we are constantly told to walk in the Spirit.

**Walking in the Spirit**

Walking in the Spirit is really obeying the Word of God with a
yielded and thankful heart. This is always what the Spirit leads us to do—obey the Word with the right motive and attitude. As we step out in faith to obey God, the Spirit enables—always! You can tell when someone is spiritual or walking in the Spirit because they react spiritually to life’s circumstances. They obey God’s Word with the right motive and attitude.

ENLIGHTENMENT
The enlightenment of the Holy Spirit is something we have already discussed in chapter 1. Let us review it briefly:

The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints (Ephesians 1:18).

The word enlightened here is the Greek word photidzo and means to lighten or shed light. We believe that it is through the ministry of the indwelling Holy Spirit that this enlightenment or illumination takes place.

Paul says in Romans 8:16 that the Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. He does this by enlightening as we study the Word of God and receive its truth by faith.

Enlightenment then has to do with understanding, and God wants us to have understanding so we can grow in appreciation and maturity and be grounded in the truth. Once a believer comes into the full understanding of the Word rightly divided and chooses to walk obediently to the truth, he will not be a babe tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine (as Paul says in Ephesians 4:14,15) but will grow up into Him in all things who is the Head even Christ.

We might ask: Does God enlighten some and choose not to enlighten others? Is that why some men do not understand the mystery revealed by Paul? While we believe that God is sovereign, the Scriptures plainly state (speaking of God):

Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the [full] knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4).

The Scriptures teach that God’s will is to have every believer
fully mature in spiritual understanding. What hinders this is man’s unwillingness to study or his unwillingness to receive God’s Word. Men who choose to be indifferent, who choose carnality, or who have some other vested interest rather than receiving the Word and standing for it grieve the Holy Spirit and hinder His enlightenment. In Ephesians 1:17–19 Paul prays that God will give us a burden or a spirit of desire for wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him so that we will be enlightened to three things:

• First, the hope of His calling; our position in Christ as members of His Body according to the secret purpose of God revealed through Paul

• Second, the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints; blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ

• Third, the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe

These three things are needed to ground the saint in the truth. God seeks to establish and ground us in His Word both by men who preach and teach it and by our personal study of it, but it is accomplished by the enlightening of the Holy Spirit.

EMPOWERMENT

And what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places (Ephesians 1:19,20).

Here we learn that in us dwells the very power that raised up Christ from the dead. The exceeding greatness of His power is available to us in the Person of the Spirit within us. This is not power that must be prayed down or worked up. It is not power that some have not received but power that lives in every believer. This is power for victorious living and power to labor for Him. It is power to do all the will of God, and all we have to do
is appropriate it by faith. We must accept its reality by faith and step out in obedience to experience the joy of His empowerment. Paul referred to this exact power when he said:

But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also give life to your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you (Romans 8:11).

This is not talking about the future; it is talking about right now. The Spirit of God within us will give us life, that is, the ability to live in victory now. We need not live in sin. We have within us that exceeding great resurrection power, and we are able and responsible to live for Him by His power. All that is required is the step of faith to choose to obey the truths and principles of the Word of God, and God will supply all the necessary power. This is walking in the Spirit. That is why Paul went on to say:

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh (Romans 8:12).

INTERCESSION
The last work of the Holy Spirit that we are going to consider is His intercession.

Likewise, the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered (Romans 8:26).

The word likewise tells us that this is another helping ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Considering our many infirmities or needs, this chapter has already stated that in light of the infirmity of sin the Spirit gives eternal life (Romans 8:2,10). Because of the flesh, He gives power for victory (Romans 8:11); because of the groaning creation, He gives hope (Romans 8:23,24); and because of our finiteness in prayer, He gives intercession. We pray in this dispensation without the gift of knowledge that a kingdom saint
might have had. We must therefore pray about many things concerning which we do not know exactly what God’s will is. We pray without the promise of “whatever ye ask in prayer believing ye shall receive.” But we pray knowing that the Holy Spirit intercedes. He pleads our cause; He asks those things we really need. We also pray believing verse 28, that God is working all things together for good toward those that are His.

THE BLASPHEMY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
This subject of the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is something that has been a considerable problem to many. We would like to interject here some brief comments on this issue. In Matthew 12:24–32 we find the exact definition of the unpardonable sin. The Lord had just healed a man possessed with a demon, and in verse 24 the Pharisees accused Him of casting out demons by Beelzebub or Satan. The Lord then laid a scathing rebuke against them for such a harsh judgment against Himself. He said in verse 28:

But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you (Matthew 12:28).

The Lord was demonstrating through the power of the Spirit that He was able to bind Satan and take out of the world such as He wanted. Their accusation attributed Christ’s power, the work of the Holy Spirit, to Satan. Concerning this very sin, the Lord said:

Wherefore, I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this age, neither in the age to come. (Matthew 12:31,32).

Several things should be noted about this sin. First, Christ has to be present and performing miracles that manifest the kingdom in order for one to commit this sin. Second, the sin is that of attributing the Holy Spirit’s power to Satan. No other sin will fit; this particular sin is the only one the context will allow.
Third, no believer can commit this sin because believers are in Christ and all their sins are forgiven. Fourth, this sin could only be committed by an unbeliever in the age in which our Lord walked this earth or in the coming kingdom which He called the age to come. Such events cannot be applied to this secret dispensation of grace, but rather the millennium.

Believers need have no fear of committing this sin, and no one in this dispensation of grace can commit this sin because the Holy Spirit is not manifesting the kingdom with miraculous power. In this dispensation of grace God is not imputing men’s trespasses unto them but is offering salvation by grace through faith to all.
Chapter 8
The Church

The word *church* has been very misunderstood. To the unbeliever or the religious person a church is almost always a building or a particular denomination. As far as they are concerned, you *go to* church on Sunday, or you join a church organization by signing a membership role. On the other hand there is the true believer, who may or may not have greater understanding on what the church is; but when they come to the Bible, they believe that there is only *one* church found in its pages from beginning to end.

Both of these views demonstrate misunderstandings that we trust will be fully cleared up by our dispensational approach to this subject.

Our basic study will consider four points:

- The word itself
- The churches of the Bible
- Distinctions between the churches
- Similarities and terms common to these churches

THE WORD *CHURCH*
The English word *church*, in and of itself, offers little help in defining exactly what a church is. However, in the original language of the New Testament the word is very specific. The Greek word translated *church* is *ekklesia* and literally means *a called-out group*. The main thing to remember about the meaning
of this word in the Bible is that it has no reference to a building or a denomination but rather to an assembly of *people* called out for a specific purpose. A *church* then is a *called-out group* or a *called-out assembly*.

Physically speaking, a church could be any group assembled for a specific purpose. But spiritually speaking, a church is a group of people called out by God through redemption. No one joins this church or assembly by doing any religious works or by signing anything. The only way to become a member of God’s true church is by spiritual regeneration through believing God’s Word.

**THE CHURCHES OF THE BIBLE**

We must recognize that God has more than one called-out assembly (or church) in the Bible.

According to its general use, the Greek word *ekklesia* is used of many groups in the Bible. When the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) was produced, this word *ekklesia* was the word used to translate the Hebrew word for *congregation*. In the New Testament this same Greek word is used of both saved and unsaved groups of people.

In Acts 19:32, for instance, those who had gathered to worship the goddess Diana were called an *assembly*, using this Greek word. In verse 39 of the same chapter, a court of law was called *a lawful assembly*, again employing this same word. Verse 41 says that the clerk dismissed the *assembly* or *ekklesia*.

Concerning the called-out of God, however, there are several references we want to address.

*This is he that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him in Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, who received the living oracles to give unto us (Acts 7:38).*

Here we see that the congregation of Israel in the wilderness with Moses (about 1600 B.C.) was called a *church*. Some Israelites were no doubt saved, but many of them were unbelievers (as verses 39 and 40 go on to teach). Nevertheless, they were a called-out group. They had been called out from among
the nations, delivered from Egypt, and had became God’s covenant people. However, from out of this general congregation, this covenant people, God was calling out a people who by faith would be the true church of Israel—the church of the redeemed. Thus, God has always had His church or His redeemed. It is with this in mind that we turn to Matthew:

*And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18).*

Here the Lord proclaims to Simon Barjona that based upon his profession (in verse 16) he is now to be called Peter, which is the Greek word petros, a stone, and that upon this rock, or petra, He would build His church. This was not a reference to Peter but to the truth Peter professed—the truth that Jesus was the Christ, the Rock, the Son of the living God, that upon that truth Christ would build His church. It is important to note that here Israel was still exclusively in view for the Lord had just given specific instructions:

*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 not; But go, rather, to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matthew 10:5–7).*

The called out here are the redeemed of Israel, those built upon the foundation rock of the Lord’s Messiahship and Deity according to the kingdom gospel. The Lord is not speaking exclusively of a future day but of the church He was already building among the children of Israel.

In this regard the Lord said concerning a brother who sins:

*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 an heathen man and a tax collector (Matthew 18:17).*

While the truth taught in this passage concerning how to handle a brother who sins might be applied to today, the *church* of this passage was that Jewish assembly—that church of the
redeemed of Israel—which the Lord was building at that time during His earthly ministry. They were those who had accepted the good news of the kingdom.

Our next reference is in Acts:

Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved (Acts 2:47).

These newly saved Jews were added to the church (which already existed), the called out of Israel. Again we see that the only ones present were Jews:

And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven (Acts 2:5).

The next church we want to look at is in Ephesians.

And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all (Ephesians 1:22,23).

In this passage the called-out group is given a specific name: the church, which is His Body. Ephesians 2 says:

And that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby (Ephesians 2:16).

This church is composed of Jews and Greeks and is called the Body of Christ.

As we consider all these passages, we can see there are basically two called-out groups. At least two main differences between them are already obvious: one church is Jewish (made up of the nation Israel and Gentiles who became proselytes to Judaism), and the last church is non-Jewish (made up of individual believers of the nations—of which Israel is now but one) and is called a Body.

This brings us to an important conclusion in relation to the word church. When we see the word church in a verse, we must ask ourselves: “What church or called-out group is this?” We must look to the context to determine which church is being addressed. The word church itself does not tell us which church is being addressed.
DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN THE CHURCHES

In keeping with the dispensational character of the Bible, we believe that God reveals in His Word that He has had more than one called-out group. When we say “the dispensational character of the Bible,” we want to clearly define what we mean.

The Bible is written as progressive revelation. As God progressively revealed truth, He also dispensed distinctive economies or programs in relation to that truth. These economies or dispensations involved specific people with specific responsibilities and callings.

The word dispensation is a Bible word with which everyone should be familiar. Paul said in Ephesians:

If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me toward you (Ephesians 3:2).

The Greek word translated dispensation is oikonomia. It means house law or house management and has to do with the economy, that is, the administration or stewardship of a household. This Greek word is also translated stewardship in Luke 16:2.

We would define a dispensation, therefore, as the act of God dispensing (dealing out) either a program or instructions within a program (or economy) involving man’s responsibility.

Progressive revelation and the dispensations are, therefore, in perfect harmony. We have already discussed briefly that God has revealed a prophetic program for the earth and a secret program for the heavenlies. The prophetic program concerns God’s blessing of the earth, that is, all the nations of the earth through the nation Israel and their established kingdom.

The secret program, however, concerns the offer of salvation to all men on the basis of grace alone—not through Israel and her kingdom but in spite of Israel’s chosen position. This program involves a heavenly calling and is separate and distinct from the earthly calling of the kingdom. No matter how many dispensations one sees in the Bible, these two distinctive programs and the dispensing of them must be recognized.

While we realize that not every new dispensation involved a new program, these two major programs involve specific dis-
pensions that are clearly distinguished in the Scriptures. It follows that at least two distinctive churches or called-out groups are presented in relation to these two programs. Since the entire Word of God with the exception of the Pauline Epistles addresses God’s earthly kingdom program, we believe that the word church mentioned outside of the Pauline Epistles is a reference to the called out of God for the kingdom, i.e., the kingdom church.

It follows, then, that the church, the Body of Christ, found within the Epistles of Paul is a separate and distinct called-out group from the kingdom church.

We believe this can be demonstrated with several profound and marked distinctions. These two distinctive groups had:

- Different beginnings
- Different gospels
- Different makeups in relation to their members
- Different walks—different marching orders
- Different hopes
- Different apostles and portions of Scripture directed to them

We say conclusively that while most of the Bible has to do with this kingdom church, it is in the Pauline Epistles alone that we find the doctrine, position, walk, and destiny of the church, the Body of Christ. The above-mentioned facts alone should dispel the idea that there is only one church in the Scriptures. Many contend, however, that God simply did not reveal the full truth about the Body of Christ until Paul, but that it nevertheless existed and was being added to from the beginning. All who hold to that system, however, must in some form or other spiritualize and apply to us all the promises that God made to Israel.

This cannot be the case in light of God’s distinctive programs and callings.

For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance (Romans 11:29).
Each called-out group or church is fitted to its calling and hope, and both will be fulfilled in their season.

The church of Israel and the kingdom dispensation is distinct from the church, the Body of Christ, and the dispensation of grace. The only real remaining issue then is when did this present dispensation of grace actually begin?

**THE KINGDOM**

Concerning God’s promise to bless all the *earth*, the channel of that blessing is to be God’s true kingdom church—the redeemed of the nation Israel. God officially began building this church with the man Abraham.

As God told Abraham to leave his country and kindred, He said:

*And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing (Genesis 12:2).*

Abraham had two great distinctions in Scripture. First, he was the father of the Hebrew people, the nation Israel. Second, he was the man God chose to be the father or chief example of faith.

God gave Abraham a child of promise named Isaac, and Isaac bore a son named Jacob. These three became known as the fathers of the nation Israel: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Jacob’s name (which means *supplanter*—receiving things by his own craftiness or leading) was changed to *Israel* (God strives or contends, i.e., *God leads* [to prevail with God by His choice]). It was this man who was the father of the twelve patriarchs who became the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel. The nation Israel was God’s chosen channel of blessing to fulfill His purpose for the earth. But we have an interesting statement in Romans:

*Not as though the Word of God hath taken no effect. For they are not all Israel, who are of Israel (Romans 9:6).*

We might paraphrase this by saying, “They are not all true believing Israel who are born of Jacob.” The true nation or
church of Israel is composed of the ones who expressed faith in God’s message, just as their father Abraham had done.

And so all Israel shall be saved; as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob (Romans 11:26).

This means all true Israel, that is, all those who are saved in that great nation. All down through Israel’s history, we find that God was building this church or this called-out group of His redeemed. Abraham was certainly a member of this church and so were Moses, Joshua, David, etc. We could name many saints who were members of this kingdom church, but the most important thing to remember is that this church is a group that had specific covenants and promises made to them. The two main promises involved a land or a kingdom and a King. In Genesis 12:7 and 15:18 God made a specific covenant with Abraham concerning the land. In 2 Samuel 7:16 and Jeremiah 23:5 the specific promise of a king is made who will rule over this kingdom.

This is why when we turn to the Gospel according to Matthew we read in the very first verse:

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham (Matthew 1:1).

The Lord Jesus came to His own people to fulfill these very promises to the nation Israel. Thus we read in Romans:

Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers (Romans 15:8).

This helps us understand exactly what the Lord meant when He told the Apostles in Matthew 10:7 to “preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” That was the literal, earthly kingdom which Israel had been promised since Abraham. When we read of the gospel of the kingdom, we should have no problem understanding what that good news was.

As we begin to tie some of these thoughts together, we recall from Matthew:
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 not; But go, rather, to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matthew 10:5–7).

Here we must realize that these instructions concerned a program for which there was already a church in existence. Its gospel was now clarified as the gospel of the kingdom, and its members were specifically Jews and proselytes to Judaism. The Lord confirmed this in John 4:22, where the Lord told the Samaritan woman:

Ye worship ye know not what. We know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews (John 4:22).

When the Lord told Peter in Matthew 16:18 that “upon this rock I will build my church,” He was speaking of continuing to build a church which already existed! How wrong it is to come to this passage and assume that it is addressing the future building of the Body of Christ.

It is an even greater error to teach that this passage is a reference to Peter being the rock upon which Christ would build His church. Those who teach this wrongly establish a priesthood beginning with Peter and progress with a supposed succession of popes who have power to bind and remit sins and are said to be Christ’s representatives here on earth until He returns. This is false doctrine that has absolutely no foundation in Scripture.

The rock referred to here is Christ according to Peter’s confession in verse 16:

And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:16).

Peter’s statement contained the gospel that the Jews were required to believe concerning the King and kingdom that was being offered. The keys of the kingdom that the Lord said He would give unto Peter represent authority. This authority would be conferred upon him as well as the other Apostles at a future
time when they would be filled with the Holy Spirit as a fore-
taste of kingdom blessing. We again refer to the Lord’s words
concerning a brother who sins:

> 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 an heathen
> man and a tax collector. Verily I say unto you, Whatever ye
> shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever ye
> shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven (Matthew 18:17,18).

Two things should be noticed from these two verses. First,
as we noted earlier in this chapter, the church here existed at the
time the Lord gave these instructions to the Apostles. This
church was the called out of Israel, those who had responded
correctly to the baptism of John and the preaching of the
gospel of the kingdom through the Twelve Apostles.

The second thing we should notice is that though the keys
were given, this did not mean that the Apostles could send a
man to hell or send a man to heaven. They simply had power or
authority to cast a brother out of the church, to excommunicate
him because of unresolved sin. If the brother repented, it did
not mean he would regain his salvation for salvation is not in
question here. He would be allowed to re-enter the fellowship of
that church. The Apostles were given this authority to act in our
Lord’s absence with a view to order in the church and the abili-
ty to rebuke sinful behavior.

> Again I say unto you that if two of you shall agree on earth as
touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them
by My Father, who is in heaven. For where two or three are gath-
ered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them
(Matthew 18:19,20).

How often these two verses are used by well-meaning peo-
ple who believe that if two or three believers are gathered
together today in the name of Christ that He is then in their
midst and that this constitutes a church. This interpretation vio-
lates the context of this passage. These verses are specifically
sanctioning a quorum among the Twelve Apostles under that king-
dom program to act with divine authority in the Lord’s absence.

152 Basic Bible Doctrines
Verses 19 and 20 cannot be divorced from verse 18, and under that program they would be acting in the power of the Holy Spirit as the Apostles did later at Pentecost.

Believers today cannot claim the promises of these verses because they involve a different dispensational program. Also, in what sense could we say that a certain number of brethren would be necessary to invoke the Lord’s presence when in this dispensation of grace we are literally members of His Body?

Clearly verse 20 refers to the Lord’s power and authority vested in the midst of the Twelve Apostles—to act decisively in matters of spiritual concern.

To this point we have seen that the beginning of this church was with Abraham. The gospel of this church was the gospel of the kingdom. The membership was believing Jews (and proselytes to Judaism). As to their walk, let us turn back to Matthew:

Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons; freely ye have received, freely give. Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor copper in your purses, Nor a bag for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet a staff; for the workman is worthy of his food (Matthew 10:8–10).

In this passage the Apostles were directly told that their walk was to be a literal manifestation of the miracle-working power of the Holy Spirit. They were further told to take no thought for their earthly provisions but were to totally rely on God to provide their needs. This instruction was further clarified in Luke:

And seek not what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after; and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell what ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which grow not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth (Luke 12:29–33).

These instructions are very clear, and they must not be taken out of their kingdom context. To try to practice this walk today
would bring only confusion and discouragement because it would not have God’s blessing.

The hope of this church is also centered in the kingdom program. Their expectation was the establishment of the earthly kingdom. Luke 1:32,33 declares this at the Lord’s birth, and Matthew 25:31–46 speaks prophetically of when those days will be literally fulfilled. The specific authority over this church is vested in the Twelve Apostles:

\[\text{And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you that ye who have followed Me, in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28).}\]

We must also note that as the kingdom program progressed, all of these points could be verified in the final commission given to the Twelve by our Lord and in the first few chapters of the Book of Acts during the Pentecostal ministry. By this fact we can conclusively demonstrate that no dispensational change took place prior to the salvation of the Apostle Paul.

Comparing Matthew 28:19,20 with Acts 1:6 and Acts 3:19–26, we can see that the gospel was still the gospel of the kingdom.

In Matthew 28:19 and Acts 2:38 we see that Jewish water baptism was still required for the remission of sins. In Acts 2:5,22,36 it shows that the membership of this church is still Jews only. Comparing Mark 16:15–18 with Acts 2:38,39, the walk of the church is exactly the same. In Acts 4:32–37 the Jewish brethren were selling all their goods exactly as the Lord had instructed in regard to the kingdom program.

As to their hope Acts 1:6; 3:19–21, 24–26 teach that the promised earthly kingdom was clearly in view.

We understand that under this program the blessing of the Gentiles was in view, but only through the instrumentality of this chosen people and their established kingdom. Thus, the blessing of all the earth is with Israel as the channel; they are in a position above the other nations, and all nations look to them for light and blessing—under this earthly kingdom program!
THE CHURCH, THE BODY OF CHRIST

Now let us look in contrast, to the church of this dispensation and its characteristics. As we have mentioned before, the church of this dispensation is called *the church, which is His Body*. This name is very significant in relation to several of the points of distinction between the kingdom church and the mystery or secret church of this dispensation.

As to its beginning, we must first understand that there is no need to even have a different called-out group unless there has been a change in God’s program that would affect the calling and hope of the individuals involved. We determine from Scripture that the Body of Christ is separate and distinct from the kingdom church because there has indeed been a change in God’s program. Paul said in Ephesians:

*If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me toward you (Ephesians 3:2).*

*Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs… (Ephesians 3:5,6).*

And in Romans he said:

*For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits: that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in (Romans 11:25).*

*For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him (Romans 10:12).*

The church, the Body of Christ, is the direct result of the revelation of the mystery and involves God making a change away from the kingdom program. That change did not take place and *could not* have taken place on the day of Pentecost. Pentecost was a continuation of the kingdom program—not the start of something secret or unprophesied and new. The beginning
of the Body of Christ involved a change in the relationship of the nation Israel both toward God and toward the other nations.

This change enabled God to reconcile all men on the same basis into one new man (the Body of Christ), so making peace. Thus the gospel is called “the word of reconciliation” in 2 Corinthians:

To wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:19).

The world here includes both the Jew and the Greek, and this is the one most distinguishing feature of this present dispensation. Israel has fallen to the same level as the Gentile, and God is appealing to all men without national distinction to be reconciled to Him.

The result of this offer is that those who believe the gospel of grace are placed into one new man, the Body 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, to make in Himself of two 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 (Ephesians 2:14–16).

God accomplished this reconciliation by showing that all men were alienated from Him. Whether a Jew under a covenant relationship or a Gentile outside the commonwealth of Israel, all were proved to be under sin.

We must make it especially clear that until Israel was placed in this position along with the Gentile, the Body of Christ could not have begun. This is what God referred to in Romans where we read concerning Israel:

I say, then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid; but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, to provoke them to jealousy (Romans 11:11).

The nation Israel had fallen temporarily from her chosen
position, and this fall meant the offer of salvation went to all the world without distinction:

Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fullness (Romans 11:12)?

This verse shows that the setting aside of Israel from her chosen position is only temporary and that one day they will have a fullness or completion of their promised kingdom program. But today Israel is looked upon the same as the Gentiles.

The reconciling of the Gentiles (the nations) here does not mean that all nations are now saved. It does mean that all nations including Israel have been alienated and are now savable or reconciled to a place where as proven sinners they are offered salvation by grace through faith.

Again we also note that this verse points out that on the basis of God’s grace Israel again will be brought to a place of national preeminence and the kingdom program will be gloriously fulfilled.

The beginning of the Body, then, awaited the concluding of Israel in unbelief along with the Gentiles. This we believe happened when the nation Israel showed their third and final rebellion against God. They, under the covenant of the law, stoned Stephen who was full of the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:59). There Stephen indicted the nation Israel for having received the law by the disposition or the dispensation of angels and having not kept it. This is where under the dispensation of law sin abounded:

Moreover, the law entered, that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound [superabounded] (Romans 5:20).

This is where the chosen nation was fully proved to be no better than the Gentiles.

But here, also, is precisely where, as it says, grace superabounded. This is where God began to reveal the mystery of His will. This is where the dispensation of grace began—not at Pentecost, but here with the salvation of Paul, who calls himself
the pattern (of salvation in this dispensation) in 1 Timothy 1:16. This pattern is of the long-suffering of God, that is, grace superabounding over man’s abounding sin under the law. Thus, the gospel of this special dispensation of grace is also called the gospel of grace of God (Acts 20:24). This gospel is, of course, based upon the cross of Christ, but today we preach Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery (Romans 16:25).

Today, we offer the merits of the cross entirely apart from the works of the law. Today, we offer the merits of the cross entirely apart from Israel’s instrumentality. Today, the cross is preached as good news, and all men whether Jews or Gentiles are offered redemption full and free by grace through faith into an organism that is being built as the trophy of the riches of God’s grace—the Body of Christ.

We see, therefore, that the beginning of, the gospel of, and the members of this church are distinctively different from the Jewish kingdom church.

Many accuse us of believing that the kingdom program was for the Jews and the program of grace is for the Gentiles, but this is not what we believe. Though we believe that the kingdom church was exclusively Jewish (Gentiles had to become proselytes to Judaism), it is through that nation (Israel—in her established kingdom) that God will bless all the nations of earth. The kingdom program will have a world-wide outreach, but it will be through Israel and is the subject of prophecy. The program of grace, however, is to all nations including the Jews but in spite of Israel’s national position and program. The present dispensation involves a heavenly calling and the building of a church in accordance with the mystery, God’s secret purpose, and this church will occupy not the earth but the heavenlies as the trophy of God’s grace.

The walk and hope of the Body of Christ can easily be summed up by one word: heavenly. Paul says in Ephesians 1:3 that all of our blessings are spiritual blessings in the heavenlies and that our walk is to be worthy of that calling (Ephesians 4:1).

God is not now offering that kingdom program, and so we
have no promises of earthly, physical blessings or of miraculous
demonstrations of the power of the Holy Spirit. We recall that
under the kingdom program they were to sell what they had, but
for this dispensation Paul said:

But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his
own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel
(1 Timothy 5:8).

Also in 2 Thessalonians 3:10 he said that if any would not
work, neither should he eat; in verse 12 he continued that with
quietness they should work and eat their own bread. No longer
is God requiring us to sell all our properties and have all things
common.

Though our hope is heavenly, we want to stress that we do
not look for the Second Coming of Christ to the earth. We look
for the secret coming of our Lord in the air. At that time He will
not establish His kingdom, but He will rapture the Body of
Christ into glory to ever be with Him.

We believe that the heavenlies are both the position and the
hope of the Body of Christ:

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we look for the
Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:20).

When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also
appear with Him in glory (Colossians 3:4).

1 Corinthians 15:51,52 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 are
the classic texts that refer to this secret calling of the Body of
Christ.

The last distinction is that we have a different Apostle. In
Romans we read:

For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the
Gentiles, I magnify mine office (Romans 11:13).

Believers today need to recognize the significance of this fact.
Paul was not a missionary of the kingdom program that the
Twelve were preaching. He was an Apostle—the dispenser of a
new program, God’s secret program of grace. His journeys were
not missionary journeys but *apostolic* journeys, and the program God revealed through him superseded and set aside the kingdom program for Israel. Ephesians 3:1–9 bears abundant testimony of Paul’s unique apostleship, message, and authority.

As we stated at the beginning, in Paul’s Epistles alone we find the doctrine, position, walk, and destiny of this church, the Body of Christ.

**SIMILARITIES AND TERMS COMMON TO THESE CHURCHES**

Some terms can apply to both called-out groups, and because of this they have been a hindrance to many brethren seeing the difference between these two churches.

One of these terms is the phrase *church of God*. In 1 Corinthians 1:2 Paul calls the saints at Corinth *the church of God*. These saints were obviously members of the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27). Yet in Galatians 1:13 Paul speaking of the Jewish kingdom church that He himself persecuted also calls *it* the church of God. The explanation of this is again that the word *church* alone does not tell us what specific church or program is being addressed. Furthermore, there is an overall sense in which all saints of all ages are God’s called out, that is, called out through redemption in Christ! And yet recognizing this basic unity, we must nevertheless realize that saints of other ages have a different calling, position, walk, and destiny from the saints who are members of the Body of Christ.

Another term that has been misunderstood is the phrase *in Christ*. In Romans 16:7 Paul refers to those who were *in Christ before him*. This would obviously have to be a reference to Jewish kingdom saints. But in Colossians 1:2 Paul refers to members of the Body of Christ as *in Christ*. Here again the term can have more than one meaning.

There is a sense in which all of the saved of all ages are in Christ, that is, in His salvation or in His spiritual family because of His work on the cross. In this way even Abraham and David were in Christ. Nevertheless, this does not diminish the distinctiveness between the various programs and callings that God...
has dispensed concerning those who have been redeemed by Christ. The key then is to realize that both of these terms can mean either something general or something specific, and we simply ask that the context be carefully considered before a determination is made.

One other term that we will consider is in John 10:16, where the Lord made reference to other sheep. There we read:

*And other sheep I have, that 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 (John 10:16).*

We do not believe that this is a reference to the church, the Body of Christ. God is going to the Gentile today in spite of the nation Israel, which is the subject of the mystery or secret that was not made known until Paul.

The “other sheep” refer to the northern ten tribes of Israel who were also known as Samaritans. In the Lord’s first commission to the Twelve in Matthew 10:5 they were told not to go to these northern tribes. Nevertheless, one of the Lord’s great Old Testament promises in Ezekiel 37:15–22 was that He would heal this breach in the nation Israel. In the Lord’s second commission to Israel in Acts 1, He included these in His offer of the kingdom. Even though Paul calls believers of this dispensation a flock in Acts 20:28, we should understand clearly that while some terms can have broad meanings, the fact remains that the church, the Body of Christ, of which we are members, is unique to this dispensation of grace that began with Paul.
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Chapter 9
Gifts

God is truly a gift-giving God!

…He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things (Acts 17:25).

He begins with the gift of life itself at conception. Next and most important is the gift of eternal life, and in this dispensation of grace God gives eternal life freely to all who trust Christ as Savior and Lord believing:

…that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:3,4).

But there is much more! God then gives gifts to His people—those He has given salvation—so they can serve Him and help one another.

But what are these gifts, and have there been any dispensational changes in this area? We will answer these questions and more in the following pages.

The subject of gifts is a major area of confusion to many. A failure to rightly divide the Scriptures has resulted in much error and misunderstanding concerning God’s ministry in this area today.

Because so many different passages deal with this subject, many people feel they have adequate proof for just about anything they want to claim as God’s gift to them. Even unbelievers are claiming to have a part in the charismatic movement, and they tell us that they, too, are experiencing the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

One common denominator in this whole area of confusion
seems to be outward experience. “I have seen it with my own eyes,” they say, or, “It actually happened to me; I felt it happen!” they tell us. It seems to matter little what the Word of God has to say about the subject. All that matters to them is “I have seen it!” We should desire to accept the clear teaching of the Word of God on this subject, regardless of our experiences.

Let us consider two main points: first, the ministry gifts to the Body of Christ; and second, the sign gifts for the nation Israel.

MINISTRY GIFTS TO THE BODY OF CHRIST

And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11,12).

As we look at these verses, we must distinguish between corporate gifts and personal ministry gifts. The gifts described here in Ephesians 4 are corporate gifts—gifts given to the corporate Body of Christ. The personal ministry gifts, however, are those enumerated in Romans 12:6–8. The latter would more generally be particular talents or abilities given to various brethren for ministering to the saints.

We define gifts in the scriptural sense for this dispensation as being a ministry, talent, or ability given by God through the indwelling Holy Spirit for the edification of the Body of Christ.

CORPORATE GIFTS

Let us note the overall structure of Ephesians 4. Paul began the chapter with an exhortation to a worthy or a balanced walk in relation to the glorious calling that we have in Christ. He continued that exhortation with instructions concerning the doctrinal basis or spiritual unity that we are to guard in this worthy walk. In verses 7 through 16 Paul explained the means that God has provided for the continuation of this sound teaching and overall edification in the church. This is accomplished through gifts He has given to believers within the Body:
For the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:12).

Verse 7 tells us that God has given grace to every member of the Body according to the measure of the gift of Christ. God has given to every saint a gift for his usefulness as a member of the Body. God has also been gracious to every saint in that He has provided men (who are gifted) for the Body’s spiritual growth both doctrinally and numerically. God has not left the saints without a means to accomplish their worthy walk through the sound teaching of the Word of God. Verses 8 through 10 validate this grace of God by showing that this has always been God’s way, that is, He is a gift-giving God!

In verse 8 Paul quotes Psalm 68:18 to describe an event that we also believe is referred to in 1 Peter 3:19. This is when Christ, after His death but evidently before His initial ascension in John 20:17, went to the lower parts of the earth, or sheol, and preached to the spirits in prison. This word preached that is used in 1 Peter 3:19 is not the word for evangelize but rather the word for herald.

We do not believe that the Lord in any way offered a second chance to the lost in the torment portion of sheol. He rather proclaimed His victory over death to all the residents of that place, both the lost and the saved, and then took all those in paradise with Him to a new dwelling place in His presence, thus leading captivity captive. Verse 8 says that He:

…gave gifts unto men (Ephesians 4:8).

This portion is intended to demonstrate that God is indeed gracious and gift giving in His provision for the saints. Verse 11 is the natural continuation of verse 7:

And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers (Ephesians 4:11).

Of the four gifts mentioned in this verse we believe that only two remain in operation today: that of evangelist and that of pastors and teachers, or really teaching pastors. The gifts of apostles and prophets have passed from the scene because their
purpose of laying the foundation has been fulfilled. These two offices had to do specifically with the giving forth of God’s Word. Because the Word of God is now fully revealed and complete, there is no longer any need for these gifts in the Body. The word *apostle* means *a sent one* and is really an office held by appointment. We believe there are two main categories of apostles in the New Testament. These would be *primary* and *secondary* apostles.

**Apostles**

*Primary apostles* were those chosen personally by the Lord Jesus Christ. There were 13 of these, 12 of whom were ministers of the kingdom program to the nation Israel, and one alone was the minister of the mystery program to the Body of Christ.

The *secondary apostles* are those whose place was subordinate to the primary apostles. Only one of these was called directly by the Holy Spirit as far as the record of Scripture. Some suggest that there were as many as seven in this secondary category, but the Scripture actually names only three. These would be Barnabas (Acts 14:14), Titus (2 Corinthians 8:23), and Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25). The rendering of the Greek word *apostolos* in the last two of these references suggests the more probable meaning for this class of apostle as that of *messenger*.

All of the main or primary apostles had the distinctive credentials of being called directly by Christ and displaying the signs of an apostle, as did Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:12. These men were chosen for the initial proclamation and furthering of a specific message or program and were not succeeded by others after their deaths. Since God has finished the revelation of His purposes and programs, no new apostles are necessary.

**Prophets**

The word *prophet* means *to speak forth* and in the scriptural context would mean *one who speaks forth God’s Word*. This word can also have several areas of meaning. While in one sense anyone who speaks forth the Word of God is a prophet, we believe that
in the context of Ephesians 4 this gift has to do with the *office* of a prophet. The same reasoning that tells us why the office of an apostle is no longer necessary in this dispensation of grace also tells us why the office of prophet is no longer needed.

**Evangelists**
The two remaining gifts that God has provided are very much current and in order today. The first of these is that of *evangelist*. The word *evangelist* means *a messenger of good news* or *a messenger of the gospel*. This gift involves those who are specially enabled by God to lead men to Christ. There is a difference between a gift and a responsibility, but for now we want to understand that these men are especially gifted in these areas.

**Pastors and Teachers**
The last gift mentioned is that of *pastors and teachers*. While some believe that these are two separate gifts, it seems more consistent with the structure of the context to see them as one gift. While the other gifts are separated by the words *and some*, these last two are joined by the conjunction *and* which can have the sense of *even*. Teaching pastors are the last corporate gift given to the Body of Christ.

The word *pastor* means *a shepherd*. He is one who oversees the saints—caring for and teaching them as a shepherd would his flock. This man is not by any means a lord over God’s people. Rather, he is one who oversees the spiritual welfare of the flock by himself being a servant and an example to the saints. These men are referred to in the New Testament by a number of terms including *pastor, bishop, overseer,* and *elder*. While we understand from Scripture that the Holy Spirit is the one who calls a man into this ministry, this call is recognized in Scripture by the laying on of hands or the appointment of the older spiritual brethren in the assembly. In this regard we suggest reading Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6; and Titus 1:5.

**PERSONAL MINISTRY GIFTS**
We read of the personal ministry gifts in Romans 12:
Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; he that giveth, let him do it with liberality; he that ruleth, with diligence; be that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness (Romans 12:6-8).

In the overall context of Romans 12 Paul is exhorting believers to consider God’s wonderful mercy spoken of in 11:30–32, of which we as individual believers have partaken. He asks us in our gratitude to present ourselves living sacrifices to God and to be fully transformed from what we were by the renewing of our minds. This means that as we take in the Word of God and obey it from the heart, we will be completely changed practically even as we have been changed positionally in Christ.

The object of this renewing is that we might know God’s perfect will. From Romans 12:3 all the way to Romans 15:3 Paul tells us what God’s will is and how to accomplish it. It can be summed up briefly by saying that God wants every believer to be dedicated to Him and to function in the Body in a God-honoring and productive way that will edify and complement every other member of the Body.

Paul’s exhortation in verse 3 is that no believer would think of himself more highly than he ought, but to think soberly. This means that no believer should think of himself as more important or better than another saint. The sober way of thinking is that we are all equal members of one Body and that we all need one another. No one member is greater than another. Every member has been given a measure of faith or faith’s measure which means that every saint has been given a gift that can be accomplished by faith.

Paul then uses the human body to illustrate that the Body of Christ, like the human body, has different members, all of whom have different offices. Therefore, verses 6 through 8 tell us that having gifts that differ according to the grace given to each of us, we are to faithfully do what God has enabled us to do. There are seven specific gifts that are mentioned here, all of
which are to be practiced in the attitudes of verses 9 through 16. God has fully fitted us to function as saints in this special dispensation of grace and to edify and help one another in every way.

The gift of prophecy is gone from the scene because the Word of God is complete.

The gift of ministry is the gift of service and can take many forms in the assembly. Teaching would mean those who teach the Scriptures and would mean not just the pastor but any man in the assembly that God has enabled in this way. Exhortation can mean exhortation or comfort and involves a God-given ability to help others in times of need. Giving is mainly in the area of finances but can also certainly apply to other goods and services. Believers are told to give with simplicity or without ulterior motives with the single purpose of helping all alike. Those who rule or take the lead are to be diligent and those who show mercy or actively show kindness and mercy to those in need are to do it with cheerfulness or literally, hilariously.

These gifts obviously take into account many different areas of ministry, and it is also quite possible for a believer to have more than one of these gifts. Realizing that we all have a function in the Body, we should desire to be faithful to perform that which God has enabled us to do.

Romans 12 and Ephesians 4 both address unity or oneness in the Body of Christ through the gifts God has given. Romans 12 addresses unity in service, while Ephesians 4 addresses unity in understanding.

One important question we need to answer is: How do we know what our gift is? Many have had great difficulty and personal turmoil in trying to determine his gift. The answer is found right in this context. If a believer will simply do what it says in Romans 12:1,2, it will not be long before he will realize the gifts God has for him. A believer must be saturated with the Word of God and allow this transformation process to take place. By living consistently with the Word he will naturally begin to accomplish the things that God has gifted him to do.

Sitting around worrying about what your gift is, trying this or
that, or moving here or there will not help. To be totally given over to a sanctified, Christ-honoring life will give God ample opportunity to manifest His gift in your life. Proverbs says in this regard:

_In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths_ (Proverbs 3:6).

Another important issue is the relationship between gifts and responsibilities. Many of the saints will excuse themselves from giving financially, from witnessing, or from serving because they will say, “That’s not my gift.” While an individual might not have a special enablement from God to evangelize, all believers still have the responsibility to testify and witness for Christ! A believer might not be especially wealthy, yet we all are responsible to give as God has prospered us. We all have the ability to live as becometh saints and are therefore to always be busy serving the Lord, recognizing and bearing our responsibilities as members of the Body of Christ. As we do this, the Lord will manifest in due time what our particular gift is.

**SIGN GIFTS TO NATIONAL ISRAEL**

The next point of our study is the _sign gifts_, and we will address this with four questions:

- What are they?
- Why were they given?
- When were they in operation?
- Have they ceased?

**What Are They?**

Sign gifts are miraculous demonstrations of superhuman or supernatural power. All through the Scriptures we see examples of God performing superhuman acts through men that He empowered.

One of the most famous miracles in the Old Testament is the parting of the Red Sea in Exodus 14, where *Moses* stretched forth his rod over the sea and the Lord divided the sea before
the children of Israel. We think of Elijah in 1 Kings 18 where at Mount Carmel he challenged the prophets of Baal. The Lord responded with a demonstration of power that silenced the wicked prophets, after which Elijah had them killed. Elijah’s successor was a man named Elisha. Elijah was taken up in a whirlwind (2 Kings 2:11), and a double portion of his spirit fell upon Elisha. Chapters 2 through 7 of 2 Kings record many great signs or miracles that God empowered Elisha to perform.

It is very interesting to note that from Elisha the prophet all the way to the Lord Jesus Christ there was not a miracle-working prophet in Israel. When the Lord came upon the scene, His miracle-working ministry marked something truly unique to the people of Israel. His was a sign ministry the likes of which they had never seen but had only read of in the Scriptures. This miraculous power was then conferred upon the Twelve Apostles and even promised to all those who believed the gospel of the kingdom (Mark 16:17,18). The Lord’s earthly ministry and the Pentecostal ministry are without a doubt the most prominent New Testament examples of the sign gifts.

**Why Were They Given?**
The sign gifts were given to authenticate the message and the messenger to the sign nation, the nation Israel. From the beginning of the nation Israel, with the separation of Abram, the Lord gave signs to demonstrate His messages to them. We can safely say that the Lord taught Israel to look for a sign. In Exodus 4:1–9 the Lord gave Moses signs that he was to do for the children of Israel that they might believe God’s Word through Him. God spoke of signs in Isaiah:

*Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, the virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14).*

The Lord spoke of signs:

*And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man, but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them (Matthew 8:4).*
Paul said:

*For the Jews require [or ask for] a sign…* (1 Corinthians 1:22).

Looking for a sign was not a fault with the Jews but was something that God had taught them to do. It was only a problem when the Jews sought signs apart from believing the truth of Christ, which is exactly the position they found themselves in.

**When Were They in Operation?**
The answer to this is very simple. The sign gifts were in operation while God was dealing with the *sign nation*:

> And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name (John 20:30,31).

The real meat of these verses is often overlooked and therefore misunderstood. Note the phrase:

> …that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God… (John 20:31).

Christ came to Israel to confirm the promises made unto the fathers with miraculous demonstrations as proof that He was the very Christ—their Messiah, the Son of God. He came in that capacity offering them the gospel of the kingdom over which He was to be their Messiah or King.

All the while God was dealing with the nation Israel under the prophetic program, He used signs to confirm His promises. It must be kept in mind, however, that these signs were in direct relation to the confirmation of the gospel of Israel’s kingdom and the men that proclaimed that message. As Christ came upon the scene, He did so vindicating Himself with signs. He also gave this power to those Apostles whom He sent out in His name. Matthew 10:5–8 bears ample proof that the Lord sent them out preaching the good news of the coming kingdom.
while healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, raising the dead, and casting out demons.

It is interesting to note that the nation Israel as a whole did not receive the gospel, in spite of the Lord’s miracle-working ministry, and finally He made a rather startling statement in Matthew, where we read:

*Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from Thee. But He answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet, Jonah* (Matthew 12:38,39).

Considering that God taught the nation Israel to look for a sign, these words seem harsh indeed, but consider what the Pharisees’ question was really saying. The Lord had already performed an abundance of signs or miracles for the Jews. Indeed, much of His earthly ministry had already taken place by this time. Just a little earlier in this same chapter the Lord had done a miracle for them, and they said that He did it by Beelzebub, the prince of the demons. When they came to Him and said, “We would see a sign,” it meant they had rejected all that He had done so far!

This was precisely why the Lord said that a wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign. He meant *at that late date!* Having clearly rejected all the signs that had already borne abundant proof of His claims, they said, “We would see another!” It was at this point in His ministry that the Lord began to turn His ministry from the public to the private presentation of Himself. He began to hide the truth from the multitudes by speaking to them in parables. In the earthly ministry of the Lord this was truly a dramatic point that few have appreciated.

The next appointed national sign was, as the Lord said, that of the prophet Jonah. This referred to the Lord’s future death and resurrection being a sign to the nation that His words were indeed true. Following that sign was to be the sign of the great day of Israel’s Pentecost. This would come in part as the fulfilling of prophecy and also as the promise of power from on high.
that would inaugurate the so-called “great commission.”

Concerning this great outpouring of signs, the Lord said:

*And, behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high* (Luke 24:49).

In Mark’s account of this commission we read:

*And these signs shall follow them that believe: In My name shall they cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues; 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* (Mark 16:17,18).

The Lord did not cut off His dealings with the nation Israel at the cross nor start a new Body on the day of Pentecost. Having forgiven Israel’s ignorance at the crucifixion, God again appealed to the chosen nation and offered the return of the Lord Jesus and the times of refreshing (which is the kingdom). He bore witness to His offer with signs and wonders of the Holy Spirit performed by the hand of the Apostles.

Consistent with the sign ministry as a whole, on the day of Pentecost national Israel was still in view, and the ministry was very much in accord with prophecy. There is no hint of the revelation of the mystery or the formation of the secret Body of Christ.

As the Acts ministry continued, it became evident that the majority in Israel and especially their leaders did not receive this great display of spiritual power. Subsequently, God allowed them to come to a place where in accordance with His purpose they proved themselves to be no better than the Gentiles and were concluded in unbelief and alienation. The point at which this happened was also the practical end of the sign ministry to the nation Israel. This was where God began to set the nation Israel aside, not in accordance with prophecy but in accordance with the mystery. The point of which we speak was the stoning of Stephen (who was full of the Holy Spirit) and the salvation of Saul of Tarsus.
Have They Ceased?

Have the sign gifts ceased? The answer is a simple and, we believe, a scriptural “Yes.” As to when they ceased, we would say, “When God had fully set aside the sign nation.” In the present dispensation of grace when God is not dealing with national Israel or her prophetic program, there are simply no sign gifts in operation. God will one day resume His dealings with that program and will also in that day reinstate the sign gifts, but that is not until after the close of this secret program at the rapture of the Church which is His Body. Probably the most difficult thing for many people to understand in this regard is the fact that all the way through the Acts period miracles were performed by many of the saints, including the Apostle Paul.

Some would reason this is proof that sign gifts continue even today; however, this reasoning ignores two important things. First, there was a transition period between the two programs. During the transition, God gradually closed His dealings with the nation Israel while at the same time He ushered in this present program of grace. Those who received sign gifts during this time (which ended with the close of the Book of Acts) were used to provoke Israel to jealousy and to show that God had superseded them by sending His blessing to the Gentiles.

The second thing we must remember about Paul’s miracle-working power is that he was given this ability as the sign of an Apostle, as he stated in 2 Corinthians 12:12.

One of the most important passages on the subject of the ceasing of the sign gifts is found in 1 Corinthians 13, which we need to study in some detail.

While there is no argument that at that time in the Acts ministry the Corinthians were practicing the sign gifts, here the Apostle Paul documented the time when these gifts would cease. As Paul set the scene here, he began in 1 Corinthians 12 with their most urgent need to recognize the unity or the oneness in the Body rather than carnally exalting one individual over another because of a difference of spiritual gifts.

This overall context of 1 Corinthians 12–14 affords us with
an excellent opportunity to notice several common errors concerning the sign gifts.

The first such error is that the reason people do not have the gifts of the Holy Spirit (or Pentecostal power) today is that we are not spiritual enough or that we do not have enough faith. But the Corinthians are ample proof that this is not the reason believers do not experience these gifts today. Of all the New Testament churches there was none more carnal and unspiritual than the Corinthians. This Epistle is filled with rebukes of their carnal ways, yet these carnal Corinthians experienced all of the sign gifts.

Obviously, it was not their spirituality or lack of it that determined whether or not they possessed these abilities. The issue is: Were they still part of God’s program of grace? This is also very much the issue today. Are these gifts still part of God’s present program? Since God set aside the kingdom program, the answer is “No.”

How much confusion would be eliminated if believers would rightly divide the Word on this subject. Some are wrongly trying to spiritualize Luke 24:49 and believe that they must “pray through” for the gifts of the Spirit or tarry for the second blessing (or as some also call it, “the second work of grace”). These are simply wrong interpretations and wrong applications of verses that pertained to the kingdom program.

Many today have exalted the gifts for the gifts’ sake (such as the Corinthians also did). These have so persistently sought for something representing this power that Satan has amply accommodated them. He has beguiled them into thinking that a number of the nonsensical things they do are actually bona-fide examples of such gifts as tongues, interpretation of tongues, or miracles of healing. In reality they are a sham and a disgrace to those who confuse others with their error.

Let us look where Paul gave clear instruction concerning the end of what were genuine sign gifts. In 1 Corinthians 13:1–8 Paul taught the Corinthians to seek to know and manifest the love of God, because without it none of the gifts meant anything. Furthermore, love will still be needful and remain after
the gifts have ceased. All of God’s will for the believer—in edifying one another and laboring for Him—can be accomplished by walking in His love without any sign gifts at all. Our continuing need is for an intimate knowledge of Christ and His love according to God’s present economy—His present purpose in Christ Jesus. In verse 8 we read:

Love never faileth; but whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away (1 Corinthians 13:8).

When Paul said that “love never faileth [or fails],” he simply meant that love will never fail to exist. Next he said, “whether there be prophecies, they shall fail.” Here the word fail did not mean that prophecies would not come true. He meant that the gift of prophecy would be rendered inactive or be done away. Exactly when this would happen Paul explained further on, but notice also that it says that tongues shall cease. This literally means that the gift of tongues would stop.

What exactly the gift of tongues was has been a confusion to many. In short, the gift of tongues was the supernatural ability to speak an earthly, foreign language without having ever learned it. The word tongues should be thought of by the translation languages. The gibberish that men claim is the gift of tongues today is utter nonsense and absolutely unscriptural. The gift of tongues was primarily given to the Apostles for the fulfilling of their kingdom commission, that is, so they could miraculously speak the language of any other nation in communicating the gospel of the kingdom.

This is exactly what they did in Acts 2:5–13, and there is never any exception. This Pentecostal gift was explicitly one of the sign gifts to the nation Israel.

Some today in falsely claiming an angelic or an unknown tongue turn to 1 Corinthians 13:1 or 1 Corinthians 14:22 for their proof. But even when these gifts were in order, they were still human languages.

When angels spoke to men, they always spoke human languages. The word unknown in 14:2 is in italics in the KJV and is
not actually in the Greek text. The only implication of the word *unknown* is that the language or tongue would be foreign to most of the brethren. For instance, if one walked into a Greek-speaking assembly and spoke in the Hebrew tongue, that language would be unknown. The Corinthians had this gift (as with all the gifts) to provoke the unsaved Jews to jealousy. This was only allowed while God was still dealing with the sign nation—Israel. The most important point of this gift in 1 Corinthians 13:8, however, is that it was going to cease, and just when we shall see.

Verse 8 says that knowledge shall vanish away. Here again, it did not mean that people would not know anything, but rather that the *gift* of knowledge would be rendered inactive or be done away. This is the gift that Peter had in Acts 5, when he knew that Ananias and Sapphira had lied concerning the sale of their property. Paul went on:

> For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away (1 Corinthians 13:9, 10).

As Paul revealed the timing of the end of these sign gifts, he set up a contrast in verses 9 through 13 between a *now* time and a *then* time or a coming time. It was a difference between the time at which he wrote this Epistle and a time future to that day. So he said, “Now [and that would be *now* as I am writing] we know in part and we prophesy in part.” This had to do with the fact that the sign gifts were temporary in nature and had no permanent place in God’s program for the Body of Christ of which these Corinthians were members. Rather, they had to do with the short-term ministry of the kingdom gospel to Israel. But with that program rapidly being set aside, Paul prepared them for the end of that sign ministry.

Paul said in verse 10 that when that which was perfect was come these partial things would be done away. Obviously, the question is what did it mean when it said, “…when that which is perfect is come” (1 Corinthians 13:10)?

Paul’s reference here to something *perfect* that was coming is often taken to mean the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.
However, we believe that this is not the case for several reasons. The first reason is the word *perfect* itself. The word *perfect* is not the Greek word meaning *moral perfection* but rather the word meaning *completeness*. Also, the gender of the word in the Greek is the *neuter gender* rather than the masculine gender, as one would expect if it were a reference to Christ.

Another important reason is the context itself. Paul made an illustration in verse 11 to emphasize the nature of the need to be ready for a change to take place. The illustration also has the two time elements, *now* and *then*, which also answer to *immaturity* and *maturity* or *incomplete* and *complete*. The Corinthians were being asked to grow up into Christ—into the dispensational change that God was preparing to make that would vitally affect them.

Verse 12 again presents the *now* and *then* format, but it is important to know that verse 12 basically repeats what was said in verses 9 and 10. It does this in two separate statements. First, he said:

*For now we see in a mirror, darkly; but then face to face...*

(1 Corinthians 13:12).

The *now* when he saw through a glass darkly was the time of his writing this letter. The *glass* was something looked into with the object of seeing a reflected image. It probably would have been a flat piece of shiny metal in Paul’s day, but for our purpose the word *mirror* conveys the thought best. So he said now we see darkly, that is, the image is not perfectly clear. But then, that is after that which is complete is come, the image will be face to face or perfectly clear. Verse 12 goes on to say this another way:

*...now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.*

This statement provides the best commentary of all on what Paul meant by the *perfect* or *completed* thing that was coming. He was speaking of the completed *knowledge* or the *revelations* God was giving him concerning the *mystery*—this present program of grace. The two phrases “I know in part” and “then shall I
“know” are especially important. The word for know in the phrase “I know in part” means to know but is modified by the words in part. But the Greek word for know in the phrase “then shall I know” is a word which means to fully know.

Paul was really saying, “Then shall I fully know even as I am known.” Thus, Paul was telling the Corinthians that when he would have the full knowledge (the completed revelations) concerning the mystery program, this would be when God would have fully ushered in the present dispensation. Israel’s kingdom dispensation and the sign gifts would be set aside.

Paul was saying that at the time he was writing the Corinthians he had only part of the revelations, but then he would have them all. In Galatians Paul said concerning the truths he taught:

For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:12).

In 2 Corinthians Paul said:

It is not expedient for me, doubtless, to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord (2 Corinthians 12:1).

But turning to his later Epistles we can clearly understand the exact timing of when those perfect or complete revelations came. In Ephesians Paul prayed that God would give to the saints:

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him (Ephesians 1:17).

Here the Greek word for knowledge is the same word for full knowledge that Paul used in 1 Corinthians 13:12 when he said “then shall I fully know.” When Paul wrote to the Ephesians, he did indeed fully know. God had given him the full complement of revelations, and he then prayed that the Ephesians would understand God’s secret program in its fullness.

Paul also confirmed this in another of his later Epistles. God’s revelations given through Paul fulfilled or completed the Word of God for the present dispensation.
Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill [fill-full or complete] the word of God; Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints (Colossians 1:25,26).

This means the Colossians (and we) can now fully know God’s new dispensation.

In Colossians 2:2 Paul used this word full knowledge which is there translated acknowledgment. Paul explained that his great desire was for the Colossians to have all the riches of the full assurance of understanding to the acknowledgment (or really, in the full knowledge) of the mystery! The purpose of God and His love in Christ can now be fully known. What joy we can now have to fully know Him! What a privilege to be able to serve Him with the greatest gifts of all—His abiding love and grace!

By the latter part of Paul’s ministry that perfect thing had come—that complete understanding of God’s present program—and that is precisely when the sign gifts fully ceased. Now we can clearly understand the instruction of 1 Corinthians 13:12, and we have a firm basis to proclaim that the sign gifts have indeed ceased.

Consistent with this, as we would expect, in Paul’s later Epistles we find Paul himself as well as his helpers unable to perform miracles any longer. Philippians 2:25–27; 1 Timothy 5:23; and 2 Timothy 4:20 are suggested in this regard.

We emphasize that we do believe that God can still heal sickness and do wonderful things, but we do not believe that these are manifested as sign gifts of the Holy Spirit, nor do we hold that believers are able to either possess or perform these sign gifts. We are simply not under the kingdom dispensation.

As to the fact that many in the Pentecostal (charismatic) movement seem to be so successful, they are being beguiled by the adversary (or the flesh) into thinking that they possess the sign gifts. They are therefore reaping the fruit of not rightly dividing the Scriptures. People are settling for far less than what the true sign gifts actually were. It would seem that they are easy prey for just about anything that Satan or the flesh conjures up.
in the name of the Holy Spirit. We understand that many in this movement are sincere and well-meaning, but that does not negate that they have fallen into doctrinal error which has ultimately detracted from their spiritual growth and caused much despair.

May we who understand what the true gifts of God are in this dispensation use them diligently and lovingly to the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ and the edifying of the Body of Christ.
Chapter 10
The Believer’s Walk

What a blessed truth; all the saved are able to walk pleasing to God! All the saved are able to walk in close fellowship and joy with Him. The true believer is able to walk in victory over sin! This victorious walk is not an issue of rules—do this; don’t do that. It is obeying Him out of love and gratitude in the power of the Holy Spirit, not in the power of the flesh.

The subject of the believer’s walk is certainly an important truth of the Word of God. It is especially important that we approach this subject scripturally. We want saints to have a full understanding with a view to implementing the wonderful provision God has made for us in this area. We also want to answer those who say that grace is a license to sin, or that it leads believers to a head knowledge but falls short in practical godly living.

The Greek word *walk* means *to walk about* and has to do with our *conduct* or our daily, practical living. The Pauline Epistles as well as the whole Word of God are full of exhortations concerning the believer’s walk. In every dispensation the outworking of faith in God’s Word has been a godly walk. We believe, however, that in this present dispensation of grace believers are especially able and responsible to live spiritual, godly lives.

This subject focuses on our condition or our *state* as believers in this life and is meant to be in perfect harmony with our *standing* or our position in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Pauline Epistles alone reveal the dispensation of grace and the calling and destiny of the church in this dispensation.
Also, Paul’s Epistles alone fully reveal the truth concerning the provision for and the appropriation of the victorious, godly walk of the saint in this present dispensation.

Paul refers to the believer’s walk many times in a variety of exhortations. To cite a few, the believer is told to walk worthy of his calling in Ephesians 4:1, to walk in good works in Ephesians 2:10, to walk in love in Ephesians 5:2, to walk circumspectly in Ephesians 5:15, to walk in the Spirit in Romans 8:4 and Galatians 5:16, to walk in newness of life in Romans 6:4, to walk in Him in Colossians 2:6, to walk in wisdom in Colossians 4:5, and to walk to please God in 1 Thessalonians 4:1.

We will consider many of these exhortations later in the study, but as we proceed now, we approach this subject in four points:

• Principles of the believer’s walk
• Provision for the believer’s walk
• Exhortations concerning the believer’s walk
• Reward of the godly walk

PRINCIPLES OF THE BELIEVER’S WALK
The main principle of the believer’s walk in this dispensation of grace is simple and yet very profound. It is based upon the Holy Spirit and the grace of God. This sets the tone for our entire study.

Our walk is not based upon the principle of the fear of God’s wrath but upon gratitude that causes obedience because of His grace. Our walk is not a walk empowered by the flesh but by the Holy Spirit.

Can the Spirit-led walk under grace be more godly and consistent than the fearful walk of the flesh under the law? We answer with an unqualified and resounding “Yes!” This is the whole thrust of the Pauline Epistles on this subject.

Grace, through the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, is the only thing that could save the sinner from the penalty of sin under the law, and grace through the empowerment of the Holy
Spirit is the only thing that can deliver the saint from the dominion of sin in his daily life.

Indeed, grace not only provides for but demands that we in this dispensation live on the very highest spiritual ground—far higher than could ever be possible under the law of Moses. This principle of grace motivation and spiritual empowerment begins in the believer’s life at the moment of his salvation. At the moment of salvation the Holy Spirit not only regenerates the believer but also takes up permanent residence within the believer.

From this point on the believer possesses two natures. One is the flesh and its influence upon the mind (the old nature), and the other is our regenerated spirit (the new nature). The Holy Spirit now indwells us and seeks to influence our spirit. This then becomes the life-long battle between the flesh and the Spirit. The victory of this battle has already been won and is ours by faith as we walk in the Spirit obeying God’s Word. This is the experience of every believer in this dispensation of grace. This is a principle that governs all the saints without exception and is the basis for our saying that we deny that man’s sinful nature is ever eradicated in this life. Thus Paul said:

For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would (Galatians 5:17).

The Book of Romans tells us there is a law connected with each nature. Romans 7:23 tells us that there is a law of sin that is in our members. This law says that the flesh can only sin. The flesh cannot please God, and this remains true even in the believer. The other law is in Romans 8:2 and is the law of the Spirit, that of life in Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit gives life in Christ both upon salvation and ever after within the believer. This is a law and means that in the Spirit we can live lives that are pleasing to God; we can live in victory over sin. Therefore, living in the flesh can only produce sin, but living in the Spirit will never lead a person into sin. We see the battle lines clearly drawn. These two natures being active in the believer call for obedience to choose to walk in the Spirit and to refuse to walk in sin.
We must never forget that even while this battle goes on in the flesh here, we also have at the same time a glorious position and righteous standing in Christ as a result of the work of the Holy Spirit through regeneration. This position can never change and, in fact, becomes one of the chief objects of the exhortations to walk in the Spirit rather than in the flesh.

**PROVISION FOR THE BELIEVER’S WALK**

**Power and Victory**

The first area of our provision is in the empowerment and victory that we have already been given. That power is vested in the Holy Spirit Himself. It is the Holy Spirit within that is the basis of the believer’s victorious walk. We never have to pray for the power of the Spirit to indwell us or for the victory of the Spirit to come upon us because these things are already in us. All that is left for the believer to do is to understand and believe what the Word of God teaches on this point and walk in this truth by faith.

We do not have to try in the flesh to somehow come up with the power. We are not in any way dependent upon our human strength for this endeavor. To quickly demonstrate this truth, Titus 3:5 teaches that we were regenerated by the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:13 calls this the baptism of the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ. Romans 6:3 teaches further that the Spirit literally baptized or placed us into Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection, and 2 Corinthians 5:5 with Ephesians 1:14 teach that the Holy Spirit then took up permanent dwelling within us.

Paul drew from these very facts:

*But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also give life to your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you* (Romans 8:11).

This verse speaks of the spiritual power that resides in all believers regardless of how long they have been saved. No believer has a greater or a lesser portion of this power, but all have been empowered alike. The quickening of our mortal bod-
ies here is literally giving life or power to us in this body to live in victory over sin—now. Paul continued:

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh (Romans 8:12).

The truth is that we do not have to live in sin. We are debtors to live in the Spirit, and we have the ability in any given case not to sin. This does not mean we cannot sin, but it absolutely means that we do not have to sin! We say again: We do not have to pray for victory; rather, accept the fact that we already have the victorious power within!

**Implementation or Appropriation**
The next area of provision is how we implement or appropriate this power. God has not left us dependent upon human resources or circumstances to be able to put this power to use. We would define this provision with one word: faith. Faith believes what God says, i.e., God’s Word, and faith obeys God’s Word. When God tells the things He has done within the saint, faith will simply accept the truth and appropriate and implement that power for an obedient walk.

We do not have to pray the power down or try to work it up. We rather choose to obey the Word of God, and God meets our step of faith with the power that is already within us to carry out our obedience.

**Motivation**
Another area of provision is the motivation for our godly walk. Perhaps the best example of this provision is found in Titus:

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present age; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a people of His own, zealous of good works (Titus 2:11–14).
Here we learn the great truth that grace not only saves but that it is our teacher. This quality of unmerited favor that God displays in salvation also motivates the believer to live in gratitude for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace works by the Spirit through love rather than by the law through fear. God wants us to walk in the Spirit willingly out of gratitude, not to live by a fearful adherence to a legalistic code.

If we were still under the law of Moses, we would be doomed to live in sin because the law is weak on account of the flesh. To try to keep the law is to try to walk in the flesh. We have already looked at the fixed principle or law governing the flesh and sin. The flesh can only sin, so to dwell on the flesh as under the law of commandments can only result in failure. This failure brings about condemnation, and condemnation brings guilt and death.

The law is a fearful and failing system because of the fallen nature of man. Even the saved man, because he still possesses the old nature, is bound to fail if he tries to operate under this system. But the grace of God does not teach us to live by fear, nor in the flesh, but in the Spirit. Grace teaches us to live godly lives as we look for the appearing of the very One who by grace saved us with His own blood:

*Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13).*

Here we see the basis for our motivation. Christ gave Himself for us so that He might redeem us from all iniquity. This means that not only are we redeemed from judgment for our iniquities but that we are redeemed from the power of iniquity. By His grace He has enabled us to be free from the bondage of sin. He has purified to Himself a peculiar people or a people of His own who by His grace through the Spirit within can be zealous of good works.

Grace never teaches men to sin, nor does it permit or license men to sin in any respect. Those who teach otherwise are looking at grace from a human aspect that would naturally take sin-
ful advantage of its benefits. To those who are in the Spirit, grace becomes the great principle of motivation that speaks of Christ’s love, sacrifice, and His power in our lives. From this vantage point grace produces a zeal toward godliness and good works that are done in the Spirit and truly honoring to the Lord.

**Is Grace A License to Sin?**

“Does grace excuse sin in our lives, or does it mean that we will not have to answer for sinful activity?” The answer is: No, grace does not excuse sin, and it does not teach that we will not have to give an account for living in sin. Grace, in fact, tells us that with provision so full and free, if we choose to disobey the Word of God, we *will* have to give an answer for our actions at the judgment seat of Christ. The issue there, however, will not be our salvation for that issue was settled at Calvary when we trusted Christ. The issue at the judgment seat of Christ will be service rendered to the Lord as believers. We may mark well that there will be a terrible loss of reward for those who have shunned a godly walk and chosen a life in the flesh.

Does this mean in reality that God is trying to frighten us into obedience? No, not at all. God in love is leading, enabling, and encouraging us to obey. The fear under the law was that man’s only resource was the flesh, and therefore, condemnation and judgment were sure. There simply was no hope, no peace—only and always a fearful looking for judgment.

Under grace our judgment is past (because it was borne by Christ), and we have peace with God. We have the Holy Spirit within, and we have the greatest motivational force in existence as our teacher. Victory and joy are only a step of faith away. In order to fail a person literally has to choose to fail and choose to quench the spiritual provision God has made. God tells us such action will indeed be called into account at the appearing of our Lord. This will be a judgment based upon His superabundant grace and love toward one who had the provision of Almighty God to walk in the Spirit and who chose to disobey. This is a judgment of our service and affects our rewards, not our salvation.
Life in the Spirit

Paul also refers to the difference between a life in the Spirit under grace and life under the law in fear:

*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 (Romans 8:14,15).*

In the context of these verses Paul was addressing the difference between walking in the flesh and walking in the Spirit.

In chapter 7 as a whole and in the first 15 verses of chapter 8, Paul was discussing the very fact that the law cannot bring godliness in the believer’s life. This is true because the law operates by the flesh and brings fear and condemnation, but the Spirit brings life and power and does not operate by fear but by grace.

Verse 14 means that as many as walk in the Spirit—they who in obedience to the Spirit’s leading live in godliness—they are the *sons* of God. The term *sons* of God here carries the meaning of the *personifications* of God. This means that those living in the Spirit are living as saints (who are born into God’s family) *should* live. They are sons of God. They are the personifications of God’s spiritual life within. Paul continued to explain the provision for this in verse 15 by declaring that we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear. The spirit of bondage is the spirit of the law of Moses.

Had that system been placed back upon us after our salvation, we would again be in bondage to live in the flesh under fear.

*For sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law but under grace (Romans 6:14).*

Sin’s power has been broken because we do not have to depend on the flesh, living in fear under the law. Sin dominated men under the law because they did not have a new nature but were dependent upon the flesh—which can only sin. But sin cannot dominate us now because we have a new nature and are not under the law. We are now dependent upon spiritual power.
and under grace. This is a completely different system. We now have spiritual life and spiritual power, and grace is our banner. We no longer have to sin! So we have not received that spirit of bondage again to fear, but we have received the Spirit of adoption or the Spirit of Sonship, whereby we cry, “Abba, Father.”

We have been placed by the Holy Spirit into God’s family as full-grown sons with all the blessings and privileges that are vested in Christ. Rather than crying “woe is me” under the law, we cry “Abba, Father [that is, Father, our Father],” and we rejoice as sons of God who can live like sons of God.

EXHORTATIONS ABOUT THE BELIEVER’S WALK

We must realize that exhortations concerning the believer’s walk are based upon the principles and provisions we have been discussing, and our understanding of those truths is fundamental to obeying the exhortations.

One of the main passages that every believer in this dispensation should master in the area of the believer’s walk is Romans 6. This chapter directly addresses this subject with both instruction and exhortation designed to fully prepare the saint for a victorious life.

Know, Reckon, Yield

The chapter can be summarized by three words: *know, reckon, and yield*. These three words will make the difference between walking in the victory we have in Christ and walking in disobedience and sin.

In chapter 5 Paul had just finished expounding the basic issues of sin, death, and the gift of grace. He finished the chapter by saying that as sin had reigned unto death (and that would be under the law) now grace reigns unto eternal life, and that, of course, began with this dispensation of grace. We need to study Paul’s next remark:

*What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound* (Romans 6:1).
This may seem like an unusual question, but it directly faces the opponents of grace and their human logic. Humanly, they might reason, “If sin caused grace to abound and shine so brightly, then a continuance in sin under the law will make grace abound even more.” The result of this logic is, of course, that grace allows sin to continue unabated! Paul defeated this logic by basically declaring that God manifested the riches of His grace to take away sin—not to allow it to continue.

Romans 5 teaches that sin and death have been defeated and overcome by the gift of God’s grace—not just overcome in that we will not be judged, but much more. We can now live free from sin’s power. Grace dethroned sin both from condemning us to hell and from controlling our lives now that we are saved. This was God’s purpose, and this is what His grace accomplished—it defeated sin in the flesh. Exactly how it did this, Paul went on to explain. Verse 2 continues:

God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer in it (Romans 6:2).

In other words, Paul said, “How shall we that have been separated from sin through death, choose to return to its control?” It would be ridiculous, indeed, but that is exactly what disobedient believers have done. They have allowed sin to continue to control their lives when they should not and need not submit to its power. Paul continued:

Know ye not, that as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death (Romans 6:3)?

Here the first of our three-word outline of this chapter is found. It is the word know. This is something every believer should understand. Every single person who has trusted Christ as his Savior has died with Christ. He was actually placed into Christ’s very death. This is the meaning of the word baptism here, and it has nothing to do with a water ceremony. This is the baptism that is spoken of in 1 Corinthians, where it says:

For by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body... (1 Corinthians 12:13).
This was accomplished at the moment of our salvation, and it is at this point when the believing sinner is identified with Christ. The knowledge of our identification with Christ is fundamental to our victorious walk. Paul clarified this even further:

*Therefore, we are buried with Him by baptism into death… (Romans 6:4).*

We were actually accounted to have been buried with Him by baptism—identified with His death. Paul continued:

“*…that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life* (Romans 6:4).

We died, were buried, and raised with Him, that just as He has finished dealing with sin, so we should now walk in newness of life—this resurrection life and power that is ours in Christ. Verse 5 goes on to say:

*For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection (Romans 6:5).*

The phrase *planted together in the likeness of His death* means the exact same thing as the phrase *baptized into His death.* This should dispel any confusion about the meaning of the term *baptism* here. Paul said that if this has happened (and we know that for every believer it has), then we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection. This does not have reference to the future resurrection day but to the believer’s life *now.* Verse 4 says we should walk in newness of life, and verse 5 calls this the likeness of His resurrection.

This is talking about that resurrection power within every believer. We can and should live in that power now. Paul said in verses 6 and 7 that we can do this:

*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. For he that is dead is free from sin (Romans 6:6,7).*

Once we know this, we are then to simply reckon or account it
to be so. To reckon is to count something as fact—to put it to account! Verse 11 says:

Likewise, reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ, our Lord (Romans 6:11).

Verses 12 through 16 complete the thought with the word yield. To yield is to obey. It is a step of faith. The power is there— we have died and been raised in Him—we must only but reckon (account) it to be so and yield our members as instruments of righteousness. This is walking in that true resurrection life that Paul spoke of in two other passages in his Epistles. The first is in Ephesians:

And what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places (Ephesians 1:19,20).

In this passage Paul prayed that the believer might have a full knowledge of Christ in three important areas. One of these is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe. This is the same power that raised Christ from the dead and actually dwells in us. It is ours to use by faith, and no believer should fail to understand the abundance of the provision that God has made for us in this area. The result of walking in this power is lives that are fruitful for Him. In saving us God not only glorified Himself through the display of His great power but made it possible that we through that power might be vessels who are sanctified and fit for His use. Another passage in this regard is in Philippians:

That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead (Philippians 3:10,11).

It is important to see here that this was Paul speaking as a believer of knowing Christ. He did not mean knowing Christ as Savior; Paul already knew Him that way. Paul meant the practi-
cal, experiential knowledge we acquire as we grow in Him and get to know Him more and more. Paul made this request as one who knew all of the truths of the mystery. Paul did not ask for more information; he asked to know Him! Paul said that he wanted to know the power of His resurrection. This again is now.

Paul desired to live in that resurrection power that would cause his life to be Christ-like in every way. He also called it “the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death.” This meant that Paul wanted to know the kind of godliness and obedience that caused Christ to suffer and even be put to death.

Paul continued this thought in verse 11 by making use of a special word. He said:

*If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead* (Philippians 3:11).

The word resurrection here is the normal word for resurrection but with a prefix that means out. Paul wanted to attain to the out-resurrection. This was not in reference to a future day but then in his immediate walk. To attain here means to reach or actually to arrive at something, and that something is basically what verse 10 is describing.

Verse 11, therefore, sums up verse 10, and that was why Paul used this special word. In verse 11 Paul referred to a resurrection that had already happened. He referred to power that had already been displayed. He was talking about a life that had put to death the flesh and lived in the power of the resurrected Christ—a life in the power of the Spirit.

Paul was referring to exactly the same thing that he did in Romans 6:4: “…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.” We should walk in that newness of resurrection life and power that is ours in Christ. This was what Paul wanted for himself, and this is exactly what each of us should want in our lives as believers. Paul continued in Philippians:

*Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect…* (Philippians 3:12).
None of us can say we have fully arrived at this perfect or complete spiritual maturity. None of us can say our practical lives are perfectly sanctified in every way. But Paul did go on to say:

…but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:12).

The words follow after have the thought of to follow after with the idea of catching. The meaning, therefore, is really that of pursuit. Paul was saying, “But I am in pursuit of that resurrection life, if that I may apprehend or lay hold of that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.”

Paul wanted to lay hold of that for which he had been laid hold of by Christ. And for what did the Lord lay hold of Paul and all believers? We are to walk in newness of life, to lay hold of that resurrection power, and to live in the Spirit in victory over the power of sin. God saved us that we might serve Him with all our hearts. He also gave us the power to do just that, and now He says that this should be our pursuit.

Paul said in verses 13 and 14:

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind [the earthly things of verses 5 and 6], and reaching forth unto those things which are before [what he seeks to apprehend], I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:13,14).

These words press toward the mark mean to pursue the goal. Paul reached forth for those things that were before him; he pursued the goal for the prize of the high calling. Paul had a goal in his life. It was something that he always kept before him and toward which he always reached. Everything else in his life was subordinate to this mark, and he never wanted anything to keep him from his pursuit.

Without this goal in our lives, we will not accomplish that for which God apprehended us. A man without a goal is like a ship without a rudder. Out on the sea of life, he will go aimlessly adrift. No believer need be adrift and at the mercy of the
flesh. We all must have this particular goal before us and pursue the goal through an appropriation of that spiritual power.

The prize is to be commended for our service and to receive a reward from the Lord Jesus. Paul here was basing this goal upon the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, and it is not without significance that he did this. It was the common method of Paul in his Epistles to base the exhortations and the motivations to a godly walk upon the blessed calling we have in Christ. In Ephesians we read another significant exhortation:

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called (Ephesians 4:1).

The exhortation here means to walk in balance with or to live in equality with our vocation. Vocation here is really the word calling. We are to walk or to live equal to the calling to which we were called.

The word therefore at the beginning of this verse tells us that Paul was exhorting them (and us) based upon something he had already stated. That something is the blessed position and hope we have as members of the church, the Body of Christ. All through chapters 1, 2, and 3 of this Ephesians letter, Paul has been declaring the glorious blessings we have in Christ. Chapter 1 sees us as blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ.

Chapter 2 contrasts in two ways what we were with what we are now in Christ. First, we were sons of disobedience and children of wrath by wicked works, which made us aliens from the life of God.

Second, we were outside of the commonwealth of Israel, separate from the chosen nation and without God in the world.

But now, the glory of God’s secret purpose in Christ has been made known. He has revealed the mystery—a secret program in which He is building a joint body, a new man, of both Jews and Gentiles reconciled by the cross. We who were once dead in trespasses and sins are now alive in Him and seated in heavenly places. This is our glorious calling, and it is based upon this glorified position we have in Christ that we are exhorted to walk worthy (to walk in balance).
Has God equipped us for this walk? Yes, He has more than equipped us, as we have been studying. He has fully equipped us for victory over the flesh, and as Ephesians 4 teaches us, He has fully equipped us for doctrinal purity and spiritual growth within the Body.

**Be Filled with the Spirit**

Another great exhortation of this Epistle is to be filled with the Spirit:

> And be not drunk with wine, in which is excess, but be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).

This is but one of many exhortations in the second half of Ephesians that shows the pattern of exhortation based upon doctrine. Chapters 1, 2, and 3 are doctrinal or positional truth; chapters 4, 5, and 6 are practical truths based upon those positional truths. That is not to say there is no practical truth concerning the believer’s walk in the first three chapters, because there is. But in the overall sense the Epistle follows this pattern.

In Ephesians 4:1 we are told to walk worthy. In 4:17 we are told to walk not as other Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind. We are not to walk as we once did. Verse 20 says that we have not so learned Christ. That is, we did not learn from Him to live in the flesh, but rather (as verses 22 through 24 continue), we learned to put off the old man (the former manner of life), to be renewed in our mind, and to put on the new man.

> And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us... (Ephesians 5:2).

> See, then, that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise (Ephesians 5:15).

The word *circumspectly* means *accurately*, and so we are told to walk accurately, or to walk as becometh saints so that we will be fruitful for the Lord rather than a hindrance to the ministry of the truth.

Thus, when Paul tells us to “be filled with the Spirit,” he is using a term that is the key to all other exhortations. In a sense they are synonymous because they all have to do with that life
which is yielded to the Spirit’s power and leading. This is what it means to be filled with the Spirit.

This is by no means an exhortation related to the promise of being filled with the Spirit under the “kingdom program.” Under that previous program believers were filled with the miracle-working power of the Spirit. Their walk also was to be a walk of faith, but faith in accordance with the kingdom promises and instructions (which included miracle-working power).

The walk of the believer today is not in accordance with those kingdom promises. Paul’s exhortations are consistent with the present program of grace. This means that we by faith choose to obey the Spirit’s leading. We choose to obey the Word of God, and the life of the Spirit is manifest in us as we do. This has the same meaning as in Galatians, where Paul said:

*This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh (Galatians 5:16).*

To walk in the Spirit is to yield to the Spirit’s leading—to obey the Word of God from a grateful heart. God has fully given us this ability; by obeying His Word, we lay hold on that abundant life in the Spirit—by faith.

Among these many exhortations not to walk in the flesh, we might well pose the question: “What does God expect us to do if we do sin?” The answer is to face it for what it is: *sin*—and turn from it. In 1 Corinthians Paul said:

*Awake to righteousness, and sin not… (1 Corinthians 15:34).*

We must recognize sin for what it is and forsake it. Sin is a destroyer—it kills. It is always harmful to man. It embodies something that is against God’s will and against His design for our blessing.

God in love delivered us from sin’s power and its awful consequences, and it behooves us to forsake it lest we be harmed by it. We do not want to be guilty of carnality or of choosing to live in the flesh. Carnality will show despite to the love of God and will surely ruin our testimony and our joyful walk.

While no sin can ever change our righteous standing in Christ or the love of God for us, sin in our lives will hinder our
joyful walk with the Lord and cause Him to be offended. It will also grieve the Holy Spirit and be a hindrance to spiritual growth.

While God never gets angry and forsakes us or becomes unloving with us if we sin, we must nevertheless realize that He hates sin and has given us many plain instructions about the deadly consequences of sin in our lives. In this state sin will have its natural outworking which is death; remember, sin always has its consequences.

God in His love for us and in His perfect holiness does not want us to live in sin and guilt. He does not intend that we who are in the Spirit should live inconsistently with our calling. Therefore, He will also chasten the sinning saint with both the natural consequences of sin and His own hand of chastening, if necessary.

Living in sin will also cause us to lose rewards for service at the judgment seat of Christ, and so it behooves us to put to death our members upon the earth and walk in the Spirit. To live in the Spirit is life and peace.

Problem or Choice?
What are the main hindrances to a spiritual life, and what about problem sins that believers cannot seem to overcome? The main hindrances to the saint are quite simply the world, the flesh, and the devil. All three are very potent sources of sin and disobedience for the Christian. All three are also very much defeated by the believer’s identification with Christ. We have absolutely been given the victory already over all three of these forces. Therefore, all the believer must do is obey God and walk in the Spirit, and he will never fall prey to any of the forces that oppose the Spirit.

As to problem sins that seem to hold us in bondage and to be almost impossible to forsake, there is one thing that we must know and accept concerning this. These sins are not our problem—they are our choices. There is no sin that cannot be immediately overcome by the power of the Spirit who is in us. This is the truth, and we must accept it.
Any sin that has us in bondage is really our choice. It is certainly not just a problem that we are powerless to control. For some reason the individual chooses to be a servant to that sin when God teaches plainly that we have the power to forsake it and become servants of righteousness.

**REWARD OF A GODLY WALK**

In 1 Corinthians 3:10–17 and in 2 Corinthians 5:10 we read two extremely important passages on this subject. We will only quote the latter reference here. Paul said:

> For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Both this verse and those in 1 Corinthians 3 are straightforward and need to be remembered as we conduct ourselves in this life. Our walk must be circumspect or accurate both as to the doctrine we teach and as to our moral conduct.

We cannot be considered truly godly (no matter how morally pure our life) if we will not stand for the distinctive truth of the Pauline revelation. Those who know this truth, who will not stand for it, and who will not build upon the foundation of the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery will suffer loss of reward before our Lord.

And for those believers who live in ungodly and immoral behavior, they also will have to answer to the Lord, who loves them and yet cannot condone sinful behavior:

> If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him [deny Him our service], He will also deny us [deny us rewards]: If we believe not [if we are unfaithful], yet He abideth faithful; He cannot deny Himself (2 Timothy 2:12,13).

The Lord will keep His Word; He will be faithful whether by rewarding us or by withholding reward. May we whose hearts have been won by grace so walk to please Him.
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Chapter 11
Baptism

Perhaps no other doctrine has caused so much division and contention within the ranks of fundamentalists as the subject of baptism. Even among the many denominations there is great disagreement as to many details in the administration of this ceremony.

The confusion is not with the clarity of the subject in the Word of God; it is with the failure of many believers to recognize both the meaning of the word in Scripture and the right division of Scripture on this subject.

We of the “grace movement” are certainly in the minority when it comes to the stand consistent with the Pauline revelation for us today: Israel’s water baptism has no place in this present dispensation of grace.

Our stand has caused many to “turn us off,” so to speak, and to be unwilling to hear what we believe the Scriptures teach on this subject. We believe this subject is of utmost importance to believers today.

The Pauline Epistles have much to say about the importance of believers’ baptism. We do believe in baptism. However, we believe in a specific baptism that is unique to this dispensation of grace—one that has nothing to do with a water ceremony.

We believe that water baptism had distinctly to do with Israel’s kingdom program, which is not the program God is administering today. This then becomes the major bone of contention between us and all the baptizing denominations.

We will cover our study of this subject in four basic points:
• The word *baptism*
• Israel’s water baptisms
• Baptism under grace
• Common objections to our view

**THE WORD BAPTISM**

First, let us look at the word itself. The word *baptism* in our English Bibles is what is called a *transliteration*. This means that in many of its occurrences the word has been brought over from the Greek by letter equivalents only and has not actually been translated. A *translation* is when a word is brought from one language into another *by its meaning*. Therefore, the word *baptism* has not really been translated so that the basic meaning is clear.

In the Greek the word *baptize* is *baptizo*. It is a form of the primary verb *bapto*. *Bapto* means to *dip*, but usually means a *temporary condition*—that is, to dip and then to take out again. *Baptizo* means to *immerse permanently*; this is a *permanent change*. It means a *thorough identification*—to be thoroughly identified with something so as to completely change it. Therefore, while *bapto* and *baptizo* are related verbs, they do not share the exact same meaning.

The word *baptism* is *baptisma* (a neuter word). The masculine of *baptisma* is *baptismos*. This word *baptismos* is translated *washings* three times in the New Testament.

*Bapto* is found only three times in the New Testament and is translated *dip* each time (Luke 16:24; John 13:26; Revelation 19:13).

*Baptizo* is transliterated *baptize* 76 times. It is translated *wash* in Mark 7:4 and Luke 11:38.

The primary meaning, therefore, of the word *baptism* is *thorough identification*—so as to completely and permanently change something’s character and condition. We will seek to show conclusively from Scripture that this is an accurate definition.

There are at least twelve different baptisms mentioned in Scripture. Of these twelve, only five involve water. These twelve
baptisms fall into approximately five different groups or categories:

- **Water baptisms**, as in Mark 1:4
- **Death baptism**, as in Luke 12:50 and Romans 6:3
- **Fire baptism**, as in Matthew 3:11
- **Spirit baptism**, which itself has two categories: one in Acts 1:5 and the other in 1 Corinthians 12:13
- **National identity baptism**, in 1 Corinthians 10:1–4

We will say a word about each of these, but for the point of definition, we want to look first at two references in particular.

*But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I constrained till it be accomplished (Luke 12:50)*!

Here, as the Lord spoke to His disciples, He spoke of an event which He called a *baptism* that was future to that present time. This, of course, cannot be a reference to a *water baptism* for Christ had already been baptized by John over a year previous to this account. The Lord was clearly referring to the future day of His death on the cross.

He said that until that day He was constrained or restricted in the sense that the work which He came to accomplish (the fulfillment of the promises made to the fathers and the establishment of the kingdom) depended upon the work of the cross being completed. The main point here for our study, however, is that the word *baptism* is used to describe an event that had nothing to do with water. It was clearly a *death* baptism.

What this means is that Christ was to taste death for every man. He literally was going to be identified with death. He was going to die for our sins. That this baptism was gloriously accomplished is the whole focal point of the Scriptures.

Christ was cut off from the land of the living. He was baptized or placed into death and gloriously raised again the third day. This reference alone is enough to demonstrate the true meaning of the word *baptism*, but let us look at another refer-
ence that is equally revealing. In 1 Corinthians 10 Paul delivered a series of exhortations about godly living, and he made an example of the nation Israel when they were in the wilderness and sinned against God. He started the chapter in a very interesting way:

Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual food; And did all drink the same spiritual drink... (1 Corinthians 10:1–4).

The main point of these verses is that the nation Israel, at this time, enjoyed a number of blessings from God. These were blessings that should have caused them to yield their hearts to God in joyous obedience. But the record goes on to show differently:

But with many of them God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness (1 Corinthians 10:5).

In other words, because of their murmuring and disobedience (which happened in spite of their blessings), God was displeased and had to judge them—not once, but many times during their wilderness journey.

Let us look at just what these blessings were in relation to this word baptism. Verse 1 says that they were all under the cloud. This cloud represented God’s presence and daily guidance. Then the verse says that they all passed through the sea. This means that they all experienced God’s mighty deliverance which was a blessing. The verse says they were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea. Moses was God’s spokesman among the people, and he represented the Word of God in their midst.

Many miraculous signs had been given through Moses to verify that God’s promises of deliverance were true and sure. This verse is telling us that the whole nation was baptized or identified with this man, his leadership, and the blessing he represented. This cannot be a reference to any water ceremony. It says they were baptized unto Moses, that is, identified with or fully placed into
what Moses represented. They were identified with God’s promises through him. The reality of this was *in the cloud* (that is, in the blessing and vindication that the cloud was to them) and *in the sea* (the blessing of deliverance that the sea was to them).

As to the thought of water here, recall from the Book of Exodus that it says the Israelites went through the sea on *dry ground* (Exodus 14:16,22). Indeed, it was the Egyptians, not the Israelites, that got wet (they drowned).

Though this reference may seem obscure, it is a perfectly accurate use of the word *baptism* according to its true meaning. *Baptism* is something that most believers have wrongly taken to mean only one thing—a ceremonial *water* baptism.

Paul’s overall analogy here is that even though Israel had so many blessings, they did not appreciate them and, therefore, sinned and lived in disobedience. The Corinthians, too, were exceedingly blessed by God. In fact, they had been blessed in a way that far exceeded how Israel had been blessed in the wilderness. Yet, as we read the record of this Epistle, the Corinthians had been living in sin and dishonoring the Lord with their lives.

Paul warned them (and us) that God does not permit this kind of indifference to His blessing and that He is prepared to chasten believers for their disobedience. This exhortation is fitting to us all for we know of God’s displeasure with sin in our lives. In light of the wonderful spiritual blessings we have in Christ, it behooves us to live worthy of our calling (Ephesians 4:1,2).

We want to look at two examples in Matthew of the use of the word *baptism* that vindicate the definition of *identification*:

*I, indeed, baptize you with water unto repentance, but He that cometh after Me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire* (Matthew 3:11).

In this verse John is the baptizer, and he baptized them with water. But He tells them that they will be baptized by Christ at a later time and that He will baptize them with the Holy Spirit and with fire. These two baptisms were obviously not with water
nor were they a ceremony at all. The Spirit baptism is when they would be identified with the Holy Spirit’s ministry in Acts, and the manifestation of that identification was at Pentecost when they received the power of the Holy Spirit.

As to the baptism of fire, this is not the gift of tongues as some have thought but rather is when the nation Israel will be identified with or placed into the fire of God’s wrath in the great tribulation. We trust that the basic meaning of this word is becoming increasingly clear. We are now going to take this definition and show how it sheds light on the other baptisms of Scripture.

**ISRAEL’S WATER BAPTISMS**

We continue to maintain that the primary meaning of baptism is that of identification. The Scriptures nowhere present or even suggest that baptism for Israel was a picture of burial or death, or that the Jews ever looked at it that way.

We do understand and teach that Israel’s commanded baptism was a water ceremony. However, we believe that this ceremony represented a particular identification that was by no means new or different to them. In Mark we read:

> John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins (Mark 1:4).

John 1:31 also says:

> And I knew Him not; but that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water (John 1:31).

John’s ministry was to manifest Christ—the Messiah—to Israel and to make straight the path for His coming. John prepared the way for Christ to be revealed by baptizing Jews unto repentance for the remission of sins.

It is interesting to note several points here. John did not just baptize as he preached—he preached baptism. This means that for one to be prepared for the coming of Christ that one had to be baptized—it was not an option.

One verse that helps illustrate this is:
But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized by him (Luke 7:30).

As this verse indicates, a failure to submit to water baptism was a failure to receive the message of Christ. Someone has said that for the Jews water baptism was the door of faith into the kingdom. This statement is true.

We do not believe that the water itself actually saved anyone. Being baptized was an expression of faith in the message of the coming Christ and His kingdom. But as we have already read, water baptism was for the remission of sins. We believe this means that it was absolutely mandatory for the Jews to be baptized for the remission of sins, as a ceremonial cleansing from sins, identifying them with their national priesthood. This particular fact, that baptism represented a ceremonial cleansing, is very important, and it is the key to understanding the whole significance of baptism in that kingdom program.

We mentioned before that baptism was not a new concept for the Jews. The reason for this is that their religious system was full of baptisms:

> Which stood only in foods and drinks, and various washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation (Hebrews 9:10).

The word *washings* here is the word *baptisms*. The law of Moses contained many ceremonial baptisms of both people and inanimate objects. This was for sanctification—to set them apart for a particular reason. *Cleansing* unto identification is always in view.

The most important Jewish baptism of all was one that made it possible for a Levite to minister in the priest’s office. This is the baptism that we will examine next. In Exodus 30:17–21 God gave Moses instructions to give to the children of Israel concerning a particular article of furniture in the tabernacle and its use. This article was called a *laver*, and it was like a basin that had water in it. It was for a particular use by the priests. According to verses 19 and 20, it was extremely important for them to use it as they were instructed. Beginning with
verse 19 it says:

For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat. When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the Lord. So they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not… (Exodus 30:19–21).

Here is the first mention of Israel’s water baptism. It was a ceremonial cleansing of the hands and the feet to prepare them to minister as priests. Without this cleansing there was no way that the individual could minister as a priest. Upon entering the holy place in an unsanctified condition, the priest would immediately die.

Thus, cleansing of the priests was common for the Jews, and it was a continual practice day after day. The tremendous significance of this in relation to the water ceremony commanded of the nation Israel is found in Exodus:

Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine: And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel (Exodus 19:5,6).

This promise that the nation Israel would be a kingdom of priests is of major importance to the prophetic kingdom program. This was one of the main promises that the Jews were looking forward to all through their history. Of course, under the First Covenant (the law of Moses), Israel was unable to attain to this position of blessing. Under this covenant the priesthood was restricted to one family (the family of Aaron) in the tribe of Levi.

But God’s promises to this nation were not to be fulfilled by the works of the law. It is under the terms of the New Covenant that all of God’s glorious promises to them will be fulfilled. Thus we find in Hebrews 7–8 that once the covenant had changed so did the priesthood.

After the inauguration of the New Covenant at the cross,
Christ took His position as the High Priest of a new priesthood, which was not after the tribe of Levi but after the order of Melchizedek. This is why Peter said, as he wrote to the dispersed Jewish believers:

\[ \text{But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a people of His own… (1 Peter 2:9).} \]

This was one of the nation Israel’s blessings under the New Covenant. They received it by accepting Christ as their Messiah and by believing the gospel of the kingdom. The believing Jews became a \textit{kingdom of priests} with the Lord Himself as their great High Priest. However, like the priests of old, they had to be ceremonially washed before they were identified with their priesthood.

We believe that this is precisely the reason for, and the significance of, water baptism under Israel’s prophetic kingdom program. This is why it could not be optional. For a Jew to refuse water baptism was for him to say “no” to the good news that Jesus was the Christ and that the kingdom was at hand. This is why John \textit{preached} baptism. He was not just saying come and join the church; he was preparing the Jews to be a kingdom of priests because the kingdom of heaven was at hand!

Water baptism was in effect as long as God was ministering the kingdom program to the nation Israel. Furthermore, water baptism never ceased to be that ceremonial cleansing which identified the Jews with their national priesthood. Even in the Book of Acts after the Lord’s ascension, when the Twelve went out under the kingdom commission, baptism still had this same significance. There we read:

\[ \text{Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).} \]

The kingdom gospel was still being preached to the Jew first, and the kingdom church was still being built. These Jews were being commanded to submit to that cleansing that would acknowledge their acceptance of the risen Lord as their Messiah. This would identify them with their national priest-
hood. This is one of the primary differences between the kingdom calling and our calling and hope in the Body of Christ.

We are not a royal priesthood but members of His Body, and He is not our High Priest but our risen, glorified Head. Today, God is not ministering the kingdom program but is ministering His secret program—the dispensation of grace. This is why we believe that the command of Christ to water baptize does not apply to this dispensation of grace.

As to the mode of Israel’s water baptism, God has told us already in Exodus that it was a *washing* and *not* a burial. They did not get into the laver but no doubt stood in front of it and simply sprinkled the water on their hands and feet. In Ezekiel 36 we have an interesting verification of this, where the Lord speaks concerning His future regathering of the nation Israel into their own land as the millennial kingdom is established. Here we read:

> Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you (Ezekiel 36:25).

We believe that sprinkling the water on the hands and the feet was the scriptural method of administering water baptism. This also shows that it signified a *cleansing* and was not a picture of death in any sense. This is also brought out when Saul (Paul) was baptized in accordance with the kingdom program:

> And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord (Acts 22:16).

_W–A–S–H* does not spell _bury!* We must insist that the view that water baptism was a picture of death or a burial in water is none other than a wrong correlation of Jewish baptism with such passages in the Pauline Epistles as Romans 6:3 and Galatians 3:27. The present practice of water baptism is no doubt a failure to follow the Lord’s instructions to us through our Apostle—Paul (1 Corinthians 1:17)—and a complete misunderstanding of the meaning of the word _baptism* itself in relation to Romans 6:3,4.
BAPTISM UNDER GRACE
As we turn to the Pauline Epistles, we are going to notice a striking reference concerning water baptism:

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 (1 Corinthians 1:17).

One important point should be made at the outset. Paul, as an apostle of Christ, says that he was not sent to baptize. It would have been absolutely impossible for any of the other Apostles to have said these words in light of the kingdom commission! Under that commission baptism was part of the gospel. They had to preach baptism. But here we see an Apostle who was sent to preach a gospel but not to baptize. This is because he did not preach the kingdom gospel but the gospel for a new dispensation—the gospel of reconciliation. Is it not obvious that he did not minister the same program as the Twelve? We believe it is obvious, and not just from this passage, but indeed this passage verifies that something has changed.

If we begin with this scriptural premise, that we are not under the kingdom program and that Paul’s commission did not include water baptism, then we will begin to see the wonderful truth that the one baptism for today is that Spirit baptism into the Body of Christ. The one baptism we speak of is found in Ephesians 4:5, where we read that there is one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. This context is significant in that the one baptism here is one of the seven unities of the Spirit that we of this dispensation are to endeavor to guard. These are the doctrinal truths that we are to uphold for the edification and doctrinal stability of the Body of Christ.

We should notice that all seven are spiritual in nature and involve our positional blessings in Christ. Would it not seem strange to find one of these seven referring to a physical ceremony? It would indeed, and the truth is that this baptism, too, is a spiritual blessing and has to do with our identification with the Body of Christ. This is when we were placed into Christ and partook of all the blessings of this passage.
There is one body, in which we are all united; one Spirit, which indwells all of us; one hope of our calling, at which the whole Body will be caught up to glory; one Lord, our risen, glorified Head; one faith, that body of truth that unites all believers in this program of grace; one baptism, which is the one divine means of entrance into this position in Christ; and one God and Father of all, who is above all, through all and (because of this divine baptism) is in you all.

The interrelation of each of these blessings one with another shows us that they are all part of a unique program for this dispensation of grace.

As to further clarification of just what this one spiritual baptism is, we quote again 1 Corinthians 12:13:

For by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Greeks [Gentiles], whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

This verse speaks of the agency of the Holy Spirit as the baptizer, baptizing or, as we know this word means, thoroughly identifying us with the Body of Christ. This identification means we were actually placed into the Body of Christ. Turning to Romans we learn that this means we were identified with His death:

Know ye not that, as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death (Romans 6:3)?

Verse 4 continues:

Therefore, we are buried with Him by baptism into death, that as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4).

Verse 5 actually gives us the Holy Spirit’s confirmation of the meaning of this word baptism by using a phrase that is an exact equivalent:

For if we have been planted together [this is the phrase that means the same thing as the word baptism] in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection (Romans 6:5).
Colossians 2:12 is also an important verse on this subject. Here we learn two important aspects of this baptism:

_Buried with Him in baptism, in which also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead (Colossians 2:12)._ 

This phrase, _buried with Him in baptism_, means _buried with Him in identification with death_, literally, _placed into His death and burial_. This baptism is part of our threefold completeness in Christ. Verse 11 refers to our death with Christ by the word _circumcised_. Verse 12 refers to our burial and resurrection with Christ.

We also learn that this whole operation—our death, burial, and resurrection—was the _operation of God_—not of any clergy-man! Furthermore, this baptism must have taken place _at the moment of salvation_, because verse 13 declares that this is when we were quickened together or made alive together with Him. This is the moment of spiritual regeneration of which Titus 3:5 speaks so clearly.

_When_ we were planted in the likeness of His death is something that Scripture makes perfectly clear. It was at the moment of salvation—the moment we believed the gospel we were identified with Christ. This is when we were placed into Christ and sealed with the Holy Spirit—all in one glorious instant.

This is something with which most fundamental Christians, including most Baptists, will agree. Most who hold to water baptism today do not believe that it is necessary for salvation. Nonetheless, the reasons men water baptize today are _unscriptural ones_—which were not even correct when water baptism was a part of God’s program. Water baptism has never been a type of Spirit baptism, or a type of death, or a simple public testimony!

In this dispensation we are to guard the one baptism because of the glorious calling it represents, and we are to make a clear distinction between it and water baptism which represents the kingdom calling. There is only one baptism in this dispensation of grace and to add water would make _two_ baptisms, which would be unscriptural. This would only confuse the truth for this present dispensation.
OUR IDENTIFICATION WITH CHRIST

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

The glory of our one baptism is seen as we realize it is this baptism that saves—the baptism that identifies (unites) us with Christ. This is a twofold blessing that demands our respect. Our salvation brings with it our victory over the penalty and power of sin—free from sin’s dominion! Yes, free to live for Him—free to serve in newness of life—free to reckon the flesh dead indeed unto sin! Is this your view of baptism? I trust that it is—and more!

The second aspect of the glory of the one baptism is our relation to one another—we have been placed into Christ, into one Body!

For ye are all the sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:26–28).

The further practical truth of our baptism today is that it has to do with a unique oneness or unity that every believer has with one another. In this passage, we should think of verse 27 in this way:

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

Verse 26 tells us that we are sons of God by faith. We did not obtain this position by the law or by our works but rather by faith. Verse 27 then says that as many as have been identified with Christ have put on Christ. He is now our Head, and in Him we all have a new identity. All human class, nationality, and legalistic distinctions are gone. Now there is neither Jew nor Greek. Under the law there most certainly was Jew and Greek. Now
there is no more bond or free, but under the law there was bond and free. Now there is neither male nor female, but under the law there were ceremonial rules to be maintained.

Because of the one divine baptism in this dispensation of grace, all who have placed their faith in the risen Christ as Savior and Lord have been placed into one Body. No one individual is more needed than the other. No one is more important than the other. No one is higher than the other. All are members one of another, each with his own particular function. Each is dependent on the other, each rejoicing alike—not in what we have done, but in Him our glorified Lord, the Head of the Body.

This is the true glory of our one baptism. This is the reason that each day we must guard the precious truth for which it stands. Never can we allow our one baptism to be reduced to an unscriptural, water ceremony. That would only veil the true work of God in this dispensation of grace—our identification with Christ and precious oneness and co-equality as members of the Body of Christ. Ephesians 2:14–18 directly speaks of this truth:

\[
\text{And that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby (Ephesians 2:16).}
\]

This is what the one baptism is all about—our glorious identification with Christ. We are free from sin’s dominion and penalty. We are one with each other as members of His Body. Our directive is to protect that truth, to proclaim it, and to glory in it lest it be nullified. We must guard it lest the members of the Body fail to appreciate their unity and lest the brethren are tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. It is time that we realized the daily practicality of this precious truth, rejoicing as we conduct ourselves in the Body. We must humble ourselves before the Lord and one another, respecting one other, not thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought, but remembering that we are all one in Christ.

We must never feel that we are making a needless issue in speaking against water baptism in this dispensation and in proclaiming these glorious aspects of our true baptism. We must
speak against that which is unscriptural and does not edify the Body. Indeed, when put in this perspective, we have said far too little. We have been intimidated into silencing our lips from proclaiming and teaching what is one of the greatest truths, both doctrinally and practically, of any dispensation—the one baptism!

**COMMON OBJECTIONS TO OUR VIEW**

One of the first objections to our view is that the Lord commanded water baptism:

> Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age. Amen (Matthew 28:19, 20).

This commission involves not this dispersion of grace but the dispensation of the kingdom. The Lord not only commands water baptism but *all things whatsoever He had commanded them*. This involves the whole gospel and walk of the kingdom program. It quite simply does not apply to the Body of Christ. This is exactly the commission that Peter was fulfilling in Acts 2:38 when he said, “…Repent and be baptized every one of you for the remission of sins…” The great majority of those who baptize today do not say what Peter said and, therefore, are not really following the Lord’s commission here in Matthew at all.

This baptism was mandatory, and it was for the remission of sins. It was only *part* of the kingdom message that the Twelve were sent out to preach. This is precisely the verse that should be compared with 1 Corinthians 1:17, where our Apostle shows that he was not operating under the same commission. The other comparison that we should make then is with Romans 6:3 and Luke 12:50. There it will be seen that *our* baptism is an identification with the death of Christ and that the Lord Himself used the word without reference to water!

Another objection to our view is that since Christ was bap-
tized we should want to follow Him in baptism. In Matthew 3:13–15 we have the account of the Lord’s baptism:

Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to the Jordan unto John, to be baptized by him. But John forbade Him, saying, I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Permit it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he consented to Him (Matthew 3:13–15).

The main reason that Christ was baptized here is that it was part of the kingdom program. That alone should be reason enough why we would not seek to do it. The question here is: Why did the Lord submit to this sinner’s baptism? The answer will show that it would be impossible for anyone to follow the Lord in baptism:

…Permit it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness… (Matthew 3:15).

John’s dismay at the Lord coming to Him to be baptized was justified because this was a sinner’s baptism and the Lord Jesus had no sin. But the Lord said that allowing it would fulfill all righteousness. The righteousness or rightness of Christ being baptized as a sinner seems obscure until we realize that it was according to God’s righteous plan that Christ should bear the sins of the world.

Here He was quite simply being numbered with the transgressors, as it says in Isaiah 53. He was being identified with sinful man that He might become the sin bearer and die for our sins. If He had not submitted, He could not have been the sacrificial lamb that was substituted (by identification), and God could not have righteously forgiven our sins. We are reminded in this regard of Romans, where it says:

To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness, that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus (Romans 3:26).

God was just in the way that He provided for the justification of the sinner through faith. Thus, the Lord’s baptism was unique and could not actually be followed by anyone.
Another objection raised is that Paul also baptized. This introduces the concept of so-called Christian baptism—the teaching that baptism evolved from a Jewish baptism to a Christian baptism, which was not for the remission of sins but rather an outward sign of an inward faith.

But water baptism quite simply was never Christianized and reduced to a mere public testimony of inner faith. Under this false notion believers today think that baptism was not mandatory for salvation, may be submitted to any time after believing the gospel, and even administered more than once in a believer’s life. But the Scriptures never teach any of these premises! Water baptism was never separate from the Jewish kingdom program. The reason that Paul baptized was that during the transition period recorded in the Book of Acts, God ushered in a new program through Paul and increasingly diminished the Jewish kingdom program. Every aspect of the kingdom program ceased by the end of the Acts ministry. While Paul never ministered the kingdom program, God permitted certain things to continue as a provocation to the Jews until God was ready for those things to pass away.

As 1 Corinthians 1:17 records, water baptism was one of the first things that Paul recognized had been removed from the present dispensation of grace. Acts 19:1–7 is commonly believed to be the first Christian baptism because it is believed that Paul re-baptized these saints in this new dispensation. But a careful study of this passage will reveal that Paul quotes John in verse 4 and the action of John’s hearers to John in verse 5. Paul’s action does not begin until verse 6. In other words, there was no re-baptism whatever in this passage.

Still another objection that many will suggest is that water baptism is one of the two ordinances of the church. The other ordinance they suggest is the Lord’s Supper. We can promptly show from Colossians 2:14 that there simply are no ordinances in this dispensation of grace.

In fact, the Lord’s Supper is not an ordinance at all but a privilege of the redeemed; water baptism is not for this dispensation at all.
While we do believe that water baptism was very much required under the prophetic program, it is in recognizing the distinctive Pauline revelation for this dispensation of grace that we understand the place of water baptism. Through Paul we received the Lord’s instructions for us today. God is the one who changed the dispensation! The revelation of that change with all the instructions for obedience to the faith were given by God only through Paul. All the Word of God is for us but it must now be interpreted in light of the Pauline Epistles! Once this is believed, the rest of these issues take on a whole new meaning and are easily put into their proper place.

1 At Pentecost, it is the Lord Jesus who did the baptizing. He was the baptizer, and He baptized them with the Holy Spirit, or with the power of the Holy Spirit. Today, the Holy Spirit is the baptizer, and He places us into Christ upon believing. Water baptism has never been a type of Spirit baptism (or a type of death), whether Israel’s baptism with the spirit or our baptism by the Spirit.
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We firmly believe in celebrating the Lord’s Supper! While there are some dispensationalists who do not believe the Lord’s Supper is for the Body of Christ, the majority of them are of the “Acts 28” persuasion (sometimes referred to as ultradispensationalists), with whom we are not in agreement on many issues of doctrine including this one.

We will cover our study of this subject in three points:

• The Lord’s Supper: what it is not
• What the Lord’s Supper is
• How the Lord’s Supper is practiced

THE LORD’S SUPPER: WHAT IT IS NOT

There are two basic unscriptural views we will consider. One is held by Roman Catholics and the other by the Lutheran Church.

Not Transubstantiation
The Catholic view is called transubstantiation. According to this view the elements of bread and wine actually become the body and blood of Christ upon being consecrated by the priest.

While Catholicism as a whole is hardly a biblical faith and while we believe many of their teachings are unscriptural, we nevertheless take this opportunity to refute their widespread teaching in this area. We want to be able to answer their error because of the prevalence of their teachings. Many who have been saved out of Catholicism might yet be confused on this subject.

The basic text that the Catholics use to support their view is in John 6:
I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread that cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat of it, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world (John 6:48–51).

Verse 53 continues:

Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you (John 6:53).

Though the language here seems obscure, eating Christ’s flesh and drinking His blood is obviously a metaphor for believing in Him as the Son of God whom the Father sent to give life to all who trust Him. The Lord does not speak of the Lord’s Supper here at all, nor does He speak of a future day when He would institute the Lord’s Supper. He is speaking of that very day in which He lived, that whoever would believe in Him would be eating bread that would give everlasting life. Verses 33 and 36 of this chapter show that the Lord spoke of believing in Him:

For the bread of God is He who cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world...But I said unto you that ye also have seen Me, and believe not (John 6:33,36).

Faith in the Son of God is the issue here, and it is faith unto everlasting life. This also refutes the teaching that there is any efficacy (or saving effectiveness) in partaking of the Lord’s Supper. We say this because the Catholics also wrongly believe that when the elements are consecrated and administered they constitute the resacrifice of Christ and are the means of conferring grace and holiness.

The Lord’s Supper is by no means a sacrament. It does not confer anything efficacious to the one who partakes. Those thoughts are simply a misapplication of this passage. Indeed, the whole sacrificial system of the Catholic priesthood and mass are an abomination unto God. Not only is their priesthood an
unscriptural institution, but their sacrifice of the mass is a direct contradiction of Hebrews:

By which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (Hebrews 10:10).

In verse 18 it says:

Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin (Hebrews 10:18).

To sum up this issue, we do not believe that the elements of the Lord’s Supper in any way become the actual body and blood of the Lord.

Not Consubstantiation

Another view that is similar to transubstantiation is that of consubstantiation.

This view, commonly held by the Lutheran Church, says that though the elements of the Supper do not actually become the body and blood of Christ, nevertheless, once consecrated they do actually communicate Christ to the partaker. Again, they see it as an efficacious sacrament of the church. We deny this view because it essentially says the same thing as the Catholic view and ascribes an unscriptural teaching to this event.

Other views, such as that of Calvin, say that Christ is spiritually present in the elements. Calvin seemed to believe that grace was spiritually conferred by partaking of the elements. Of all the great reformers, namely Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli (who were all contemporaries), only Zwingli, the Swiss reformer, seemed to hold a view consistent with our understanding.

It is said of this man that he denied that Christ is really present in any sense, but that the Lord’s Supper was simply a memorial of His atoning death.

Not The Passover

Among dispensationalists are some who do not believe that we are to celebrate the Lord’s Supper. They believe that it is really the Passover. To the “Acts 28” group, this fits perfectly into their
thinking. They believe that the Body of Christ did not have its historical beginning until after Acts 28:28. They wrongly believe that throughout the entire Book of Acts Paul ministered nothing but the kingdom program. We believe their view shows a complete misunderstanding of Paul’s Acts ministry as recorded by Luke and causes them to misconstrue many of the clear statements of Paul from his early Epistles concerning the program he proclaimed.

Their view leads them to conclude that all of the Epistles that Paul wrote before Acts 28 were Jewish Epistles and related to the kingdom program. When Paul makes a reference to the Lord’s Supper in 1 Corinthians, they simply conclude that he is in fact referring to the Passover. The “Acts 28” brethren have failed to see that the Apostle Paul from his salvation on was the pattern of a new dispensation of grace.

His early Epistles proclaim over and over again that he was ministering the revelation of the mystery and that believers to whom those early Epistles were written were members of the secret Body of Christ. We will not here further refute the Acts 28 view of the Scriptures. However, in that they are one of the main proponents of the view that the Lord’s Supper is the Passover, we wanted to clarify the source of their error.

In looking closely at the institution of the Lord’s Supper in the Gospel accounts, we will be able to see that it was not the Passover. In Luke 22:14–18 we notice that the Lord partook of the Passover supper. But in verse 19 we read:

\[
\text{And He took bread, and gave thanks, and broke it, and gave unto them, saying, This is My body which is given for you; this do in remembrance of Me (Luke 22:19).}
\]

While the accounts of the Passover supper in Matthew and Mark would seem to associate the Lord’s Supper with the Passover, the account here in Luke makes it clear that the Lord instituted the supper after the Passover meal:

\[
\text{Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you (Luke 22:20).}
\]

There are also several other things that need to be recog-
nized in this context. First, the Jewish Passover was kept every year by the faithful Jews who would return to Jerusalem to partake of the seven Jewish feasts in their calendar year. These seven feasts were spread out over the whole year and could be observed in just three trips to Jerusalem each year. Thus, we have the command several times in the Old Testament:

*Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which He shall choose: in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles; and they shall not appear before the LORD empty (Deuteronomy 16:16).*

The feast of the Passover was kept every year without fail in the place that God chose, which 2 Chronicles 6:5,6 tells us was Jerusalem. Furthermore, Exodus 12:43 tells us that the Passover could not be kept by any foreigner but only by those of the house of Israel or a circumcised servant.

We should realize then that the Passover of which the Lord partook with the Apostles was the *real* Passover—the one to which all the others looked forward. His resurrection would then be the *real* feast of first fruits, and the day of Pentecost or the feast of weeks (that came seven weeks after first fruits) was the *real* Pentecost.

Therefore, from that year on, these first four feasts would not be looking forward to the reality but would be in memorial of the reality. In Luke the Lord said concerning the Passover:

*For I say unto you, I will not any more eat of it, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God* (Luke 22:16).

The Lord would not eat it again until the kingdom. But the Apostles would eat it again as Israel had always done—in exactly one year but not one day sooner! So also with the separate event of the bread and the wine after the Passover—there is no indication that *they* would celebrate it again until one year from that day.

The teaching is clear that what the Lord did after the Passover supper was something that had never been done before in connection with that meal. It was *new*. Therefore,
though it would no doubt be kept by the Apostles the next year after the Passover meal, we can see how the Lord could instruct members of the Body of Christ to observe it without imposing any of Israel’s feasts on the Body of Christ.

Paul did make an interesting statement in 1 Corinthians 5:7,8 that has caused some to think that the feast of Passover is indeed what is referred to in chapter 11 of this same Epistle. But upon examination of the passage in chapter 5, we see Paul used certain terms as metaphors to exhort members of the Body.

Many of the Corinthians were Jews who had been saved under the preaching of the gospel of grace and who were now members of the Body of Christ. Thus, Paul’s words had a very real significance to them by way of application to their present position.

Purge out, therefore, the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us (1 Corinthians 5:7).

Here, Paul referred to their daily lives, how they should reflect that they had taken part in the real Passover (the death of Christ), and that they were now a new creation. Verse 8 goes on:

Therefore, let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (2 Corinthians 5:8).

When Paul said here “let us keep the feast,” it really has the sense of “let us keep festival,” that is, let every day of our lives be that unleavened festival of sincerity and truth which represents our position in Christ. The context is more than clear as to the daily application of what Paul was saying, and the brethren who think that it applied to the Corinthian saints actually keeping the Passover are simply missing the point.

THE LORD’S SUPPER: WHAT IT IS
A Revelation
The first thing we want to stress is that the Lord’s Supper is a revelation for the Body of Christ:
For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread (1 Corinthians 11:23).

What the Apostle Paul related here was that the account of the Lord’s Supper was given to him by revelation. In other words, he was not there on the night of the Passover supper before the Lord’s death. Though Paul knew much about the Passover supper (he himself had no doubt kept it many times), he knew nothing of this separate remembrance that the Lord instituted afterwards.

Paul’s understanding of this event came directly from the Lord by special revelation. The deliverance of this memorial to the Body of Christ was not by tradition but by a special dispensation from Christ. Furthermore, there are several aspects to the Lord’s Supper as it was delivered to the church of this dispensation that are different and distinct from the Lord’s Supper in connection with the kingdom church.

Today, the Lord’s Supper is not imposed in any way; that is, we are not given any specific mandate as to how often we are to celebrate it. Thus, it is not an ordinance.

Another distinction is that in this dispensation this memorial demonstrates the oneness or unity of the Body of Christ which, of course, was not even in existence at the time of Luke 22.

Therefore, the Lord’s Supper is first a revelation, and second, we believe, it is a commemoration or a memorial.

There is absolutely no mention either here or in the Gospels that anything efficacious is imparted to the recipient of the elements. Rather, it is specifically called a remembrance in both accounts. This means that it is done as a memorial of His death—to remember Him until He comes.

When it says to remember Him, it does not mean that we just remember that He died. It means that we remember His death and our special relationship to Him now as a result of that death—until He comes!

It is a commemoration of His death, His present position as Head of the Body, and His return—His coming for the saints at
the rapture of the church! Indeed, all of this was accomplished by the giving of His body, the shedding of His blood for our sins, and His glorious resurrection on the third day.

The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ is the center of the gospel of grace for today. The cross of our Lord is the central theme of the whole Bible—whether the gospel of the kingdom to the nation Israel or the gospel of grace to the Body of Christ. The cross is the power of God unto salvation to men of all dispensations.

Christ and the cross can be preached according to prophecy, or Christ and the cross can be preached according to the revelation of the mystery. It is the same Lord and the same cross that is preached to both, yet it is the cross as it applies to two distinct programs. Thus, we know Him and remember Him as our risen Head. Believers in the nation Israel knew Him and remembered Him as their risen Messiah. He is the same Person, but there are two distinctive programs.

A Proclamation
We remember Him by way of His death and resurrection and what it accomplished, until He comes!

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till He come (1 Corinthians 11:26:).

The word show here means announce or proclaim. What Paul said was that we proclaim Christ’s death—that is, the result or accomplishment of His death—until He comes.

HOW THE LORD’S SUPPER IS PRACTICED
We will examine how we practice the Lord’s Supper by going through the text of I Corinthians 11:17-34.

The Lord’s Supper and Communion
We do not necessarily advocate other names that the Lord’s Supper has been given, but we mention them because of their common use. The Lord’s Supper is sometimes called the Eucharist. This comes from 1 Corinthians 11:24 where “given thanks” is the Greek word eucharist.
The Lord’s Supper is also sometimes called the Lord’s table (from 1 Corinthians 10:21), and it is also referred to by many as communion (also derived from 1 Corinthians 10:16).

It is interesting to note that these last two terms, the Lord’s table and communion, are found in a context that has been generally taken to be referring to the separation of those who partake of the Lord’s Supper from the table of idols. However, upon more closely examining 1 Corinthians 10:11–22, we note that while separation is indeed the subject of the passage, Paul was not referring to the Lord’s Supper as in chapter 11. Rather, he was speaking of the Lord’s table which is a reference to the believer’s place of daily fellowship and sustenance.

This table is a metaphor for our position in Christ and our fellowship therein. It is the very basis of the believer’s daily walk:

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16)?

The word communion means fellowship, and the word fellowship means something held common between individuals. The cup and bread that Paul referred to in this verse represent those things that are our real source of fellowship and blessing as believers—namely, our fellowship in the blood of Christ (that is, in what it has given us) and our fellowship in the Body of Christ:

For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread (1 Corinthians 10:17).

This has to do with our daily lives and our relationship to one another in Christ.

Paul likened this to the nation Israel back in the Old Testament when they were fed every day from the meat that came from animals sacrificed to the Lord on the altar:

Behold Israel after the flesh. Are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar (1 Corinthians 10:18)?

Paul said, “Are not they who eat of the sacrifices sustained by, blessed by, and in fellowship with the altar and what it rep-
resents?” The answer is: “Of course they are.” They are directly associated with all that altar represents, and they are therefore responsible to honor that altar and the God to whom that altar corresponds. In other words, to partake of the altar of God (which means to understand and fellowship in the truth of God) and then worship idols would be gross sin.

Paul brought the subject of our position, source of fellowship, and daily blessing in Christ into direct contrast to idolatry or worshipping demons:

_Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of demons; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table, and of the table of demons_ (1 Corinthians 10:21).

Paul was saying that we cannot fellowship in the truth of the blood of Christ (our position in the Body of Christ) and at the same time fellowship or join commonly with the worship of demons. It is absolute sin to join ourselves to that which is contrary to our position and fellowship in Christ. Paul expressed a similar thought in 2 Corinthians, where he said:

_Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness_ (2 Corinthians 6:14)?

Verse 16 goes on to say:

_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_ (2 Corinthians 6:16).

The only scriptural conclusion then is the exhortation of verse 17, which says:

_Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you_ (2 Corinthians 6:17)

We that partake of the Lord’s table are those who have trusted Him as Lord and Savior and have fellowship both in the benefits of His shed blood and in the Body of Christ. Having
partaken of the Lord’s table, we must never partake of that which will deny the true fellowship we have in Him:

Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He (1 Corinthians 10:22)?

In other words, would we dare to provoke the Lord’s displeasure? Can we stand against Him and not have to answer for our disobedience? The answer to both of these questions is obvious. No saint of God should knowingly provoke the Lord’s jealousy through disobedience; we would then find ourselves in a position to be chastened of Him.

Paul continued this thought in verses 23 through 33 in the practical sense of the expediency of everything in our lives. Though some of the things we allow may not be directly connected with idols or other sinful practices, they may still be a stumbling block or a bad testimony to others.

Some of our actions may imply the wrong thing. Paul says that though all things are lawful for him, all things do not edify. Therefore, as verses 32 and 33 tell us, whether dealing with things that are directly sinful or things that are lawful but not a good testimony, we are to do all things to the glory of God, for the profit of the many that they might be saved. This is the real issue of partaking of the Lord’s table. It has to do with our fellowship in Christ from the moment we were saved and our constant testimony to others of our position in Him.

The Lord’s Supper

It would be more scriptural to consistently refer to this celebration or memorial as the Lord’s Supper. Though the terms the Lord’s table and communion are not necessarily wrong, they refer to something broader than this particular celebration.

Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together, not for the better, but for the worse. For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they who are approved may be made manifest among you (1 Corinthians 11:17–19).
Paul’s introduction here was certainly an unusual way to begin talking about the Lord’s Supper, but in relation to this subject the Corinthians had a particular problem that was worthy of rebuke.

The Corinthians were perhaps the most carnal of the churches that had been started by Paul and that were under his apostolic authority. They were members of the Body of Christ, had embraced the gospel of the grace of God, and yet in many ways were not living in a manner honoring to the Lord. One of their problems was sectarianism. They were divided into schisms or factions that promoted disunity and disharmony among the brethren:

"For ye are yet carnal; for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men (1 Corinthians 3:3)?"

When Paul said in chapter 11 that he partly believed the news that he had heard, it was not in relation to whether there was division but in relation to their dividing up into sects in the church when they were supposed to be observing the Lord’s Supper! Paul’s reasoning in verse 19 was that it was understandable that there would be divisions when they came together because those who were the approved leaders of their various factions would naturally be thrust forward and rallied around by their followers.

The wording of verse 20 is a major indictment against not only their divisions but also the way in which their conduct had dishonored the Lord’s Supper. Paul said:

“When ye come together, therefore, [or for this carnal purpose] into one place, this is not to eat the Lord’s supper (1 Corinthians 11:20)."

The word therefore, as I emphasized, is a key to this verse. Some have actually tried to use this verse to say that Paul was saying that we should not practice the Lord’s Supper, but this is far from the case. What he was saying was that when they came together in division and disunity to honor those who were the approved leaders of their various sects, and to discredit those of
other sects, this sinful behavior was not in any way the Lord’s Supper:

For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper; and one is hungry, and another is drunk (1 Corinthians 11:21).

We should note the several areas of misconduct cited in this verse. First, they did not wait for one another. They looked upon the occasion as merely a feast. They all just ate when they felt like it and gave no consideration for the brother next to them. This is not how the true Body of Christ should act!

Next, they gluttonized the food with complete disregard for the needs of their fellow saints. What mockery this was of the true meaning of the Lord’s Supper for the Body of Christ! Finally, some were actually getting drunk in the same spirit of gluttony and were therefore turning this occasion into a drunken brawl.

We all know the kind of behavior that accompanies drunkenness—the reveling, indecency, and sin. This is precisely their behavior on this sacred occasion. They showed total disregard for the unity of the Body and their precious relationship toward one another in the Body of Christ. Paul’s rebuke was more than fitting:

What? Have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? Or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not (1 Corinthians 11:22).

They had despised the church of God, that is, the Body of Christ. They had brought shame and not edification to other members of the Body.

Paul next set in order the proper way to honor the Lord’s Supper. He spoke first of the occasion itself and illustrated the need for solemnity and order. He then addressed the proper manner in which to celebrate the Lord’s Supper and emphasized the consequences for misbehavior.

For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread (1 Corinthians 11:23).
This verse relates several things. As we have already stated, Paul received this information by revelation. This is significant in that Paul as a model Jew already knew about the Passover, but he knew nothing of the Lord’s Supper. Furthermore, the Body of Christ (being a separate calling from the kingdom program) would not have been permitted to celebrate the Passover feast. The Lord’s Supper was specifically given to us as a revelation from the risen Lord.

We also learn about the proper order in which to take the elements, and of course, we would begin with the bread:

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\text{And when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, Take, eat; this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me (1 Corinthians 11:24).}
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The proper observance according to this verse is to offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God for the bread and what it represents. This sets the proper attitude and spiritual tone of the brethren and honors the Father and the Son in worship. The bread is then broken, distributed, and eaten in an orderly fashion while the brethren wait for all present to partake. Whether we use the small wafers that are distributed at most observances or if we use actual unleavened bread in loaf form, it must be distributed and eaten in a manner that gives each member of the Body ample time to partake.

The reason for this is that, as the Lord said, it is a memorial of His Body which was broken for us. He said, “…this do in remembrance of Me.” This remembrance is of Him, that is, of Him presently in relation to what He did upon the cross. We look to Him now in respect of what He accomplished for us. Each member of the Body is to share in this worshipful remembrance! It is because of His work upon the cross that we have this relationship to Him and to one another as members of His Body.

This glorious position and oneness that we have is to be honored so that we might always be mindful of our identity with Christ.

\[
\text{After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had}
\]
supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me (1 Corinthians 11:25).

The words after the same manner indicate again a prayerful attitude before taking the cup. We are again reminded that this was done after the supper and is not to be considered the Passover. The cup is a symbol of the blood that was shed for us and that signifies the inauguration of the New Covenant, which was based upon His sacrificial, substitutionary death.

The shed blood is a sign of death, and all we have in Christ is based upon the truth that He died for us, was buried, and rose again the third day. Thus, the working principle of the New Covenant is the basis of God’s salvation for men of all dispensations—namely, the shed blood of Christ and the grace of God. Once again as we remember Him now as He is, based upon the blood that was shed, we are drawn ever nearer to Him in the practical sense of our devotion to Him and our appreciation of our position in His Body.

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till He come (1 Corinthians 11:26).

One important element of this verse is that it reiterates the teaching “as often as ye drink it” by saying “as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup.” This gives us as members of the Body of Christ special permission to observe the Lord’s Supper as often as we desire. All that is required is that we do it with the respect due the occasion. We must honor the Lord and invoke the worshipful remembrance of our Savior—His work upon the cross, His present position as Head of the Body, and His coming again. This verse teaches that we show forth or really proclaim His death until He comes.

This special memorial shows forth the truth of all His death accomplished for each member of the Body. It shows forth our present relationship as members of one Body in Christ, and it shows forth the hope of the Body, which is His coming!

But to whom do we show these things? The answer is to each other and the angels who are watching us—but the primary benefit is to the believer. This is not something of which unbe-
lievers are invited to partake, nor is it intended to be for a testi-
mony to them. This Supper is to cause us to appreciate Him
anew each time we partake and to cause us to recognize our rela-
tionship to one another in Him.

None of us is better that the other, none is higher; none can
boast in anything save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. It
is a small wonder that the Lord was so displeased with the
Corinthians’ observance of this solemn proclamation.

The next verse describes the proper manner in which we are
to observe the Lord’s Supper, and in a word, it is *worthily*. The
way the Corinthians had been conducting themselves at their
get-togethers is precisely what verse 27 is talking about and
warning against:

> Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the
Lord, unworthily, [or really in an unworthy manner] shall be guilty
of the body and blood of the Lord [or shall be guilty of dishonoring
the body and blood of the Lord] (1 Corinthians 11:27).

That is why Paul said in verse 28 that a man should *examine
himself*; that is, he should examine the manner in which he con-
ducts himself in observing this Supper:

> For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily [or again in an unwor-
thy manner], eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discern-
ing the Lord’s body (1 Corinthians 11:29).

We must pause here to say that by no means are verses 27
through 29 saying that a man must be free from sin before he
can partake of the Lord’s Supper. Many have taught that if a
brother has unconfessed sin in his life this renders him unwor-
thy to eat the Lord’s Supper. But which of us can say that we are
sinless? Are we not complete in Christ, and do we not have
peace with God because of that completeness? Indeed, we do,
and the only reason a brother or a sister would not be permit-
ted to partake of the Lord’s Supper is if they were disfellow-
shed from the assembly for gross sin.

But that same brother would not so much as be given the
right hand of fellowship if he were in that condition, nor could
we share a meal with him. All fellowship would be broken off until he repented of his sin. Any brother that is in fellowship in the assembly is welcome to partake of the Lord’s Supper. We reiterate that the issue to which Paul is referring in these verses is the manner in which we partake of the Supper.

It is our respectful solemn conduct in partaking of the elements that is in question here. This is where the Corinthians had failed, and it is because of this that they were judged by God! But just what was the judgment that one would eat and drink to himself? Paul answered in the next verse:

“For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep (1 Corinthians 11:30).

God had intervened with a strong hand of chastening because of their mockery of His death and the unity of the members of the Body in relation to that death:

“For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged [by God] (1 Corinthians 11:31).

What will stay God’s hand of judgment and chastening? The answer is: when we examine ourselves and judge our own conduct before we dishonor Him! Then He would not have to intervene. But if we are stubborn and will not judge error in the church, we can be sure that God will step in and chasten us lest we would be condemned with the world, i.e., lest we should be found to be even as the world in our conduct when we should be examples of Christ.

The world dishonors the Lord and mocks Him because of its enmity with God and will therefore be condemned or judged. But should we who are the objects of His grace be found to do even the same? God forbid, and thus the Corinthians in their sinful division had been guilty of what the world is being condemned for—dishonoring the Lord.

Verse 33 describes how the brethren can avoid eating the Lord’s Supper unworthily:

“Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another (1 Corinthians 11:33).”
How much is said in this one small phrase! When we come together with a view to having the Lord’s Supper, we are to tarry (wait for) one for another. This simply means we are to wait for one another as each partakes of the elements. This shows due respect for each brother’s position in the Body and gives due honor to the Lord as we remember Him—in His death and resurrection, in His present relationship to us as our Lord, and in His coming again to receive us to Himself.

What a joy to be able to partake of such an occasion! What an honor to be able to fellowship—to share commonly this blessed unity and remembrance! What a cleansing and purging it should be in our lives to cause us to worship Him—to look to and remember Him until He comes!

And if any man hunger, let him eat at home, that ye come not together unto judgment. And the rest will I set in order when I come (1 Corinthians 11:34).

When we come together in the assembly and especially when we come together to eat the Lord’s Supper, it is expressly to worship the Lord Jesus and to honor our relationship to each other as members of His Body. Paul said that to come together to honor disunity and to disgrace the Lord will only bring judgment.

No one should come to the Lord’s Supper with a view to feasting or merely eating a meal. The Lord’s Supper should be separate and distinct from any other meal or feast. If anyone hunger, let him eat at home before coming to the Lord’s Supper.

As to when in the worship service we should partake of the Lord’s Supper, we believe it should be up to the individual assemblies. Some partake first so as to set the tone of worship for the rest of the service. While this seems commendable, it is more customary to partake after the regular service. Again, the most important thing is that it be done in a worthy manner that honors the unity of the Body and glorifies our blessed Lord!
Chapter 13
Resurrection

It is certainly easy to understand why the doctrine of resurrection is one of the fundamentals of the faith. It is without doubt one of the cardinal doctrines of the Word of God.

All of the promises in the Bible rest upon the doctrine of resurrection. If resurrection be not true, then our hope is in vain. We have heard the old saying, “The proof is in the pudding”; well, so it is with resurrection. When Christ was raised, it was the wonderful proof that everything else He said was also true. If He had the power to do that, then He also had the power to do everything else that He promised. If He had not been raised, the whole redemptive purpose of God would have been thwarted because it would have demonstrated that God was powerless to carry it out. Indeed, Paul says that without resurrection:

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable (1 Corinthians 15:19).

Our philosophy of life would then no doubt be like the world’s, which is: “Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die.”

In that resurrection is true, it is the foundation of our hope in Christ and the final step of redemption.

We will approach our study of this subject in three main points:

• The foundational aspect of resurrection
• Dispensational distinctions
• The practical truth of resurrection
THE FOUNDATIONAL ASPECT OF RESURRECTION

The Greek word for resurrection literally means to stand again. Although this word is not found in the Old Testament, the truth of it most certainly is. Because of the common plight of all men—namely, death—the truth of resurrection is very important to men of all dispensations. According to God’s unfolding plan of redemption in His Word, this truth has been held out to men of all past dispensations.

A Bodily Resurrection

In Job we read (from what is perhaps the oldest book in the Bible) of how even ancient Job had a hope of resurrection:

For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God (Job 19:25,26).

Job made a reference to something that we want to notice. He said, “…yet in my flesh shall I see God.” We believe in a bodily resurrection. We read the account in Luke 24:36–43 of how the Lord appeared to the eleven Apostles, and they were frightened supposing they had seen a spirit. But He said in verse 39:

Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have (Luke 24:39).

He continued in verses 41–43:

And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, He said unto them, Have ye here anything to eat? And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And He took it, and did eat before them (Luke 24:41–43).

These verses are ample proof that the Lord had a bodily resurrection. The rumors that were quickly spread said that someone had stolen His body. But as the two disciples on the Emmaus road found out, He was risen indeed, which is exactly what they reported to the eleven Apostles in verse 34. We understand that the Lord’s body was flesh and bone, yet it was a body that did
not depend upon physical surroundings for its sustenance. It was a body that could eat and be touched, yet He could appear, disappear, and walk through walls. So the resurrection body that the Lord has is not a physical body like ours, but rather a spiritual body. He had a glorified body, as it says in Philippians 3 where it also speaks of our hope of being like Him. There we read:

*Who shall change our lowly body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself* (Philippians 3:21).

We believe that we will have a body fitted for glory just exactly like His, and this is another reason why His bodily resurrection is so important. We know that because His body was raised and glorified, we who have been redeemed by Him will have the same experience. We can say with Job that in our flesh we shall see God. Another thing that we believe is different about the Lord’s resurrection body is that it had no blood:

*For the life of the flesh is in the blood...*(Leviticus 17:11).

The life of the body in resurrection is in the Spirit (for the believer) and no longer subject to the limitations of the flesh. Paul said concerning the resurrection body:

*It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body* (1 Corinthians 15:44).

Paul also extended this to us who know Him as Savior by saying:

*And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly* (1 Corinthians 15:49).

We are further assured of this change in verse 50:

*Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption* (1 Corinthians 15:50).

We shall be raised in bodies that are incorruptible and glorified. We want to emphasize again that resurrection is the hope of all the redeemed of all ages. This is not just a New Testament hope. Many times in the Old Testament this subject is referred
to—though not by the actual name resurrection, yet it is the same event.

We have already seen in Job 19 how Job had the hope of a literal bodily resurrection. Abraham demonstrated a belief in resurrection when he offered up Isaac (the child of promise) in Genesis 22:1–14. Here, this great man of faith, after he had been told to go and offer his son for a burnt offering, “rose up early in the morning and saddled his donkey.” Many a man would have slept in late that morning but not Abraham. He was prepared to do the will of God because his faith did not waver. The Book of Hebrews tells us what he actually believed in this matter:

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called; Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from whence also he received him in a figure (Hebrews 11:17–19).

Abraham had hope in God that He was able to perform His great promises and deliver his son from the dead. Even at the time of Abraham’s own death, it says that he saw the promises afar off and was persuaded of them. He obviously believed that he would possess the promised land in resurrection. Another reference in the Old Testament is in Isaiah where, speaking prophetically of a future day for the nation Israel, it says:

Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust; for thy dew is like the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead (Isaiah 26:19).

Another important passage in the Old Testament is in the Book of Ezekiel:

Therefore, prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD: Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves (Ezekiel 37:12–13).
Can this be a reference to anything else but a literal bodily resurrection? What do all those in the nation Israel who have died in hope have to look forward to if these verses are not true? The answer is obvious; they would have no hope. Israel does indeed have a living hope of resurrection.

**Everlasting Life or Everlasting Shame**

The final passage we are going to look at in the Old Testament is in the Book of Daniel:

> And many of those that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt (Daniel 12:2).

Here, Daniel related that at the end of the tribulation period there will be a resurrection. This resurrection is for his people, that is, the nation Israel. As this portion tells us, it is to be a twofold resurrection. Some will be raised to everlasting life (we believe this is at the beginning of the millennium) and some to everlasting shame and contempt (which will take place at the end of the millennium).

This text begins to establish the doctrine that all men—both saved and lost—will have a resurrection, but only the saved will be resurrected into glory. There is only one class of beings which does not appear to have a resurrection. This group was the product of the cohabitation of the sons of God (or the angels) with the daughters of men. The account of this is in Genesis 6, and these beings who are their offspring are referred to several times in the Scripture. One of these is in Isaiah 26:14. There the word deceased is the Hebrew word Rephaim, which is a word that is sometimes used to describe this group. It says these deceased or Rephaim “shall not rise.”

**Christ, the Resurrection**

Resurrection is vested in a Person—the Lord Jesus Christ:

> Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live (John 11:25).
In that Christ is both God and man in one Person, He represents both the power of God and the proof of resurrection. His own body is the demonstration, thus making Him the rightful captain or leader of salvation. Vested in Him is the very power of eternal life. He is the Creator who spoke life into existence, and He is the resurrection who can speak life again into bodies that are dead. This chapter in John illustrates this in a dramatic way as the Lord raises Lazarus from a tomb in which he had lain for four days. There is no question as to the state of his body after that amount of time; his spirit was gone from him. Decay had set in, and the cell and muscle tissue was dead and decaying. But in a display of divine power the Lord Jesus performed an act of creation! He recreated that decomposing heart as well as every cell in his decaying body and brought Lazarus back to life. In an instant of time he was perfectly restored—not just revived—but completely raised from the dead.

Lazarus did not at this time receive a glorified body but a resurrected *human* body, and thus, he did not represent the first fruits of resurrection. But this act did demonstrate the glory of God and vindicated Christ's Deity before the Jews.

In that our Lord is the resurrection, He is also the first fruits of resurrection. It is as the first fruits that the Lord fulfills the Jewish feast day of that same name. The first three of the seven Jewish feasts were the Passover, the feast of unleavened bread, and the feast of first fruits. Just as the Passover was literally fulfilled when the Lord was sacrificed upon the cross, so the feast of first fruits was fulfilled on the day He arose from the dead.

The first fruit of something is the first sampling or the first example. In a field of corn it is the first bushel that is brought in at harvest time. In resurrection the Lord is the first fruit. He is the first one to be raised and glorified as the example and proof that all others who have trusted Him as Savior and Lord will also be raised with Him:

*But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept* (1 Corinthians 15:20).
There is, of course, an order in resurrection:

*But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at His coming (1 Corinthians 15:23).*

All of the redeemed wait until the proper time in God’s purpose to be raised; but because He is the first fruits, we know that we, the redeemed, are going to be raised with Him. Another important point about resurrection is that it demonstrated that the Lord Jesus is the Son of God. Christ was made of the seed of David according to the flesh:

*And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead (Romans 1:4).*

In the resurrection Christ vindicated all of His claims. He proved He was Almighty God. He told the Jews:

*…Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up (John 2:19).*

Here, He referred to His body. Everything that Christ was—all the promises He represented, everything He had proclaimed—was vested in the resurrection. As Romans 1 tells us, His glorious power has been declared. But just as His declared Deity and power are an assurance of life to the believer, His resurrection power and life are also an assurance of something else to the *unbeliever*:

*And the times of this ignorance God overlooked, but now commandeth all men every where to repent, Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; concerning which He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead (Acts 17:30, 31).*

The lost also have an assurance. That assurance is that the Word of God has been vindicated and those who have died without Christ will stand before Him—not as the Savior, but as their Judge. Resurrection is also the assurance of justification:
Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification (Romans 4:25).

When it says He was raised again for our justification, the word for has the sense of because of or on account of. The Lord was raised again on account of our justification. This means that when He died it was for our sins; it was to pay for our offenses. This was God’s righteous method of redeeming sinful men. He who knew no sin was made sin for us.

Believing this message gives a man eternal life. Personally trusting Christ as Savior brings salvation by the grace of God. The resurrection of Christ signified that His work was finished and that God was indeed satisfied or propitiated. He was raised on account of the fact that the work of justification was complete. The means by which God could justify an ungodly sinner was now established. Resurrection manifested a finished work.

God did not immediately after the resurrection begin to proclaim justification by faith. He did not proclaim the full effect of what was accomplished by the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, but rather He waited until after the salvation of Paul to proclaim these great truths. Nevertheless, we learn that it was resurrection that marked that the basis of justification was complete.

We have looked at several foundational aspects of resurrection:

• It is bodily.
• It is the hope of all the redeemed.
• It is not just a New Testament hope.
• It is vested in a Person—the Lord Jesus Christ.
• It is a vindication of Christ’s Deity.
• It is the assurance that He will judge the lost.
• It signifies that the means of justification is complete.

DISPENSATIONAL DISTINCTIONS
As we enter the New Testament, we know that both Peter and
Paul preached resurrection. In examining how they preached resurrection, we will see that God has indeed revealed a distinctive resurrection for the nation Israel in prophecy and also a distinct resurrection for the Body of Christ in Paul’s Epistles.

**Peter and Resurrection**

Peter referred to the resurrection of Christ several times in the early chapters of Acts but always with a view to the prophetic kingdom program. The day of Pentecost itself was a demonstration of the resurrection of Christ that pertained to the kingdom program. Peter addressed the nation Israel and accused them of crucifying the Lord Jesus. His next declaration was:

> Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it (Acts 2:24).

As Peter proclaimed this truth, he explained that the prophetic word of David had been fulfilled. Verse 30 tells us that God swore to David by an oath that of His loins according to the flesh Christ would come to sit on David’s throne. Peter then said:

> He, seeing this before, spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in hades, 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 Spirit, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear (Acts 2:31–33).

That which they then saw and heard was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Peter explained that this was a demonstration that Christ had been raised to sit on David’s throne. It is in exactly this regard that Peter said:

> Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ (Acts 2: 36).

Peter proclaimed the Lord Jesus to be raised as the Christ, the rightful heir to David’s throne. To the nation Israel this meant
He was *the King* who would establish the *kingdom of heaven on earth*. It is on this basis that Peter offered the nation the times of refreshing and the return of Christ in Acts 3:19–21.

After another notable miracle, Peter again proclaimed Christ raised from the dead in verse 15, and he told the nation the object of this miraculous ministry:

> Unto you first God, having raised up his Son, Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities (Acts 3:26).

The response of the leaders of Israel was clear:

> And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead (Acts 4:1,2).

But Peter proclaimed to them:

> Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him doth this man stand here before you well (Acts 4:10).

The object of Peter’s message was boldly proclaimed:

> Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

Peter’s final appeal was in Acts 5:29-32 where after their second confrontation he again declared that Christ had been raised to be a Prince and a Savior to give repentance to Israel and the forgiveness of sins of which both they and the Holy Spirit had been witnesses. Thus, Peter preached resurrection in relation to the prophetic kingdom program, and the Jews’ salvation and hope were based upon Christ being raised to sit on David’s throne.

In this light it is astonishing to find the leaders of Israel rejecting Peter’s message of Christ’s resurrection. Did not Abraham and David—as well as all the Old Testament saints
who had died—have a hope of resurrection into that same kingdom of which Peter spoke? Indeed, they did, and the Old Testament Scriptures attest to that very fact!

One of the greatest promises of God to the nation Israel was that of resurrection, which was based upon the resurrection of Christ. Ezekiel 37 was certainly one of the most important passages in this regard that a Jew could know. Every Jew who had the opportunity to read this chapter should have had it memorized. If 1 Thessalonians 4 means anything to the church of this dispensation, then Ezekiel 37 should have been the Jew’s favorite portion on the hope of those who had died under the kingdom program.

Ezekiel’s vision of dry bones laid the foundation for the kingdom hope of Israel. This was the portion the Lord used in John 3 to rebuke Nicodemus for not understanding the truth of being born from above. Nicodemus was a master or a teacher in Israel, and yet, to his discredit, he knew nothing of this great truth which was the hope of Israel.

Ezekiel 37:11–14 dramatically shows the exact nature of how God will perform this feat of resurrection in Israel. This great portion relates how the nation will go from a position of seeming desolation to one of glorious restoration through resurrection. At this time the Spirit of God will be put within them, and they will be placed in their own land in the kingdom, forever. In verses 15 through 22 we learn how the Lord will heal the division between the ten northern tribes and the two southern tribes, so they will again be one nation. In verses 21 through 28 they will dwell in the promised land with one King, and they will enjoy God’s covenant of peace forever.

This whole portion constitutes resurrection of the “many” (Daniel 12:2) who will awake to everlasting life. This is the prophesied resurrection for the nation Israel that must be kept separate from the unprophesied resurrection of the church, the Body of Christ. The Lord Jesus also made reference to this prophesied resurrection in the Book of John:

Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, And shall come forth: they
that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation (John 5:28,29).

This is Israel’s prophesied resurrection, and it is actually two resurrections separated by a period of one thousand years. To help understand this, we turn to the Book of Revelation. There we learn the exact workings of the completion of the day of the Lord and the Second Coming of Christ to establish the millennial kingdom:

…and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and who had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years (Revelation 20:4,6).

But concerning the second resurrection, it says:

But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished… (Revelation 20:5).

Verses 12 through 15 speak of the final resurrection of the unjust, who then die the second death in the lake of fire. So, prophetically, the first resurrection is this one at the beginning of the millennium and is the one to which all Israel looks.

We believe this is when Old Testament saints will be raised to enter their kingdom hope as taught in Ezekiel 37. But the second resurrection is at the end of the millennium and is the expectation of all the lost of all ages. The first resurrection is a prophetic resurrection for the nation Israel and is separate from the secret resurrection for which we, the Body of Christ, wait. We could say that Israel’s first resurrection takes place at the Second Coming of Christ.

We have seen how Peter’s ministry in the Book of Acts preached Christ’s resurrection to Israel in relation to His Second Coming.
Paul and Resurrection

We are going to find an interesting relationship between Paul’s presentation of resurrection in the Book of Acts and his presentation of resurrection in his Epistles. The one thing to keep in mind about Paul’s Acts ministry is that as Luke recorded the events in the Book of Acts he did so with a view to the apostasy or the unbelief of the nation Israel. That is primarily what the Book of Acts is from beginning to end—the account of the fall and setting aside of Israel. Everything Luke recorded, including his record of Paul’s ministry in Acts, was related to the fall of Israel.

Paul’s ministry as recorded in the Book of Acts was not to minister the kingdom program to the nation Israel but to warn them of their impending blindness and to announce to them that God had sent salvation to the Gentiles under a new dispensation. We learn of Paul’s apostleship and message primarily from his Epistles, many of which were written in the Acts period. Paul definitely had a ministry to the Jews during the Acts period, but it was not to offer them the kingdom but rather to warn them and provoke them to jealousy with the message of grace.

This is the explanation for Paul’s presentation of resurrection in the Book of Acts. Five separate times Paul directly referred to resurrection in the Book of Acts, and one time he indirectly referred to it, giving him more references than Peter! Yet, Paul was not offering the kingdom to the Jews. He was testifying that Christ’s resurrection had indeed taken place and that resurrection was the proper hope of this unbelieving nation. He preached this because that is where he had to start with a Jewish audience before going on to the truth of the message of grace.

Paul’s apostleship was indeed to proclaim the gospel of grace and justification by faith to all men without distinction. But as he came to the various cities, he was also to warn and provoke the Jews. Therefore, he began with them the way he had to—preaching first Christ and His resurrection as the basis of Israel’s hope. This was the first step they needed to take in preparation to hear the further truth that Paul was sent to proclaim.
Considering the reason that Luke recorded the events in the Book of Acts, we would expect to see mostly accounts of Paul addressing the Jews by first generally referring to Christ’s resurrection as their hope. This is exactly what Luke recorded.

In Paul’s Epistles we want to notice a completely different resurrection, which is for believers, members of the Body of Christ. The two primary chapters in the Pauline Epistles on this subject are 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4. Both of these passages deal with an event that involves resurrection, but this event and resurrection are unique to this dispensation of grace. Since we will be dealing with the comings of Christ in another chapter, we will not study 1 Thessalonians 4 at this time. But in 1 Corinthians 15 Paul deals extensively with the specific resurrection of the Body of Christ. We call this resurrection the rapture.

Through Peter, Christ’s resurrection was viewed as it related to Israel’s hope of resurrection in the millennium. But in Paul’s Epistles Christ’s resurrection is viewed as it relates to the secret program for the church, the Body of Christ, and our resurrection into the heavenlies. That is precisely why in this chapter Paul can refer to the resurrection as a prophetic event and yet relate it to our secret hope by calling it a mystery.

As we approach this chapter we notice that there was a particular problem which Paul addressed. The Corinthians were a very problematic group that Paul had to rebuke for many problems. But the particular error dealt with in this chapter was one that was perhaps their most serious doctrinally.

Having accepted the gospel through Paul’s preaching, they had now come to the point where some of them were denying the resurrection. We can understand how some believers might develop problems in certain areas and fail to act as they should. We can even see how some might have problems with a failure to rightly divide the Word as they should. But for a group of grace believers that had been saved under the ministry of Paul to deny the truth of resurrection—is it possible? Can that actually happen? Indeed, it can, and it did!

This should cause us to realize the danger of not accurately
teaching and standing for the fundamental truths of the Word of God, rightly divided! It is no wonder that Paul tells us to guard the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Can believers who have embraced the grace message today actually come to the place where they will begin to deny such foundational truths as the resurrection? The Corinthians were living proof that it could happen, and therefore, we need to be faithful to stand for the truth and to rebuke those who will let the great truths of the Word of God slip from their grasp.

Paul opened chapter 15 by declaring that gospel which he had preached unto them and which they had received. They had actually embraced these very truths of which resurrection was so important and in which they now stood.

\[
\text{By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain (1 Corinthians 15:2).}
\]

The salvation here is not soul salvation. Here it says they are saved, “…if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you…” The salvation of our souls is not dependent upon our memory of the gospel but upon the faithfulness of Christ and the promise of God. What Paul was talking about here was their salvation (deliverance) from error or false doctrine. By keeping in mind the truths they had been taught and which they had also received, they would be saved or preserved from going astray as to doctrinal truth.

Paul then actually reviewed for them the gospel of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. This, of course, was according to the Scriptures and meant that Christ and His death, burial, and resurrection were not the mystery (secret) of which Paul was made the minister. But as Christ is preached according to the revelation of the mystery, the cross becomes the center of the gospel of grace which concerns a secret calling and dispensation.

Paul then gave specific proof and documentation that Christ was seen of a great number of brethren after His resurrection. Finally, Paul brought the issue home to these Corinthians by saying:
And last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time (1 Corinthians 15:8).

The significance of Paul’s being born out of due time (Greek, aborted) and being the last one to see the Lord is very important to the Corinthians; it was by Paul that they had received the gospel of grace. Paul represented such a contrast from his life as a persecutor of Christ to the Apostle of His grace that they had to agree that it was the risen Christ who had made this change—both in him and in them!

Paul contrasted what he was in verse 9 with what he is now in verse 10, and the resurrection of the Lord was all that could account for the miracle of Paul’s conversion and ministry. Thus, the meaning of Paul being “born out of due time” had to do with God aborting him from a path of rebellion and destruction that would have led only to judgment—for both him and the nation Israel. The “due time” was that of judgment, and Paul’s salvation represented God intervening with a dispensation of grace. Thus, the Corinthians knew well the resurrection of Christ and all its wonderful significance. Having reviewed all these facts for them, Paul “lowered the boom”:

Now if Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead (1 Corinthians 15:12).

What an indictment! They had absolutely no response except to acknowledge they had erred concerning the truth.

1 Corinthians 15 is the most comprehensive treatise in the Word of God on the subject of resurrection. In the rest of the chapter Paul looked at the ramifications of resurrection. The structure of this chapter as a whole concerns the subject of resurrection in light of the mystery:

- The documentation and proof of resurrection (verses 1–11)
- The importance and reasoning of resurrection (verses 12–19)
- The triumph and order of resurrection (verses 20–28)
• The witness and suffering of resurrection (verses 29–34)
• The body and nature of resurrection (verses 35–50)
• The mystery of resurrection (verses 51–53)
• The victory of resurrection (verses 54–58)

There are many areas here worthy of our study, but we want to make careful note of the fact that for us as members of the Body of Christ resurrection is directly related to the revelation of the mystery:

> Behold, I show you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed (1 Corinthians 15:51,52).

The important thing to see is that when Paul said “behold I show you a mystery,” he was not using this term mystery loosely. He was obviously not referring to the general truth of resurrection in this statement because, as we have seen, both the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of men in general were foretold in prophecy. But what was not foretold in prophecy was the special resurrection for the Body of Christ. This is that unprophesied resurrection, the secret resurrection which is the exclusive hope of the Body of Christ, something not revealed to men of other ages.

Just as the revelation of the mystery concerning God’s purpose to build the Body of Christ was not revealed before Paul, so the truth of the resurrection of this Body was also a secret never before made known. That is exactly why Paul could say “I show you a mystery.” This was a secret! It was something about which the Twelve Apostles and all of the prophets before them knew nothing! It was not their hope, but it was specifically the hope of the church, the Body of Christ.

The resurrection of Christ was no mystery, but the preaching of Christ raised from the dead according to Paul’s gospel
certainly was (Romans 16:25; 2 Timothy 2:8)! Israel looked to the resurrection of Christ *prophetically* as the hope of their resurrection into the kingdom at Christ’s Second Coming.

We as members of the Body of Christ look to the resurrection of Christ according to the *secret* purpose revealed through Paul. The hope of our resurrection is to go to glory at His *secret* coming, which is *before* His Second Coming for Israel! Our resurrection is *before* the prophetic program resumes for the nation Israel. Their prophetic program starts again with the great tribulation, which is part of Israel’s *day of the Lord*.

**THE PRACTICAL TRUTH OF RESURRECTION**

*And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins (1 Corinthians 15:17).*

What a terrible circumstance it would be if this doctrine and the special hope we have as members of His Body were vain! What sin and despair it would encourage in our lives if we had no hope. We would be indeed, as Paul says in verse 19, “of all men most miserable.” This error had taken its toll on the Corinthians. Based upon these evident truths, Paul exhorted them:

*Be not deceived: Evil company corrupts good morals. Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame (1 Corinthians 15:33,34).*

The Corinthians had indeed allowed their attendance to false teachers to corrupt their good manner of doctrine. This was labeled as a sin by Paul, and they were told to wake up to what was right and sin not. We should mark well that this could also happen to us. This failure to stand for the truth had weakened their testimony, and therefore, some in the world had not the knowledge of the truth of God through them. This for them was a shame because they should have been living testimonies to the grace of God through the resurrection of Christ and its effect on them.

At the close of this chapter Paul finished with the victory that we have in Christ by way of our hope in Him. The last verse
teaches how the truth of His resurrection should affect us every hour:

*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58).*

How the impact of this verse should cause us to labor for Him! Nothing that we ever do for Him will be done in vain. We can abound in labor for Him; we can suffer. We can totally expend ourselves in His service and know it will never be in vain! All we look forward to will be fully realized in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, when we see Him in that glorious appearing!

In Romans 6:3–10 and Philippians 3:10–14, we learn that the *power* of His resurrection dwells in us who are saved. By that resurrection power, we can live for Him now, in victory, not struggling in the power of the flesh, but living by the power of His resurrection as we press toward that mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.
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Chapter 14
The Second Coming of Christ

The Lord Jesus Christ is coming again! What a blessed hope for all that know Him as their Savior! But what a blessing to also understand the distinctive truth God has revealed through the Apostle Paul about Christ’s coming for us!

In this study of the Second Coming of Christ we will be making a distinction between His prophetic comings and His secret coming. This is without question the key to understanding eschatology—the study of coming things.

Most of the confusion that has arisen on this subject is the result of a failure to rightly divide the Scriptures. To rightly divide Scripture is to recognize the divisions God has placed in His Word between His prophetic program for Israel and His secret program for the church, the Body of Christ. Without recognizing God’s twofold purpose—that is, His purpose for the earth through Israel and His purpose for the heavenlies through the Body of Christ—there can be no clear understanding on the subject of the Second Coming of Christ.

The program for Israel is the subject of prophecy. The program for the Body of Christ is the subject of the mystery—God’s sacred secret. The first was revealed progressively through the prophets whereas the mystery was revealed only through Paul. Therefore, it follows that the first and second comings of Christ to the earth are the subject of prophecy, but the secret coming to take the Body into the heavenlies is the subject of the mystery.

Nowhere outside the Pauline Epistles is the truth of the rap-
ture or the secret coming of Christ taught. It is not hidden in prophecy; it is not hidden in types and shadows. It was completely hidden in God until He revealed it as part of that great body of truth—the revelation of the mystery—given through Paul. As we would expect, all the prophetic Scriptures point to the first and second comings of Christ to establish His earthly kingdom.

We will approach this subject in three basic points:

• The first coming
• The Second Coming
• The secret coming of Christ

THE FIRST COMING

The first coming of Christ was, of course, at His birth. Isaiah prophesied of this coming:

Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign; Behold, the virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14).

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, Counselor, 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 justice and with righteousness from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this (Isaiah 9:6,7).

In Isaiah 9:6,7, we see the first and second comings referred to: His first coming which we learn from other passages was to suffer and His Second Coming to establish His kingdom. The first coming of Christ is the one the Jews completely misunderstood. All they could see was the coming in glory to bring in the kingdom, and therefore, they stumbled at His first coming.

Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ who was in them did signify, when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow (1 Peter 1:11).
The sufferings of Christ are what they stumbled over. 

*And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name JESUS; for He shall save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21)*.

This was the purpose of His first coming. He was born in a manger; He later came meek and lowly riding on a donkey, and yet he was their God and their Christ!

*He came unto His own, and His own received Him not (John 1:11)*.

This verse is really saying that the Lord came unto His own things (the first word *own* is in the neuter gender), but His own people received Him not. The things that the Lord came unto were His position as Savior and Lord—the Messiah of Israel, the Son of God—but His people received Him not. Having completed the work of redemption, having suffered and died for the sins of the world, He ascended to the Father until the time when He will indeed come in power and great glory at the Second Coming.

The first coming represented His humiliation as He took upon Himself the form of a servant. He did indeed veil His glory and submit to the Father's will—all the way to the cross. Without this suffering, there could have been no glory. Had He not died for the sins of the world, there would have been no kingdom for the Jews, because they would have been condemned in their sins under the law. Yet all through His earthly ministry He manifested His Deity through miracles, wonders, and signs and declared Himself to be the Messiah. He fully demonstrated that He was the One who was to come and establish the kingdom. The Jews were without excuse and guilty of crucifying Christ, and yet God forgave them and openly declared after His resurrection:

*Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36)*.

The first coming had fully accomplished all that was intend-
ed. The suffering was over; the price of redemption had been paid.

THE SECOND COMING
The Scriptures teach conclusively that the Second Coming of Christ refers to His Second Coming back to the earth in power and great glory to set up the millennial kingdom. This coming is preceded by the great tribulation (as is explained in Matthew 24) and is followed by a thousand-year, earthly reign. This coming can also be referred to as *the revelation of Jesus Christ* and is the subject of the Book of the Revelation. Matthew 24 and the Book of Revelation are the two most prominent places in the New Testament concerning the order of events surrounding the Second Coming of Christ. The secret coming of Christ for the church which is His Body is nowhere to be found in these prophetic Scriptures.

The whole scope of Matthew 24 and the entire Book of Revelation are related to prophecy, not to *the mystery*. Therefore, as we have already stated, the Second Coming is a prophetic event which is revealed in the Old Testament and borne witness to in the New Testament. Psalm 2:6–9 speaks of the Lord’s resurrection to be the King of Israel and to rule His kingdom with a rod of iron. Isaiah also spoke of this glorious time when:

> And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD’S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it (Isaiah 2:2).

Turning to Isaiah 9, we read:

> 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 justice and with righteousness from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this (Isaiah 9:7).

Isaiah 11:1–10 also speaks of the prophetic coming of the Lord to establish this glorious kingdom, and we must realize the
separation between the first and Second Coming.

Jeremiah said it this way:

*Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS (Jeremiah 23:5,6).*

Ezekiel speaks of the regathering of Israel at Christ’s Second Coming, and following the great resurrection of the first part of chapter 37, we read:

*And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, to which they are gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land. And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel, and one king shall be king to them all; and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all (Ezekiel 37:21,22).*

This subject is really the focal point of the entire Old Testament. God promised a land or a kingdom to the nation that would come out of Abraham’s loins (Genesis 15:18–20). It was promised that through this nation all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:1,2; 22:17,18). Furthermore, this nation was promised a king who would sit on the throne of his father David and who would bring in a glorious, righteous reign that would never end (2 Samuel 7:16; Jeremiah 23:5,6). It is in regard to these two promises (the king and the kingdom) that we see the gospel of Matthew open with the words:

*The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. (Matthew 1:1).*

The exact lineage is then given to demonstrate that Christ is indeed the One who was to come and fulfill both of these promises. Daniel 2:44 speaks of this kingdom which will break in pieces all the other kingdoms of the earth and shall stand forever. Chapter 7 continues this thought:
I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him; His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed (Daniel 7:13,14).

With verses such as these it is a wonder that people have so much trouble understanding the literal hope that belongs to the nation Israel. Some actually believe that today is the fulfillment of these verses and that we are the spiritual nation Israel! But how wrong! These verses speak of that day when the Lord Jesus will return according to prophecy to establish His everlasting, earthly kingdom.

Daniel 9:24–27 unfolds some of the prophetic events preceding the Second Coming, including the time of desolation that is described in more detail in the Book of Revelation. In Daniel 12:1–3, we learn that this time of great trouble (the great tribulation) will be followed at the Second Coming by a resurrection and then the establishment of the kingdom. Zechariah 12:10 speaks of the time at the end of the tribulation when they shall see Him whom they have pierced and will mourn for their sin:

> And His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in its midst...And the LORD shall be king over all the earth; in that day shall there be one LORD, and His name one (Zechariah 14:4,9).

We can see the abundance of clear Scriptures foretelling this prophetic event. The Second Coming continues to be the hope of the nation Israel. John the Baptist came preparing the way of the Lord, that is, preparing Israel to receive this very kingdom. The Twelve Apostles were sent out preaching “the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” After Christ’s resurrection, when the Apostles had spent forty days studying with the Lord, they asked:
…Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6)?

In Acts 3:19 Peter in accordance with his commission offered the nation the times of refreshing (which would come from the presence of the Father) which is a reference to the kingdom. There was simply no other calling or hope revealed other than this prophetic, millennial kingdom hope until God revealed His secret purpose through the Apostle Paul. There is absolutely no mention or allusion anywhere in the Scripture to a secret Body of Christ or a secret rapture into glory until Paul.

Second, this coming will take place after the great tribulation. In Matthew 24:2 the Lord had just finished telling them about the destruction of the temple, and the Apostles asked Him an important question:

*And as He sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the age* (Matthew 24:3)?

The age spoken of here will end (consummate) with the establishment of the kingdom. The Lord answered their question in the rest of this chapter, and what He told them was certainly anything but pleasant. The Lord proceeded to prepare the nation Israel—not the Body of Christ, but the nation Israel—to go through the most grievous times that have ever come upon the earth.

Verses 4 through 14 tell the story in abbreviated form, and then verses 15 through 31 repeat the account with more detail. The answer follows the basic teaching that the time of Jacob’s trouble, the great tribulation, must precede the Lord’s Second Coming.

One important thing to see in this chapter is that none of these events apply to this secret dispensation of grace in which we live. All of these events have to do with God’s prophetic program for the earth and have nothing to do with this present dispensation of grace. Indeed, these events cannot even begin to take place until the present mystery program is concluded.
Verse 15 begins by addressing the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet. An abominable idol will be set up by the Antichrist in the middle of the seven-year tribulation period. Then faithful Jews are to run to the mountains where they will be protected by God through the remaining three and one-half years. Verse 29 announces that immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened and the events of Joel’s prophecy, foretold in Joel 2:30–32, will be fulfilled:

And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory (Matthew 24:30).

Matthew 24:31 speaks of the resurrection that will begin the establishment of the millennial kingdom. We see also that this coming will not be a pretribulation coming or midtribulation coming but a post-tribulation coming. Furthermore, this Second Coming will inaugurate the millennial kingdom, and there will be a resurrection associated with it. Revelation 20 also attests to these facts, where John speaks of those who:

...had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection (Revelation 20:4,5).

Revelation 19:11–21 explains how the tribulation will end with a battle called Armageddon. This battle will end with the Lord’s coming, at which time He will also bind Satan and cast him into the bottomless pit for the thousand-year kingdom. Another interesting fact about this Second Coming is that all the earth shall see Him come, as it also says in Revelation 1:7.

Turning back to Matthew 24, we want to note one important mistake many have made concerning this chapter:

But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only (Matthew 24:36).
He told them no one would know the day and hour, but concerning the Second Coming for Israel as a whole, they will have signs of the season:

So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors (Matthew 24:33).

Once the abomination of desolation is set up in the temple, they will know that there will be approximately three and one-half years to go. They will know the season; they will be able to observe the signs and “call it” at least down to the year, if not the actual season of the year.

It is not so today with the secret coming for the Body of Christ. We have absolutely no signs of His coming and no way to calculate it. For us, the rapture is an imminent hope. It can happen at any time.

In Matthew 24, the Lord continued:

But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be (Matthew 24:37–39).

This context is very important to what the Lord said next. What He had done was to set up a comparison between the circumstances surrounding the judgment of Noah’s day and the circumstances surrounding the Second Coming for Israel. He said that the people of Noah’s day simply ignored the impending judgment and went on with their normal sinful lives. Then suddenly the flood came and took them all away in judgment. This is how it will be at the Second Coming:

Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left (Matthew 24:40).

In this illustration things are perfectly clear. These two that are in the field are obviously one saved Jew and one unsaved Jew who are together just before the Second Coming at the end of the tribulation. But we know that at the Lord’s return to the
earth He is going to set His foot on Mt. Zion and establish His kingdom here on earth! Therefore, the one…taken is taken in judgment just as in the illustration of Noah’s day, and the other left is left to enter into the blessings of the kingdom!

Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left (Matthew 24:41).

Once again, the one taken is taken in judgment just as in Noah’s day, and the remaining one is blessed to be able to enter into the kingdom. A common problem with this passage arises when believers try to fit the rapture into Matthew 24:40–41. They teach that the one taken is taken in the rapture and that the one left is left behind destined to go through the great tribulation. But does that fit the context? No, it does not!

The rapture is just not there; it does not belong in this context at all! Nothing here speaks of a secret calling away into glory of the church, which is His Body. This is all prophetic and has to do with the coming of Christ to the earth to establish His earthly kingdom at the end of the tribulation. In that regard the illustration in verses 37 through 41 fits perfectly.

The important thing to realize is that God intervened in the completion of this kingdom program with the present mystery dispensation of grace. Before any prophetic events of the last days of the kingdom program can begin, we of this secret dispensation of grace must be taken out of the picture. God will not resume His prophetic dealings with Israel until the mystery program is complete:

For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits: that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in (Romans 11:25).

THE SECRET COMING OF CHRIST

Behold, I show you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed (1 Corinthians 15:51).

The word mystery tells us this event is something that previ-
ously had not been made known. Neither resurrection itself nor the prophesied return of Christ is the mystery. This particular coming and this particular resurrection are a secret.

Paul could not have been telling the Corinthians a secret if he had been referring to the same coming as Matthew 24. The event described in 1 Corinthians 15 is something the prophets knew nothing about. It had never been revealed before Paul. Even the Lord in His earthly ministry said nothing about a secret coming. This coming is indeed unique! It will happen in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. There is no talk of a tribulation first, no signs accompany it, and there is a universal transformation. The dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we (that is we who are alive at the time) shall be changed. This is indeed a coming fitted to this secret program of grace which involves not the nation Israel and the prophetic program but the Body of Christ and the program of the mystery. To Paul alone was committed the revelation of the mystery:

For this cause I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles—If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to-ward you, How that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery (as I wrote before in few words, By which, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His Holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit (Ephesians 3:1–5).

This mystery is the great purpose of God to form the church, the Body of Christ. This is a program and calling separate and distinct from Israel’s kingdom program. The inauguration of God’s secret program waited for the nation Israel to be concluded in unbelief along with the Gentiles. This did not take place until after Acts 7 with the stoning of Stephen. It was only then that God was ready to unveil His secret purpose to manifest the riches of His grace.

Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, to make in Himself of two 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 (Ephesians 2:15,16).

At a time in Israel’s history when they and the world were ripe for the great tribulation, God intervened with the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery. He temporarily set Israel and her prophetic program aside and began a secret dispensation of grace. The entire prophetic clock has been stopped while God forms the mystery church, the Body of Christ. Thus Paul wrote in Romans:

For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits: that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in (Romans 11:25).

It is only after this present dispensation of grace is concluded that God will again take up His dealings with the nation Israel and will complete the prophetic program for the earth. This is why we make a number of specific statements concerning the timing of the secret coming of Christ for the church which is His Body. Because this dispensation is a secret program, it is separate and distinct from Israel’s kingdom program. This dispensation, both its introduction and its termination, are solely the subject of the mystery revealed through Paul. Therefore, we conclude that the secret coming of Christ to rapture the church is both premillennial and pretribulational. This means that in accordance with the revelation given to Paul, the Body of Christ will be raptured before the great tribulation or any of the prophetic events of the kingdom program.

We further believe that the secret coming of Christ for His body is unprophesied; that is, it is nowhere revealed outside of the Pauline Epistles. It is also unparalleled; that is, there are no types or pictures of our rapture anywhere in the Old Testament. Finally, it is unannounced, which means that there are no signs connected with His secret coming. It will be in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and we are therefore to understand that it is an imminent hope, which simply means that it can happen at any moment.
Failure to Rightly Divide
As we consider these points we would like to go to some other portions in Paul’s Epistles where the rapture is directly addressed. We will then look specifically at the issue of the pre-tribulational rapture and discuss some of the problems caused by a failure to rightly divide the Word of truth on this subject.

First, we turn to 1 Thessalonians 4. This is perhaps the most prominent place in the Pauline Epistles describing the secret coming of Christ for His Body. In the context of this Epistle, the Thessalonians needed encouragement because they had been facing severe persecution:

For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus; for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews (1 Thessalonians 2:14).

So severe was the persecution that Paul sent Timothy back to them to establish them and comfort them concerning their faith. But the issue that Paul addressed in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 was the result of a misunderstanding that had arisen concerning those who had been martyred through persecution. It was believed that these who had died had missed the Lord’s coming for the Body. Paul wrote to clear up this matter:

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them who are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others who have no hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13).

These great truths of which Paul did not want believers to be ignorant concern the imminent hope of the Body of Christ. It is a hope that comforts us when we lose a friend or loved one in Christ. We sorrow not as others who have no hope. Paul did not say that we do not sorrow, but he said that we do not despair or sorrow as others who have no hope! We do have hope! Everyone who has trusted Christ in this dispensation of grace, whether they die before His coming or whether they live until that day, has the hope of resurrection. When we bury a departed, fellow member of the Body in the ground, we sorrow on one hand humanly, but we rejoice on the other hand according
to the hope we have in Christ. We shall be reunited with them at His appearing. No member of the Body is going to be left out, as Paul explained:

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him (1 Thessalonians 4:14).

Two groups are spoken of in this verse. The first group is “we the living” who believe that Jesus died and rose again—in other words, we who have believed the gospel and are saved but have not yet died physically. The other group is those who sleep in Jesus. This group also is believers, but they are believers who have died for the cause of Christ.

To sleep in Jesus might apply to any that have died in Christ, but it has more to do with a specific issue pertinent to the Thessalonian believers. Our word in here is the Greek word dia, and has the sense of through or by means of. “Them also who sleep in Jesus” really has the sense of those who sleep on account of Jesus. These have died as a direct result of the gospel! They have been martyred for their stand for the gospel! Thus, they sleep or are dead because of Jesus or because of their defense of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Both groups are believers, but the one is living and the others are asleep; that is, their bodies are in the grave. The verse says that both groups are going to be brought “with Him,” that is, up in resurrection. The words “even so” tell us that the rapture applies to both groups, and therefore there is no fear of anyone being left behind. This is reaffirmed in the next verse:

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 precede them who are asleep (1 Thessalonians 4:15).

Paul declared first that he had received this truth directly by the Word of the Lord. This is consistent with all of Paul’s revelations which Galatians 1:12 declared he received directly from Christ. He was not taught these things by men, neither were they the subject of prophecy. They were the subject of the revelation of the mystery revealed by Christ from glory. This is also consistent with his statement in 1 Corinthians 15:51 where he
called this body of truth (the secret coming) a mystery. So Paul declared with absolute authority that the living saints will not preceed those who have died in Christ.

The coming of the Lord in this verse is not the Second Coming at the revelation, but rather the secret coming for the Body. The Second Coming is after the tribulation and is to establish the millennial kingdom. This secret coming is before God resumes His dealings with the prophetic program and will therefore precede the tribulation and the Second Coming. So the coming of the Lord of which Paul spoke is unique to us who are members of His Body, whether living or dead.

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 (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

All of the events in this verse are things that will happen in relation to the secret coming. Many have tried to associate these things with the events described in Revelation 4:1. That context has to do with John coming up to heaven to see a heavenly vision of things to do with God’s throne and the scroll with seven seals. Those events are part of the Day of the Lord and have nothing to do with the rapture of the church. As stated earlier, the Body of Christ and the present program of grace are nowhere found in the Book of Revelation. The Book of Revelation is all future to this dispensation of grace.

When Paul spoke of the trump of God, he used a military term. I Corinthians 15:52 calls this the last trump, a military term. The last trump was the signal to return home or to retire in rest. Thus, this signifies our call home and our going to be with our Lord in rest. But the verse proclaims that the dead in Christ will rise first. Far from being left behind, they will actually go up a split second ahead of us! Verse 17 then continues:

Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

How different is this coming from the one taught in Matthew 24! There He comes to the earth to set up His kingdom.
Here He takes us away from the earth into glory. This is that universal change Paul spoke of in 1 Corinthians 15:51, where he said we shall not all sleep but we shall all be changed. Philippians 3:20,21 also refers to this change, saying that Christ will change our lowly bodies to be fashioned like His glorious body. Colossians puts it this way:

*When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory* (Colossians 3:4).

What a hope we have as members of His Body—to be changed and taken into glory in the twinkling of an eye! Whether saints have gone to be with the Lord or remain, we will all have a part in this glorious, secret coming for the resurrection of the Body. Paul closed this portion in 1 Thessalonians with these words:

*Wherefore, comfort one another with these words* (1 Thessalonians 4:18).

**Pretribulation Rapture**

To examine the clear and pointed teaching of the pretribulation rapture, turn to 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12.

While the term *rapture* is not actually found in Scripture, the truth of it certainly is in such terms as: *caught up together, changed, raised incorruptible,* and *appear with Him in Glory.* But another place where an acceptable name is found for this event is here in 2 Thessalonians 2:3. It is translated “the falling away first,” but as we shall see, it is a reference to the rapture or the catching away of the Body of Christ.

In this passage, Paul dealt again with a concern of the Thessalonians. They had been receiving false reports that said the Day of the Lord or the great tribulation had come and were suffering as a result of it. But Paul again comforted them by presenting the clear truth that that day cannot come until after we are gone. In verse 1, Paul comforted them by the coming of the Lord and our gathering together unto Him. This is the secret coming (which precedes the Day of the Lord), the time of our gathering together unto Him.

He said in verse 2 that they should not be shaken or trou-
bled, neither by spirit, by word, nor by letter, as from us (as though sent from us). Evidently they had been getting letters that were sent as though from Paul and which told things that were just not true. These things concerned the day of Christ being at hand, which means the day of Christ’s judgment or the Day of the Lord was present. Verse 3 goes on to explain why this is impossible:

*Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come, except there come the falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition* (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

Paul said that there should be no deception for that day (the day of tribulation) would not come except two things happen: first, the falling away, and second, the revelation of the man of sin. These two things must happen before the tribulation: the falling away and the revelation of the Antichrist!

What exactly is the falling away? The original Greek word is *apostasia*. This word is a compound word which means to go from a standing position. The thought of falling is not contained in this Greek word. It would be better understood as a departure.

To comfort the saints, Paul said the Day of the Lord would not come except these two things happen first: the departure and the revelation of the man of sin. This departure is none other than the departure of the church, which is His Body, into heaven at His secret coming. This is the secret coming spoken of in 1 Thessalonians 4. Thus, the departure is another term which we could use for our hope of His coming to catch away the Body. We learn also that our departure must come first, before the Antichrist can even be revealed! Paul had other things to relate in chapter 2, but beginning with verse 6, he reiterated the truths of verse 3:

*And now ye know what restraineth that he might be revealed in his time.* (2 Thessalonians 2:6).

Paul said (repeating the two things of verse 3), “Now you know what restrains the unveiling of the Antichrist.” It is the Body of Christ! Our presence here prevents the prophetic program from resuming! Verses 7 and 8 repeat again the two key
events that must precede the Day of the Lord. This is very important to see. These two verses (verses 7 and 8) repeat the events of verse 3. Paul said in verse 7:

For the mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he who now hindereth will continue to hinder until he be taken out of the way (2 Thessalonians 2:7).

This language seems obscure, but let us explain it. Paul said: “…the mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he who now hindereth…” This is the Body of Christ! We are hindering the revealing of the man of sin. “He who now hindereth, will continue to hinder until he (the one hindering) be taken out of the way.” The church is hindering the revelation of the man of sin and must be taken out of the way (literally, out of the midst) before that man can be revealed. The Body of Christ being taken out of the way is the same as the departure of verse 3. This is the first thing that must happen before the Day of the Lord. The second thing is again repeated in verse 8: “And then shall that wicked one be revealed.” Again, the two events that must come before the day of judgment are “the departure” and the “revelation of the man of sin” in verse 3.

Then the Lord will come in His Second Coming to consume the beast with the Spirit of His mouth and the brightness of His kingdom coming. How thankful we should be that God has not appointed us unto that wrath but that He will deliver us first into the clouds of glory to ever be with Him! It is no wonder that Paul exhorted the Thessalonians not to be soon troubled or shaken.

There are those today who fail to rightly divide the Word of Truth on this subject and teach that the Body of Christ must go through part or all of the great tribulation. This is not so, and we need never fear. The Word of God is clear as to the secret hope of the Body of Christ. Before that man of sin can be revealed, before that prophetic clock can again begin to run, we shall be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with The Lord!
Chapter 15
The State of the Dead

The state of the dead can be a very disturbing subject to those who are outside of the Lord Jesus Christ. But to us who have trusted Him as our Savior, our hope of living forever with Him is secured by His resurrection. Based upon the absolute faithfulness of the Word of God, we have the assurance that our lives are:

“…hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory” (Colossians 3:3,4).

The Word of God has much to say about the state of the dead (both saved and unsaved) between death and resurrection. The eternal state of the unsaved dead is also clearly taught. These issues are important indeed, and the Bible is the only authoritative source of truth about these issues. In this lesson we seek to give a brief overview of the Bible’s teaching on this subject. We will cover this lesson in four points:

- Death
- Resurrection
- Judgment
- The eternal state of the lost

DEATH
The term death has been a problem for many people, but the main thing to remember is that it never means extinction or cessa-
tion of existence, but rather separation. Ephesians 2:1 tells us that before we were saved we were dead in trespasses and sins. This is talking about spiritual death. This does not mean that we did not exist, but it means that we were alienated or separated from a Holy God because of our sins. This was remedied when we trusted Christ as our Savior, at which time we were given spiritual life or regenerated by the Holy Spirit. This is when we were placed into Christ and given His eternal life by the gift of God’s grace.

Whether we talk about spiritual death, physical death, or eternal death, the issue is the same—it means separation.

Physical death is the separation of the soul and the spirit from the body. Resurrection is the reuniting of the body and the spirit. If death were final and meant the end, then what would be the meaning of resurrection? And if death were the absolute cessation of existence, then how could there be a second death as in Revelation 20:14?

Death is a definite state that affects the body, soul, and spirit. One of the things we must realize is that man is tripartite; that is, man is a three-part being. We know that we have a body. This was made of the dust of the ground as a creative act of God:

And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul (Genesis 2:7).

Some maintain that this verse means only that man is a living soul—that it does not mean that man has a soul. We believe that when God said in Genesis 1:26, “…Let us make man in our image, after our likeness,” that He meant that as He is tripartite or triune, so we are tripartite. We have a body, soul, and a spirit. The Lord Jesus confirmed this when He said:

And fear not them who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Matthew 10:28).

Also we read:

For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and
lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul (Matthew 16:26)?

To what could the Lord possibly have been referring in these references if not to the fact that we do indeed have a soul? As to the spirit, Paul said:

The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God (Romans 8:16).

Therefore, we conclude that we are three-part beings and that each part suffers the consequence of sin. We are spiritually dead or separated from the life of God before salvation. We are presently dying physically, and unless we are bodily taken to heaven in the rapture, our bodies will be separated from our souls and spirits in death. Our souls are either saved and have the hope of living forever with Christ, or they are lost and on their way to a Christless eternity.

Spiritual death is a condition that man is born into. His whole body, soul, and spirit are separated from the life and blessing of God. Physical death, however, is the point at which the spirit and soul leave the body. Once this happens, a man is ushered into eternity forever. Once this death takes place, man’s eternal state is fixed and cannot be changed.

A man’s eternal destiny depends upon whether or not he was saved during his physical life. In this regard the Book of Hebrews says:

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment (Hebrews 9:27).

This is one appointment that no one will miss. Mark well, there is no second chance. Men who trifle with death and treat it lightly should think twice; our lives are like a vapor, and all too soon we are ushered into eternity.

When physical death takes place, what exactly happens to the body, the soul, and the spirit? First, the body returns to the ground, back to dust from which it was created:

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 3:19).
This is a condition the Scriptures refer to many times as both death and sleep. The body, as we know, decomposes quickly and remains unoccupied or separated from the soul and spirit awaiting resurrection. The place that the body goes is the ground or the grave, and the regular Old Testament word for this is kehver. This was generally a cavern closed off by a door or a stone. The New Testament word means a monument or a place of remembrance.

The one difficult thing about the subject of the grave is that the word grave is sometimes used to translate other Hebrew and Greek words that do not mean the place of the body. One of these is the Hebrew word sheol (with its Greek equivalent hades). The most important thing to remember here is that the grave is separate and distinct from the place of the soul and spirit. The body returns to the ground but what of the soul and spirit?

Like all Bible subjects, this one too involves progressive revelation. To base all of our understanding upon Old Testament verses would be wrong, but in some cases that is exactly what men have done.

The Book of Ecclesiastes is often quoted by those who maintain that death or the grave is the end of existence until the resurrection. It must be remembered that Ecclesiastes is a book authored by a man who looked upon everything from the viewpoint of mere human wisdom. He experienced everything under the sun, and the inspired account of his findings was “all is vanity.” We would not look to this book as the final authority on this subject in view of its perspective, as well as the truth of further revelation from the Lord—both in His earthly ministry as well as through Paul from glory. But Solomon did make one statement that provides a beginning as to what happens to the soul and spirit:

*Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God, who gave it.* (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

When the body returns to the ground, the spirit returns to God who gave it. But does this mean that all men go to heaven whether saved or lost? No, indeed! But the spirit of man does
return to God for His disposition, that is, from the time of physical death on, the disposition of the spirit and soul is out of men’s hands. They no longer control their fate, but rather, it is completely in God’s hands.

But where exactly do the soul and spirit go? The Old Testament answer is found in the word sheol. Though this word is only translated either the grave, hell, or the pit, its actual meaning is to ask. It is the place of the departed or the unknown. They simply did not know anything about what went on in this place. That this word can mean the grave we do not argue, but that it only means the grave we deny. In 1 Samuel 28:7–19, King Saul sought the help of a medium. She was allowed to summon Samuel. In verse 15 Samuel said: “...Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up?” Obviously, Samuel was conscious and in some place of residence.

In the Psalms, David said of the Lord:

For thou wilt not leave my soul in sheol, neither wilt thou permit thine Holy One to see corruption (Psalms 16:10).

The place in which the Lord was not left is called sheol. Sheol was a two-compartmented place that contained the souls of the lost and the saved, each in their own respective place.

The New Testament also adds further light. The New Testament word equivalent to sheol is the word hades. This word is translated hell ten times and grave once.

Hades is the place that is referred to in the striking story of the rich man and Lazarus, where the rich man is said to be in hell or hades.

The Lord also said in Matthew 16:18 that the gates of hell or hades would not prevail against it (the Kingdom Church) built upon Him—the rock! The main question about hades is: “Are the souls there conscious or unconscious?” We believe that they are conscious. Some, trying to prove the unconscious state of the dead, have tried to make sheol and hades always refer to the grave. From this doctrine some have developed the idea of soul sleep. As we have already noted, the implication of Scripture is that those in the intermediate state are indeed conscious.
I believe that one very pertinent passage in regard to the conscious state of the dead is the story of the rich man and Lazarus. In Luke 16:19–21 the Lord related a story that warns men of God’s ultimate judgment upon unbelief toward the Word of God. One of the clear inferences here is that those who perish having rejected the teaching of Scripture are separated from God’s blessing and in a condition of suffering. This gives a clear view into the state of the soul between death and resurrection. From the overall context we learn that the Lord was rebuking the self-righteousness and unbelief of the Pharisees.

All the way from chapter 14, He dealt with the Pharisees. In Luke 16:13–18 the Lord directly rebuked their covetousness and their disobedience to God’s Word while claiming to keep the law. But in verses 19–31 the Lord gave to the Pharisees the strictest warning of all.

While some have suggested this portion is just an account of the Lord repeating an error of the Pharisees to humiliate them (a kind of satire), the Lord never rebuked error in that manner. Others tell us this account is just a fable and has no reference to actual facts. But that cannot be true for the Lord did not in any way relate these events as fictitious. On the contrary, they are related as real and a direct warning to the Pharisees. Even if we call this a parable, we must be careful to note that parables were always based upon truth. Parables were never fables. Luke 16 leaves no doubt that it is a true story that represents true ideas and real consequences, whether we call it a parable or not. I prefer to call it a story.

The reader is exhorted to read this passage carefully and to note some of the following things. First, there is a very real, frightening consequence to some of the hearers of this story. Next, in verse 20 only the beggar is given a name. Verses 22 and 23 relate that both men died and went to their respective places. The implication is not that rich men go to hell and poor men go to heaven but that the rich man, like many of the Pharisees, had not accepted the Word of God (cf. verses 29 & 31) and therefore did not receive blessings. He was not saved and was self-
indulgent, living in self-righteousness, luxury, and covetousness. He clearly did not love his neighbor as himself. The beggar, on the other hand, was obviously one who had been saved in his lifetime and received blessings after his death.

I believe that we must realize that this story teaches, a conscious state of men between death and resurrection.

We notice that some of the things in the passage are metaphorical of the truth they convey. Lazarus was in Abraham's bosom, which means the joy of Abraham or the place of joy for saved Jews. We also notice that there were fingers and eyes and a tongue mentioned, but these were just ways of showing that this was a fully conscious state. We see that in this place called hades the rich man was in torment, Lazarus was comforted, and between them there was a great gulf fixed. We further notice that there was no changing the circumstances in which they found themselves. The rich man had absolutely no hope of deliverance; their eternal destiny was fixed at the time of their death.

Thus, the Pharisees were being told that if they continued in their self-righteousness and unbelief, they would surely go to a place of eternal, conscious torment as soon as they died. This passage certainly supports a conscious state of the dead, whether between death and resurrection or in eternity and clearly puts an end to the teachings of soul sleep between death and resurrection, as well as any thought of annihilationism, that is, that the dead are simply snuffed out or cease to exist.

This passage also provides not the slightest hint of purgatory. There is no such doctrine taught anywhere in the Word of God as that of purgatory, a teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. According to them, some men go to purgatory where they can work out their punishment and then finally be delivered into heaven. But the Scriptures are clear that belief in the gospel while on earth is the only way that a man can be saved. The Lord Jesus said:

...if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins (John 8:24).
Another important verse that teaches the conscious state of the dead is Matthew 22:32. There that Lord says:

“...God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.”

What the Lord is teaching here directly concerns resurrection but the implication is clear, no one’s spirit is asleep after death. We also see this in John 8:56 where the Lord says:

“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and say it and was glad.”

Furthermore, the Lord said to the thief on the cross:

“...this day thou shalt be with me in paradise (Luke 23:43).

This man was to be conscious and with the Lord after death that very day.

Just as we have seen an intermediate state for both the saved and the lost in accordance with prophecy, the Pauline Epistles also show the believer’s hope today of being with the Lord immediately after death:

We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8).

We realize that this overall context is talking about being clothed upon with our house not made with hands which is eternal in the heavens. This is our resurrection body that we will receive when this tabernacle or tent which is our present house is dissolved. The principle here leaves no room for soul sleep. Rather, we are confident that though we are absent from being physically with Him now, once we are absent from this body we will be present with Him as we await the receiving of our glorified bodies. Paul says much the same thing in Philippians where he talks about Christ being magnified in his body whether it be by life or by death:

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain (Philippians 1:21).

What gain could there be in dying if it meant an unconscious state? Paul speaks of a gain that is the result of presence with the Lord. In verse 23, he goes on to speak of this gain as
a departure or, literally, an upward loosing to be with Christ which is far better (in the original, very far better)! But Paul said that though he would much rather be loosed to be with the Lord, to abide in the flesh was more needful for them, and thus, he had a confidence that he would abide with them. There is absolutely no room for soul sleep in our understanding of this intermediate state.

In conclusion to this section, is it not correct and Scriptural to say that after our body dies and goes to the grave that our spirit (and no doubt our soul) will be with Him, our Lord (Ecclesiastes 12:7), and like He was between His death and resurrection? This is not just in future resurrection it is immediately after death. Our Lord’s soul and spirit were never asleep or unconscious and were never separated from God in any way after the death of His body and prior to His resurrection, and neither shall we be. Did the Lord have an intermediate body? No, don't be ridiculous, and neither will we. God can handle our state-of-being until resurrection, be sure of that.

RESURRECTION
We will examine resurrection with special reference to the lost and also with reference to judgment. We emphasize that all men both saved and lost will have a resurrection. The Lord made reference to this in the Gospel of John:

Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, And shall come forth: they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation (John 5:28–29).

We understand that these two resurrections are both prophetic and will be separated by a space of 1000 years. The mystery or secret resurrection of this dispensation of grace will involve only the saved of this present dispensation. The Apostle Paul also made reference to the resurrection of the saved and lost in the Book of Acts:

And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust (Acts 24:15).
Those who wish to think that death is just the end and that there is no afterlife are going to be in for a great surprise. Not only is there a conscious intermediate state, but also a resurrection to a judgment where there will be no hope of receiving mercy. Paul used this as a warning:

*Because He hath appointed a day, in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; concerning which He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead* (Acts 17:31).

Much like the reaction Paul received in verse 32, many today scoff at the idea of a resurrection or of a coming judgment. However, the warning is clear, and God has made us responsible to tell the lost of their imminent danger. God’s remedy is fully made known. The gospel of the grace of God stands between life and death, and men need only trust Christ to be delivered by His grace.

The resurrection of the lost, those who reject the truth of God, is referred to most clearly in the Book of Revelation. In Revelation 20:11–15 we read of the most awesome judgment in the Word of God.

**JUDGMENT**

*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* (Revelation 20:11).

This great white throne is the final judgment of God before the beginning of the new heaven and new earth. We do not believe there will be any saved individuals at the great white throne. This is that resurrection of the *unjust* of which Daniel, the Lord, and Paul all spoke. All of the lost of all ages including this present dispensation of grace will be there to be judged for their works. The One sitting on that throne will be none other than the Lord Jesus Christ:

*For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son* (John 5:22).
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. For as the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself; And hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man (John 5:25–27).

It is as the Son of man that the Lord will judge men. He is man’s Redeemer, and He will also be man’s Judge. How amazing to realize that all those who have rejected Him as Savior will some day stand before Him as their Judge. In that day there will be no gospel of grace, no opportunity to be saved, but only His justice upon ungodly sinners.

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 (Revelation 20:12).

These books that are opened are proof that God is keeping careful records of all the works men do in this life. Verse 13 continues saying:

And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and hades delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works (Revelation 20:13).

The first prominent feature here is the resurrection. The dead, small and great, will stand before God. The sea gives up the dead that are in it. Death and hades deliver up the dead that are in them. These distinctions are somewhat obscure to us, but we recall that there is to be a bodily resurrection of the lost. Thus, when it speaks of the sea giving up its dead, it no doubt refers to the resurrection of the bodies of those who died in the sea. Likewise, the bodies of those in death and hades will be raised to face this judgment.

The other prominent feature is that every man is judged according to his works. These works are the deeds done in his life that demonstrate he is a sinner and by which he chose to be judged. These are quite simply all those who have died in their
sins. Men who die without a Savior will not have their sins forgiven and will have to answer for their own sins.

Though it is true that Christ died for the sins of the world, it is because He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world that God can and does offer salvation to any man who will trust Christ as Savior and Lord. But men are not actually placed into the death of Christ until they believe the gospel; that is, the work of Christ is not actually substituted for the sinner until he believes the truth.

God is propitiated or satisfied that the work of Christ is sufficient to save any man and is available to save any man, but the actual substitution does not take place until faith is expressed in God’s message of salvation. Men who reject the truth of God will have to bear the judgment for their own sins. Paul made reference to this:

*For this ye know, that no fornicator, nor unclean person, nor covetous man (who is an idolater) hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience (Ephesians 5:5–6).*

It is because of sin that God will judge the unsaved. These are sins that they will have to bear themselves because they have no Savior. They will have rejected Him and the grace that was offered to forgive their sins. They will find themselves facing God’s wrath and eternal separation from His holy kingdom.

When it says that they will be judged for their works, it means that the principle of grace was rejected and they now find themselves under the works principle. Paul made reference to this issue in Romans 2:5–16. As verse 5 teaches, the judgment of God in that day will be a righteous judgment. Every man there will receive exactly what he has coming.

Sometimes we hear men say, “All I want is justice,” but this is a foolish statement. What we really deserve is to be judged and separated from God forever because of our wicked works. Instead, He by His grace offers something we do not deserve—the forgiveness of sins based upon the finished work of Christ.
Those who want justice will be surprised. Verse 6 says that God will render to every man according to his deeds. Reading down through verse 10 we see that there are two possibilities for those who choose to be judged by works. Those who have been perfect will indeed receive eternal life, but those who have sinned will receive God’s indignation and wrath. Verse 11 gives solemn warning that there is no respect of persons with God. No one will be overlooked because of who they were; works will be the sole issue. All men whether under law or without law will be judged and shown to be sinners. Then Paul makes an amazing statement about the final decision or judgment of God in verse 16:

In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel (Romans 2:16).

What exactly is Paul’s gospel? It is the gospel of the grace of God! What does Paul mean when he says that God will judge men by his gospel? Does not verse 12 say that men shall be judged by the law? Yes, it does. The answer is that both a consciousness of God’s righteousness and the very law of God’s righteousness will first judge men and show them that they are sinners. They will be proved to be dead in trespasses and sins.

The final judgment will not be that they did not work their way to heaven; no man can work his way to heaven. God did not intend that men would work their way to heaven, and that is why He always provided a message of salvation. Though the gospel of grace is a new message given through Paul, God’s grace has always been the source of salvation in every dispensation.

The final judgment of men, that will send them to eternal separation, is that they rejected God’s gracious offer of salvation in any dispensation. The remedy was always there. God always had a way for men to come to Him by faith. But men shunned God, rejected His salvation, and chose to stand in their own works.

What an ironic ending to face! Men were never obligated to perform a life of perfect works to be accepted by God. Salvation was always available, and men could have availed
themselves of God’s redemption from sin in any dispensation, even though the merits of the cross were not yet made known. That will be the final judgment—they rejected God’s mercy and grace!

*And death and hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death* (Revelation 20:14).

All of the resurrected lost will be cast into the lake of fire—body, soul, and spirit. This is a literal separation from God, but it is distinctly the last judgment and separation of the lost from God.

Just as the first death was not the end of existence, so the last or the second death is not the end of existence. These resurrected people will have bodies fitted for their eternal state. They will not be bodies of flesh and blood like the ones that died the first death; otherwise they would be burned up. These bodies will be of a different nature that will fit them to exist eternally in this state.

The lake of fire described here is the most terrible place in existence, and we emphasize that it is a literal place. Matthew 25:41 tells us this place was prepared for the devil and his angels. These rebellious angels never had an opportunity to be saved or to repent as far as the Scripture is concerned.

That God may have created this place to immediately stop and judge the rebellion of Satan and his followers is bad enough. But how astonishing to think that all the lost of mankind, who rejected God and knew Him not as their Father, will go to the place of their father—the devil!

It is interesting to note that here in Matthew 25 we also see a judgment that seems to involve men being judged before the great white throne. But upon a closer examination of the passage, we see a judgment that will take place at the beginning of the millennium. Verse 31 begins the passage saying that this will take place:

*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* (Matthew 25:31).
The judgment that follows is of those nations that either helped Israel or worked against Israel during the great tribulation. It is commonly referred to as the *sheep and goat judgment* (verse 32). In verse 34, the nations that treated Israel favorably will be allowed to inherit the kingdom, which means that they will be allowed to enter into the blessings of that kingdom era. But in verse 41 we read of the other nations:

*Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41).*

While it may seem that these went immediately into the lake of fire, the meaning is that they were judged as worthy of the lake of fire and evidently were sent to hades to await the final judgment of the great white throne. Verse 46 affirms this:

*And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal (Matthew 25:46).*

The lake of fire will be the final place not only of lost men but also of Satan and his angels, for whom it was originally prepared. The first inhabitants of this place are evidently the beast and the false prophet of Revelation 19:20, and they will remain there during the thousand-year imprisonment of Satan. From Revelation 20:10 we learn that Satan will be cast into the lake of fire where the beast and the false prophet are.

*And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:15).*

Of the books mentioned here only one is the book that could have helped an individual and that is the book of life. As men are judged out of the things written in the other books, no reason will be found to write their names into this book of life. Therefore, at the end of the judgment, all those whose names are still missing from the book of life will be cast into the lake of fire.

We have mentioned two specific judgments. The first (at the beginning of the millennium) will affect the nations of the
tribulation period, and the second (at the end of the millennium) will affect the lost of all ages.

THE ETERNAL STATE OF THE LOST
We will examine the eternal state of the lost by asking three questions and answering them from Scripture.

• Are these people conscious?
• Will they be conscious eternally?
• Will they be in torment, i.e., is this fire real?

In Matthew 13 the Lord explained the parable of the tares and the field to His disciples:

And shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear (Matthew 13:42–43).

This tells us that they shall indeed be conscious. Wailing and gnashing of teeth are terms that are meant to describe torment and pain, not unconsciousness. But these of this judgment are no doubt cast first into hades and then later, after the millennium, into the final state. Is that state also conscious? Yes! In Revelation 14:9–11 we read of those in the tribulation who worshipped the beast and received his mark and who shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God:

...which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever; and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name (Revelation 14:10–11).

Not only does this passage speak of literal torment, but it also clearly addresses the fact that this suffering will be forever and ever. In conjunction with this we read:

Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from
Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41).

Also in verse 46 it says:

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal (Matthew 25:46).

It is clear that the state of the lost will be fully conscious and that when men go to hades it is merely the beginning of what will be an eternal state of torment. Hades itself shall be cast into the lake of fire—that everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

To sum up the answers to our questions, we believe the Scriptures teach:

• That the lost will be eternally conscious

• That they will be in torment in hades until the day that they are raised in bodies suited for torment to stand at the final judgment

• That from there they will be cast into the lake of fire where they will be separated from God forever and in a conscious state of eternal torment

Jude 13 gives us another glimpse into what this place will be like by saying that unto the lost is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. We can scarcely imagine how awful this place will be, but each individual will be alone in his own confinement of the blackness of darkness, completely separated from God and in the torment of fire, forever!

How we need to be busy proclaiming the gospel of God’s grace while there is yet time!

Some of the main objections to these truths are important to note because it is likely that sooner or later we will be faced with some of them. There is the annihilationist view. Most in this camp believe that the lost simply sleep or are unconscious until the resurrection of the unsaved, at which time they are simply annihilated. This, of course, requires the mishandling of many Scriptures that clearly teach the opposite.

Then, there is the universal reconciliation or universal
redemption view. These believe that God will ultimately save all created beings including Satan. Their logic is shallow, indeed, and rests mostly on the claim that the words eternal, everlasting, and forever do not really mean forever but only have to do with specific periods of time or specific ages. Their claim is unsupported by Greek grammar, as well as the fact that these same words are used of God and the Lord Jesus Christ to describe their eternal power and Deity!

One of the particular dangers of this view is that it must logically attribute the creation of sin to God. By their logic, just as God originated sin to accomplish His own purpose, He also allowed for the redemption of all beings—some through faith in Christ and the others later, after a painless judgment and time of unconscious separation. This teaching is both dangerous and sinful; it attacks the very character of God and the truth of His Word.

Both of these erroneous views have a common denominator. They rest in the question, “How can a God of love ever torture His creatures with everlasting fire?” But God’s love is manifest in the cross, not in compromising His holiness and righteousness. The fact that He allowed His Son to suffer the equivalent of an eternal death upon the cross to redeem sinful man is the proof that He loves the world. His love never compromises His justice or righteousness. Those who reject His love are then subject to His justice. This is manifest in wrath and judgment against sin—the sin of rejecting His love and the redemptive work of His Son!

We simply cannot let our human emotions negate the clear teaching of the Word of God! While we do believe there will be degrees of punishment in the lake of fire (from such passages as Luke 12:47–48), they will nonetheless be in conscious suffering forever.

God be thanked that the redeemed—all those who are justified by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—will be eternally with Him! In this dispensation of grace we are consciously present with the Lord the moment we are loosed from these bodies. At
the rapture of the church we will receive our glorified bodies and ever be with Him in the heavenlies.

The rapture will be immediately followed by what Paul calls *the judgment seat of Christ* in 2 Corinthians 5:10. This is no unbeliever’s judgment, neither is there any reference to salvation here—only the saved in Christ will be here! This is a time when we the redeemed will be reviewed by our Lord for our service for Him as believers. To the faithful, eternal rewards or degrees of reign in glory will be given. But for those who have been unfaithful, He will justly withhold reward; yet the believer will be ever in the joy of the Lord.

May these solemn and important matters beckon us to greater service for Him—that the lost might be saved from the eternal judgment of the lake of fire and enjoy eternity with Him.
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Chapter 16
Our Mission and Commission

How wonderful it is to know that the Lord has given very definite instructions for the Body of Christ as to our commission. He has not left us without a mission here on earth, and He has fully enabled us to fulfill this mission.

The Lord gave more than one commission since His earthly ministry began. It is our desire to clearly make these different commissions known so that we can walk circumspectly or accurately according to the present dispensation of grace which God is administering today.

The majority of believers are ignorant of the true mission of the church, the Body of Christ. They are really operating with little idea of the full scope of the Lord’s instructions in this area for today! Failure to recognize God’s message for us today through Paul, separate and distinct from the message of the Twelve, has caused many believers to operate under the wrong commission! But the right division of the Scriptures will at once shed light on this area and give clear direction and understanding.

We will examine the subject of our mission and commission in three points:

- The definition and basis of a commission
- The commissions of Christ on earth
- The greatest commission from the Lord in glory
THE DEFINITION AND BASIS OF A COMMISSION

A *commission* is defined in the dictionary as “a formal written warrant granting the power to perform various acts or duties” or “an authorization or command to act in a prescribed manner or to perform prescribed acts.” The basic idea is to hire or charge someone to go forth and perform a certain task. In a spiritual sense, it is the Lord Jesus Christ charging and sending forth His followers to proclaim the message of truth concerning Himself.

The important thing to realize is that Christ gave several commissions. Some were on earth, but one was from glory; and to simply mix them all together would be confusing and wrong. As we consider the commissions the Lord has given, several questions should come to mind as we seek to discern exactly to whom each commission is directed. We should ask:

- What is the program of the commission; that is, is it Israel’s program, or is it the mystery program to the church which is His Body?
- What is the gospel of the commission?
- What is the overall content of the commission?
- Who are the deliverers and recipients of the commission?

These questions have to do with the basic understanding of exactly what the Lord wants us to do. What is the program, what is the gospel, what is the content, and who are the recipients of the Lord’s instructions? Without answers to these questions we are bound to be proclaiming something that is not part of God’s program for today.

The basis and foundation of all the Lord’s commissions, regardless of the program, is *Himself*—*He* is the foundation. Paul wrote in Romans 1:16 that vested in the good news of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth—to the Jew first and also to the Greek. Here Paul is not making reference to any particular dispensational message but rather to the *Person* of Christ. *He* is the power of God unto salvation. When Christ was preached to the Jew first under the
ministry of the Twelve, He was the power of God to save those who believed the gospel of the kingdom. When Christ was preached to the Gentiles under Paul’s ministry, He was the power of God to save those who believed the gospel of grace. Paul puts the emphasis upon the Person of Christ as being the power of God to save in any dispensation.

Paul also made a clear reference to this truth in 1 Corinthians. There he said:

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11).

The Lord Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone and the foundation of all God’s good news to man—regardless of the program He is ministering. No one since the Lord’s earthly ministry can preach the truth of God without making reference to Christ. But when Paul said “other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid,” he was expanding upon the statement that he made in verses 9 and 10:

For we are laborers together with God; ye are God’s cultivated field, ye are God’s building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth on it. But let every man take heed how he buildeth upon it (1 Corinthians 3:9,10).

Paul talked about a building of God that was built “…according to the grace of God which is given unto me…” The building of which he spoke was the church, the Body of Christ. Paul said that it was built according to the grace of God (or the message of the grace of God) which was given to Paul as a wise master builder. Paul clearly spoke of himself as a master builder or an architect, that is, a chief builder! He was the one who had been given the original plans to dispense to the world concerning the construction of God’s new building, the church, the Body of Christ. This was not a building in which the Jew was first or which was looking for the millennial reign of Christ, but a building made up of both Jews and Gentiles reconciled into one body—one new man—through the preaching of the Cross.

It was Paul, not the Twelve, who was responsible for dis-
pensing this message and program. That is why he called himself the architect; he was the Apostle of the gospel of the grace of God. It was in this capacity that he said, “I have laid the foundation and another buildeth on it.” The foundation to which Paul referred was Christ preached as Paul was commissioned to preach Him:

Now to Him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began (Romans 16:25).

This was the foundation to which Paul referred in 1 Corinthians 3:10,11. Jesus Christ is the center of the whole Bible, yet He can be preached as the foundation of the kingdom program, according to prophecy, or He can be preached as the foundation of the church which is His Body according to the revelation of the mystery. One was the ministry and commission of the Twelve, but the other was the mystery committed solely to Paul. Therefore, when Paul said “let every man take heed how he buildeth on it,” he meant the foundation of the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery! This is precisely why it is so important to be careful to understand our commission lest we find ourselves building according to the wrong specifications and program.

Now that we understand the basis and foundation of all of Christ’s commissions, (that He is the central figure in God’s purpose), we must distinguish between preaching Him according to prophecy and preaching Him according to the truth committed to Paul for this secret dispensation of grace. It is the same Lord but two separate programs; it is the same Christ but the foundation of two distinct buildings. To the one He is the foundation of the kingdom through prophecy. To the other He is the foundation of the Body of Christ through the revelation of the mystery, and that foundation was laid by Paul.

THE COMMISSIONS OF CHRIST ON EARTH
Next, we are going to look at the actual commissions of Christ.
The Lord gave three progressive commissions in His earthly ministry and all three had to do not with a secret dispensation but with a prophetic program for the earth through Israel.

The first of these is in Matthew 10:5–14. Here the Lord commissioned or sent forth the Twelve Apostles to proclaim a specific message. This message was to be accompanied by certain demonstrations of power and also by certain actions of the Apostles.

Let us recall the things we should ask when we come to a commission: what is the program, the gospel, the content, and who are the recipients and objects of the commission?

As we view this passage as a whole, we see that the program involves the nation Israel and a kingdom that is to be proclaimed to them first. This can be verified by such passages as Luke 1. Here, speaking of the Lord at the announcement of His birth, we read:

*He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David. And He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end (Luke 1:32,33).*

From these verses we learn that the program of the Matthew 10 commission is definitely the prophetic, kingdom program. Christ announced that very kingdom as “at hand.” This kingdom was promised since the world began, as God had spoken to Abram:

*And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed (Genesis 12:2,3).*

Under this program all the world was in view. Every nation on earth was to be blessed through the establishment of Israel’s kingdom.

In Matthew 10:5 we see that in accordance with that design they were not to go to the Gentiles or even any city of the Samaritans. They were to go only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The gospel they were to preach was *the kingdom of*
heaven is at hand (verse 7). This is that kingdom of which the prophets had spoken, which we read about in Isaiah 9:6,7; in Jeremiah 23:5,6; and also in Daniel 2:44 and 7:13,14.

The content of this commission involved things that accompanied the sign ministry, and they were given power to do miraculous deeds to verify the authenticity of their gospel. We also notice in verses 9 through 14 that they were to follow a certain procedure in providing for their personal needs and in handling each house that they came to.

While it is true that they did not actually offer the kingdom at this time, they were nevertheless offering it at hand. This means that until the Lord actually died on the cross the kingdom could not be literally established. With John the Baptist, the way was being prepared for the kingdom to be offered as soon as Christ’s work on the cross was complete.

As we progress in the gospel accounts, we would expect to find the ministry of the Lord broadening as the kingdom message flourished. However, it was not long after this account in Matthew 10 that we see the Lord facing increasing opposition from the nation as a whole. In chapter 12 He began to rebuke the nation, and in chapter 13 He hid the truth from them in parables. These actions represented a dramatic turning point in the public ministry of the kingdom program. The unbelief of the nation caused the Lord to confine His ministry to the little flock who would follow Him. All this was in accordance with God’s foreknowledge; the rejection of Christ by His own people was also predicted in prophecy.

The next commission the Lord gave on earth is found in Luke 10:1–12. As we consider our four basic questions in regard to this commission, we find that it is the same program, gospel, and content (marching orders), as well as the same objective audience as the one in Matthew 10.

This time the Lord sent out His followers and instructed them concerning their personal provision (to provide nothing for their journey), their message of peace, their miraculous power, and their gospel of the kingdom. The cities they were to visit were the ones to which the Lord Himself would go, which
identified them as pertaining exclusively to the nation Israel. This passage also explains exactly what it means to be a peacemaker:

_Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the sons of God (Matthew 5:9)._ 

A peacemaker is someone who brought the message of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, to a household in Israel and offered peace if they would receive it. If received, the messenger came into the house, healed the sick, and proclaimed the kingdom gospel. But if the house would not receive their peace, then the disciples were to deny peace to that house, brush off the dust of their clothes against that house in judgment, and leave.

God knew beforehand that the nation would largely reject this offer and that rejection would go all the way to crucifying the Lord. Nevertheless, God according to His purpose forgave Israel this sin according to the Lord’s prayer on the cross just prior to His death. Therefore, after His resurrection we find yet another commission to His people which is indeed a progression beyond the first two commissions.

There are no less than five separate accounts of this next commission, and any serious student of Scripture is obligated to read and study all five accounts. This next commission is, of course, the one known as the “great commission.” We emphasize that this name is not given to it in Scripture, and neither is it the greatest commission of the Bible. It is indeed a powerful and important commission, but it is not a commission based upon the greater truth that was to be revealed later through the Apostle Paul.

The first of the five accounts of this commission is given in Matthew 28:18–20:

_And Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying, All authority is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always,
even unto the end of the age. Amen (Matthew 28:18–20).

The next account is Mark 16:15–18:

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. And these signs shall follow those who believe: In my name shall they cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues; 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 (Mark 16:15–18).

The third account is Luke 24:47–49:

And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high (Luke 24:47–49).

The fourth account is John 20:21–23:

Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you; as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit; Whosoever's sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever's sins ye retain, they are retained (John 20:21–23).

The fifth and final account of this commission is found in Acts 1:8:

But ye shall receive power, after the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:8).

We have gone to some length to quote all these references to be sure that there is no mistake about what the entire commission says. Besides the general mistake of not recognizing the difference between this commission and the commission given to Paul, another error is that believers try to choose one of these accounts over and above the others, as if they are five separate
commissions. But the only scriptural and correct way to view these portions is to realize that they are five separate and unique accounts of the *same commission* given by the Lord after His resurrection and before His ascension!

These are indeed the Lord’s parting words to His Apostles on earth. They are His instructions for them to go forth and continue the work that they had begun prior to the cross.

We also must emphasize that these are *not* the last words the Lord spoke concerning the mission and commission of the saints. There was to be another body of truth revealed that was still kept secret at this time. The message and commission of that secret program was to be the greatest commission of all!

The reader must realize that a thorough accounting of the various aspects of this kingdom commission is necessary to understand it as a whole. Remember our four questions in relation to this commission:

- What is the program?
- What is the gospel?
- What is the content or marching orders?
- Who are the recipients and the intended objects of the commission?

Let us list all the parts of this commission. First, they were to tarry at Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high. This, of course, was the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Many today are misled concerning this command as they try to obey instructions that were not given to us!

Second, they (not we) were to begin their ministry at Jerusalem. We cannot spiritualize these words by saying that wherever we are, that is our Jerusalem! This was a literal city, and the reason for its importance to the kingdom program is that Jerusalem was to be the very center—The Capital—of the earthly kingdom! Isaiah 2:1–4 clearly shows that this city will be the place from which the Lord will rule and reign in the kingdom. Thus, under the ministry of that program, it was manda-
tory that this city be converted first. The only accurate way to handle this order is to realize that it is part of a program which cannot be carried out today! We see from the Acts record what the Apostles did. They remained at Jerusalem—exactly what they were supposed to do!

They were finally to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. We must not forget that this is all the world beginning with Jerusalem! Matthew says that they were to go forth and teach all nations, but this is all nations according to the prophetic kingdom program. Israel must first be converted before the rest of the nations can hear the truth of the kingdom. This is true because under that program it is through Israel’s established kingdom that the nations are to be blessed.

We see the Lord’s orders as to the progression of His commission (Acts 1:8). They were to begin at Jerusalem, then go on to Judea, then to Samaria, and finally, after the nation Israel had accepted the gospel, they could then go to the uttermost part of the earth. That the kingdom commission and gospel had a worldwide scope, we absolutely affirm. Every nation on earth is to be blessed through Israel’s rise to their Messiah. Indeed, the Book of Isaiah affirms this:

> For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people, but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And the nations shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising (Isaiah 60:2,3).

Clearly, under this kingdom program Israel was to be the channel of blessing to the rest of the nations; under this program the Jew was indeed first.

The third aspect of this commission was that they were to preach the gospel to every creature. Here we must be extremely careful not to include the gospel later revealed through Paul. The context must determine which gospel and what program is being ministered at any time.

In Acts 1:3–8 the Lord confirmed that the gospel He had sent them out to preach in Matthew 10 was the same one they were being sent out to proclaim. In Acts 1:3 He taught them for
forty days things pertaining to the kingdom of God. These things had to do with His death, burial, and resurrection taking place before the actual offer and establishment of the kingdom on earth. The work of the cross had been accomplished, and they were soon to be filled with the power of the Spirit. They would then go forth witnessing of Christ’s resurrection and telling of His Second Coming to establish the kingdom. This is exactly why they asked him the question in Acts 1:6:

When they, therefore, were come together, they asked of Him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6)?

Their question shows what they understood the kingdom of God to mean. The Lord did not rebuke them or tell them this kingdom was not literal, but spiritual. He simply told them it was not for them to know the timing. That the kingdom is literal is clear from the many prophecies as well as all the Lord had taught them about His Second Coming in fulfillment of the prophetic Scriptures. Verse 8 tells us their ministry would indeed cover the entire earth, and verse 11 confirms that the literal, earthly kingdom was in view because they were told this same Jesus would come in like manner as they had seen Him go. Also, if we examine the Acts ministry of Peter, we will see that these things pertaining to the literal return of Christ are exactly what he proclaimed to Israel. The gospel was still the gospel of the kingdom.

The fourth aspect we should note is that this gospel included water baptism. This was not just an optional ceremony because the Lord specifically said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” Peter also said to the Jews:

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 Spirit (Acts 2:38).

This was not an outward sign of an inward faith, neither was it a picture of their death with Christ as some have imagined. It was a ceremonial cleansing that identified them with Israel’s national priesthood. This is also very significant to their king-
dom program since one of God’s primary Old Testament promises was that they would be a kingdom of holy priests (Exodus 19:6).

The fifth aspect of this commission is that miraculous signs were to follow those who believed (Mark 16:15–18). This point is very important. The same commission that included water baptism also included the sign gifts of the Holy Spirit. If the Word of God means anything, this commission (when ministered in the proper dispensational timing) must have these miraculous signs immediately following those who believe.

This is proof enough that the kingdom program is not what God is offering today. Failing to rightly divide the Word of truth, many seek to retain this commission for us today and manipulate these Scriptures into saying something completely different. Such distortions nullify the clear teaching of the Word of God.

The last aspect of this commission we will consider is where the Lord told them:

*Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age.*

_Amen (Matthew 28:20)._ 

Did this not include His entire earthly ministry with the Twelve Apostles and all of the instructions He had given them in relation to this kingdom program? This was not just Christ’s command to love one another (John 13:34) but also included “sell that ye have and give alms” of Luke 12:33. It included the command to “provide neither gold nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor a bag for your journey” of Matthew 10:9,10. It also included their preparations for the great tribulation of Matthew 24. It must also include the instructions of the sermon on the mount as well as the so-called Lord’s Prayer, both of which clearly related to the kingdom of heaven on earth.

In light of all this, how could we possibly say we can do all things whatsoever the Lord commanded upon earth? We cannot! What has happened to all these instructions? They have been superseded! The early Acts ministry confirms that all these
things were being accomplished by the Apostles as they offered Israel the kingdom.

What was that program? It was the prophetic kingdom program. What was the gospel? It was the gospel of the kingdom. What was the content? It was filled with things related to the prophetic, earthly promises and the miraculous ministry of the Holy Spirit. Who were the recipients and the objects of these things? They were to the Jew first and then to the Gentiles after Israel’s rise to kingdom glory.

**THE GREATEST COMMISSION FROM THE LORD IN GLORY**

This brings us to the next and final commission given by the Lord. This time the instructions are not from the Lord on earth, nor are they a continuation of that ministry the Lord empowered the Apostles to continue in His absence.

This final commission was given from glory through only one man, the Apostle Paul. We are compelled to call it the greatest commission of the Bible! It is a twofold commission as we shall see, but it is based not upon prophecy but upon God’s revelation of His secret.

*According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth on it. But let every man take heed how he buildeth upon it* (1 Corinthians 3:10).

The message and ministry of Paul was not according to prophecy but according to the *revelation of the mystery*. While it is true that Jesus Christ is a prophetic figure, God made known through Paul His secret purpose in Christ to reconcile all things unto Himself—based upon the merits of the cross according to the riches of His grace. It was God’s secret purpose to conclude Israel in unbelief along with the Gentiles and then to reconcile both unto God in one Body by the Cross.

We are not saying that Israel’s unbelief is a mystery. *The mystery* (secret) is God’s purpose to build a joint Body of believing Jews and Gentiles, based not upon Israel’s instrumentality but
based upon the setting aside of Israel. This is the revelation that constitutes the dispensation of the grace of God and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery.

Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, for to make in Himself of two 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 (Ephesians 2:15,16).

We also read:

For this cause I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles—If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me toward you, How that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery (as I wrote before in few words, By which, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel (Ephesians 3:1–6).

Vested in these two passages, we have the instructions that tell us this program is different from that which the Twelve Apostles knew or were proclaiming. This new program had been kept secret from all previous ages and generations until revealed through Paul. The reconciliation of believing Jews and Gentiles into one Body is the heart of this program. It is accomplished first through proclaiming the ministry of reconciliation—the gospel of the grace of God—and second by making all see what is the administration of this mystery.

Let us go to the account of the first aspect of this commission:

And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath com-
mitted unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we beg you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For He hath made Him who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:18–21).

The second aspect of this commission is where Paul said:

And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages hath been hidden in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ (Ephesians 3:9).

As we consider our four questions regarding a commission, we ask first: What is the program of this commission? As we have read in detail, the program is the dispensation of the grace of God made known through the revelation of the mystery. This is a new program that involves building the church, the Body of Christ. It was revealed not through the prophets but only from glory through a single man—the Apostle Paul. This program has an entirely different calling, walk, and destiny from the kingdom program which the Lord ministered through the Twelve.

What is the gospel of this commission? In Acts 20:24 Paul said he preached the gospel of the grace of God. This is that gospel of reconciliation recorded in 2 Corinthians 5 and is the message to the world that God had concluded all in unbelief that he might have mercy upon all. God proved all men to be sinners and alienated from Him—whether the Gentiles, who were set aside in Genesis 11, or the Jews, who were concluded in unbelief in Acts 7.

God exposed the rebellion of the entire world against Himself and then intervened with a secret. Now that all men were proven helpless and deserving of His wrath, He intervened with a dispensation of grace and made known that He had set aside the chosen nation with her prophetic program. God then reconciled the world to a position of offering salvation to all by grace through faith alone. Now He beckons the world to be reconciled to God, i.e., personally reconciled to Himself by
believing the gospel of grace. Under this gospel it is not the Jew first:

*For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him (Romans 10:12).*

Under Paul’s gospel we receive justification by faith apart from the deeds of the law and peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. Under this gospel water baptism is excluded:

*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 no effect (1 Corinthians 1:17).*

Under this gospel the cross is preached as good news, and those who believe the gospel of grace are not joined to the kingdom church but are united with the Body of Christ by one spiritual baptism (1 Corinthians 12:13).

The next question is: What is the content of this commission? This commission involves our heavenly calling, and in accordance with this no earthly promises are given. We receive all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ and our hope is the secret coming of Christ to rapture us away into glory. The miraculous sign ministry of the Holy Spirit has ceased. No sign gifts are promised in conjunction with the ministry of reconciliation.

Finally, who are the recipients and objects of this commission? It was received by Paul to give to *all the world*:

*For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office (Romans 11:13).*

We have only one Apostle in this dispensation of grace, and God used him alone to give this message to the world. We must not go to the Twelve Apostles or the kingdom commission of Israel to find our worldwide outreach. God has reconciled the world unto Himself with the gospel of grace. We must reach out to the world with the right message, with the right program, and with the right expectation of blessing.

Our goal is twofold: to offer salvation (reconciliation) to all
through believing the gospel of grace and to help those who trust Christ to understand the administration of the mystery! Paul spoke of both aspects of this commission in Colossians 1:23–25. In verses 20–21 he referred to that message of reconciliation:

> 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 that is under heaven, of which I, Paul, am made a minister (Colossians 1:23).

Paul was commissioned to preach the gospel of reconciliation to every person under heaven. He was a minister of a worldwide message of reconciliation (Colossians 1:6). But he went on to say in Colossians 1:24 that his commission and ministry had yet another aspect. Verse 24 speaks of the church, the Body of Christ, that is, those who have believed the message of grace. Paul said in verse 25 that he was also a minister to them, according to the dispensation of God that was given him to complete the Word of God, even the mystery!

The twofold aspect of Paul’s commission is vividly seen in his ministry: first to beg the world to be reconciled to God through the gospel of grace and then toward those who believe, to make all men see what is the administration of the mystery. To help men understand the mystery program for today is part of Paul’s commission!

We must realize this commission was given directly to Paul, and we are to carry on his message and ministry.

Thus, we preach salvation through Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery! We labor to make all believers see the administration of the mystery so they can grow in grace and be established in the faith, not tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine and undispensational teaching. Is it any wonder that we call this the greatest commission?

THE COMMISSIONS COMPARED
What about the kingdom commission? We believe that it should now be called the “superseded commission” or the “set-
aside commission,” but certainly not our commission. We offer a brief comparison between the two commissions.

**The Kingdom Commission**

- This commission was given by Christ to the Twelve Apostles *on earth*.
- The Twelve Apostles were assigned to administer this program.
- It reached out to the Jew first.
- It involved the gospel of the kingdom.
- It offered an earthly, kingdom hope.
- It had physical and spiritual blessings on earth.
- Water baptism was required.
- A Jewish kingdom church was being formed.
- Signs and wonders were given to facilitate the outreach of this commission.
- It was entirely in accordance with prophecy.

**The Grace Commission**

- It was given first to the Apostle Paul by Christ *from glory*.
- There is only one Apostle—the Apostle Paul—to administer this program.
- There is no difference between Jews and Gentiles.
- The gospel is the gospel of grace.
- We have a heavenly hope and calling.
- We have no earthly blessings but rather all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies.
- Water baptism has ceased, and we are to guard the one *spiritual* baptism of Ephesians 4:5.
• The church, the Body of Christ is being formed.
• There are no sign gifts.
• It is solely in accordance with the revelation of the mystery.

Let us truly consider this secret commission from the Lord in glory as His final instructions to us, His Body, through Paul. May we diligently seek to make known the precious truths He has committed to our trust, that we might say with Paul:

_And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that in this I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak_ (Ephesians 6:19,20).
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Basic Bible Doctrines

In this book the author presents the major doctrines of the Bible in a basic and concise way from a Pauline perspective.

Donald Webb has served as president of Day of Grace Ministries since its organization and also serves on the board of Word of Grace Mission. From 1983–1992 he directed the Berean Bible Institute. He has been active in preaching the Word, rightly divided, since 1973.

Day of Grace Ministries is a private ministry supported by the gifts of the Lord’s people. Its purpose is to spread the gospel of the grace of God so that all men might have the opportunity to “be saved, and come unto a [full] knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4).

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