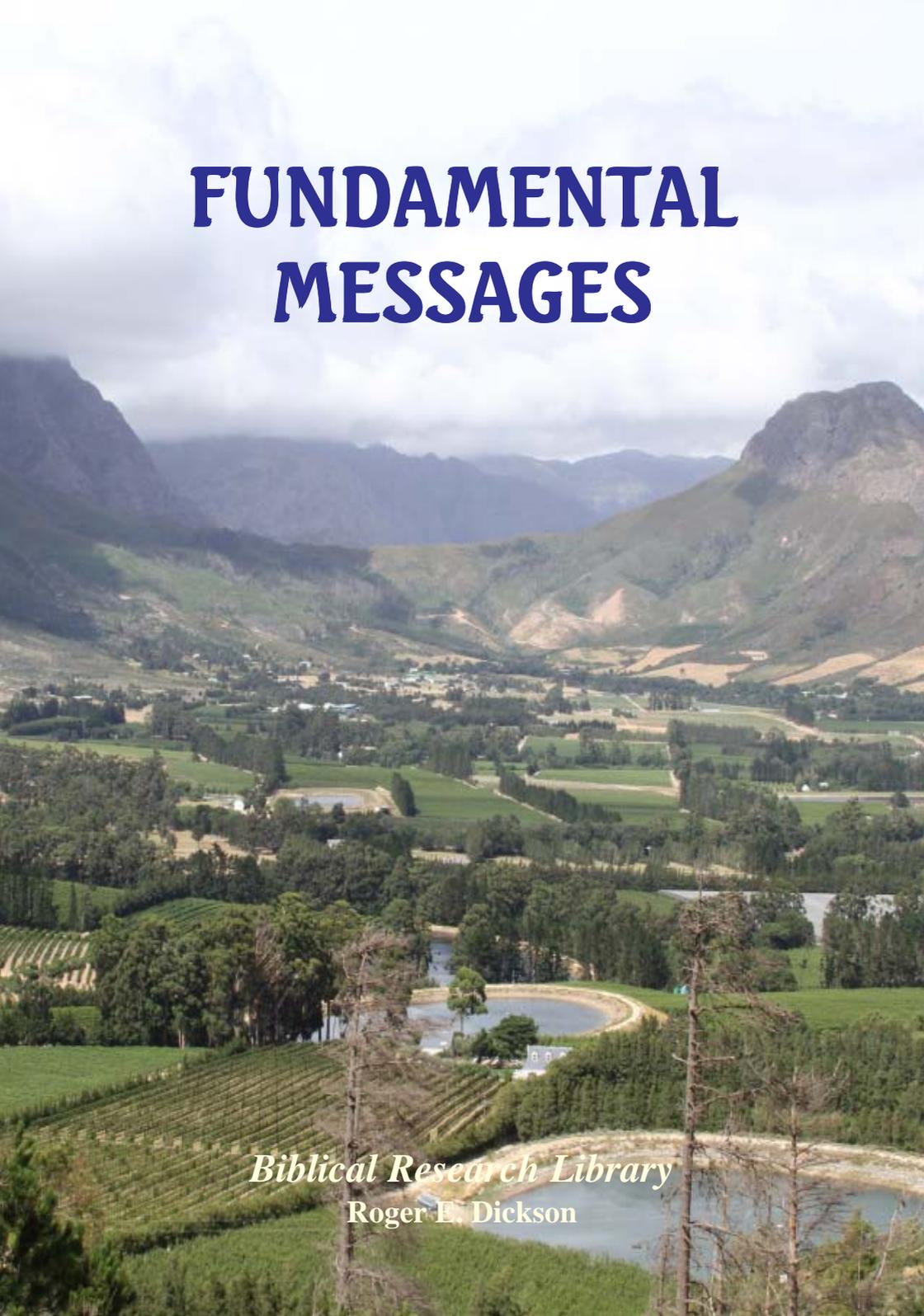


FUNDAMENTAL MESSAGES

A scenic landscape photograph of a valley. In the foreground, there are rows of grapevines on a hillside. A river flows through the valley, surrounded by lush green fields and trees. In the background, there are large, rugged mountains under a cloudy sky. The overall scene is peaceful and rural.

Biblical Research Library
Roger E. Dickson

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FUNDAMENTAL MESSAGES

Christians proclaim a unified message of the gospel that was revealed by the triune God. In this last book of this volume, we would urge every reader to proclaim the fundamental truths of the following chapters. It is our mission to preach a message of truth and salvation to a world that must hear the gospel. It is upon the foundation of these truths that disciples are brought together in unity throughout the world in order to give all men the opportunity for eternal life. The early Christians knew these truths. The result was Luke's record of what happened in the first century. *"Therefore, those who were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word"* (At 8:4). As we go about everywhere in the world, we must be preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 1

The One God

Christians believe in the loving and merciful God of heaven. He is not harsh or unjust. He lovingly encourages His people to behave after His character of love, for He is love. There is only one God and He has revealed His love to man. He has revealed Himself through three manifestations, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, in order to work His eternal plan to bring those who love Him into heaven.

In the Bible the plural Hebrew word *elohim* is translated "God". This plurality of the one God was revealed when God said in the beginning, "Let Us" create man (Gn 1:26). The fact that God is one, and yet plural in manifestation, is something that is not possible for humans to understand. We cannot produce a complete understanding of God by human reasoning lest we create a god after our own imagination. If we create a god in

our minds that we can fully understand, then we know that such a god does not exist, for the nature and work of this god would be limited to our human thinking.

The only God that exists is the one above our imagination. This God exists in spirit (Jn 4:24). He is the God unto whom Christians call all people to be obedient, for we are His creation. God desires that we live in eternity with Him. His appeal to us is to seek Him first in all things (Mt 6:33), and submit to His will (1 Pt 5:6). He works to give us eternal glory in His presence (Mt 25:34).

I. THREE MANIFESTATIONS OF ONE GOD:

There is only one God (Dt 4:35; 6:4,5; Is 43:10,11; 45:5; 46:8-11). He could manifest Himself in many ways. But in the Bible it is recorded that He

manifested Himself in only three ways.

A. The Godhead at the baptism of Jesus:

At Jesus' baptism, God the Father spoke from heaven. As a dove, God the Holy Spirit descended upon God the Son, Jesus, who was on earth in a bodily form (Mt 3:16,17; Jn 1:33).

B. The Godhead at in the ministry of Jesus:

While Jesus worked by the power of the Holy Spirit on earth, He found favor with the Father in heaven (Lk 1:30-35; 4:14).

C. The Godhead revealed to the early church:

Stephen was filled with the Holy Spirit at the moment of his death. At the same moment, he saw the Son and the Father together in heaven (At 7:55-59; see also Mt 28:19,20; 1 Co 11:2; 2 Co 13:14).

II. THE ETERNAL NATURE OF GOD:

God has revealed his nature to all men through His word. In order to know the one true and living God, therefore, we must know Him through the revelation of His word. Those who do not know the word of God, cannot know the true God of heaven.

A. God is love.

The central attribute and character of God is love (1 Jn 4:16). In all His work with people, He manifests love (Jn 3:16; 1 Jn 3:1,16). He commands that His obedient believers manifest love for one another (Jn 13:34,35; 1 Jn 3:14). Those who are true believers in the true God of heaven, work to serve Him with a spirit of love and mercy (1 Jn 2:10,11; 4:7-21). We know that if anyone creates an idea of God that promotes an unloving attitude of violence or terrorism, then that person has imagined a false god who behaves according to one's own carnal ambitions.

B. God is eternal.

The central nature of God is that He is the only eternal spirit who is without beginning or ending. He is eternal (Dt 33:27; Is 57:15). Since all things have not existed for eternity, it is logical to conclude that we were created by the eternal God (1 Co 8:6; Cl 1:16; Rv 4:11). And since nothing can exist outside the presence and power of God, we must also conclude that God is the only eternal power who maintains the existence of all things. God has now given this power and authority to God the Son who reigns over all things (Mt 28:18; Rm 5:17; 1 Tm 6:15,16; Hb 1:3).

C. God is unchanging.

He is **unchanging** in His behavior,

character and nature (Nm 23:19; Ps 33:11; Mt 3:6; Hb 6:17,18; Js 1:17).

D. God is all-powerful.

He is **omnipotent** in that He can do all that can possibly be done (Gn 18:14; Jb 42:2; Mt 19:26; Rv 19:6).

E. God is present everywhere.

He is **omnipresent** in that He is not confined to any specific place (1 Kg 8:27; Ps 139:3-10; Jr 23:23; At 17:28).

F. God knows everything.

He is **omniscient**, and thus knows all things in nature (Gn 15:5; Ps 147:4,5; Is 40:26), all the works of man (Ps 119:168; 139:2,3), the heart of man (1 Sm 16:7), and the future (Is 42:9; 46:11). Only God can be omniscient, for such identifies Him as God. He knows all that can be known.

III. THE ETERNAL WORD OF GOD:

From the time of the creation until the final coming of Jesus, God's work among men on earth was first manifested through Jesus, who was God manifested in the flesh (incarnation) (Jn 1:1,14). From the time of the incarnation, God the Father has existed as the head of Jesus (1 Co 11:3). God the Holy Spirit initially worked through Jesus on earth. He now dwells in obedient believers. The inseparable relationship between the Father and

Son, while the Son was on earth, reveals the oneness of the Father and Son in nature and work throughout this earthly ministry of Jesus on earth.

A. God works as the Father.

1. The Father is the "Father" in the Godhead (Gl 1:1; Cl 1:2,19; 2:9).
2. The Father is the head (center-of-reference) of Christ (1 Co 11:3; Cl 2:9).
3. The Father is the Father of all things (Ep 4:6).
4. The Father gave all authority (power) to the Son (Mt 28:18; 1 Co 15:24-28).
5. The Father's will was done by the Son on earth (Jn 4:34).
6. God created all things through the Son (Jn 1:1-3; Cl 1:16; Rv 4:11).

B. God worked on earth through the Son.

God, the Son, existed before the creation of the world (Gn 1:26; Jn 1:1). However, the Son was manifested as the incarnate Son of God in order to bring man, the creation of God, into eternal glory. It was the purpose of the incarnation, therefore, to bring the obedient into an eternal dwelling with God.

1. The Son chose to give up an equality with God (Ph 2:5-11).
2. The Son was sent into the world by God (Jn 1:14; 4:23,36;

- 5:23,36; 8:17,18).
3. The Son was less than the Father while on earth (Jn 10:29; 14:28).
 4. The Son did the will of the Father on earth (Jn 4:34; 6:38; Hb 5:8).
 5. The Father miraculously bore witness to the Son on earth (Jn 5:31-37).
 6. The Father and the Son remain as one (Jn 10:30; 17:11,21-24).
 7. The Father loves the Son (Jn 15:9; 17:24).
 8. The Father glorified the Son through the sacrificial death of the Son (Jn 8:54).

C. God works until now and in the future.

The Son has now gone into eternal glory with authority over all things. He has done so in order to reign over all things until the conclusion of all things in reference to the existence of the world.

1. The Son went back to the Father at the ascension (Jn 14:12; 20:17).

2. The Father gave all authority to the resurrected Son (Mt 17:1,2; 28:18).
3. The Father now dwells in His people on earth through God the Holy Spirit (2 Co 6:16; 1 Jn 4:12-15; see Ep 2:18-22).
4. The Spirit dwells in believers on earth (At 2:38; 1 Co 3:16; 6:19).
5. The Son now reigns over all things (1 Tm 6:15; Rv 4:9-11).
6. The Son is now head of all things from heaven (Ep 1:22; 1 Pt 3:22).
7. The Son is coming again to judge all men (Jn 12:48; 2 Co 5:10; 2 Th 1:6-9).
8. In the end the Son will restore all authority to the Father (1 Co 15:28).

Recognizing the awesome power and authority of God should motivate sincere people to obey the gospel by baptism into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (See Mt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15,16; At 2:38). Only through obedience to His will do we proclaim our faith in Him.

Chapter 2

Jesus: The Incarnate Opportunity For Salvation

The greatest personality of human history who has affected the lives of millions of people, was born in the humble environment of a Bethlehem manger two thousand years ago. This is Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God. He is the only

begotten Son of the God.

The explosion of Christianity into history, and the rapid growth of the church of Jesus' disciples could not have been the invention of mere men. The only answer for the phenomenal growth

of Christianity in the first century is that it had a Supernatural beginning. As a historical character, Jesus is who He said He was, the Son of God. Nothing else answers the questions as to why Christianity has grown to the point of captivating the hearts of millions of people for centuries.

Jesus fulfilled hundreds of prophecies. He proved the divine origin of His teachings by the evidence of His miracles. He taught a way of life that has been unmatched by any man-made religion. And finally, He was proved to be the only Son of God by His resurrection from the dead in order to reign in heaven.

The existence, work and character of Jesus Christ could not have been dreamed up by over zealous disciples. He was God revealed in the flesh, and thus, He demands and deserves the obedience of all people. Understanding that Jesus is not an invented historical personality by a group of men, but the actual Son of God, should move all of us to serve Him. Those who truly know Jesus, therefore, are those who are obedient to His word. The disobedient can never truly know the Son of God.

I. THE PERSON OF JESUS:

Our attraction to Jesus is caused by who He is. Since He is truly the Son of God and all that the Bible says He is, then He can be and is the solid foundation for the faith of millions of people who have believed on Him for their salvation.

A. Jesus was indwelt by the fullness

of God (Cl 1:19; 2:9).

B. Jesus is the incarnate Word of God (Jn 1:1,14; 1 Jn 1:1,2; 2 Jn 7).

C. Jesus is the only Son of God (Jn 1:14,18; 3:16,18).

D. Jesus is one with God (Is 9:6; Jn 1:1,2; 10:30; Ti 2:13; 1 Jn 5:20).

E. Jesus is eternal in existence (Rm 9:5; Hb 7:3; Rv 1:8).

F. Jesus is all-knowing (Mt 9:4; Lk 5:22; Jn 2:25).

II. THE PROOF OF JESUS:

The Bible and history are both evidences that Jesus is who He said He was. If one believes in the Bible, he must believe in Jesus as the Son of God (Jn 20:30,31). If one believes historical documents, men must believe that Jesus existed in history.

A. The proof of prophecy:

There are over 300 prophecies in the Old Testament concerning Jesus and His work. These prophecies were written hundreds of years before Jesus lived.

1. He would be a descendant of Abraham (Gn 12:1-3; see Gl 3:16).

2. He would be a descendant of Isaac (Gn 21:12; see Hb 11:18).

3. He would be born of Judah (Gn

49:10; see Lk 3:33).

4. He would be a descendant of David (2 Sm 7:12-16; see Rv 22:16).
5. He would be born in Bethlehem (Mc 5:2; see Mt 2:1,3; Jn 7:42).
6. He would be betrayed (Ps 41:9; 55:12-14; see Mk 14:66-72).
7. He would be raised from the dead (Ps 16:10; see At 2:32).

B. The proof of His existence:

Many ancient historical documents refer to Jesus and events surrounding His ministry.

1. Julius Africanus quoted Thallus, who lived in Rome around A.D. 52. Thallus was familiar with the darkness that came over the earth at the time Jesus was crucified (Mt 27:45).
2. Mara Bar-Serapion in a letter to his son referred to the Jews' execution of "their king," a reference to Jesus.
3. Tacitus, who was born around A.D. 52-54, referred to "Christus" (Christ) who was executed during the reign of Tiberius.
4. C. Plinius Secundus (Pliny, the younger), governor of Bithynia around A.D. 112, wrote to Caesar Trajan concerning the problem of "Christians" in his province.
5. The Jewish Talmud (Jewish teachings that were compiled

from A.D. 70 - 200) makes many references to "Yeshu'a of Nazareth," though the references are made in a negative context.

6. Josephus, a Jewish historian at the end of the first century refers to "Jesus, a wise man, ... a doer of marvelous deeds."

C. The proof of His miracles and resurrection:

If Jesus were who He said He was, then we would expect Him to have control over the supernatural and natural world. He would not be subject to a death without a resurrection. While religions of men focus on the tombs of their founders, Christians focus on the reign of a resurrected Savior. The rapid growth of the church in the first century in only a few years is answered in the fact that Jesus was actually raised from the dead.

D. The proof of persecuted disciples:

The suffering and death of the early Christians can be answered only in the fact that they believed Jesus was the resurrected Son of God.

1. The disciples willingly suffered for Jesus (At 4:18,19; 14:22; 2 Tm 3:12).
2. The disciples willingly died for Jesus (At 8:1-3; 12:1-4; 1 Pt 4:16; Rv 2:10).

E. The proof of the New Testament documents:

The existence of the ancient New Testament documents proves that Christianity was a powerful movement in the first century. Because these documents were written without contradiction by several men over a period of many years, proves that neither Jesus nor the church were the invention of men (See Jn 20:30,31).

III. THE POWER OF JESUS:

No man on earth ever claimed to be God as Jesus claimed to be (Jn 10:30-33). Therefore, He was either the greatest liar and deceiver who ever lived, or truly the One He claimed to be with the authority and power He now has over all things. Who Jesus claimed to be makes Him greater than all men.

- A. **Jesus was the creator of all things** (Cl 1:16; Hb 1:2).
- B. **Jesus is now head of all things** (Mt 28:18; Jn 13:3; Ep 1:20-22).
- C. **Jesus is King of all earthly rulers** (1 Tm 6:15; Rv 19:16).
- D. **Jesus now reigns over all things** (Rm 5:17; Ph 2:9-11; 1 Pt 3:22).
- E. **Jesus is our Savior and Redeemer** (Jn 14:6; At 4:12; Ep 1:7; Ti 2:14).
- F. **Jesus is our High Priest before God** (Hb 3:1; 4:14; 7:26).
- G. **Jesus is the foretold Prophet** (Lk 13:33; Jn 1:21; At 3:22-26).

H. Jesus is our only Mediator with God (1 Tm 2:5; Hb 8:6; 9:15; 12:24).

I. Jesus will be the final judge of all (Jn 12:48; 2 Co 5:10).

IV. THE PLEA OF JESUS:

Because Jesus has universal authority, He is the only one who has a right to make a universal plea to all men to come to Him for eternal existence in the presence of God.

A. Jesus says He is the only way, truth and life (Jn 14:6).

B. Jesus pleads that all come to Him (Mt 11:28,29).

C. Jesus says that all people must believe in Him (Jn 8:24).

D. Jesus says that everyone must believe and be baptized in order to be saved (Mk 16:15,16).

The reason for God's coming in the flesh of Jesus was to become the atoning sacrifice for our sins (Jn 3:1-21). Through His sacrifice one can be reconciled to God (2 Co 5:16-21). All those who join with Jesus in His death and resurrection through baptism will live forever in the presence of God (Jn 5:24,25; Rm 6:3-6; 2 Th 1:6-9; 1 Pt 3:21). When we die we want to be with Jesus (Ph 1:23). Our journey to be with Jesus in eternity begins by being with Him in His death on the cross, in His burial and in His resurrection (Rm 6:3-6).

Chapter 3

Living With The Holy Spirit

God is working on earth by the manifestation of Himself through the Holy Spirit. When the Son of God ascended to assume headship over all things, the Holy Spirit was sent to work through the inspired word of God in order to continue the work of the Son on earth.

Though there is much confusion today concerning the work of the Spirit, one thing is certain. The Spirit will do His work among God's saints regardless of our understanding of all His work. The Spirit's work is not controlled by our knowledge of His work.

We know that the Spirit works to produce unity among believers. He works to produce unity among those who have obeyed the gospel, for obedient believers have received the Spirit. The Spirit works today through those who are in a covenant relationship with God in order to accomplish God's work of world evangelism.

In order to prevent confusion through misguided emotions, believers look to the word of God for an explanation of how the Spirit works in their lives. Our minds can be deceived by our own desires. For this reason, the Spirit seeks to lead us through the word of God which He inspired to be written for our direction. Since Christians have the Spirit, they desire to work, therefore, by the di-

rection of the Spirit-inspired word of God. Knowing the word of God is our opportunity to know where the Holy Spirit wants to lead us. The word of God keeps us going in the right direction.

I. THE WORK OF GOD, THE HOLY SPIRIT:

Christians must understand that God is still at work among His people and in the world. He has not left us alone to suffer at the mercy of the world.

A. The Spirit is God.

God the Spirit manifested Himself in the history of man to accomplish the work of the Godhead among men. He is thus referred to in the Bible to be one with God.

1. As a part of the Godhead, God the Spirit, was in existence before the creation of the world (Gn 1:1,2,26).
2. The eternal Spirit was working in the beginning in creation as a part of the Godhead (Gn 1:1,2; Jb 26:13; Ps 104:30; Hb 9:14).
3. If one lies to the Spirit, he is actually lying to God the Spirit (At 5:3,4).

B. The Spirit is God at work.

The one true God manifested Himself to man through the work of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God, the Spirit, works as one with the Father and Son.

1. The Spirit worked through the Son while the Son was on earth (Mt 3:16; 4:1; 12:28; Lk 4:1,14,18,21; Jn 3:34).
2. The Spirit glorifies the Son, not Himself (Jn 16:13,14).
3. The Spirit gives testimony to God the Son (Jn 15:26).
4. In the first century, the Spirit was first sent by the Father and Son to the twelve apostles (Jn 14:26; 15:26).
5. The Spirit revealed truth to the apostles which He heard from the Father and Son (Jn 14:26; 16:13,14).
6. The Spirit revealed the mind of God to the first century apostles and prophets (1 Co 2:10-13; 2 Pt 1:20,21).
7. The word of God was written by inspiration of the Spirit to continue the work of God among men (2 Tm 3:16,17; 2 Pt 1:20,21; see At 20:32).

II. THE ATTRIBUTES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT:

Since the Holy Spirit is God, then He has the same attributes as God the Father and Son. Though His attributes have not been revealed in incarnation as

the Son, He has revealed them through written word.

A. The Spirit has the nature and attributes of God.

1. The Spirit is eternal (Jb 26:13; Hb 9:14).
2. The Spirit is all-powerful (omnipotent) (Gn 1:2; Lk 4:1,14).
3. The Spirit is all-knowing (omniscient) (Rm 8:26,27; 1 Co 2:10-13).
4. The Spirit searches all things (1 Co 2:10).
5. The Spirit loves the saints (Rm 15:30).
6. The Spirit is a personality that can be **grieved** (Is 63:10; Ep 4:30), **lied to** (At 5:3), **resisted** (At 7:51; 1 Th 5:19), **despised** (Hb 10:29), **blasphemed** and **sinned against** (Mt 12:31,32; Mk 3:28,29; Lk 12:10).

III. THE CHRISTIAN AND THE HOLY SPIRIT:

When the prophecy of Joel 2:28 was fulfilled at the time the Spirit empowered the apostles on Pentecost in Acts 2:1-4, the Spirit's work on earth began among Christians. The miraculous work of the Spirit continued until God's messengers and their spoken and written word were confirmed before the world. Upon reception of the Spirit when one is baptized, the Spirit continues His presence among Christians today.

A. The Christian and the Spirit in the first century:

1. In the first century, the inspired spoken word was miraculously confirmed before unbelievers by the Spirit (Mk 16:17-20; Hb 2:3,4).
2. In the absence of the written word, the Spirit guided Christian teachers, whose teachings were inspired by the Spirit (1 Co 12-14).
3. In order to mature the church, miraculous gifts of the Spirit were given by the laying on of the apostles' hands (At 8:18; Rm 1:11; 2 Tm 1:6).
4. The confirming work of the Spirit before unbelievers ended with the completion of the word in the first century (1 Co 13:8-13).
5. All necessary truth was revealed in the first century (2 Tm 3:16,17).
6. Christians must now rely on the written word of God for direction from God (At 20:32; Ep 3:3-5; 2 Tm 3:16,17; see Gl 1:6-9; Jd 3; Rv 22:18,19).
7. Christians are warned not to change, add to or subtract from the Spirit-inspired written word of God (Gl 1:6-9; Jd 3; Rv 22:18,19).

B. The Christian and the Spirit today:

1. The Spirit indwells the Christian

(1 Co 3:16; 2 Co 6:16; Ep 2:22; 2 Tm 1:14).

2. The Spirit sanctifies (2 Th 2:13,14; see Jn 17:17; At 15:9; Ep 5:26; 1 Th 5:23; 1 Tm 4:4,5).
3. The Spirit strengthens (At 20:32; Ep 3:16,20; Cl 1:10,11).
4. The Spirit comforts (At 9:31; see 2 Co 7:6,7,13; Rm 15:4; 2 Th 2:16,17).
5. The Spirit leads (Rm 8:14; Gl 5:18,25; see Is 48:17; Ps 119:105; 2 Th 3:5).
6. The Spirit seals the Christian (2 Co 1:21,22; Ep 1:13,14; 4:30).
7. The Spirit seeks to produce the fruit of the Spirit in our lives (Gl 5:22,23).
8. The Spirit works today through the impact of the word of God on the heart of man to **produce faith** (Jn 20:30,31; Rm 10:17), **convert** (Js 1:18; 1 Pt 1:22,23), **save** (At 11:14; Js 1:21), **cleanse** (Jn 15:2; Ep 5:26), **quicken** (Ps 119:40,93; Jn 6:63), **give understanding** (Ep 3:4; 2 Tm 3:15), **admonish** (1 Co 4:14; 10:11), **guard** (2 Tm 3:13-15), **exhort** (1 Pt 5:12), **instruct** (2 Tm 3:16,17), **stir up** (2 Pt 1:12,13), **purify the soul** (1 Pt 1:22), and **enlighten the mind** (Ps 19:8; 119:130).

IV. THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TODAY:

The Spirit works today in ways that are beyond our complete understanding.

However, He does explain in the Bible that He wants the Christian to maintain a life of self-control and dignity. To live in this way, the Spirit desires that we ...

- A. ... maintain emotional control of our free-moral choice, because we will give account of our behavior before Christ (2 Co 5:10).
- B. ... maintain unity upon the foundation of God's word, because we must speak the oracles of God (1 Pt 4:11; see 1 Co 1:10; Gl 1:6-9; 1 Jn 4:1-4).
- C. ... maintain unity in purpose and work, because the church must work as one body (1 Co 12:12-31; Cl 3:12-17).
- D. ... maintain control of our speech in order to speak with grace in our

hearts, because we must give account before God of every idle word we speak (Mt 12:36,37; Cl 4:6).

- E. ... maintain a studious life, because we are responsible before God to know the Scriptures (At 17:11; 2 Tm 2:15; see 2 Pt 3:15,16).

One blasphemes the Spirit by saying that the Spirit's instructions for salvation are not from God. One sins against the Spirit by rejecting the Spirit's instructions in the Bible as to how he or she must be saved (Mt 12:31,32; Mk 3:28-30; Lk 12:10). But the Spirit seeks to convert people today through the preaching of the inspired word (Js 1:22), by which one is born again (1 Co 4:15; 1 Pt 1:22,23). And one is born again when he or she obeys the Spirit's written instructions that in order to be saved, we must believe and be baptized for remission of sins (Mk 16:16; At 2:38).

Chapter 4

The Bible: God's Message To Man

A man has deprived himself of the best knowledge there is in the world if he has deprived himself of a knowledge of the Bible. On the foundation of this book, civilizations have been built and sustained. Only through the medium of the Bible can we understand who God is.

The word "Bible" comes from the Greek word *Biblia* which means "book." The Bible is God's book of instruction for all people. No other written words

have affected so many people for so long in history. The reason for this is that men know the Bible is God's truth that was revealed to direct our beliefs and behavior.

The Bible is a library of sixty-six Holy Spirit inspired books and letters. Contrary to man-made religions that are usually based on the writings of one man, the Bible was written by over forty inspired men over a period of about 1,500 years. Though written by so many different people over a

period of many centuries, there are no contradictions in the Bible. There is one united theme throughout the entire Bible, the eternal salvation of man through the sacrificial offering of Jesus, the Son of God.

Thirty-nine of the Bible books make up the Old Testament. These books were first given to the nation of Israel. The New Testament contains twenty-seven books that were written to Christians. Today, Christians receive their instruction for living through the New Testament, but learning and admonition from how God worked with Israel in the Old Testament.

I. THE BIBLE IS GOD'S BLESSING FOR MAN:

The Bible came to us through years of God's work to inspire men as to how we can please Him.

- A. The Bible is God speaking through words** (Mt 22:43; At 1:16; 2 Tm 3:16).
- B. The Bible is God speaking through the Holy Spirit** (Jn 14:26; 16:13; 1 Co 2:10-13; Hb 3:7; 9:8; 10:15; 2 Pt 1:20,21).
- C. The Bible is God speaking through the Holy Spirit through inspired words of truth** (Jr 36:4; 1 Co 2:13).
- D. The Bible is God speaking through the Holy Spirit to men who spoke and wrote inspired**

words of truth (Ex 24:4; 35:1; 2 Sm 23:2; Is 51:16; Jr 36:4-6; Ez 11:5; 1 Co 14:37).

- E. The Bible is God speaking through the Holy Spirit through men to men** (Lk 1:70; At 28:25; Rm 1:2; 16:26).
- F. The Bible is God speaking through the Holy Spirit through inspired men to all men of all history** (Ez 2:7; 3:4,10,11,17; 2 Th 2:14; 2 Tm 3:16,17; Hb 1:1,2).

II. WE CAN TRUST THE BIBLE:

God gave the Bible to people upon the foundation of miraculous proof. He not only inspired men to preach and write His word, but He also sent confirming miracles to prove that His word was more than the mere word of men.

- A.** The Bible was confirmed by miracles. The word of God that was first spoken by the early messengers of God was proven to be from God by the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit (See 1 Kg 18:30-40; Mk 16:20; Jn 20:30,31; At 2:33; 4:29,30; 1 Co 2:1-5; 12:7; Gl 3:5; Hb 2:3,4).
- B.** The confirmed and spoken word was written. The inspired writers of the Bible recorded their miraculously proven word (Rm 15:4,18,19; 1 Co 2:4; 10:11; 1 Th 1:5).

III. THE BIBLE WILL CHANGE LIVES:

We must give the Bible a chance in our lives. If we believe it to be the word of God, then we will treasure its message. Our lives will thus be transformed into lives that are pleasing to God.

- A. **The Bible can dwell in our hearts** (Cl 3:16; 1 Jn 2:14,24; 3:9; 2 Jn 2).
- B. **The Bible can be laid up in our hearts so that we not sin against God** (Ps 37:31; 119:11).
- C. **The Bible can be written on our hearts when we honor its principles** (Ps 40:8; Jr 31:32,33; 2 Co 3:3; Hb 8:10; 10:16).
- D. **The Bible changes our lives when we sincerely obey its principles** (Js 1:22-25; 1 Jn 1:6,7; 2 Jn 4; 3 Jn 3,4).

IV. THE BIBLE IS SUFFICIENT FOR ALL:

The Bible is all-sufficient to furnish the Christian with all direction that is necessary to be acceptable to God. The Bible has the power to accomplish the following in our lives:

- A. **Power to change lives** (1 Pt 2:1,2; 2 Pt 1:3; 1 Th 4:1,2; 3 Jn 3,4).
- B. **Power to give eternal life** (Jn 8:51; see Jn 5:24; 11:26).
- C. **Power to eternally save** (At 11:14;

20:32; Hb 4:12; Js 1:21).

- D. **Power to give freedom** (Jn 8:32; Js 1:25).
- E. **Power to minister to others** (Ep 4:11-16).
- F. **Power to teach** (Pv 22:6; Ps 119:103,104; Rm 15:4).
- G. **Power to admonish** (1 Co 4:14; 10:11; 2 Tm 4:1,2; Ti 1:9).
- H. **Power to live a godly life** (Cl 1:5-10; 1 Tm 3:14,15; 1 Pt 5:12).
- I. **Power to reprove, rebuke and correct** (2 Tm 3:16; Ti 1:9).

V. THE BIBLE IS GOD'S FINAL REVELATION:

The Bible claims to be God's only and final revelation of truth to man. With the writing of *Revelation*, the last book of the Bible, God stopped all revelation of truth that He desires men to know in these times of existence.

- A. God revealed His will to the fathers of extended family groups in the Old Testament times before the giving of the Old Testament law on Mount Sinai (Hb 1:1,2).
- B. God revealed His will to Israel on Mount Sinai through the Old Testament books (Dt 4:1,13; 5:1-5; Ex 19:4-6; Ne 8:1; Rm 3:1,2).

- C.** God revealed His will to the Old Testament writers who recorded examples for the Christian's learning (Rm 15:4; 1 Co 10:11). 119:50,93; Ep 2:1,5).
- D.** God revealed all truth to the New Testament apostles in the first century as specific instruction for Christians (Jn 14:26; 16:13).
- E.** We have all necessary instruction today in the New Testament that was recorded for our teaching and moral guidance (Gl 1:11,12; Ep 3:3-5; 2 Tm 3:16,17; 2 Pt 1:3). Therefore, we must not add to nor subtract from the Bible (Dt. 4:2; Gl 1:6-9; 2 Jn 9-11; Rv 22:18,19).
- E.** ... **to enlighten our minds** (Ps 19:8).
- F.** ... **to give us understanding** (Ps 119:104,130; Ep 3:4).
- G.** ... **to lead our lives** (Ps 73:24; 119:105).
- H.** ... **to comfort our hearts** (Rm 15:4; 1 Th 3:2; 4:18).
- I.** ... **to produce in us spiritual growth** (At 20:32; Cl 1:10,11).
- J.** ... **to strengthen our hearts** (At 20:32; Rm 16:25; 2 Tm 2:1,2).

VI. GOD WORKS THROUGH THE BIBLE:

Since God is our creator, He seeks to direct us to Him. He intends that His word function in the following ways in the lives of those who seek a relationship with Him, and thus desire to submit to His direction. Through the Bible God seeks ...

- A.** ... **to produce faith in our hearts** (Jn 20:30,31; Rm 10:17).
- B.** ... **to sanctify our souls of sin** (Jn 17:17; Ep 5:26; 1 Tm 4:4,5).
- C.** ... **to cleanse our hearts and souls** (Jn 15:2,3; Ep 5:26; 1 Pt 1:22).
- D.** ... **to quicken our souls** (Ps

God revealed His word to us in order that we find our way to Him. Without His revelation to us, we could not know who He is or how to please Him. The Bible reveals that Jesus is the only way to God (Jn 14:6). As the Son of God, Jesus said, "*If you love Me, keep My commandments*" (Jn 14:15). If you want to find your way to God, and to show your love for Jesus, the Son of God, then you must keep the commandments of Jesus. The only way to know the commandments of Jesus is by reading the Bible. You can know and keep Jesus' commandments by obedience to the gospel by baptism into Christ (See Jn 6:45; Mk 16:16; At 2:38; 22:16; Rm 6:3-6; 1 Pt 3:21). Through faith and obedience of the gospel, one becomes a member of Jesus' body, the church (1 Co 12:13; Cl 1:18).

Chapter 5

The New Testament Of Jesus

The Bible contains two written laws that God has given to man throughout history. The first is the Old Testament law that was given specifically to Israel as the condition for keeping the covenant that God established with Israel on Mount Sinai. This law is also called the “law of Moses” (Ne 8:1), the “law of God” (Ne 8:8,14,18), the “law of the Lord” (Lk 2:22-24), or simply, “the law” (Jn 1:17; Rm 7:7). This law preserved Israel until the Messiah came.

The second written law, the New Testament law of Christ, was brought into force after Jesus, the Messiah, died on the cross about two thousand years ago. This law was established when the first official announcement of Jesus’ reign in heaven was made in A.D. 30 on the Jewish feast of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2. The New Testament law and covenant are superior to the Old Testament law and covenant because the New has a better hope (Hb 7:19), a better covenant with God (Hb 7:22; 8:6), better promises (Hb 8:6), better sacrifices (Hb 9:23), a better possession (Hb 10:34), a better hope of resurrection (Hb 11:35), and a better blood offering (Hb 12:24). Those who are immersed into Christ have come into this new covenant agreement with Jesus (See Mt 26:26-29). They are now subjects to the “law of the Spirit of life” (Rm 8:2), which is the “perfect law of liberty” (Js 1:25). This is the “law of Christ,” a

law that brings freedom in Christ (Gl 5:1,2; 6:2). It is the perfect law that brings freedom to all who obey it.

I. ORIGIN OF THE OLD TESTAMENT LAW:

The Old Testament law was given to the nation of Israel. It was a condition for Israel’s keeping the covenant that God established with the nation about 1,440 years before Jesus.

- A. The old law was given to Israel by God on Mount Sinai in the fifteenth century before the coming of Jesus (Ex 19:11,18-20; Dt 33:2; Ne 9:13).
- B. The old law was given through angels (At 7:38,53) to Moses for Israel (Ne 8:14; 9:14; Jn 1:17; 7:19).
- C. The old law was given only to the Jews, the children of Israel (Dt 4:1,13; 5:1-5; Ex 19:4-6; Ne 8:1; Rm 3:1,2).

II. PURPOSE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT LAW:

The Old Testament law was given only to Israel as a temporary law to prepare Israel for a greater law that would come in the future of the nation. By giving Israel the old law, God sought to pre-

serve a segment of humanity until His Son, Jesus, came into the world for the salvation of all men.

- A. The old law was a shadow of more glorious things to come** (Hb 10:1; Cl 2:16,17; see Jr 31:31-34).
- B. The old law was a tutor, or headmaster, to guide, instruct and preserve Israel until Jesus came** (Gl 3:24,25; 4:4).
- C. The old law was given to expose and correct sin** (Rm 3:20; 7:7).
- D. The old law preserved Abraham's heritage until God's promise** (Gn 12:1-3) **could be fulfilled** (Gl 3:8,16-19).

III. WEAKNESS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT LAW:

The Old Testament law was flawless for the purpose for which it was given to Israel. It was God's law, and thus, it was holy, just and good (Rm 7:12). It was not given to Israel as a means for the Israelites to earn their salvation, for no one can keep law perfectly in order to save himself (Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16). Therefore, the weakness of the law was not in the law itself. It was weak in reference to salvation because of the following:

- A. Animal sacrifices of the law could not in and of themselves take away sins** (Hb 10:4; 9:15).

- B. No man can ever be justified by meritorious works of the law** (At 13:39; Rm 3:20,28; Gl 2:16; 3:10,11; Hb 10:1-4). Therefore, salvation under both the Old and New Testament laws is through an obedient faith that responds to the grace of God (See Hk 2:4; Rm 1:17; Gl 3:11,12; Hb 10:38; Js 2:14-26).
- C. Righteousness before God cannot be achieved by meritorious works of law** (Gl 2:21). By works of merit no one can receive life under law (Gl 3:21,22), for all people sin (Rm 3:10,23).
- D. Because everyone sins against law, God never intended that law-keeping make one perfect before Him** (Hb 7:18,19).

- E. There was forgiveness under the Old Testament law only in view of the sacrificial blood of Christ** (Rm 3:27; Hb 9:15).

IV. ABOLISHMENT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT LAW:

The Old Testament law was never intended to be a permanent law of God for all men, for God promised a new covenant and law that came after it was given (Jr 31:31-34). God intended that the old law exist only until the time came for the establishment of the New Testament law of Christ.

- A. The law was to be in force only un-**

til the time when the Seed (Christ) came into the world (Gl 3:19; 4:4). moral principles of the old law continue in the law of Christ.

- B. Jesus came to fulfill the purpose of the old law, and thus, abolish it through the establishment of a new law (Mt 5:17,18).
- C. When Jesus died on the cross, the old covenant was taken away, and thus, the law of the covenant was made void (Hb 10:9,10). It was abolished (Cl 2:14; Ep 2:14-16) in order that the New Testament covenant and law be established (Hb 9:16,17).
- D. Christians are made dead to the old law (Rm 7:1-6).
- E. There was a change of priesthood when Jesus ascended to heaven (Hb 7:11-25). Jesus became our high priest (Hb 2:17; 8:1; 9:11). Therefore, the change in priesthood meant that there also be a change from the Old Testament law to the New Testament law of Christ (Hb 7:11-14).
- F. The old law has been nullified and all Christians are free from its bondage (Gl 4:21 – 5:1).

V. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT LAW:

When Jesus came, He came with a new covenant and law for all men. This is a law of grace and truth that has come to us through Jesus (Jn 1:17). Eternal

- A. Jesus died in order to institute a new covenant between God and all men (Hb 9:15-18; 10:9).
- B. The revelation of God's grace and His truth came through Jesus (Jn 1:17; Ti 2:11-14).
- C. God speaks to us today through His only begotten Son, Jesus (Hb 1:1,2; see Mt 17:5; Jn 12:48).
- D. Jesus is now the only way, truth and life (Jn 14:6; see At 4:12).
- E. At the final judgment, Christians will be judged by the words of Jesus (Jn 12:48) which are spirit and life (Jn 6:63).

Christians use the Old Testament today as an inspired record for learning and admonition (Rm 15:4; 1 Co 10:11). However, the old law of the Old Testament is no longer binding on mankind as a religious law. We no longer have to offer animal sacrifices or keep the rituals of the Jewish priesthood. All men this side of the cross of Christ must submit to the law of Christ, for He died once and for all time for our sins (Gl 6:2; Hb 5:9). All must now obey the good news of Jesus' death for our sins and resurrection for our hope. We do this by immersion into Christ for the remission of our sins (At 2:38; Rm 6:3-6; 2 Th 1:7-9). Once we are born again, we are directed

in life by the law of Christ. Christ-centered people follow Christ by being obedient to His word.

Chapter 6

God Worked And Continues To Work

God is not confined to natural laws. Neither does He dwell in a realm that is controlled by natural laws. He is above nature. He is above the laws of this physical world. He is supernatural. And for this reason He can work in any way He desires at any time in history. It is the task of the Bible student to determine why He worked in a specific manner at any time in history. This is important because God does not work without a specific purpose.

Because of the great confusion in reference to the work of God today, we must discipline ourselves to allow the Bible to explain how God works. If we do not do this, then we are left to the wild imaginations of ignorant and misguided people to define the work of the god they have created after their own imagination. The idolater never understands correctly the work of God. He is always misguided by his own imagination. Therefore, it is imperative that we use the Bible as the dictionary concerning how God has worked throughout history.

I. BIBLE WORDS FOR GOD'S WORK:

Four different Greek words are used in the New Testament to explain how God has supernaturally manifested Himself in our physical world.

A. Wonders (*teras*):

This word is never used alone in reference to miracles. It is always used with other words that refer to God's supernatural activity (At 2:22,43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 15:12; Hb 2:4). This word explains the reaction of people to a miracle (Mt 9:26; Mk 2:12; 4:41; 6:51; 7:37; Lk 8:56; 13:17).

B. Signs (*semeion*):

This word is used when God wanted to signal to unbelievers His presence with those who preached His word (Mk 16:20; Jn 3:2; At 14:3; 2 Co 12:12; Hb 2:4).

C. Powers, or mighty works (*dunamis*):

Through powers, God wanted the witnesses to recognize a power that is greater than the natural laws that ordinarily work in our environment (Gn 18:14; Ex 5:2; Ps 33:4-9; 107:23-32; Is 40:12-27; At 2:22; 19:11). Miracles manifested the power of the Father (At 15:12), Jesus (Mt 10:1), and the Holy Spirit (Mt 12:28).

D. Works (*ergon*):

Though a miracle was a wonderful act to man, this word explains that a miracle was a manifestation of the environment in which God dwells (Jn 5:36; 7:21; 10:24,32,38; 14:11,12; 15:24). A miracle, therefore, clearly manifested the presence of God to all men.

II. PURPOSE OF CONFIRMING MIRACLES:

God does not work without a purpose. He did not work in a miraculous manner in order to satisfy the idle curiosity of man. He worked through miracles to accomplish specific purposes.

A. Miracles manifested the glory of God.

1. When God revealed the realm of the supernatural through miraculous work, His glory was manifested to people in a manner that could not be denied (Jn 1:14; 11:40-42; 17:6-8; At 4:14-16).
2. The miraculous glory of God is recorded in the Bible for us to read and give glory to God today (Is 40; Ps 19:1,2; Jb 38,39; Rm 1:20).

B. Miracles manifested the glory of Jesus.

1. Miracles proved that Jesus was sent directly from God into this world (Jn 3:2; 4:48; 5:36; 6:14; 10:24,37,38; 11:15; 14:11).
2. Miracles manifested God's ap-

proval of Jesus as His Son (At 2:22).

3. Miracles proved that Jesus was the Christ (Messiah), and the incarnate Son of God (Mt 11:2-6; Lk 7:20-22; Jn 20:30,31).
4. Miracles glorified Jesus when He was on earth (Jn 2:11).
5. Miracles proved Jesus to be God on earth with the authority to forgive sins personally (Mt 9:6; Mk 2:9-12; Lk 5:26).
6. Miracles proved Jesus' supernatural power on earth over material substances (Jn 2:1-11), distance (Jn 4:46-54), time (Jn 5:1-9), creation (Jn 6:1-14), nature (Jn 6:16-21), misfortune (Jn 9:1-12), and death (Jn 11:1-46).

C. Miracles gave a divine witness to God's messengers.

1. Miracles proved that God was working with His people (Dt 13:1-4; Mt 12:24-27; At 2:1-4,6-8,43; 3:6-10; 4:14-16; 5:12-16; 8:6; 9:36-42; 14:8-11; Hb 2:3,4).
2. God allowed His messengers to work miracles in order to manifest to the world that His messengers were sent from Him. He gave miraculous witness to Elisha (2 Kg 2), Moses (Ex 7:8-13), Jesus (Jn 3:2), the apostles (At 2:43; 2 Co 12:12), and special first century disciples (Mk 16:17-20; Hb 2:3,4). This miraculous witness of God is recorded in the Bible. The Bible

is thus a sufficient witness for us today to believe in Jesus as the Son of God (See Jn 20:30,31; 2 Tm 3:16,17).

D. Miracles confirmed that the word of God was from God.

1. Miracles proved that the inspired word of the Christ-sent apostles was from God and not from man (Mk 16:17-20; see Jn 14:26; 16:13,14).
2. Miracles proved that the Christ-sent apostles were God's messengers who had the authority to speak His word (Hb 2:3,4).
3. Since God's will was confirmed by miracles and recorded for our reading, the disciples of Jesus find confidence in the historical fact of the miracles that are recorded in the Bible (See 2 Th 2:10-12; 2 Tm 3:16,17).
4. Miracles were not given for personal benefit (See Ph 2:25-27; 2 Tm 4:20).

III. CHARACTERISTICS OF CONFIRMING MIRACLES:

- A. In order for a miracle to be valid, the occurrence of the miracle had to be perceived through one or more of the five senses of man (See Jn 3:2; At 26:26).
- B. True miracles could not be explained by the ordinary occurrence of natural laws. Those who experienced

true miracles clearly understood that something out of the ordinary had happened (At 4:14-16; 26:26).

- C. The presence of the supernatural work of God was clearly seen in a miracle (1 Kg 18:17-46; Jn 3:2; 11:43-45).
- D. A miracle did not occur over a long period of time. A miracle was instantaneous so that it would not be confused with the ordinary occurrence of natural laws (Mt 8:3; 20:34; Mk 10:52; Jn 11:43,44).
- E. Miracles in the Bible were not worked in a manner to be hidden from the beholders. Because they could be witnessed by everyone, true miracles could not be denied even by unbelievers (1 Kg 18:30-40; Jn 9:1-41; 11:45,46; At 4:14-16; 26:26).
- F. Because miracles could be witnessed, their purpose of signaling God's presence to unbelievers could be accomplished (Mk 16:17-20; Jn 20:30,31; At 2:22).

IV. GOD PROVIDENTIALLY WORKS TODAY:

God continues to work today apart from the ordinary occurrence of natural laws, but in a way that is perceived through the faith of the believers. His work is believed by believers, but often

denied by unbelievers. Nevertheless, He continues to work providentially in the lives of His people.

- A.** Since God has already miraculously worked to confirm Jesus as the Messiah and His Son, He now works through the preached word in order that people believe (Jn 20:30,31; At 2:22).
- B.** God works providentially to restore health to those believers who pray for healing (2 Kg 20:5; Js 5:13-16).
- C.** God works providentially to care for those believers who ask for the necessities of life (Mt 6:9-13).
- D.** God works providentially to open doors for evangelism (1 Co 16:9; 2 Co 2:12; 2 Th 3:1,2).
- E.** God works providentially to provide ways of escape from temptations and trials (Rm 8:28; 1 Co 10:13; Ph 1:19; 2 Pt 2:9).
- F.** God works providentially to deliver His people from evil doers (2 Co 1:9-11; 2 Tm 4:18; see Pv 2:6,8,12,16; 2 Th 3:2; 2 Tm 3:11; 4:17; Ph 22).
- G.** God works providentially to raise up evangelists (Mt 9:38).
- H.** God works providentially so that our faith not fail (Lk 22:31; see Ps 125:3; 1 Co 10:13; Cl 4:12).
- I.** God works providentially to aid the saints in times of need (Rm 15:30-32).
- J.** God works providentially to bring evangelists to the saints (Rm 1:9,10; 1 Th 3:10).
- K.** God works providentially to bring forth fruit to His glory (1 Co 3:5,6; 1 Th 1:2-8; 2 Th 1:11,12).

God expects people today to respond to His preached word in order to believe and obey the gospel (Rm 10:17; see Jn 20:30,31). The message of the gospel needs no more miraculous confirmation, for the confirmed word of God is sufficient to produce faith (Rm 10:17; 2 Tm 3:16,17; see 1 Co 15:1-4). Though God will allow many to believe in false miracles (2 Th 2:10-12), one must now believe the testimony of the miracles that are recorded in the Bible. One must respond to the preached word of God by baptism in obedience to the miraculously confirmed gospel of Jesus (Rm 6:3-6; see Gl 3:26,27).

Chapter 7

The Grace Of God

The word “grace” refers to what God gives and cannot be earned. Grace is God’s loving desire and action to save us regardless of our inability to earn eternal life by our good works. In order to understand this grace, we must first understand our impossibilities in life in reference to our desire to live eternally with God.

I. UNDERSTANDING GRACE:

When one understands the nature of God’s grace toward all men through Jesus, he is drawn to the cross where grace was manifested (Ti 2:11).

A. The impossibility of trading life for life:

What God has to offer costs more than what we can afford to pay (See Rm 8:18; 2 Co 4:17). Eternal life in heaven is without end. There is no possible way for us to earn heaven in a fair deal by exchanging a lifetime in good works as a Christian for the reward of eternal life. We could not live long enough doing good works on earth in order to earn what God offers in eternal dwelling in heaven.

B. The impossibility of trading our life for eternal life:

In reference to our ability to keep

God’s law, God says that “*there is none righteous, no, not one*” (Rm 3:10). The problem is that “*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*” (Rm 3:23). We fall short because we cannot keep law perfectly in order to stand just (justified) before God. God says, “*By the deeds of law no flesh will be justified in His sight*” (Rm 3:20). One cannot be “*justified by the works of law*” (Gl 2:16). We cannot be justified before God by law simply because no man can keep God’s law perfectly in order to save himself.

When one sins, the law says that he is a lawbreaker (1 Jn 3:4). According to law, therefore, lawbreakers must be punished (Rm 6:23). The lawbreaker (sinner) must receive the wrath of the Judge (Rm 4:15). One might seek to keep the whole law, and yet commit one sin. That one sin makes him a lawbreaker, and thus, guilty before God’s law (Js 2:10). We must, therefore, cry out for grace from the Judge. Recognizing his inability to live perfectly before God, Paul cried out, “*O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*” (Rm 7:24). **As breakers of God’s law, all of us seek deliverance from judgment.**

Most people recognize that they break God’s law. Most know that they are sinners. But because we think we can stand alone before God, we seek out or invent our own system of forgiveness of

sins against God. We thus answer Paul's question in a wrong way. We answer with works to receive forgiveness that is based on our own efforts.

Our invented system of "salvation by good works" is the false belief that our good works will make up for or atone for our sins. We deceive ourselves into thinking that if we do enough good works, God will forgive our sins. Doing good works may make one feel good toward God, **but not one good work will obligate God to forgive one sin.** The Bible says that we are not saved by good works "*lest anyone should boast*" (Ep 2:9). If we were saved by good works, we would boast against one another. We would glorify ourselves before God as the religious leader in the Bible who boasted in prayer that he gave tithes and fasted twice a week (Lk 18:11,12). **Salvation cannot be earned by good works lest we put God in debt to pay us with heaven.** If one could earn his salvation by good works, then the reward would not be counted "*as grace but as debt*" (Rm 4:4).

II. REVELATION OF GOD'S GRACE:

Only God can give a solution for our sin problem that has destroyed our relationship with Him. He only can deliver us from our condemnation in sin. Paul praised God for his deliverance from sin by the atoning sacrifice of Jesus. "*I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord*" (Rm 7:25).

The Bible says, "*For the grace of*

God that brings salvation has appeared to all men" (Ti 2:11). To this, we say hallelujah! Jesus has become a mediator before God on behalf of those who establish a covenant with God (1 Tm 2:5). He is the divine link between God and humanity. He has brought to us God's free gift of grace. The Bible says that "*the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many*" (Rm 5:15).

For God so loved us that He gave His Son (Jn 3:16). Though we were law-breakers, God loved us. Even in our futile efforts to save ourselves, God reached from heaven and loved us through Jesus (Rm 5:8). Grace is God's gift to sinful man. It is a gift, and thus, it is not earned by our righteousness. Since it is a gift, we cannot demand it on the basis of good works (Ep 2:8,9).

III. RESPONDING TO GOD'S GRACE:

God has worked His part in His plan to bring us eternally into His existence in heaven. We must now learn of His work through Jesus and respond to His grace (Jn 6:45). Our knowledge of the grace of God that was revealed through Jesus must generate faith. Faith must move us into action. We must be moved to obey what God wants us to do (Rm 1:5; Gl 5:6; Js 2:14-26). The Bible says that "*the just will live by faith*" (Hk 2:4; Rm 1:17; Gl 3:11; Hb 10:38). The justified will live by trusting in God for their salvation (Rm 5:1,2), not in their ability to perform law perfectly or attempt to

trade their good works to God for His grace.

God's grace does not give us freedom to sin as some have misunderstood (See Rm 6:1; Jd 4). It gives us freedom to obey (1 Pt 2:16). The one who has heard and learned of the grace of God that was revealed through Jesus is motivated to obey the Father (Gl 2:20). We establish God's law in our lives by responding to His grace (Rm 3:31).

The same response of thanksgiving that results from recognizing God's saving grace also applies to good works. We are "*created in Christ Jesus for good works*" (Ep 2:10). **We work because we are saved by God's grace, not in order to be saved.** Good works to others, therefore, are expressions of appreciation and thanksgiving to God for our salvation (1 Co 15:10; 2 Co 4:15).

IV. GRACE AND FREEDOM:

There will always be those who seek to bind on the consciences of men those things God never intended to bind. Some Jewish teachers in the first century sought

to bind circumcision and other Old Testament ceremonies on the consciences of the early Christians (At 15:1,2,10). These teachers came in "**to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage**" (Gl 2:4). But God's grace sets us free from the bondage of human religious traditions (Gl 5:1). One is fallen from grace if he seeks to justify himself through the performance of religious traditions and ceremonies (Gl 5:4).

In order to come into the realm of God's grace, you must respond to grace by obedience to the gospel which is the death of Jesus for our sins and His resurrection for our hope (See Rm 6:3-6; 1 Co 15:1-4; 2 Th 1:7-9). Therefore, baptism for remission of sins is not a work. It is a response to the grace of God that was revealed on the cross. Those who respond to grace by baptism, show their appreciation to God for the grace that was revealed through Jesus. Those who give their lives in thanksgiving for the grace of God, work in appreciation of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus (2 Co 4:15).

Chapter 8

The Gospel

God knows that we cannot live perfect lives. Because God knew we could not live without sinning, He planned before the creation of the world the offering of Jesus Christ for the sins of all men. He planned that Jesus would save us from eternal condemnation. When the time came for God to reveal His salvation for

man, He sent Jesus into the world (Gl 4:4).

All of us know that we cannot save ourselves by perfect obedience to law or earning heaven through good works. Realizing that we cannot live perfect lives should motivate sincere people to search for the means by which God seeks to save

people from their sin. God has given to us this means. It is called grace. His grace was revealed on the cross through Jesus (Ep 3:3-5). When we realize our inability to save ourselves, we seek grace.

God is the creator of all things (Gn 1:1,26,27). He created man in the beginning. Since God created man, this gives Him the right to give moral laws to man by which we must live. Since God is the creator, He also has the right to demand obedience from man.

Everyone has sinned against God's law (Rm 3:10,23). In fact, if one says he has not sinned, God says that he is a liar (1 Jn 1:8-10). Therefore, each one of us must recognize and repent of our sins (At 3:19; Js 4:1-9). Before we die, we must obey what God wants us to do to fulfill our obligations to establish a covenant of grace with Him.

I. SIN IS TRANSGRESSION AGAINST GOD'S LAW.

1 John 3:4 teaches that we sin against God by voluntarily breaking His law. We do so by **not doing** what God has told us to do in His word. We also sin by doing what God has told us not to do in His word (Rm 8:12-14; Ep 2:1-3). Everyone, therefore, has sinned.

II. SIN IS NEGLECTING TO DO THAT WHICH IS RIGHT.

James 4:17 teaches that we sin when we do not do those principles of good that are defined in the Bible (Gl 6:10). If our conscience is directed by

God's word to do good, then we sin if we fail to do what we know is good (Mt 25:41-46).

III. SIN SEPARATES US FROM GOD.

Isaiah 59:1,2 teaches that sin spiritually separates us from God. Therefore, when we think of sin we must think about being **separated from God who can give us eternal life**. We must think about being forever separated from our Creator (Mt 7:21-23). Everyone, therefore, must be **reconciled** to God.

IV. THE RESULT OF SEPARATION FROM GOD IS DEATH.

Romans 6:23 teaches that the result of sin against God's will is **separation from God**. The result of separation from God, is **spiritual death**. One is spiritually dead because his sin has separated him from God who gives eternal life. The final payment for sin that is in our lives, therefore, will be our destruction in the **second death**, which is our final separation from God for eternity (Mt 10:28; Jn 5:28,29).

A. The result of sin is spiritual death.

Romans 5:12 teaches that when one walks in sin, he is separated from God, and thus, **spiritually dead**. As the representative of the human race, Adam was the first to introduce sin into the world. Everyone since Adam suffers from spiritual death because everyone

has individually sinned against God. **Spiritual death, therefore, is man's first and greatest problem.** The gospel is the only solution to this problem.

B. Sin brought physical death into the world.

1 Corinthians 15:20-22 teaches that when Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden, he was separated from the Tree of Life. He thus had to **physically die** (Gn 3:22-24). Therefore, all of us have to suffer the **consequences** of Adam's sin because we cannot now partake of the Tree of Life (Hb 9:27). **Physical death, therefore, is man's second greatest problem.**

V. JESUS REVEALED THE GOSPEL.

Mark 1:14,15 states that Jesus preached the gospel. The word "gospel" means **good news**. The good news is Jesus' coming to solve both our **spiritual death problem** and our **physical death problem**. However, Jesus asks us to first **learn** of Him (Jn 6:45), and then **believe** the good news (the gospel) (Mk 16:16; Jn 3:16; 8:24).

VI. JESUS IS COMING AGAIN.

2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 teaches that Jesus is coming again at the end of time! When He comes, He will punish with everlasting destruction those who do not **obey the gospel** (1 Pt 4:17). It is necessary, therefore, that everyone "obey the

good news" (the gospel) in order to escape the coming destruction when Jesus comes. If one must obey the gospel, then there are two questions that must be asked and answered. "**What is the gospel (good news)?**" and "**How can one obey the gospel?**" Once these two questions are answered one is on his way to come into contact with the grace of God. The answer to the questions, therefore, is crucial for our salvation in Christ.

VII. THE GOSPEL IS AN EVENT IN HISTORY.

1 Corinthians 15:1,2 teaches that the gospel was **declared** and **preached** to men. It was **received** by receptive and repentant hearts. Obedient believers base their emotional and spiritual well being on the historical fact that the gospel event actually happened. We are **saved by the gospel** if we continue to believe the word of God that communicates to us the historical fact of the gospel event. Now what is the gospel?

1 Corinthians 15:3,4 gives a simple definition of the heart of the gospel. The gospel is the **historical event** of **Jesus' death for our sins** and **His resurrection for our hope of eternal life**. Jesus, therefore, died in order to bring us back to God (2 Co 5:18-21). He made it possible for us to draw near to God (Ep 2:11-13). It is for this reason that the gospel is good news!

VIII. ONE OBEYS THE HISTORICAL EVENT OF THE GOSPEL.

Romans 6:3-6 explains how to obey the gospel. In Romans 6:3 Paul declared that one comes “**into Christ**” by immersion (baptism). Verses 4 & 5 explain that we are buried **with Jesus** by immersion into water. We are then resurrected with Jesus out of the “tomb” of water. However, verse 6 explains that before one can obey the gospel by immersion into water, he must first be **crucified with Jesus**. In other words, one must repent of sins before he or she is baptized for remission of sins (At 2:38; 3:19). As an example, people in the first century ...

1. ... **heard** the good news (Mt 13:9; Jn 5:24,25; 6:45; 8:47).
2. ... **believed** the good news (Mk 1:14,15; Jn 3:16; 8:24; 20:30,31).

3. ... **repented** of sin (Lk 13:3; At 2:38; 3:19; 2 Pt 3:9).
4. ... **gave their lives** as a living confession (Mt 10:32,33; Rm 10:9,10).
5. ... **obeyed the gospel** by immersion (baptism) into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (Mk 16:15,16; Jn 3:3-5; At 2:38; 22:16; 1 Pt 3:21).

Baptism in obedience to the gospel is one’s opportunity to obey Jesus. Baptism, therefore, is necessary in order to obey the gospel. If one is not baptized, then certainly he has not obeyed the historical event of the death of Jesus for our sins and His resurrection for our hope. In order to be born again, we must obey the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

Chapter 9

Obedience To The Gospel Through Baptism

Since the words “baptism” and “baptize” are mentioned over one hundred times in the New Testament, we must assume that this is a very important subject in the Bible. Thousands of people were baptized in the first century. Thousands were baptized in order to come into a covenant agreement with God. Millions since the first century have also been baptized for the same reason that the early believers were baptized. They were baptized for the forgiveness of their sins. Upon faith and repentance, anyone can be baptized for the same reasons

people were baptized two thousand years ago.

The Greek word *baptizo* that is used in the New Testament was first transliterated in English Bibles with the new English word “baptize.” In the transliteration of the word *baptizo*, the equivalent sounds of the Greek letters were brought over into the English language to produce the words “baptize” and “baptism.”

However, the Greek definition of *baptizo* is “to dip,” “plunge,” “immerse,” or “overwhelm.” The most common defi-

dition is “immerse.” Therefore, when the words “baptize” or “baptism” are used in the English Bible in reference to one’s salvation, the meaning of immersion must be understood. When people were immersed in the first century, they were immersed in “much water” (Jn 3:23). The New Testament teaching is that men and women were immersed in water for remission of sins.

I. THE ONE BAPTISM:

Throughout the New Testament, six baptisms are mentioned.

1. John’s immersion (baptism) unto repentance (Mt 3:11; Mk 1:14).
2. Immersion into the responsibility and burden of leadership (Mt 20:22,23).
3. Immersion with the Holy Spirit (Mt 3:11; At 1:5).
4. Immersion with fire (Mt 3:11).
5. Israel’s immersion in the cloud (1 Co 10:1,2).
6. Immersion in water for remission of sins (At 2:38).

When Paul wrote the Ephesian letter in A.D. 62, he proclaimed that **there was only one valid baptism at that time** (Ep 4:5). This is the baptism in water for forgiveness of sins that was first preached in Acts 2:38.

II. CANDIDATES FOR BAPTISM:

In order to be a candidate for immersion, the following must happen be-

fore one is immersed:

1. Only those who can be taught are to be immersed (Mt 28:19,20).
2. Only those who can understand the command to be immersed are to be immersed (At 2:38).
3. Only men and women are to be immersed (At 8:12).
4. Only those who can hear the teaching of the gospel are to be immersed (Mk 16:15,16).
5. Only those who can believe are to be immersed (Mk 16:16; Jn 8:24; 8:12).
6. Only those who can receive the word of God are to be immersed (At 2:41).
8. Only those who can repent are to be immersed (Lk 13:3; At 2:38; 3:19; 17:30; 2 Pt 3:9). Therefore, baptism is only for adults who can make a free-moral choice to be immersed.

III. THE PURPOSE OF BAPTISM:

The New Testament records the examples of thousands of people who believed in Jesus and were immersed (At 2:41; 6:7; 8:6,12). They were immersed in obedience to the gospel for the remission of their sins.

A. Immersion is obedience to the gospel.

The gospel is the historical event of the death of Jesus for our sins. It is the event of His burial and resurrection to

give us hope of eternal life (1 Co 15:1-4). This historical event is communicated to us through the inspired word of God. Unless one obeys the gospel, he cannot be saved (2 Th 1:6-9; 1 Pt 4:17). When one is baptized, he is buried with Christ into His death in order to be raised from the waters of baptism to walk in newness of life (Rm 6:3-6). Therefore, the action of *baptizo* is immersion into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus in order to be saved. The believer obeys the gospel by immersion in water for the remission of his or her sins.

B. Immersion is for the remission of sins.

When one is immersed with Jesus in obedience to the gospel, he or she comes into contact with the blood of Jesus. He thus receives forgiveness of sins (At 2:38). One's sins are thus washed away (At 22:16; Ti 3:5). God subsequently adds the immersed believer to the church of His people who are in a covenant relationship with Him (At 2:47). Baptism, therefore, stands between being lost outside Christ and saved in Christ. It is necessary, therefore, that one be baptized into Christ.

IV. THE RESULT OF BAPTISM:

Baptism is a response to and obedience of the gospel. When one submits to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus by immersion, he or she receives great blessings from God. The following things happen in the spiritual realm of

his or her spiritual regeneration:

1. One walks in newness of life (Rm 6:4).
2. One becomes a new creature (2 Co 5:17).
3. One appeals to God with a good conscience (1 Pt 3:21).
4. One puts on Christ (Gl 3:27).
5. One becomes an obedient subject of Christ (Jn 3:3-5).
6. One becomes a part "of Christ" (1 Co 1:12,13).
7. One comes into a relationship with Christ (Rm 6:3; Gl 3:26,27).
8. One comes into Christ where he or she receives the following:
 - a. All spiritual blessings (Ep 1:3)
 - b. Redemption by Jesus' blood (Ep 1:7; Cl 1:14)
 - c. Forgiveness of sins (Ep 1:7)
 - d. Sanctification from sin (1 Co 1:2; 1 Jn 1:7)
 - e. No condemnation (Rm 8:1)
 - f. A new creation in Christ (2 Co 5:17)
 - g. Eternal life with Jesus (1 Jn 5:11)
 - h. Salvation for eternal life (2 Tm 2:10; At 4:12; 1 Pt 3:21)

V. EXAMPLES OF BAPTISM:

There are many examples in the New Testament where believing men and women obeyed the gospel by immersion in water for the forgiveness of their sins.

1. The Jews on Pentecost (At 2:41-47)
2. The Samaritans (At 8:5-13)
3. The Ethiopian eunuch (At 8:26-40)
4. Saul of Tarsus (At 9:17,18; 22:16)
5. Cornelius and his household (At 10:34-48)
6. Lydia and her household (At 16:14,15)
7. The Philippian jailor and his household (At 16:30-34)
8. The Corinthians (At 18:8)

Faith, repentance and confession are **unto** salvation (Rm 10:9,10; 2 Co 7:10).

However, immersion is **into** Christ where there is salvation (2 Tm 2:10; 1 Pt 3:21). Men are redeemed by the sacrificial blood of Jesus (At 20:28; Rv 5:9). However, this redemption by the blood is in Christ (Ep 1:7; Cl 1:14). One must be immersed into Christ (Gl 3:27). Jesus sanctified the church by His blood (Hb 13:12). He continues to sanctify the faithful (1 Jn 1:7). Only the sanctified, therefore, are in the body of Christ (1 Co 1:2; 6:11). In order to be sanctified by the blood of Jesus, one must be immersed into the body of Christ (1 Co 12:13). If one has been immersed for the wrong reasons, he should be immersed again for the right reasons (At 19:1-6).

Chapter 10

King Jesus

No matter what happens in the world today, one thing is true. Jesus Christ now reigns over all things. He is in control even of the physical world. All people on earth are under His kingdom reign. Even Satan and demons are contained by His authority. Regardless of what may happen on earth, or things in the spiritual world, we can be assured that Jesus reigns as the supreme authority over all things in heaven and on earth.

Now here are some exciting facts about this reign. Among the approximately three hundred Old Testament prophecies concerning Jesus, the Messiah (Gr. "Christ"), the prophecies of Daniel 2 and 7 refer specifically to Jesus' kingdom reign and the establishment of

Jesus' reign.

In Daniel 2 King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon was given a vision by God. The vision was of an image that had a head of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly of brass and feet and legs part of iron and part of clay (Dn 2:31-35). Daniel interpreted this vision. This amazing vision was a prophecy of four world kingdoms (Dn 2:36-45). The head of gold was the Babylonian Kingdom; the breast and arms of silver was the Medo-Persian Kingdom; the belly of brass was the Greek Kingdom; the feet and legs of part iron and part clay was the Roman Kingdom. It was in the days of the Roman Kingdom that Daniel said God would establish a new kingdom (Dn

2:44). This prophecy has been fulfilled!

Daniel 7 is a parallel prophecy of the same four world kingdoms of Daniel 2. In the Daniel 7 vision, Daniel fore-saw the ascension of the Son of Man (the Christ) to the Ancient of Days (God) (Dn 7:13). When the Son of Man ascended to His throne, kingdom reign and dominion were given to Him (Dn 7:14; see also the prophecies of 2 Sm 7:12,13; Ps 16:8-11; 110:1; Zc 6:12,13; Jl 2:28-32; Is 2:1-5; Mc 4:1-3).

The prophecies of Daniel 2 and 7, with many other prophecies, speak of the resurrection and ascension of Jesus to the right hand of the Father. These prophecies foretold that Jesus would be King over all things on the throne of God. On the throne He would function as both a priest and king. God's house would be the spiritual dwelling into which people from all nations would flow as they were drawn by God's word.

I. JESUS AND JOHN SPOKE OF THE KINGDOM:

As the forerunner of Jesus, John the Baptist was the one crying in the wilderness of Palestine to prepare the way for the Messiah. In preparation for the King's coming, he proclaimed, "*Prepare the way of the Lord; make His paths straight*" (Mt 3:3; see Is 40:3; Mt 3:1). Jesus followed John's preparation. Jesus proclaimed, "*My kingdom is not of this world ...*" (Jn 18:36). Jesus told Pilate that He was born for the purpose of being a king (Jn 18:37).

A. John announced Jesus' kingdom reign.

John preached, "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*" (Mt 3:1,2). The word "kingdom" refers to **reign and rule**. The phrases "of heaven," or "of God" define **the origin** of the reign and rule. Jesus' reign proceeds from God and out of heaven. The phrase "at hand" referred John's audience to the nearness or immediate establishment of the kingdom reign from heaven. In reference to John's ministry, Jesus' kingdom reign was soon to be established. It was not a kingdom that would be established over two thousand years in the future after the time John first preached this message. It was a kingdom that was to be established in the first century.

B. Jesus announced His kingdom.

After John, Jesus prophesied, "*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand*" (Mk 1:14,15). In order to emphasize the immediate nature of the establishment of His kingdom reign, Jesus said that some of His immediate disciples would not die before He established His kingdom (Mk 9:1; see Lk 9:27).

C. Jesus announced His church.

During His ministry, Jesus asked His disciples, "*Who do you say that I am?*" (Mt 16:15). Peter answered, "*You are the Christ [Messiah], the Son of the living God*" (Mt 16:16). In fact, Jesus

was the prophesied **Messiah** (Christ) because He fulfilled all Old Testament prophecies concerning His coming and work (Lk 24:44). He was the **Son of God** because the Father worked mighty miracles through Him (Jn 20:30,31; see 3:2). The Messiahship and Sonship of Jesus are the rock upon which the church is founded (Mt 16:18).

In Matthew 16:19 Jesus spoke of His kingdom. He said to Peter, “*And I will give you **the keys of the kingdom of heaven**, and whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven ...*” “Keys” refers to the privilege to reveal heavenly authority. Peter had the initial authority (privilege) of unlocking the kingdom reign (authority) of Jesus on earth. He was **the first man to officially and publicly announce the kingdom reign of Jesus**. This He did in A.D. 30 on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2.

II. FULFILLMENT OF KINGDOM PROPHECIES:

The disciples of Jesus were in Jerusalem on Pentecost when God poured out the Holy Spirit upon all the apostles (At 2:1-4). This outpouring fulfilled the prophecy of Joel that God had made centuries before (Jl 2:28-32; At 2:16-24). It was God’s signal that Jesus’ reign had begun and the church was to begin by the addition to the disciples the first people to be baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins.

A. Old Testament prophecy was fulfilled in Acts 2.

In the days of the Roman kings the events of Acts 2 fulfilled all kingdom prophecies (Dn 2:44; Lk 2:1-3). Jesus had already ascended to the right hand of the Father and was reigning as King by the time the Acts 2 events took place (Dn 7:13,14; At 1:9-11).

1. Peter stood up on Pentecost and made the first official announcement of the reign of the resurrected and ascended Jesus to the throne of God in heaven (At 2:29-33; see 2 Sm 7:13,14).
 2. Peter preached that Jesus was at the right hand of God with all His enemies as His footstool (Ps 16:8-11; 110:1; At 2:25-28,34,35).
- B. The church began when people responded to the first announcement of Jesus’ kingdom reign.**

Peter preached the lordship of Jesus (At 2:36). People believed and responded by repentance and baptism (At 2:37,38). When submissive men and women obey Peter’s instructions today, they are added to the church by God (At 2:41,47). **The church began in the first century when submissive people first responded to the first official announcement of the kingship of Jesus as He exercises all authority from heaven.** Today, every time people submit to the kingdom reign of Jesus, the will of the Father is done on earth in the hearts of men as it is done in heaven (Mt 6:9,10). The kingdom comes into the

hearts of those who have submitted to Jesus (Lk 17:20,21). The submitted recognize the power and authority that King Jesus now has.

1. All authority has now been given to Jesus (Jn 13:3; 17:2; Mt 28:18).
2. He is King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tm 6:15).
3. He is now far above all principality, power, might and dominion (Ep 1:20,21).
4. All things are now put under His feet (Ep 1:22).
5. He is now exalted above every name (Ph 2:9,10).
6. All angels and authorities have been made subject to Him (1 Pt

3:22).

7. The created world is now under His control (Hb 1:3).

Jesus is now King of His kingdom and head of His church! He now has all authority over all things (Mt 28:18). All those who submit to His kingdom reign will become a part of His body, the church. The church, therefore, is the manifestation of the kingdom reign of Jesus on earth. He reigns from heaven in the hearts of men (Lk 17:20,21). He will reign as king with all authority until He comes again. At this final coming, He will return the authority of kingdom reign to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (1 Co 15:26-28).

Chapter 11

The Church

The word “church” is used in the New Testament to refer to the people of God who have obeyed the gospel by immersion into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. The Greek word *ekklesia* that is translated with the English word “church,” comes from two different Greek words, one meaning “out” and the other meaning “to call.” The word was originally used in Greek culture to refer to a general participatory assembly of citizens and leaders of a community who were “called out” for a special meeting where discussions were conducted by the entire community. In the New Testament the word “church” (*ekklesia*) is used

primarily to refer to God’s people who have been called out of the world in order to be a part of an interactive fellowship of believers. The church is God’s special holy nation of redeemed people whose citizenship is in heaven (At 20:28; Ph 3:20,21; Ti 2:14; 1 Pt 1:18,19; 2:9). The church is the manifestation on earth of Jesus’ kingship in heaven.

The church is made up of those on earth who have submitted to the reign of Jesus from heaven. The church is composed of those in whose hearts Jesus now reigns (Lk 17:20,21). Wherever the will of God is done on earth in the hearts of men as it is done in heaven (Mt 6:10),

then the church exists. All the church is under the reign of Jesus, but not all the kingdom of Jesus is the church, for angels, spiritual principalities and earthly governments are all under the kingship of Jesus, though they are not a part of the church (Ep 1:20-22; 1 Pt 3:22).

I. PROPHECY OF THE KINGDOM AND CHURCH:

The church of Christ was established in A.D. 30 in Jerusalem on Pentecost in Acts 2 when people first submitted to the first official announcement of the kingdom reign of Jesus.

- A. Jesus ascended to heaven prior to Acts 2** (Dn 2:44; 7:13,14; see At 1:9-11).
- B. The Holy Spirit was poured out in Acts 2** (Jl 2:28-32; see At 2:1-4,16-24).
- C. The events of Pentecost in Acts 2 took place in the last days of national Israel** (Jl 2:28; Is 2:1-5; see At 2:16,17; Hb 1:1,2).
- D. People of all nations were added to the church and the gospel went from Jerusalem** (Is 2:1-5; Mc 4:1-3; see Lk 24:47; At 2:41,47).
- E. The new covenant was established when people were baptized into a covenant relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit** (Jr 31:31-34; see Hb 8:6-18; Mt 28:19,20).

II. BIBLE DESCRIPTION OF OBEDIENT BELIEVERS:

It is important to understand that the New Testament does not emphasize titles that distinguish disciples from one another. The names that are used in reference to God's people describe who they are.

A. New Testament references to Jesus' disciples:

The following are descriptive adjectives that explain who the people of God are in their relationship with God and one another.

1. Disciples (At 11:26)
2. Brethren (Ph 4:21; 1 Pt 2:17)
3. Christians (At 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pt 4:16)
4. Members (1 Co 12:27)
5. Saints (Rm 1:7; Ep 1:1; Ph 1:1)
6. Servants (Rm 16:1,2)
7. Children of God (Gl 3:26; 1 Jn 3:1,2)
8. Priests (1 Pt 2:5,9; Rv 1:6)

III. BIBLE DESCRIPTION OF GOD'S PEOPLE:

The fact that there are several references to the people of God in the New Testament indicates that there is no one specific name of the church. Those phrases that are used in the New Testament in reference to the ekklesia of God are used to define the nature of the people of God.

A. New Testament references to God's people as the church:

The people of God are focused on God. Since God's people are Christ centered in their lives, then every reference to them in the New Testament would exemplify their identity. They are thus not called after men, but after God and Christ, the Son of God.

1. Church of God (1 Co 1:2)
2. Bride of Christ (Rv 21:9)
3. Body of Christ (Ep 1:22,23)
4. Church of the Lord (At 20:28)
5. Church of Christ (Rm 16:16)
6. Flock of God (1 Pt 5:2,3)
7. House of God (1 Tm 3:15)
8. Temple of God (2 Co 6:16)

IV. THE CHRISTIAN'S COVENANT WITH GOD:

Those who have submitted to the lordship of Jesus have come into a saving covenant relationship with God (Hb 10:15-18).

- A. **They are in fellowship with God** (1 Co 1:9; Jn 15:4; 1 Jn 1:3).
- B. **They have been purchased and purified by the blood of Jesus** (At 20:28; Ep 1:7,14; Ti 2:14; Hb 1:3; 9:14; 1 Jn 1:7).

C. **They are a royal priesthood of God** (1 Pt 2:5; Rv 1:6; 5:10; 20:6).

D. **They are a holy nation of God** (1 Pt 2:9).

E. **They have a heavenly citizenship** (Ep 2:6,19; Ph 3:20,21).

F. **They are reconciled to God** (2 Co 5:18-21; Cl 1:20-22).

G. **They are built on the Son of God** (Mt 16:15-19; 1 Co 3:10,11).

V. ORGANIC LIFE OF GOD'S PEOPLE:

Jesus is the only head of the church (Ep 4:4-6). He rules from heaven by the authority of His word (Jn 12:48). Members of the church are Christ centered. They manifest Christ on earth because they recognize who He is (See Mt 16:13-19).

A. Jesus is Head, King and Priest:

As our **Head**, Jesus seeks to direct our lives through His word (Mt 11:28,29; Jn 12:48; Rv 3:20). As our **King**, we voluntarily submit to His lordship in our hearts (Lk 17:20,21). As our **Priest**, we trust in Jesus to have taken care of our problem of sin (1 Jn 1:7).

1. **Head:** From heaven, Jesus is the only controlling head of His body on earth which is His church (Ep 5:23; Cl 1:18).

2. **King:** Jesus is King of all things (Jn 18:36,37; 1 Tm 6:15; Rv 3:21). He reigns over all with all authority (Mt 28:18; 1 Pt 3:22). God has subjected all things that exist to His reign (Is 9:6,7; Ep 1:20-22; Ph 2:9,10; Hb 1:3).
3. **Priest:** Jesus is our High Priest who is seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven (Hb 4:14-16; 8:1,6). He makes intercession for all who have obeyed the gospel (Hb 7:25; 9:24; 1 Jn 2:1).

B. Shepherds serve by their godly examples:

1. A plurality of qualified servant elders (1 Tm 3:1-7; Ti 1:5-9) are designated among the disciples in order to give spiritual service, guidance and counseling to the flock of God (At 14:23; 20:17; Ph 1:1; Ti 1:5).
2. Elders of the church are also referred to in the New Testament as “presbyters” (“those who are older in age” – At 11:30; 14:23; 15:2,4,6,22; 1 Tm 5:17), “overseers,” (or, “bishops” in some translations - At 20:28; 1 Tm 3:1), and “pastors,” or “shepherds” (“those who care for the needs of the flock” – Ep 4:11; 1 Pt 5:2). All these terms refer to the elders in order to explain their ministry to the saints.
3. Elders work to spiritually lead (1 Tm 5:17), care for (1 Pt 5:1-3;

Js 5:14,15), guard (At 20:28-32; Ti 1:9) and admonish the church of God (1 Th 5:12,13).

C. Deacons, or servants, serve in special needs:

1. Deacons are designated to serve the church (At 6:1-6; Ph 1:1).
2. Deacons have qualifications of work and behavior before they are designated as special servants of the church (1 Tm 3:8-10,12,13).

D. Evangelists preach the word of God to the lost:

It is the work of an evangelist to ...

1. ... proclaim the good news (the gospel) to the lost (Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15; Rm 1:15; 10:14,15; 1 Co 9:16; 1 Pt 1:25).
2. ... proclaim the truth (1 Tm 1:3-10; 4:1-3; 6,11-16; 2 Tm 2:2; Ti 3:8).
3. ... reprove, rebuke and exhort the church with longsuffering (2 Tm 4;1,2).

All references to special ministries in the New Testament emphasize the service that members of the church offer to one another. They are not references that exalt members above one another.

VI. THE SERVICE OF THE DISCIPLES OF JESUS:

As a body filled with the Spirit of God (1 Co 6:19), the church is a vibrant community in this world to accomplish the work of God to bring people into eternity through obedience to the gospel.

A. **Evangelism:**

Disciples of Jesus preach and teach the gospel to the world (Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15,16; Lk 24:46,47; At 5:42; 6:7; 8:4; Cl 1:23).

B. **Benevolence:**

Disciples of Jesus care for the needy and do good works to all men (Mt 6:1-4; 7:11,12; 25:31-46; Lk 4:18; 6:30,31; 10:25-37; 14:12-14; At 2:44,45; 4:32-37; Gl 2:10; 6:10; 1 Tm 5:3-16; Js 1:27; 2:14-26; 1 Jn 3:17,18).

C. **Edification:**

Disciples of Jesus must edify themselves (1 Co 14:3-5,12,16) in order that they be equipped to minister in all good things (At 14:22,23; Ep 4:11-16; 5:19; 6:10-18; Hb 10:24,25).

VII: THE WORSHIP OF THE DISCIPLES OF JESUS:

Though every day is a day of service and worship for Christians (Rm

12:1,2), Sunday is a special day of worship together as an assembly of God's people. They come together to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus over a love feast (1 Co 11:17-33; 2 Pt 2:13; Jd 12). During or after the feast they partake of the Lord's Supper in remembrance of Jesus (Mt 26:26-29; At 20:7; 1 Co 11:23-29). Every day disciples sing praises to God and admonish one another (Ep 5:19; Cl 3:16), preach and teach the word of God (2 Tm 4:2), pray (1 Th 5:17), discuss and implement good works (At 20:7; Hb 10:24,25), and give to help those who are in need, especially widows and orphans, and in order to send forth evangelists to preach the gospel (Rm 10:14,15; 1 Co 16:1-3).

Jesus is coming again to save His body, the church of Christ. In order to be delivered from this world when Jesus comes, one must be a part of the one body for which Jesus died (At 20:28). Therefore, one must be baptized into the body of Christ in order to be saved when Jesus comes again (Rm 6:3-6; 1 Co 12:13; Gl 3:26,27). Jesus is coming for His people. It is imperative, therefore, that each person on earth has the opportunity to become a member of His body. Christians preach the gospel to the world in order to give everyone an opportunity for heaven.

Chapter 12

Christians Only

Over two thousand years ago the disciples of Jesus were called Christians (At 11:26). It was not easy being a Christian in the first century in the midst of so many confused religious beliefs. Today, there are also thousands of religious groups throughout the world. However, in the midst of so many religious beliefs, millions are becoming Christians only. They are becoming Christians because of the overwhelming truth that Jesus of Nazareth was more than a prophet. He was the Son of God just as He claimed.

We want to be Christians only. That's all. In a world of conflicting and confusing religious beliefs and practices, you too can be just a Christian. You can be a disciple of Christ without being a part of any religious institution of men. You can be just a Christian without placing your membership with a religious organization of man that seeks to claim you as its member. Your membership will be in heaven alone.

The word "Christian" means that one is "of Christ." As a Christian you belong to Christ. You are a follower of the person of Jesus and His teachings. One who follows the person of Jesus Christ and is obedient to His teachings, is just a Christian. Millions of people throughout the world have become Christians only. They are validated as Christians simply because they have obeyed the gospel by being immersed into the

death, burial and resurrection of Christ, and now, they are living a Christ-centered life.

I. WHY BE A CHRISTIAN:

We are Christians because Jesus fulfilled over **300 prophecies** written about Him hundreds of years before He lived. He must be believed. Here are only a few examples of these fulfilled prophecies.

- A. He was a descendant of Abraham** (Gn 12:1-3; see Gl 3:16).
- B. He was born in Bethlehem** (Mc 5:2; see Mt 2:1,3).
- C. He was a sojourner in Egypt** (Hs 11:1; see Mt 2:15).
- D. He was a teacher of the Gentiles** (Is 42:1-4; see Mt 12:18-21).
- E. He was a worker of miracles** (Is 35:5,6; see Lk 7:18-23).
- F. He was betrayed** (Zc 13:7; see Mt 26:55,56).
- G. He died and rose from the dead** (Ps 16:10; see Jn 2:19-22).

II. UNITY OF CHRISTIANS:

God expects His people to be united throughout the world. Though there were individual assemblies of Christians in the first century as in Corinth (1 Co 1:2) or Ephesus (At 20:17), all local assemblies were part of the one universal church (Rm 16:16). **There is only one church throughout the world that is made up of all those who are just Christians.** God expects Christians to be united together as one universal church (1 Co 1:10). They are not to divide themselves from one another. As obedient disciples of Jesus who have given themselves in service to God, they are to stand fast in the faith and strive together with one heart and soul against the works of Satan (Ph 1:27; Cl 1:2-16). Through the power of God and their unity, Christians are a worldwide force against evil.

II. PRAYER OF CHRISTIANS:

Jesus prayed that those who follow Him should be united as one (Jn 17:20,21). He did not pray that we be satisfied with dividing ourselves into different denominations. All of us throughout the world who believe in Jesus and His word are seeking to answer Jesus' prayer to be one. We are striving to be united in order to call all non-Christians of the world into a covenant relationship with God through obedience to the gospel (Rm 6:3-6).

III. BEING FREE AS A CHRISTIAN:

You can be free as a Christian.

Believers in Jesus can be Christians without being a part of any man-made religion. Believers in Jesus can be free from being divided into different religious groups. One can be free as a Christian only by allowing the Bible to be his or her **only authority in religious matters.** Since we will be judged only by the word of Jesus (Jn 12:48), **then we are free in religious matters to be responsible only to the word of Jesus.** Since the Bible is the Spirit-inspired word of God (2 Tm 3:16,17), **then we are free to allow the Bible alone to direct us in godly living.** Since the word of Jesus is our source of faith (Rm 10:17), **then we are free to allow it to be the only foundation of our faith.** It is not wrong to have religious traditions. However, religious traditions must never be bound on believers in a manner by which the traditions cause division among Christians (Gl 5:1; see Mk 7:1-9). In order that the truth make us truly free, we must agree to allow the Bible to be our final authority (Jn 8:32). We must speak where the Bible speaks. But where the Bible is silent, we must allow freedom of opinion in loving discussion.

IV. FIRST PRINCIPLES FOR CHRISTIANS:

Being just a Christian in the community means believing and doing great things. Being a Christian means being a disciple who works for Jesus. In order for you to get started in living as a Christian, the following are essential or fundamental beliefs that all Christians must maintain in their lives:

- A. Believe in the one true and living God** (Is 44:8; Ep 4:4-6).
- B. Believe in Jesus as the one Lord** (Jn 20:30,31; Ep 4:4-6).
- C. Believe in the one universal body, the church** (Cl 1:18).
- D. Believe in the one Holy Spirit and His fruit** (Gl 5:22,23).
- E. Believe in the one baptism (immersion)** (At 2:38; Ep 4:4-6).
- F. Believe in the one faith** (Ep 4:4-6; Jd 3).
- G. Believe in holy and moral living** (Cl 3:12-17; 1 Pt 1:15).
- H. Believe in Jesus' behavioral principle of love** (Jn 13:34,35; 14:15).
- V. EXPECTATIONS OF CHRISTIANS:**

As a result of their commitment to Jesus, Christians expect to live the abundant life of spiritual and emotional peace in this world (Jn 10:10; Ph 4:6,7). Christians know and expect all things to work together for good (Rm 8:28). They ex-

pect not to be tempted above what they are able to endure (1 Co 10:13). However, because of their commitment to be working disciples for their Lord Jesus, they expect persecution from those whom Satan is using to destroy the work of God (2 Tm 3:12). They remember that the word of God tells them not to be ashamed, but to glorify God by living as a Christian (1 Pt 4:16; see At 11:26; Mt 5:10). Since the disciples of Jesus are more than Christians in name only, they understand that obedient service of the Lord Jesus Christ will stir up persecution. But they also remember that the reward for faithful discipleship is eternal life in heaven.

IV. YOU CAN BE JUST A CHRISTIAN:

In order to be a disciple of Jesus, one must first believe that Jesus is the Son of God (Jn 20:30,31). We must then be immersed into Christ in order to put on Christ (Gl 3:26,27). Jesus calls out to all people through the gospel of His death for your sins and resurrection for your hope (2 Th 2:14). If we accept His call, we can be just a Christian. Great things will then happen in the life of the obedient (At 2:38,47).