

HANDBOOK
OF
BIBLE DOCTRINE
For Baptist Churches
In Myanmar

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IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO BE READ

We live in days when there are teachers of false doctrine everywhere. There are many others who teach that doctrine doesn't matter. They say, "as long as we talk about Jesus, it doesn't really matter what people teach or what they believe." But the Bible that God gave us is a book filled with doctrine. If it didn't matter what a person believes, why did God go to the trouble of giving us an inspired book filled with doctrine? Paul's first letter to Timothy gives us an illustration of how important Bible doctrine is. Paul wanted people to be warned that they "teach no other doctrine." (1:3) He referred to conduct that is "contrary to sound doctrine." (1:10) He wanted people to be nourished up in "good doctrine." (4:6) In 4:13 he exhorted Timothy to give attendance to doctrine, and in 4:16 Timothy was reminded to "take heed unto the doctrine." Paul referred to the Pastors who "labor in the word and doctrine" (5:17) and in 6:1 he expressed concern that the "doctrine be not blasphemed." He also warned against those who do not agree with "the doctrine which is according to godliness." (6:3)

The first responsibility of a pastor is to live, teach and preach sound doctrine. To do this, he must first know the doctrines of the Word of God. The purpose of this little book is to give a clear outline of the basic doctrines of Scripture for the use of pastors, students, and Christian leaders in Myanmar. A person would do well to read through this book several times. He should look up and study every scripture referred to. He should share this book with leaders in his church. He could well teach through this book to his congregation. The best foundation for a church to build upon is a foundation of sound doctrine. It is my prayer and desire that this little book will help you to understand and uphold the doctrines of the Word of God.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

I FALSE IDEAS ABOUT GOD

It must be recognized that there are many incorrect ideas about God.

A. Atheism - There is no God

The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God."

Psalm 14:1

B. Agnosticism - We cannot know whether there is a god or not

C. Polytheism - There are many gods Romans 1:23

D. Pantheism - Everything is god

E. Liberalism - Everyone worships the same god under different names

II THE TRUE CONCEPT OF GOD

There is one eternal God, perfect in all of His attributes, who created all things for His own glory, made man in His own image, and provided salvation for man that man might enjoy perfect fellowship with God throughout eternity.

III THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD - How Do We Know About God?

Every man has built within him, a desire to know about God. Many ignore this desire and go through life without any concern about God. But most try to know something about God. Often their ideas about God come from the wrong source, and are therefore not true. Some accept the traditions of their family or of their society. Others gain their ideas about God by listening to some great authority who claims to know the truth. Others use their own reasoning ability and arrive at their conclusions about God by deciding what makes the most sense to them. Many people think that any ideas that people have about God are true, as long as they sincerely believe them. But people who depend on these things come up with many contrasting ideas about God. How can opposing ideas both be correct? If an animal is all black, he cannot be all white. If a fish is dead, it cannot be alive. If certain beliefs about God are true, opposite beliefs can-

not be true. So how can anyone be sure what to believe about God?

If there is a God who has the power to make all things and who cares about the creation that He made, then He would certainly want us to know about Himself. Therefore, He would want to reveal himself to man so that we could understand Him and love and serve Him. God has done this, and has revealed Himself to us in three different ways.

A. Natural Revelation - God has revealed Himself to us in nature

In Romans 1:19-20 we read “That which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him (God) are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.” Psalm 19:1-6 tells us that the heavens and the earth show us the glory and the handwork of God. Anyone who honestly looks at the wonders of nature, the stars above, and the world around us can plainly see that there has to be a wise and powerful God who has made all of these things. But even though nature can show man that there is a wise and powerful God, it cannot show man how he should live and how he can gain forgiveness of sins and know the love of God.

B. The Living Revelation – God has revealed Himself through Jesus Christ

God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to show us what God the Father was like. John says “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.” (John 1:14) Jesus said to Philip, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father,” (John 14:9) and Paul says that “God was in Christ.” (II Corinthians 5:19)

C. The Written Revelation - God has revealed Himself to us in the Bible

The Bible commonly refers to itself as “the Word of God.” Jesus said, “Blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it” (Luke 11:28) The Bible begins by saying, “In the beginning God...” and then 10 times in the first chapter is the phrase “and God said”. Throughout the Bible, it claims to be the word of God which reveals God’s self and God’s will to mankind. John 20:31 explains that the things that are written in the Bible are those truths

that allow us to know and believe the truth about Jesus Christ and have eternal life through this knowledge.

The Bible is the only sure and clear way that we can have accurate knowledge of God. We were not here to see Christ when He lived on earth. Natural revelation shows us the existence, power and wisdom of God, but does not give us further details about Him, or the salvation that He offers us. God wanted us to have clear, accurate and sufficient knowledge of Himself so He revealed Himself to us in the written Word of God, the Bible. There are three steps involved in providing us with this understanding of Himself.

1. Inspiration – The process of writing the Bible

God used about 40 different men to record God’s revealed truth for mankind in the 66 books of the Bible. By His Holy Spirit He moved holy men of God to write down God’s revealed message. God supervised this writing process so that they wrote down exactly the words that God wanted them to write. Every word that they wrote was inspired by God and therefore perfectly accurate in what it said. Peter says that they wrote as they were “moved” by the Holy Spirit. (II Peter 1:21) Paul tells us that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God,” (II Timothy 3:16) and David reminds us that “the Law of the Lord is perfect.” (Psalms 19:7) This doctrine is described as “the verbal, plenary inspiration of Scripture,” which means that every word of all of the Bible was fully and accurately inspired by God and is therefore without error in any fact or doctrine expressed.

2. Preservation - The process of preserving the Bible

Of course the Bible was written thousands of years ago. It had to be copied many times and translated into other languages. Therefore some people try to tell us that it cannot be accurate any more, because over the years, people who copied and translated it would have made mistakes, added some things and left out some things, so we no longer have a Bible that we can trust. But the Bible tells us that God would carefully preserve His Word throughout time. David said, “Forever, O Lord, thy Word is settled in heaven.” (Psalm 119:89) Jesus said “Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” (Matthew 5:18) In Galatians 3:16 Paul bases a doctrinal position on the fact that a word was singular (seed) instead of plural

(seeds). To do so, he certainly must have had complete confidence in the accuracy of the Scriptures. It is true that over the centuries some who copied the Bible occasionally made a mistake in copying, or added or left out a few words or made careless translations. But there were always enough other accurate copies of the Scriptures available, and people who knew the Scriptures well enough, to identify and point out those errors so that corrections could be made. People who believed in the inspiration of the Scriptures have always been careful to make every effort to copy and translate accurately. Through this means God has preserved His Word accurately for us to know and believe today.

Of course there have always been men who do not want to believe the Bible. These are the ones who would tell you that we do not have accurate copies of the Bible any more. Or they would say that the Bible is accurate in the doctrines it teaches, but it should not be trusted in matters of science and history. Others would tell you that the Bible is mostly figurative and symbolic so we cannot accept it literally. Some would say that the “intent” of the Bible writers is what really matters and we must overlook the words and simply try to understand what they “intended” in their writings. Of course all such suggestions are simply efforts to keep people from really believing what the Bible says. They are not willing to accept the doctrine of the inspiration of the Scriptures.

3. Illumination – The process by which the Holy Spirit of God helps us to understand the Scriptures

The Bible is a spiritual book, inspired by the Spirit of God, and can therefore only be properly understood with the help of the Spirit of God. “God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.... 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.” (I Corinthians 2:10, 14) This process, by which the Holy Spirit helps us to understand the Scriptures is called “illumination.” When we study the Bible, we should pray as David prayed, “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.” (Psalm 119:18)

Conclusion

God wants us to know about Himself and has revealed Himself to us through the world around us, through His Son Jesus Christ, and through the infallible Word of God, written by men inspired by the Holy Spirit of God. The Bible is the only accurate and clear record that we have present with us today and therefore is our sole authority for doctrine (what we believe) and practice (what we do).

IV THE NATURE OF GOD

To many people god is an idol of wood or stone. The ancient Greeks had many gods who were like people, with all of the emotions and sins of humans. To others, god is some kind of impersonal force in the universe that cannot really be known or understood. The Bible gives us an accurate description of what kind of a being God really is.

A. God Is a Spirit

In John 4:24, Jesus plainly states, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” Since God is spirit he does not have a body like we have. However, the Bible often uses human characteristics to help us understand what God is really like: Psalm 34:15 refers to the eyes of the Lord and His ears. Psalm 88:2, “incline thine ear,” Psalm 98:1, “his right hand and his holy arm.” These figures of speech are called “anthropomorphisms.”

B. God is a Person

Usually we think of a person as someone with a body. But the body is not the person. Someone who may have a disfigured body, or a body with some parts removed is still a person. People who die and leave their bodies are still persons. The characteristics that make a person are; intelligence, emotions and will. God has these qualities:

1. God has intelligence:

He can think and reason. In Isaiah 1:18 He invites us to come and “reason” with Him. In Isaiah 55:8-9 the prophet tells us that His thoughts are not the same as ours and are higher than ours.

2. God has emotions (feelings)

Psalm 21:9 refers to His wrath. Genesis 6:6 shows that He can be grieved. In Deuteronomy 28:3 He is rejoicing and in Psalm 111:4 He is full of compassion.

3. God has a will (ability to make decisions and plans)

Daniel 11:16 says that He does according to His own will, and in Ephesians 1:11 Paul says He works all things according to the counsel of His will, and Romans 12:2 refers to the good and acceptable and perfect “will of God.”

The truth is that God’s personality is reflected in man’s personality. Of course man’s intellect, emotions and will are corrupted by sin and in God those abilities are perfect. But since man was created in the image of God, he has the same type of personality that God has. This is the reason that man and God are able to communicate with one another: because we both have the same type of personality.

C. God Is a Trinity: One God, eternally existing in three persons

The three Persons of the Trinity, are yet but one God. This is indicated by the Hebrew word “Elohim”, which is a plural word translated as “God”, in the singular. I John 5:7 says, “There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.”

1. The Father is God

Many Scriptures refer to God the Father: John 6:27, Ephesians 6:23, Philippians 2:11, etc.

2. The Son is God

John 1:1 declares that the “Word” was God and that the Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us. Verse 14 is a clear reference to the deity of Christ. Thomas referred to Christ as “my Lord and my God” (John 20:28) Titus 2:13 says we are looking for the appearing of the great God and Savior Jesus Christ. There are ample evidences all through Scripture that assert the deity of Christ.

3. The Spirit is God

In Acts 5:3-4 Peter told Ananias that he had lied to the Holy Ghost and then says that he had lied unto God, plainly showing that the Holy Ghost was God. In I Corinthians 3:16, Paul tells the Corinthians that they were the

temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelt within them, showing that the Spirit was God. Since only God is perfectly holy, and He is referred to as the “Holy” Spirit it is obvious that the Spirit is God.

4. There is only one God

Even though each of the three Persons of the trinity is God, yet the Bible is plain that there are not three Gods, but only one. The great creed of Israel declares, “Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God is one LORD.” (Deuteronomy 6:4) Many times the Bible proclaims the great truth that there is but one God: I Corinthians 8:4, Galatians 3:20, I Timothy 2:5, etc.

5. Each Person of the Trinity is Distinct from the others

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not just three names for the one God. Each person of the Holy Trinity is a distinct person. This is clearly seen in the baptism of Christ, where Jesus, God the Son, was coming up from the water; God the Spirit descended on Him like a dove, and God the Father spoke from heaven. (Matthew 3:16-17) Each person of the Godhead was distinct from the others.

6. Each Person of the Trinity is Equal

Since each of the persons of the trinity is God, then it follows that each person is equal to the others in all of God’s attributes. This equality is demonstrated in the great commission (Matthews 28:19) and in the conclusion of the book of II Corinthians. (II Corinthians 13:14)

7. Each Person of the Trinity has a separate role

Though each person of the Trinity is equal, there are certain areas where each one has different responsibilities. Separate roles are indicated in II Corinthians 13:14: the grace of Christ, the Love of God and the communion of the Holy Ghost. In salvation: The Father plans salvation, the Son provides it and the Holy Spirit applies it to our hearts in the regeneration of the new birth. In the comparison to a household, there is the Father, the Son (Christ) and the servant (the Holy Spirit).

8. Conclusion

Though the word “trinity” is never used in the Bible, the truth that there is one God eternally existing in three distinct persons who are equal in all of their attributes is clearly taught. This doctrine is vitally important and deviation from the Biblical teaching in this area will

certainly lead a person into many other false doctrines. Of course man cannot understand how God can be three persons and yet be one, but we must acknowledge the fact that our understanding is limited and even though we can never fully comprehend many of the wonderful truths of God this is no reason why we should reject them.

V THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

God has certain characteristics which are perfect and unlimited. Man possesses a little bit of some of these attributes (a little love, a little knowledge, etc) but God is unlimited and perfect in all of His ways.

A God is Omniscient

God possesses all knowledge of all things, past, present and future. He knows His creation (Proverbs 3:19-20), He knows all about us (Psalms 139:1-4), He knows all of His works from the beginning (Acts 15:18), and all of His wisdom is unlimited (Psalm 147:5).

B. God is Omnipotent

God possesses all power to do anything. He asked Abraham, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Genesis 18:14. Job said, "I know that thou canst do everything" (Job 42:2) and Jesus maintained that "with God all things are possible." In Matthew 19:26, and in Revelation 19:6 the great multitude was praising "the Lord God omnipotent". The fact that God does not always use His power does not mean that His power is in any way limited.

C. God is Omnipresent

God is present in all places at all times. Jonah thought that He could run away from God, but found that God was wherever he went. David maintained that there was no place that he could go to flee from the presence of God. (Psalm 139:7-12) "Do not I fill the heaven and earth saith the Lord.?" (Jeremiah 23:24)

D. God is Eternal

Micah 5:2 declares that Messiah had been "going forth" from eternity in the past. In Luke 1:33 the angel Gabriel declared that of His kingdom there would be no end. Isaiah 9:6 calls Him the "everlasting Father" and Romans 16:26 calls Him "the everlasting God." Moses states "from everlasting (eternity past) to everlasting (eternity future) thou art God." (Psalm 90:1-2.) The eternal God has always been and always will be, stretching on forever beyond the limits of time.

E. God is Holy

Holiness is separation from sin. Some men keep themselves holy (apart from sin) to a degree, but only God is perfectly holy in every way. Deuteronomy 32:4 declares that He is “without iniquity,” and God Himself says, “I the Lord your God am holy.” (Leviticus 19:2) Hannah said “there is none holy as the Lord” (I Samuel 2:2) and the tribulation saints in Revelation 15:4 say of God, “thou only art holy”. Isaiah saw the seraphim before the throne of God calling out “holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.” (Isaiah 6:3) Peter reminds God’s people that we should be holy, for the Lord our God is holy. (I Peter 1:15-16)

F. God is Just

Justice is doing that which is right in accordance with law. When pleading to deliver Lot, Abraham asked “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Genesis 18:25) David said “Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne (Psalm 89:14) and looking forward to the millennial kingdom he says “He shall judge the world in righteousness.” (Psalm 9:8) The justice of God is particularly evident in His dealings with the believer. As a just God He must punish sin and therefore sends His Son to die for our sins, thus enabling Him to forgive us “that He might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” (Romans 3:26) He can be just in forgiving our sins because the penalty has been paid. (I John 1:9)

G. God is Love

John states very simply and plainly two times the fact that “God is love.” (I John 4:8, 4:16) Love is that quality of acting unselfishly for the benefit of the other person. Everything that God does for man, particularly in providing salvation, He does because of His love for man. “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.” (John 3:16) “God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8) “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.” (I John 3:1)

H. God is Truth

In Exodus 34:6 Moses says that God is “abundant in truth,” and Isaiah calls Him “the God of truth.” John says that Christ was “full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14) Christ said “He that sent me is true” (John 8:26) and then said “I am the truth.” (John 14:6)

It should be understood that this does not mean simply that whatever God says is true, but rather that whatever is true comes from God. All truth has its source in the God of truth. There is no truth independent of God.

I. God is Sovereign

All through the Scriptures God is presented as the supreme Ruler of all the universe. Hannah praised God who makes poor and rich, brings down to the grave and up from the grave, raises the beggar from the dunghill and sets him as a prince and does according to His sovereign will. (1 Samuel 2:4-9) David explains that the sovereignty of God is based on the fact that all belongs to Him when he said, "For all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all." (1 Chronicles 29:11) After being humbled by a time of insanity, even Nebuchadnezzar had to admit that His "dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou?" (Daniel 4:34-36) David says that "He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased," (Psalm 115:3) and Paul states that "He worketh all things according to the counsel of His will." (Ephesians 1:11) Often men see situations that appear to be very bad and perhaps wicked. We should not then conclude that God does not have control, but in His sovereignty and wisdom He allows things which may be bad and yet are part of His sovereign plan, which will ultimately work out for the glory of God. Nor should we try to reconcile the sovereignty of God with the free will of man. Both of these concepts are true, but we must admit that such matters are beyond our understanding and simply accept them as taught in the Scriptures.

J. Conclusion

Certainly we have a God more wonderful than anything that man could imagine. By man's wisdom he never could have developed the ideas of such a God. It is good for us to often meditate on the marvelous attributes of God and to praise and worship Him for the kind of God that He is. As we do so, we will find more and more that He is the God who is sufficient for our every need, the source of comfort and strength for every trial, the One

who gives purpose for life, forgiveness of sins and sure hope for eternity.

VI THE WORKS OF GOD

A. Creation

The Bible is very plain in it's statements that God, by His great wisdom and power, created the world and the universe and everything in it, recently, out of nothing, in six literal days.

1. It was created by God Genesis 1-2

2. It was created out of nothing and not made of pre-existing matter.

Hebrews 11:3 "by the word of God, not of things which do appear"

3. It was created through the agency of Jesus Christ

"His Son, by whom He also made the worlds" (Hebrews 1:2) "All things were made by Him (the Word-Christ) John 1:3)

4. It was created in six, literal, 24 hour days.

Each day had an "evening and a morning", which was the Jewish way of reckoning days. (Genesis 1-2) These six days became the basis for the six days of work and one day of rest commanded in the law, and were therefore the same kind of days. (Exodus 20:9-11)

5. Each living species reproduced "after its kind" – its own species. (Genesis 1:11,12,21,24,25)

This was specifically stated so that no one would think that one species evolved into another species as the evolutionists say.

6. Adam was the first man. (I Corinthians 15:45)

There were no people before Adam who were later destroyed as some suggest.

7. Death came into this world because of Adam's sin (Romans 5:12)

Since death entered the world through Adam, there could not have been millions of years of creatures evolving, living and dying before Adam. Neither could there have been an earlier civilization before Adam that perished (as in the Gap Theory).

8. The notion that each day of creation equaled a thousand or a million years of time (day-age theory) is impossible.

Since each of the Biblical days of creation had an evening and a morning (meaning a period of light and then darkness) there would have been many years of darkness alternating with many years of light, which would have made life impossible since no life could survive thousands or millions of years without light. Neither could some species have survived for ages of time while waiting for other species to evolve: such as the fruit trees created on the third day waiting for the insects created on the sixth day to pollinate them.

9. When the earth was created, it appeared to be older than it was.

Adam and Eve were mature adults the day they were created. The trees were full grown, already bearing fruit. Rivers were already flowing through river beds. On the seventh day of creation everything would have looked like it had been there for ages.

Therefore, geologists who point to rocks and canyons, etc., to prove the great age of the earth are basing their ideas on false assumptions.

10. The “cave men” are no proof for evolution.

It is true that paleontologists have found remains of apparently sub-human individuals who lived in caves. However, instead of assuming that these were individuals in the process of evolving into modern man, they should acknowledge the more likely possibility that these were people who were deteriorating because of malnutrition and inbreeding as described in Job 30:1-8.

11. Evolutionists refuse to acknowledge the reality of the Biblical flood.

Peter says the scoffers, who walk after their own lusts, are willingly ignorant of the fact that the old world, being overflowed with water, perished in Noah's flood. (II Peter 3:3-6) The world wide flood described in Genesis easily accounts for the great canyons, the multitudes of fossils buried in different places, including mixtures of arctic creatures with tropical creatures and sea creatures with land creatures.

12. The idea that life on earth could have evolved over millions or billions of years is impossible.

It is plainly contradicted by the Bible. It is not reasonable to imagine that the amazingly complicated and different species could have developed by themselves. People who are not willing to accept the reality of God try to explain life on earth by the theory of evolution. This is their way of trying to do away with the reality and necessity of God. The notion that evolution is a proven scientific process is completely false, since no point of evolution has ever been proven. The idea that “all scientists believe in evolution” is false, because there are many distinguished scientist who completely reject the theories of evolution. The Scriptures plainly teach that God created all that exists and those who accept the Scriptures by faith accept this fact.

B. Preservation

Everything in the natural world tends to wear out, rot away, deteriorate, die or fall apart. Yet, the world around us continues. Life is maintained, the sun continues to shine, the crops grow and the stars remain in their courses. The Bible tells us that this is because God is preserving our world from destruction and deterioration. The Levites of Nehemiah’s day said, “Thou, even thou, art LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all;” (Nehemiah 9:6) This preservation is specifically carried out by Jesus Christ. According to Paul, “He is before all things and by Him all things consist (Greek word-“are held together”) (Colossians 1:17) Hebrews 1:3 says that Christ is “upholding all things by the word of His power.” Without Christ preserving all things, the universe would fall apart and become nothing.

C. Providence

Divine providence is the hand of God at work in the affairs of men to carry out His divinely ordained program. This is seen when the brothers of Joseph sold him for a slave, but this resulted in the deliverance of the nation. Joseph told his brothers, “Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.” (Genesis 50:20) It was the providence of God that brought the needy Samaritan woman to meet Jesus at the well. It was the provi-

dence of God that brought Esther to the throne of Persia so that she could save Israel from the plans of wicked Haman. It was God's providence that had a great fish ready to swallow Jonah so that he could be sent back to preach to Nineveh. It was the providence of God, "who worketh all things according to the counsel of His will," (Ephesians 1:11) that caused Cyrus to allow the Jews to return from Babylon to rebuild the city of Jerusalem. Indeed, "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28) Too often even Christians refer to "accidents" or "good luck" in referring to events that ought to be described as the providence of God. We should also consider the marvelous way by which God moves us to pray so that He can use our prayers to bring answers in keeping with His providential program.

VI CONCLUSION

Thank God, we do not have a distant, untouchable God that we cannot know. We do not have a god of wood or stone that has no ability whatsoever. We do not have a weak God who is unconcerned about us. We have an Almighty God who loves us, who has revealed Himself to us in the Scriptures and is willing to bring us into a personal and eternal relationship with Him if we will but trust Him and believe in His Son whom He sent to be our Savior.

CHAPTER TWO

THE DOCTRINE OF ANGELS

I THE NATURE OF ANGELS

A. Angels are Spirit Creatures

Angels do not have physical bodies like we have. They are not omnipresent, like God is, but are only in one place at one time. But even though they are only located in one place at a time, they are still spirits, without a physical body. Scriptures even tell us the names of some of them: Gabriel and Michael. The psalmist said that God "maketh His angels spirits: His ministers a flaming fire." (Psalm 104:4) The writer of Hebrews asks "are they not all ministering spirits..?" (Hebrews 1:14) As spirits they have the ability to sometimes appear in a physical body,

as in the case of the three angels who visited Abraham. (Genesis 18)

B. Angels are created beings

In Psalm 148:2, 5, it says "Praise Him all ye angels....He commanded and they were created." Angels have not always existed. Paul declares that all things "visible and invisible" were created by Jesus Christ. (Colossians 1:16) No one knows exactly when God created the angels but Job 38:4-7 seems to indicate that they shouted for joy at the creation of the world, so they must have been created before the world was created.

C. Angels are great in number

No one knows how many angels were created, but surely it was a vast number. John describes his vision of the angels around the throne of God and said their number was "ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands." (Revelation 5:11) Daniel describes their numbers in the same way in Daniel 7:10, and Hebrews 12:22 declares that they are "innumerable." Certainly there are enough to watch over all of God's people at all times.

D. Angels have various ranks, or levels of authority

As Paul mentions angels in Colossians 1:16, he refers to various thrones, dominions, principalities and powers. Scriptures refer to cherubim, seraphim and archangels. When Michael disputed with the devil over the control of the body of Moses, it seems he did not have the authority to rebuke him directly, but had to appeal to God's authority. (Jude 9) All of these things suggest that angels are like an army, with different levels of authority and command.

E. Angels have great strength and wisdom

The psalmist tells us that angels "excel in strength." (Psalm 103:20) They are greater in "power and might" than false teachers. (II Peter 2:11) One angel rolled the huge stone away from the door of Jesus' tomb. (Matthew 28:2) Ezekiel 28:12 describes Satan (an angel) as being "full of wisdom." Since angels are spirit creatures, they are not limited by physical bodies as we are.

II THE FALL OF ANGELS

Some time before the creation of Adam, the highest angel, Satan, fell into sin and led a number of the other angels with him in his sinful rebellion against God. Ezeki-

el 28:15 tells us that Satan was perfect in all his ways until iniquity was found in him. This iniquity occurred when Satan, lifted up in pride, attempted to be like God and ascend to the very throne of God. (Isaiah 14:12-15) Many believe that Revelation 12:4 suggests that one third of the angels were drawn from their place in heaven by the tail of the old dragon, Satan. Jude 6 refers to the angels who “kept not their first estate,” and II Peter 2:4 reminds us that God spared not the angels that sinned. Thus, Satan, the highest angel, and a large number of other angels, rebelled against God and fell from their original position as servants of God most high. Some of these fallen angels are referred to in the Scriptures as demons or devils.

III THE OCCUPATION OF THE GOOD ANGELS

A The angels worship God

In Revelation 5:11 we are told that the multiplied thousands of angels around the throne of God continually proclaim, “worthy is the Lamb.” The “living creatures” in Revelation 4, rest not day or night, but are continually saying “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God Almighty,” (Revelation 4:8) as did the seraphim in Isaiah’s vision. (Isaiah 6:3) According to Psalm 148:2, and Hebrews 1:6, all the angels are commanded to praise and worship God. Although angels also do other things, their greatest occupation is to worship God.

B The angels serve God

The Psalmist tells us that the angels are God’s ministers to do His pleasure. (Psalm 103:21) An angel from God was sent to destroy the armies of Sennacherib. An angel was sent to shut the mouths of the lions in Daniel’s day, and to deliver important messages to Daniel. (Daniel 9:20-23) Angels brought messages from God about the birth of Christ to Zacharias, Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds. Scriptures indicate that they are continually fighting God’s battles with the forces of the devil in the unseen world. They are always ready and willing to do the bidding of their God.

C The angels minister to God’s people

Hebrews 1:14 declares that the angels are ministering spirits sent forth by God to minister to God’s people. God told David that He would “give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.” (Psalm 91:11) God sent an angel to open the prison doors so the

apostles could escape, and an angel provided breakfast for Elijah to give him strength. Angels delivered Lot from the judgment that was coming upon Sodom. An angel sent Philip to the Ethiopian and an angel came to Cornelius so that Peter could show him the way of salvation. Some believe that the reference to the angels of the "little ones" in Matthew 18:10 indicates the children, or perhaps every believer has a guardian angel assigned to watch over him.

IV THE OCCUPATION OF THE EVIL ANGELS

A The evil angels are referred to by various names

They are called demons, devils, fallen angels, spirits of devils and unclean spirits. They are all followers and servants of Satan

B They oppose the program of God

In Acts 16 the demon possessed girl followed Paul through the streets, calling after him and was a serious hindrance to his ministry until the demon was cast out. Devils are always opposing the preaching of the gospel and the progress of God's work.

C They promote lying and false doctrine

In I Kings 22 there is the account of the evil spirit who volunteered to be a lying spirit in the mouths of the false prophets to lead to the defeat and death of Ahab. Paul warns about the last days when people will depart from the faith and give heed to "seducing spirits and doctrines of devils," (I Timothy 4:1) and John warns us not to believe every spirit but to test the spirits because many false prophets have gone into the world. These spirits deny Christ and are not from God at all. (I John 4:1-3)

D Some of them desire to possess a body

There were many cases of demon possession mentioned in the Gospels. Jesus told of the unclean spirit that left a person but couldn't find a suitable place so took seven other devils and brought them back to indwell the person he had left earlier. (Matthew 12:43-45) When Jesus commanded the legion of demons that lived in the mad man of Gadara to leave him, they begged him to let them inhabit the pigs. (Mark 5:12) It is not clear why they desire to possess a body unless it is done in order to harm and destroy that body.

E They seek to harm and destroy people

One of many examples is found in Mark 9:17-27. A man brings his demon possessed son to Jesus for healing. The demon kept the boy from speaking. Often he would cause the boy to throw himself into the fire or into the water. When the boy was brought to Jesus, the demon "tore him and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming." When the demon was commanded by Jesus to leave the boy, "he cried and rent him sore" and left him as dead. Every case of demon possession resulted in some form of suffering and bodily harm. We do not believe that demons can indwell a person who has been born again and therefore has the Holy Spirit dwelling within him. We should not think of every case of illness as an example of demon activity. But we should recognize that it is possible for people to be oppressed and afflicted by demons even today.

F Conclusion

Certainly there is much that we would like to know about the angels. God only tells us enough to make us aware of His care for us through them and to make us conscious of the spiritual warfare that is continually going on in the invisible world. Certainly we should not be overly concerned about the angelic creatures. We are warned not to worship them. (Colossians 2:18, Revelation 22:8-9) Neither do we pray to angels, but will some day join with the angels in the worship of God in heaven.

CHAPTER THREE

THE DOCTRINE OF SATAN

I THE IDENTITY OF SATAN

Satan was the highest of all of God's created angels. He fell into sin and rebelled against God. His fall is described in Isaiah 14:12-14 and Ezekiel 28:2-9.

II THE PROGRAM OF SATAN

Even though Satan did not achieve his goal of overthrowing God in the beginning, he has never lost sight of that goal. He still wants to be God and have everyone worship him. In the end times he will lead two attempts to overthrow God by assembling the armies of earth to attack Christ, once at the end of the tribulation and then again at the end of the millennium. In the mean

time he gets people to worship himself by encouraging and promoting the worship of idols. Since Satan is behind all idolatry, the worship given to the idols actually goes to Satan. Scripture often refers to the worship of idols as the worship of devils. (Leviticus 17:7, Deuteronomy 32:17, Psalm 106:37) Paul says, “the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils and not to God.” (I Corinthians 10:20) When the devil tempted Christ, he offered Him all of the kingdoms of the world if Christ would just bow down and worship him. During the end times of tribulation, the devil will empower the anti-christ to make an idol and do great miracles so that people will worship the image that he makes and thus most of the world will worship the devil. Satan’s real purpose has never changed: to gain all worship for himself instead of God.

III THE NAMES OF SATAN

A. Lucifer, the Shining One

Because of his glorious beauty he was called Lucifer, the shining one. (Isaiah 14:12)

B Beelzebub, The Prince of devils

Since he led multitudes of angels to go with him in his rebellion against God, he became known as “The Prince of Devils.” Matthew 12:24

C The God of This World

Paul calls Satan “The God of this world.” (II Corinthians 4:4) Most people in this world are living under the dominion of Satan. Most of the systems and governments and organizations of this world are controlled by individuals who are under the authority of Satan. Certainly he is the god that this world follows.

D The Prince of the Power of the Air

Satan is given this title in Ephesians 2:2. In the opinion of many commentators, this refers to Satan’s rule over the hosts of fallen angels who fill the air around us as they go about their tasks of opposing God’s program and people in obedience to his orders.

E The Dragon, that Old Serpent, the Devil

Satan is referred to by this name in Revelation 12:9. This reminds us of his fierce nature and his appearance when he came to deceive Eve in the form of the serpent.

F Apollyon, the Destroyer

Satan's program from the beginning was to try to destroy all that God had done. He brought ruin to the human race and to God's creation. I Corinthians 10:10 and Revelation 9:11 refer to him as "the Destroyer." He is ever trying to drag men down to an eternal Hell. All of the wars, violence and destruction in society can be traced to him.

IV THE METHODS OF SATAN

Satan has a large supply of methods to carry out his purposes. Only a few of his primary methods described in the Bible can be listed.

A He Blinds

In II Corinthians 4:4 Paul says that Satan blinds the minds of them which believe not. That is, he makes them spiritually blind so they cannot see the light of gospel truth. This is why we cannot make the gospel simple enough for an unsaved person to understand it without the help of the Spirit of God.

B He Snatches Away the Truth

In the parable of the different soils, Christ described the seed that fell by the wayside and the birds came and ate it, just as Satan comes and snatches away the Word of God that is sown in the heart. (Matthew 13:19) Many hear the Word of God with interest, and then immediately forget all about it.

C He Beguiles and Deceives

Satan began his career by deceiving Eve. (II Corinthians 11:3, I Timothy 2:14) In the end times he will go out to "deceive the nations." (Revelation 20:8, 10) He is able to deceive people by making sin look good. He convinced Eve that it would be good to sin by taking the fruit that God had forbidden. This is still his method today, particularly with young people, making sin look exciting and enjoyable when really it leads to ruin.

D He Buffets God's people

In II Corinthians 12:7, Paul talks about his "thorn in the flesh" which was sent from Satan to "buffet" him. Satan often seeks opportunities to bring sickness or hard experiences into the lives of God's people to discourage and weaken them.

E He Tempts

Paul was concerned that the Thessalonian believers had been tempted to give up on trying to live the Christian life and would fall back into their old sinful ways. (I Thessalonians 3:5) The devil is always trying to tempt us to fall into sin. He even tried to tempt Jesus to sin. But God will always provide a way to escape from temptation if we will look for it. (I Corinthians 10:13)

F He Works Miracles to Deceive

Many people assume that all miracles must come from God. So if someone works miracles, he must be a godly person. But this is not true. The devil can work miracles also. By the power of Satan the Egyptian magicians were able to duplicate some of the same miracles that Moses worked. Jesus described people in the last day who would claim they had cast out demons and worked miracles, but Jesus had never known them. (Mathew 7:23) The antichrist of the last times will work many miracles by the power of Satan to lead people astray. (II Thessalonians 2:8-9, Revelation 13:13-14) Christians should be careful not to be led astray by miracle workers who may be empowered by the devil.

G He Hinders the efforts of God's people

On two separate occasions Paul had tried to go to visit and help the church at Thessalonica. On both attempts, Satan "hindered" him from going. (I Thessalonians 2:18) Maybe it was by bad weather, sickness, lack of finances or some other means, but it kept Paul from doing what he thought he should do. Satan will always try to hinder the work of God any way that he can.

H Conclusion

Certainly Satan is an awesome adversary. He walks about as a roaring lion seeking whom he can devour. (I Peter 5:8) We must resist him (James 4:7) and take the whole armor of God that we may stand against him. (Ephesians 6:10-18) We must not be ignorant of his many devices used to destroy us. (II Corinthians 2:11) But with Jesus Christ in our hearts, we can say with John, "Greater is He that is in us, than he that is in the world. (I John 4:4)

CHAPTER FOUR

THE DOCTRINE OF MAN

I MAN WAS CREATED BY GOD

In Genesis 1:27 it plainly states that “God created man.” The same truth is expressed in Psalm 100:3, Isaiah 45:12, and in Malachi 2:10. Jesus said of Adam and Eve, “God made them.” (Mark 10:6) Certainly man was included when Paul taught that all things were created by Jesus Christ. (Colossians 1:16) Liberals and evolutionists do not want to accept the fact that man was created by God. They teach that man evolved from lower forms of life over millions of years. They know that if man was created by God, then man is accountable to God. Those who accept their teachings believe that man simply evolved and therefore is his own God and can do as he pleases.

II MAN WAS MADE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

Four times in the early chapters of Genesis it states that God made man “in His image”. (Genesis 1:26, 1:27, 9:6) But what does this mean? Some would suggest that it indicates that man has a body that looks like God. Obviously, this cannot be true because Jesus said that “God is spirit,” and therefore does not have a physical body. (John 4:24) Others think that this means that man was given a body to look like the body that Jesus Christ would have when He would come to live on the earth. But in Philippians 2:7 Paul says that Christ “was made in the likeness of men.” So if Christ’s body was made like man’s body, then it ought to be plain that man’s body was not made like Christ’s body.

The image of God that is seen in man, is the immaterial part of God’s person; His intellect, emotions and will.

A. Intelligence

God is an intelligent being. He can think and reason. Man is also that kind of being. This is why God can invite man to “come now, and let us reason together.” (Isaiah 1:18) Of course man’s intelligence is hindered and clouded by sin, but he still has the ability to reason.

B. Emotions

Man is an emotional being. He can be happy or sad; worried or peaceful. He can feel anger or love, compassion or jealousy. God also can feel emotions. There

are many passages that state that God rejoiced or God was angry.

C. Will

God has a will and is “working all things according to the counsel of his will.” (Ephesians 1:11) Man also has a will to decide what he wants to do and to make decisions about what he will do. This is why God is able to call on man to turn from his wicked ways and to trust in Christ. He can choose to obey or disobey the Word and will of God.

It must be understood that man’s intelligence, emotions and will are all marred and hindered by sin. But these qualities are still part of the nature of man. That is why God and man can communicate: because they both have the same qualities of nature. Although God is infinitely superior to man, he has the same basic attributes of personality. In this way man is made in the image of God.

III MAN IS A THREE PART BEING

In I Thessalonians 5:23, Paul prays that their spirit, soul and body would be preserved. This suggests that man is a three part being. It must be recognized that some classify the parts of man in different ways, such as: material and non-material, etc. It must also be recognized that the words “soul” and “spirit” are not always used or translated in the same way in various parts of the Bible.

A. Body

Obviously, when man is living on earth he has a natural, physical body. Paul refers to our body as the “tent” that our soul lives in. (II Corinthians 5:1) When the person leaves the body, the body is no longer needed and it is buried.

B. Soul

In most cases in the Bible, the “soul” refers to the person himself, not to his body. In Revelation 6:9 and 20:4, John saw the souls of the martyrs in heaven, whose bodies had been killed on the earth. Mary said, “my soul doth magnify the Lord (Luke 1:46) and Jesus said in the garden “My soul is sorrowful unto death.” (Matthew 26:38) All of these cases refer to the real person, the soul, as distinguished from the body.

C. Spirit

Scriptures also refer to the “spirit”. The word means “breath” and refers to the breath of life, that is the principle of life which keeps the soul within the body. When God created man He “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.” (Genesis 2:7) Describing the death of Jesus, Matthew says that he cried with a loud voice “and yielded up the ghost (breath)”. (Matthew 27:50)

Though others may make different distinctions in the parts of man, it seems most clear to recognize that a living man is a three part being with a material body, the immaterial soul which is the real and eternal person, and the spirit, or breath of physical life, which maintains the relationship between soul and body.

IV MAN IS A SINFUL CREATURE

A. Man fell into Sin in the Garden

Genesis 3 gives the details of man’s fall into sin by disobedience. By his disobedience he brought sin into this world. (Romans 5:12)

B. His Sin Brought Death into this World

The wages of sin is death (Romans 6;23) so Adam’s sin brought death to the entire world of nature. (Romans 5:12, 15, 17, I Corinthians 15:21-22)

C. His Sinful Nature was Passed on to All Men

Because Adam sinned, his nature became sinful and was therefore passed on to all of his descendants. “By one man’s disobedience, many were made sinners”. (Romans 5:19) David understood this fact when he said, “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” (Psalm 51:5) Because all men inherit Adam’s sinful nature, all men also commit sin, so that Paul says, “All have sinned.” (Romans 3:23) Three times the Old Testament emphasizes the fact that there is no man that sinneth not. (I Kings 8:46, II Chronicles 6:36, Ecclesiastes 7:20)

D. Sin Affects Every Part of Man’s Being

In Romans 3:10-18 Paul describes the sinfulness of the different parts of the person: Mind, desires, throat, tongue, lips mouth, feet, eyes are all sinful. In Titus 1:15 he says even the mind and conscience are defiled. This is what is referred to as the doctrine of total depravity. Total depravity does not mean that people are as bad as it is

possible to be, but rather means that every part of a person is sinful and there is no part of a person that is not defiled and affected by sin.

V MAN IS ACCOUNTABLE TO GOD FOR HIS SIN

Since all sins are against God, it is reasonable that the sinner must be accountable to God for the sins which he has committed. Hebrews 9:27 states that “it is appointed unto man once to die, and after this the judgment.” Paul refers to the day when God will judge the secrets of men’s hearts. (Romans 2:16) Revelation 20:13 refers to the day when death and hell will deliver up the unsaved dead and they will be judged every man according to his works. Of course the sins of the believer have been paid for by Christ’s death on the cross, but the unbeliever must be judged for his sins.

Most people want to reject the idea of being held accountable to God for their sins. Some achieve this by believing the evolutionary ideas that man is just a highly developed animal who has no God to deal with. Others believe in reincarnation, where they suffer in the next life for the sins committed in this life. Others teach that death ends it all and there is nothing more. But none of these ideas can get rid of the fact that sinful man is accountable to God for his sins.

VI MAN CAN HAVE A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Because man was created in the image of God, he is able to communicate with God. Though man’s sin has separated him from God, he can enter into a relationship with God and have fellowship with God by putting his faith in the provision that God has made to deal with his sin. (I John 1:3) Then the barrier of sin is removed and his separation from God is ended.

CONCLUSION

The Bible plainly teaches that man has been wonderfully created by God in His own image. Through disobedience Adam became a sinner and passed his sinful nature on to all of his descendants. As God’s creature, man is accountable to God for his sins. They must be dealt with either by faith in the substitutionary death of Christ or by the eternal suffering of the sinner.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE DOCTRINE OF SIN

I THE DEFINITION OF SIN

Sin is mostly ignored by people today. They have no clear idea of what sin is and may not even be sure if there is any such thing. Most people would define sin as something we might do that would hurt other people. Some think that a person is being judgmental if he calls anything someone else is doing, "sin". Others think of anything that would harm the environment as sin. However, God gives us a clear understanding of what sin really is.

A. Sin is breaking God's Law

In I John 3:4 we are told that "sin is the transgression of the law." The word "sin" comes from a Greek word that means "missing the mark," as if someone were shooting at a target and missed the target. Man "misses the mark" when he disobeys the law of God.

God clearly tells man the things that he should do and should not do in His Law. When man disobeys, he is missing the target that God has set before him.

B. Sin is all that is Contrary to God's Nature

I John 5:17 says that "All unrighteousness is sin". God is righteous. Everything that He does is right, because that is His nature. So when man acts contrary to God's nature his action is "unrighteous", which God labels as sin. When man acts in a way that is displeasing to God, he is acting unrighteously, which is sin. Sometimes a person says, "You can't show me a verse in the Bible that says I can't do this particular thing." This may be true, but if it is something that God does not like, it is sin even though a person does not know a verse that says so.

C. Sin is Failing to do What We Should Do

In James 4:17, God states, "to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." It is just as wrong to fail to do something that God tells us we should do, as it is to do something that God tells us we should not do. For example, the person who will not witness, or give to God is committing sin.

D. Sin is Failing to Believe God

Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would convict men of sin because they did not believe in Jesus Christ. (John 16:8-9) If a person does not believe what God says, he is

really saying that he thinks God is a liar. This could be called the greatest sin. Really, all sins are related to unbelief. Because a person does not really believe God, he doesn't think it is necessary to obey God.

E. The Unpardonable Sin

Many questions are often raised about the "unpardonable sin." People spend much time trying to understand what that sin is, and often wonder if they can be saved because they may have committed the "unpardonable sin." In Matthew 12:31 Jesus said, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men." The word "blasphemy" means, "to speak against." This is clarified by verse 32, when Jesus went on to explain. "Whosoever speaketh against the Son of Man, (Jesus Christ) it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him." What the people had been doing was accusing Jesus of doing His miracles by the power of the devil. This demonstrated that they had hardened their heart to the Holy Spirit and were determined not to accept the truth about Christ. Therefore they would never be forgiven: not because God was not willing to forgive them, but because they would never be willing to trust Him. The only person who could commit this unpardonable sin today, would be the person who had resisted the convicting work of the Holy Spirit so long that he would never turn to accept God's forgiveness. One could only be sure that a person had so blasphemed (spoken against) the Holy Ghost when that person had died, still resisting God.

II The Universality of Sin

Sin is in this world affecting every one and every thing.

A. All Men are Sinners

Solomon said, "There is no man that sinneth not." (I Kings 8:46) This truth is repeated in Romans 3:23 and Romans 5:12. Except for the God-Man, Jesus Christ, every man, woman and child that has ever lived, has been a sinner. Men are sinners because they are descendants of Adam and are therefore born sinners, with a sinful nature. (Ephesians 2:3) Men are also sinners because they sin. (Romans 3:23)

B. All Parts of Man are Sinful

Sin has affected every part of every person. Man's thoughts, emotions, decisions, intelligence, actions and every part of his being are defiled and affected by sin. (Romans 3:10-19)

C. All Nature is Affected by Sin

When Adam sinned, it brought a curse upon nature. Paul says that the whole creation groans and travails in pain, under the bondage of corruption, waiting for the coming redemption through Christ. (Romans 8:20-23) Eliphaz stated that even the heavens are not clean in God's sight. (Job 15:15)

Since man was the highest creation of God, all of the lesser creation was affected by sin as well. Since man is defiled by sin, he is incapable of producing from himself, anything that could be pleasing to God.

III THE RESULTS OF SIN

There are always consequences for sin. No sin escapes the punishment of God. Though man usually minimizes sin, a holy God never does so. There are a number of results from sin.

A. Results of sin for the unsaved

1. Sin makes people slaves

Sins that are repeated soon become habits. Once sinful habits are established, they control a person so it is difficult for that person to escape from that sin. He has become a slave to sin. (John 8:34, Romans 6:16)

2. The presence of sin makes it impossible to please God

God sees all of the deeds and efforts of the unsaved person as defiled by sin. All of his good works are no better than filthy rags. (Isaiah 64:6) The old sinful nature of the flesh can never produce anything pleasing to God. (Romans 8:8) This is one reason why it is impossible for an unsaved person to gain credit with God by his own deeds.

3. Sin brings condemnation

Some think that they may be condemned some day when they stand in judgment before God. But God says that they are already condemned. (John 3:18) Christ has condemned sin in the flesh. (Romans 8:3) Paul says that judgment has come upon all men to condemna-

tion. (Romans 5:18) It is an awful thing for the sinner to be condemned by a holy God

4. Sin results in death

God had warned Adam that if he sinned, he would die. Paul says that “The wages of sin is death.” (Romans 6:23) The prophet repeated, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” (Ezekiel 18:4) Death comes in three forms. Most noticeable is physical death. The body dies and the soul goes on into eternity. But there is also “spiritual death”. This is the condition of the unsaved person who is physically alive, but spiritually dead. (Ephesians 2:1) In Ephesians 2:5 Paul says “we were dead in sins.” The third kind of death resulting from sin is” eternal death’, or the ‘second death” described in Revelation 21:8. The real meaning of death is “separation.” Physical death separates the soul from the body. Spiritual death separates the soul from God. Eternal death is the separation of the soul from God for all of eternity.

B. The Results of Sin for Those Who Have Been Saved

The sins of the believer have been paid for by the death of Christ on the cross. Through faith he is forgiven of all his sins. He will never be condemned for his sins. However, this does not mean that after he has been saved it doesn't matter if he sins. Even for the believer, there are consequences for sin. They are not the same consequences that are faced by the unsaved, but there are consequences just the same.

1. Sin grieves the Holy Spirit of God

The Holy Spirit who dwells within the believer is naturally grieved by the sins of the believer. Paul warns us to “grieve not the Spirit.” (Ephesians 4:30) It is very difficult for the Spirit to bless us when He is offended by our sins.

2. Sin hinders our fellowship with God

1 John 1:6-7 tell us that if we walk in the light, we have fellowship with God. But if we walk in the darkness of sin and say we have fellowship with God, we are liars. A person can't have fellowship with God if he is living in sin. The more sin is committed, the less fellowship is enjoyed.

3. Sin hinders our prayers

The Psalmist said, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. (Psalm 66:18) No believer is

completely free from sin, but if a person knows that there is a particular sin that he is hiding in his heart, and will not forsake that sin, the Lord will not be listening to his prayers.

4. Sin brings misery of heart

In Psalm 38 David describes the misery, weakness and suffering that were the results of his unconfessed sin. The convicting work of the Holy Spirit often will not allow a person any peace until the sin is confessed and forsaken.

5. Sin may bring chastisement

Certainly all problems that a Christian may have are not because of chastisement for sin. But sometimes the Lord does send chastisement on his children, just like an earthly father chastises his son to correct him. (Hebrews 12:9-11) Ananias and Saphira died because of their sin. Some of the Corinthian believers were sick and some had died as chastisement for dishonoring the Lord's Supper. (I Corinthians 11:30-31) Any Christian who persists in sin may well experience the chastening of the Lord.

6. Sin hinders our service to God

In II Timothy 2:21, Paul suggests that the believer should cleanse himself from sins so that he could be a vessel suitable for God to use. Surely a holy God does not like to use a sinful vessel.

7. Sin may cause others to stumble

If a Christian engages in sinful activities, some weaker Christian may see it and decide to do the same sinful things. He will stumble and fall into sin because the other Christian was a stumbling block to him. (Romans 14:13,21)

8. Sin may cause a loss of eternal rewards

There will be wonderful rewards that we cannot describe, waiting for God's people in heaven. These rewards will be for faithful service to God. In II John 8 the apostle warns believers to guard themselves so that they don't lose some of the rewards that could be theirs.

Every Christian should see sin as his constant enemy. He should hate sin. (Psalm 119:128) He should keep studying the Word of God. (Psalm 119:9,11) He should speak against sin (Ephesians 5:11) and run away from it (I Timothy 6:11, I Corinthians 10:13) A holy God expects a holy people.

CHAPTER SIX

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

I THE NAMES OF CHRIST

There are many names and descriptions of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures. His names are more than just names. His names show who He was and the nature or His ministry.

A. Jesus

When the angel appeared to announce the birth of Christ to Joseph, he said, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21) The New Testament name "Jesus" is the same as the Old Testament name "Joshua". It means, "Jehovah Saves." Jesus is the One who saves; He is the Savior.

B. Christ

The New Testament word "Christ" is the same as the Old Testament word, "Messiah." Both of these words mean, "The Anointed One". In Old Testament times a prophet or king was "anointed" to serve in that position by having oil poured on his head. Christ was the Messiah that the Old Testament prophets promised. He was anointed by the Holy Spirit as the One sent by God to do the Father's will on earth. Notice Luke 4:16-18.

C. Lord

"Lord" was a word commonly used for anyone who was in a place of authority. It simply means "master" and suggests that the person is someone who should be obeyed. The followers of Jesus often referred to Him as "Lord." Therefore He asked them, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46)

D. The Word

In John 1:1 it says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." In the fourteenth verse it makes it very plain that the Word was Jesus Christ, when it says, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory." Christ is also referred to as "The Word" in I John 5:7, as John lists the three persons of the Trinity. This title is used to show that Christ is the revelation, the expression of God. Much can be learned about God because He was revealed in the person and ministry of Jesus Christ.

E. The Only Begotten Son

John 3:16 tells us that God “gave His only begotten Son”. Five times the Apostle John calls Him the “Only begotten Son.” This phrase sometimes confuses people and gives them the idea that Christ had a beginning; a time when He was begotten. But many Scriptures teach us that Christ existed as God’s Son eternally. In the beginning, the “Word” (Jesus Christ) was already there, as He had been from eternity. (John 1:1) The phrase “only begotten” does not refer to a time when He was begotten, but instead it refers to the special relationship between a father and his only son. Christ had that special relationship with His Father like the special relationship between an earthly father and his only son.

II ESSENTIAL FACTS ABOUT CHRIST

A. He is God, The Second Person Of The Trinity

Often the liberals, who deny the deity of Christ, will say that Jesus never claimed to be God. Of course this is not so. In many ways He asserted that He was God. His enemies threatened to stone Him because they knew that He was claiming to be God. (John 10:33) John said of Jesus Christ, “this is the true God, and eternal life.” (I John 5:20) No one who honestly studies the Scriptures can doubt that Christ is God.

B. He Is Man

Not only is Christ the eternal Son of God, but in Bethlehem, he became a man and was born into the human race. John 1:14 says that “the Word became flesh.” Galatians 4:4 says He was, “made of a woman,” and Philippians 2:6-8 make it plain that He was “made in the likeness of men” and was “found in fashion as a man.” Jesus often referred to Himself as “the Son of Man.” All through His life He exhibited all the traits of a human. He grew. He was sometimes hungry and thirsty and tired. He was tempted. He wept, and suffered and bled. While maintaining His deity, He was still a very real member of the human race.

C. He Was Born of a Virgin

The prophet said that Christ would be born of a virgin. (Isaiah 7:14) The New Testament accounts of the birth of Christ make it plain that Mary was a virgin when she conceived Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. Belief in the virgin birth of Christ is absolutely essential, for this meant that God and Mary were both His parents and

thus He could have a divine nature and also a human nature at the same time. This is what made His sacrifice sufficient for our salvation. Because He is a man, He could die for man. Because He is God, His death is sufficient to pay for the sins of all men. Because He was a man, He could die, and because He was God, He could rise from the dead.

D. He Lived a Sinless Life

Only Jesus could ask, “Which of you convinceth me of sin?” (John 8:46) In Hebrews 4:15 it states the He “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” Peter says He was the sacrificial Lamb, “without spot or blemish.” (I Peter 1:19) Because He had no sins of His own, He could offer Himself as a sacrifice for ours.

E. He Died on the Cross

It was always God’s plan that Christ should die for man’s sin. He was a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” (Revelation 13:8) “The prophets and Moses did say...that Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead.” (Acts 26:22-23) Paul says that this is the gospel, that “Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures. (I Corinthians 15:3) Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 give lengthy Old Testament descriptions of His death.

F. He Rose From the Dead

Each of the gospels give a detailed account of the resurrection of Christ. The fact of the resurrection was the main theme of the preaching of the apostles. “With great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.” (Acts 4:33) The resurrection gives testimony to the deity of Christ, as Paul said, “He was declared to be the Son of God with power...by the resurrection from the dead.” (Romans 1:4) He also said that “if Christ be not risen from the dead, then is our preaching vain.” (I Corinthians 15:14)

G. He Ascended to Heaven

The apostles watched as Jesus physically ascended into the clouds from the Mount of Olives. (Acts 1:9) Scriptures give abundant testimony to the fact that He ascended into heaven and “sat down” on the right hand of God. (Mark 16:19) Two times in the book of Hebrews it states that Christ “sat down on the right hand of God.” (Hebrews 1:3, 10:12) The Old Testament priests never sat down in the temple because their work was

never done. Christ finished the work of redemption and then sat down because the work was done.

H. He Is Coming Again

Christ has not returned to heaven and abandoned us. He has made it plain that He will return some day. Jesus said to His disciples, "I will come again." (John 14:8) Paul says that we are looking forward to the glorious appearing of Jesus Christ. (Titus 2:13) In I Thessalonians 4:16-17 there are specific details of His coming. Believers who are troubled are to be encouraged by the promise of the Lord's coming. (II Thessalonians 1:7)

III ESSENTIAL AREAS OF THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST

A. He Was the Creator of All Things

The apostle John declares that "all things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made." (John 1:3) Paul repeats that all things in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, were made by Him. (Colossians 1:16) God the Father and God the Holy Spirit were all involved in creation, but the actual act of creation was accomplished through the ministry of God the Son.

B. He Revealed the Father

Jesus came into this world to show man, in a very clear way, what God was really like. Jesus said that if they had seen Him, they had seen the Father. (John 14:8-9) Even though no one has fully seen God the Father, Jesus "declared" Him to us. (John 1:18) In Christ can be seen all of the glory of God: His love, truth, power, wisdom, mercy and God's other qualities.

C. He Made Propitiation for Our Sins

Three times the Scriptures plainly say that Christ came to be the "propitiation" for our sins. (Romans 3:25, I John 2:2, 4:10) Propitiation means "satisfaction". The justice and holiness of God were satisfied because Christ died to pay the penalty for our sins. Because the justice of God was satisfied, man could now receive forgiveness, redemption, salvation, and be reconciled to God. (Romans 5:10-11)

D. He Is Our Mediator

In I Timothy 2:5, the Scripture says that "There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Job longed for a "daysman" who could bring God and man together. (Job 9:33) Because Christ was both

God and man, he could be the “go between” and bring man and his prayers into the presence of God in heaven. The Bible knows nothing about the Roman ideas of having Mother Mary, or one of the saints being our mediator to bring our requests to God.

E. He Is Our Intercessor

Not only does Christ bring our prayers to God as our mediator, He also prays for us and comes to the Father as our intercessor. Romans 8:34 says that Christ is at the seat of honor at the right hand of the Father to pray for us, and Hebrews 7:25 says that He is always living to intercede for us. It is good to have Christian friends pray for us, but how much better to know that Christ Himself is praying for us.

F. He Defeated Death

Death is the enemy of men. People do many things to try to stay alive. But eventually death comes anyway. Many people are afraid of death. They do not know what will happen to them after they die. But the believer does not need to fear death. Christ came to deliver people from the bondage of the fear of death. (Hebrews 2:14-15) By rising from the dead, Christ proved that He had defeated death. “Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.” (I Corinthians 15:21) Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.” (John 11:25-26) The believer leaves the body that has died, but he goes on living with God eternally.

G. He Guarantees Our Resurrection

In Romans 8:11 God says, “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 make alive your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.” Our future resurrection is just as certain as the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

H. He Will Judge the World

The day will come when Christ will return in power and great glory to reign over the world and to judge the world in righteousness. (Psalm 9:8, Luke 21:27, Acts 17:31) He will “judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom.” (II Timothy 4:1)

IV THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

It is extremely important for every believer to be correct and accurate in his understanding of the doctrine of Jesus Christ. If a person is wrong on one of the doctrines of Christ because of ignorance, he should be instructed and corrected. If a person holds, promotes and teaches error concerning some doctrine of Christ, he should be rejected and avoided as a false teacher. In I John 4:1-4, the apostles warns us to test the spirits because there are many false spirits in the world. He calls the spirits prophets also (vs. 1) to show that he is referring to teachers or preachers. He says that they are not of God, if they do not confess "that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh". This phrase would refer to all the truths of the incarnation, the virgin birth, His deity, and His salvation. Confessing these truths is more than just a statement that "I believe." It involves a willingness to proclaim these truths about Jesus Christ. The person who does not hold this position is a false teacher with the spirit of Antichrist. According to II John 7-10, these teachers do not have God with them, they are not saved and should not be welcomed into the assemblies of God's people.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

I THE MEANING OF SALVATION

Salvation is that work of God in a person's heart which brings forgiveness of sins, delivers him from condemnation, makes him a child of God and gives him the gift of eternal life.

II THE NEED FOR SALVATION

The spiritual condition of every person demands that he must experience God's salvation or he will be eternally lost. The Bible describes this condition in a number of ways.

A. He Is Spiritually Dead

The Bible says that naturally man is "dead in sins". (Ephesians 2:1,5) His body is physically alive, but his soul is spiritually dead. That means he cannot have any real relationship or fellowship with God, just as a person who is physically dead cannot have any relationship or fellowship with his earthly family. Since the unsaved man is

spiritually dead, he cannot do anything of a spiritual nature.

B. He Is Lost

When a person is lost in the wilderness, he does not know where he is or which way to go. If someone doesn't find him he is doomed to die. The spiritual condition of the unsaved person is similar. We are all like lost sheep. Jesus said that He came to seek and to save those who were lost. (Luke 19:10) Paul said that if our gospel was hid, it was hid to the lost. (II Corinthians 4:3)

C. He Is An Enemy of God

Paul says that we were "enemies of God" and at "enmity with God. (Romans 5:10, Romans 8:7) Of course most people do not think of themselves as enemies of God. They hope that they are on God's side, but if they have not put their faith in Christ and become His, they are really resisting Him and living as God's enemy.

D. He Is Guilty of the Sin of Unbelief

Because God is a God of truth, the worst thing that man can do against God is to fail to believe Him. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would convict men of sin because they have not believed. (John 16:8-9) When talking to Nicodemus Jesus said that "he that believeth not is condemned already. (John 3:18)

E. He Is Condemned

God says that judgment has come upon all men to condemnation. (Romans 5:18)

Because man has broken God's laws he stands before God a condemned sinner.

F. He is Incapable of Doing Anything Good Enough for God

Isaiah 64:6 says that all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags in God's sight. Man may do things that look good to other people, but since he is condemned and defiled by sin, anything that he may do is unacceptable to a holy and righteous God. This is one reason why man's good works can never gain him salvation. Therefore the unsaved man is in a hopeless situation where only the grace of God can save him.

III THE MEANS OF SALVATION

How can a lost sinner ever be saved? Several facts must be understood.

A. There Is Only One Way of Salvation

Many people think that since there are many religions, there are many ways to get to heaven: the Buddhist way, the Hindu way, the Muslim way or the Christian way. But this is not true. Since there is only one God who provides salvation, we must gain salvation His way. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6) Peter upheld the same truth: "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) Man would like to invent his own way of salvation, but his ways are not acceptable to God. (Proverbs 4:12)

B. A Person Cannot be saved by Good or Religious Works

Most people think that if they do enough good deeds or religious deeds, God will let them into heaven some day. But according to Ephesians 2:8-9, we are saved by God's grace and not by our works. Paul tells us that we are not saved by "works of righteousness which we have done". (Titus 3:5) Some people think they will be saved by keeping the ten commandments, but God says "by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified," that is, be made right before God. (Galatians 2:16) There are two reasons why good deeds will not give a person salvation. First, good deeds do not pay for sin. The only thing that can pay for sins is death. "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission." (Hebrews 9:22) Secondly, all of the deeds which the unsaved person does are defiled by his sin, and so are unacceptable to a holy God. Good works cannot save anyone.

C. Salvation Demands Repentance

Jesus said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (Luke 13:3,5) Peter said to the crowd, "repent ye therefore, and be converted". (Acts 3:19) Most people think that repentance means feeling bad and shedding tears. This is not right. Repentance means "to change your mind". For an unsaved person to be saved, he has to change his mind (repent). Before, he probably thought that he was a good person. He must change his mind and realize that he is a lost sinner. Before he thought he could get to heaven by doing good or religious deeds. He must change his mind and understand that only Christ can save him. This new way of thinking may produce sorrow and tears as he realizes how wrong he has been, but it is the

change of mind that is necessary for salvation, not the sorrow or tears.

D. Salvation is the Result of Faith

Faith is believing or depending on something. The Bible is clear that a person can only be saved and be right with God by faith. He is believing that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died on the cross to pay for his sins and rose from the dead to guarantee him eternal life. Consider the emphasis on “faith” in the book of Romans. “The just shall live by faith.” (Romans 1:17) “The righteousness of God which is by faith.” (3:22) “We conclude that a man is justified by faith.” (3:28) “His faith is counted for righteousness.” (4:5) “Therefore being justified by faith.” (5:1) Other Scriptures say the same thing. “Whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16) “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.” (John 3:36) “He that heareth my Word and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life.” (John 5:24) “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” (Acts 16:31) “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God” (I John 5:1)

It must be understood that “faith”, or “believing” is more than just knowing in the mind that Christ is the Son of God. Even the devils believe in God with their mind. (James 2:19). Real faith is depending on Christ as the One who brings salvation by His death and resurrection. The issue is, “What are you depending on to get you into heaven?” The person who thinks that his good works, his baptism, his church, or something else is necessary to get into heaven, is not depending on Jesus Christ. The person who knows that he will get to heaven because Christ has died for his sins and that is enough to get him into heaven, is really exercising genuine faith.”

IV THE PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF SALVATION

All teaching on the subject of salvation must make it plain that a person does not become a Christian simply by being born into a “Christian” family, or by attending a Christian church. Salvation is a personal and individual experience. To become a Christian a person must personally repent of his sins and place his faith in Jesus Christ as his Savior, resulting in the new birth. Just as in the physical birth, it happens at a point in time. The moment a person truly places his faith in Christ for salvation,

he is born again and becomes a genuine Christian and child of God. There are three factors involved in this salvation experience.

A. The Word of God

The Word of God is the “seed” that can take root in a person’s heart and produce salvation. (Luke 8:11) “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing of the Word of God.” (Romans 10:17) It is the Word of God that pierces the heart to bring understanding of God’s truth. (Hebrews 4:12) It is important that when a person tries to show another the way of salvation, that he shows him in the Bible, what God says about his sin and the salvation that God offers.

B. The Work of the Spirit of God

The Holy Spirit must do a work in a person’s heart to produce salvation. (John 3:5-8, Titus 3:5) He is the One who convinces a person that he is a sinner and that God will save him. (John 16:8-9) As we seek to lead people to the Lord, we must pray for, and depend on, the work of the Spirit in the heart of the sinner.

C. A Personal Act of Faith

In order for a person to be genuinely saved, he must personally respond to God’s offer of salvation. He must repent of his sin and place his faith entirely in God’s salvation. In faith he must reach out and accept the salvation that God offers. He must believe the promise that God will save him. This cannot be simply an outward act of saying some words, but must be an expression of the heart, trusting in Christ for salvation.

V THE RESULTS OF SALVATION

When a person is saved many things happen to his spiritual condition.

A. He Is Redeemed

Before salvation he was a slave to sin. Now he has been redeemed by the blood of Christ. (1 Peter 1:18-19) The price has been paid to purchase him out of the slave market of sin and bring him into the household of God.

B. He Is Forgiven

It is a wonderful thing to be forgiven. When God saves a person, his sins are forgiven. We have “redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.” (Ephesians 1:7) This means

God has “forgiven you all trespasses.” Col. 2:13) Our sins are taken away as far as the East is from the West (Psalm 103:12) and buried in the depths of the sea. (Micah 7:19)

C. He Is Justified

Romans 5:1 declares that we are “justified by faith” and in verse 9, justified by His blood.” To be “justified” means “to be declared righteous” (right with God). A person who has been saved still has a sinful nature, and is still a sinner. But God declares him righteous, not because he is sinless, but because the righteousness of Jesus Christ has been applied to his account. When God looks at his standing before God, He sees the righteousness of Jesus Christ upon him, because the blood of Christ has paid for his sins. Therefore God can be “just and the justifier of him which believes in Jesus.” (Romans 3:26)

D. He Is Born Again

Jesus told Nicodemus that unless a person is “born again” he would not see the kingdom of heaven. (John 3:3) Peter tells us that we are “born again” by the Word of God. (I Peter 1:23) When a person is saved, he is “born of the Spirit”. He begins to live spiritually and has begun a new life. This is also called “regeneration.” The person who has trusted Christ has had a work of God in his heart so that “he is a new creature” in Christ Jesus. (II Corinthians 5:17)

E. He Has the Holy Spirit Dwelling in Him

As soon as a person puts his faith in Christ, the Holy Spirit comes in to permanently dwell in him. Paul says if anyone does not have the Holy Spirit dwelling in him, he does not belong to God. (Romans 8:9) His body now becomes the temple of the Holy Spirit. (I Corinthians 6:19) Pentecostal people are often “seeking to get” the Holy Spirit. If they are truly saved, they do not need to seek the Holy Spirit, because they already have Him.

F. He Has Been Delivered From condemnation

Jesus made the statement that the person who believes in Him, “shall not come into condemnation.” (John 5:24) In Romans 8:1, Paul says “There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” The saved person will still sometimes sin, but since Christ has taken the punishment for his sins, he cannot be con-

demned for them. God may chasten him for his sins, but he will not condemn him to a lost eternity.

G. He Now Has Eternal Life

Jesus said that “whosoever believeth in Him, shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life.” (John 3:16) John explains that God has now given us eternal life and this life is in His Son. Jesus Christ is eternal. He has always lived and always will live. He has eternal life. When a person trusts Christ, he becomes a possessor of the eternal life which Christ has. (1 John 5:11-12) Our bodies may die, but as believers, we will live forever because we have Christ’s life in us.

VI THE CERTAINTY OF SALVATION

There are some people who suggest that if a person who has been saved should fall into sin, that person would no longer be saved, but would have lost his salvation. This idea does not come from Scripture, but instead comes from a person’s own reason and from an improper understanding of the doctrine of salvation. Below are some of the Scriptural reasons which show that a person cannot lose his salvation.

A. The Believer Has Been Born Into God’s Family

When a person is saved, he is born again into the family of God. Once a person has been born into a family, that fact cannot be changed. The prodigal son wandered far away from his father, grieved his father and sinned against him. But he was still the son of his father and nothing could change that fact. How could anyone be “unborn” from the family of God?

B. THE Believer Has Eternal Life

God says that the person who believes has everlasting life. (John 3:16) Jesus said, “I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish.” (John 10:28) Eternal life must go on forever. How could a person have eternal life that only lasted for five years or forty years, when he fell into sin? How could Jesus say that we will never perish, if we could lose our **salvation and perish?**

C. The Believer Has God’s Promises to Depend On

In many ways in many places God gives promises that the child of God is eternally secure in his salvation. In John 6:37 Jesus says “I will in no wise cast him out.” In John 10:29 He says, “No one is able to pluck them out of

my Father's hand." In Hebrews 13: 5 Christ says, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." In the Great Commission Jesus promised to be with us always until the end of the world. (Matthew 28:20) How could any of God's promises to us be true if we could somehow lose our salvation?

D. The Believer Has a Salvation That is Based on God's Grace, Not On Our Good Works

Someone may say, "If a person commits those sins, he doesn't deserve to be saved." This is true. And the believer who lives a good life does not deserve to be saved either. We are saved by God's grace, not by our goodness. If a person can not get saved by good works, how could he stay saved by good works? Salvation is entirely dependent on God's grace, not on our goodness. Certainly, we are "ordained to good works." (Ephesians 2:10) Every Christian should live a good life. But no Christian lives a perfect life. And the person who thinks that we can lose our salvation by sinning can never say how many sins we need to commit before our salvation is taken away from us. At our best, no one deserves to be saved.

E. The Believer Has God's Guarantee That He Will Not Be Condemned

If a person could lose his salvation by sinning, then he would have to be condemned and sent to an eternal Hell. But God says that for the believer, "there is therefore now no condemnation," (Romans 8:1) and "shall not come into condemnation." (John 5:24) How could God condemn a person who stands in the righteousness of Jesus Christ? How could God condemn one of His own children for whom Christ had died?

F. The Believer is Told That He Cannot be Saved Twice

Hebrews 6:4-9, is a very difficult and complicated passage. Many Bible scholars have explained these verses in many different ways. Some claim that these verses show that a person could lose his salvation. He could be enlightened, and then "fall away." If that is what these verses mean, then they would also mean that a person could not later repent and get salvation back. It would be "impossible... to renew them again unto repentance." (vs. 4,6) Then those who backslide and lose their salvation could not be saved again but would be lost forever. This writer believes that the reason they could

not be saved again is because they had not lost their salvation. If a believer falls into sin, he needs to repent and be restored to fellowship, but does not need to be saved a second time.

G. Conclusion

Of course it is plain that many people who claim to be saved were never saved at all. But all who genuinely trust in Christ are eternally saved by God's grace, and not because they deserve it. The true believer may fall into sin, break his fellowship with God, lose God's blessings and experience God's chastening, but he does not lose his sonship and his eternal salvation.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

I THE IDENTIFY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

A. The Holy Spirit is Not Just a Force or Influence

Some think that the Holy Spirit is just a name for whatever is good in the world. Anything that influences people for good is the Holy Spirit. Obviously, this is not true.

B. The Holy Spirit is Not a Feeling

Many people, especially the Pentecostals and charismatics, confuse the Holy Spirit with emotions. When their emotions are stirred, they claim that they "feel the Spirit." If everyone is very emotional, then "the Spirit is really with us tonight." It is true that the ministry of the Spirit can produce emotional reactions, such as joy or peace. But that does not mean that the emotions are the Holy Spirit. Emotions can come from many sources. A crowd at a championship football game is very emotional, but none of that comes from the Holy Spirit. Emotions in a crowd can be produced by psychological methods. Often the beat of the music, changing the pitch of the music, increasing the volume as the service progresses and having the people on the platform stir up people by their speech and mannerisms are all commonly used to promote emotional enthusiasm. This should not be confused with a genuine work of God. The work of the Holy Spirit is encouraged by prayer. Emotions that are generated by psychological methods are the result of carnality, not of the Spirit of God.

C. The Holy Spirit is God, one of the Persons of the Holy Trinity

Even though He is present everywhere, the Holy Spirit is still a definite person. He has intelligence, emotions and a will. He can be grieved. He can act and do the other things that a person can do.

II THE WORKS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

A. He Convicts of Sin

Jesus told His disciples that when the Holy Spirit would come He would convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. (John 16:8) It is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to convince people that they are sinners that need to trust in Christ. The preacher must preach the Word, but conviction must come from the Holy Spirit.

B. He Regenerates the Believer into a New Person

When a person is saved, the Holy Spirit regenerates that person. (Titus 3:5) That is, He makes him into a new kind of person. (II Corinthians 5:17) This does not mean that everything in his life will be automatically changed, but he will have the presence of the Holy Spirit to work at changing his life into what it ought to be.

C. He Baptizes the Believer into the Body of Christ

I Corinthians 12:13 says, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." The context makes it plain that the "body" is the body of Christ. Paul is speaking to Christians here, and says that we are "all" baptized into the body of Christ. The verse also tells us that it is the Holy Spirit who baptizes every believer into the body of Christ. Since "all" believers have been baptized into the body of Christ, then this baptism must take place at the same time that a person is saved. In other words, when a person trusts in Christ as his Savior, the Holy Spirit "baptizes him" (places him into) the body of Christ, in union with all other true believers.

Most Pentecostals and charismatics seriously distort this verse and claim that it teaches that we must be "baptized into the Spirit". But the verse says that the Spirit baptizes us into the body. There is no basis in this verse, or elsewhere in the Scriptures, to teach that a believer must be baptized into the Spirit, or that the baptism by the Spirit has anything to do with receiving the Spirit.

D. He Dwells Within All Those Who Are Saved

The moment a person is born again, the Holy Spirit comes into him to permanently dwell in his body. His body becomes the “temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you.” (I Corinthians 6:19) Even though the church at Corinth had some worldly and carnal members, all of them had the Holy Spirit dwelling within them and their body was His temple. In Romans 8:9 Paul plainly states that “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.” Every true believer has the Holy Spirit dwelling within. There is no need for any saved person to seek and pray for the Holy Spirit, because he already has Him.

E. He Seals All Those Who Are Saved

A person who had written a letter in Bible days, would roll it up and place a “seal” of wax where the paper came together. The person who received the letter would notice the seal, and the impression, and know that no one else had opened his letter. The letter was sealed until it was received. Paul says that the Holy Spirit is the One who has “sealed us” until the day of redemption, (Ephesians 4:30) and in Ephesians 1:13 he reminds us that we are sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise. (Ephesians 1:13) The Holy Spirit is the seal on our lives that guarantees that we will be safely delivered to God in heaven some day.

F. He Gives Spiritual Power to Believers

As Jesus was preparing to leave His disciples, He told them to wait in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high. (Luke 24:49) Just before He ascended to heaven He told them that they would receive power after the Holy Spirit came upon them. (Acts 1:8) The Holy Spirit came to begin this ministry on the Day of Pentecost. They immediately began to preach the Word of God with great power. From that day on, the Holy Spirit dwells in all believers and gives them the power that they need to do God’s will.

G. He Teaches Believers

Concerning spiritual truths, Paul says, “God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. We have received...the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.” (I Corinthians 2:10-12) Jesus said, “the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all

things.” (John 14:26) Surely, this is an important ministry of the Spirit. Every believer needs to pray that the Holy Spirit would give him understanding and discernment as he studies the Bible.

H. He Guides Believers

David prayed, “Lead me in a plain path”, (Psalm 27:11) and Paul tells us that the Holy Spirit will lead those who are God’s children. (Romans 8:14) Those who seek God’s guidance in their decisions will surely be led by the Holy Spirit to make the right decisions.

I. He Helps in Prayer

Often we do not know what we should pray for. But God does. Since the Holy Spirit knows the mind of the Father, He is able to show us what we should pray for, and He also prays for us Himself. (Romans 8:26-27) How much more effectively we would pray, if we would be more sensitive to the Holy Spirit as we pray.

J. He Produces Fruit in Our Lives

Jesus ordained that God’s children should be fruitful. (John 15:16) Certainly, by himself, no one can produce anything pleasing to God. But God’s Holy Spirit desires to work through us to make our lives fruitful. Some of the things that He will produce in us are referred to as the “fruit of the Spirit”. These include love, joy, peace, longsuffering and other good things. (Galatians 5:22-23) If these things are absent from our lives, it is because something in our lives is hindering the Spirit in His desire to produce them.

K. He Gives the Believers Spiritual Gifts

“The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every (believing) man to profit.” (I Corinthians 12:7) Paul lists different spiritual gifts and then says that the Spirit divides to every person according to His will. (I Corinthians 12:8-11) The gifts that the Spirit gives, are the abilities that He gives us to serve God in some way. Every believer has one or more of these Spirit given abilities, whether he realizes it or not.

L. He Glorifies Christ

Jesus described the ministry of the Holy Spirit, when He would come. In John 16:14, He said, “He (the Holy Spirit) would glorify me.” (Jesus Christ). Pentecostals seriously err when they mistakenly exalt, magnify and glorify the Holy Spirit. The desire of the Spirit is to bring glory to Christ, and not to Himself.

III THE CHRISTIAN'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

In order for a Christian to live a godly and productive life, he must maintain a proper relationship to the Holy Spirit of God. This is essential for godly living, Christian service, and effective praying.

A. The Believer Must Be Conscious of the Presence of the Indwelling Spirit

It is important for the believer to understand that the Spirit dwells within him and desires to produce fruit in his life.

B. The Believer Should Not Grieve the Spirit by Sin

Ephesians 4:30 plainly warns, "Grieve not the Spirit." Since He is the "Holy" Spirit, that which grieves Him most is sin. When the believer engages in that which is sinful, the Holy Spirit is offended and grieved. It is difficult for Him to use and bless a person who is grieving Him by his sinful conduct.

C. The Believer Should Not Quench the Spirit by Disobedience

When water is poured on a brightly burning fire, the fire dies down and loses much of its light and heat. When the Holy Spirit is leading and prompting someone to do something according to God's will and he refuses, the ministry of the Holy Spirit is quenched. Paul warns believers that they should not quench the Spirit. (1 Thessalonians 5:19)

D. The Believer Should be Controlled by the Spirit

"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit." (Ephesians 5:18) A person who drinks alcohol is soon controlled by the alcohol. Instead, the believer should be controlled by the Holy Spirit. Man's old carnal, sinful nature wants to control things in his life. Instead of allowing this, the believer must continually be surrendering to the control of the Spirit of God, desiring God to control his life. When the Spirit has control of our life, He can use us, teach us, lead us and bless us like He wants to. The life of blessing, power and victory is the life yielded to the Spirit of God. The most basic and important key to Christian living is for a believer to be continually and consciously yielding his life to the control of the Spirit of God.

IV THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

There are few subjects that have brought more confusion and unscriptural teaching into Christian churches than the matter of spiritual gifts. Yet, one of the most critical needs for the progress of the local church is the need for having members of a church exercising their spiritual gifts.

A. Definition of Spiritual Gifts

A spiritual gift is any Spirit given ability to serve God in some particular way. Spiritual gifts could include Spirit given abilities to sing, teach, encourage, counsel, govern, help, or many other things. It should be noted that there is a difference between a spiritual gift and a natural gift. A person might have a natural gift like singing ability, but not have the spiritual gift to sing in a way that God blesses and uses. Perhaps another person might not have as good a voice as the first person, but because he had the spiritual gift of singing, his singing might bring great spiritual blessings to many. Of course a person most often is given a spiritual gift in the same area as his natural gifts, but it should not be assumed that they are the same thing. A gift is not a spiritual gift unless it's use regularly produces some spiritual good.

B. The Universality of Spiritual Gifts

Not only do all true believers have the Holy Spirit dwelling within them, they also have at least one spiritual gift that He has given them. In I Corinthians 12, Paul discusses the subject of spiritual gifts. In verse 7 he says, "the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal," and then lists a number of spiritual gifts. In verse 11 he says that the Spirit is dividing the spiritual gifts "to every man severally as He will." Pastors should teach the members of their churches that each one of them has a spiritual gift, and they should determine what it is, and put it to use in the local church.

C. The Variety of Spiritual Gifts

In the New Testament, four lists of spiritual gifts are given. (Romans 12:6-8, I Corinthians 12:8-10, I Corinthians 12:28-31, Ephesians 4:11) It is significant that none of these lists are the same. Each lists mentions some gifts that are not mentioned in the other lists. This indicates that there is no specific lists of things that are considered as spiritual gifts, but any ability that God gives

a person to serve Him can be classified as a spiritual gift, whether it is listed somewhere or not. The Spirit equips God's people with many different gifts to serve.

D. There is No Spiritual Gift that is Intended for All Believers

In I Corinthians 12:29-30, Paul asked if all possess the gift of being apostles or prophets or teachers or miracle workers or healers or those who speak in tongues. Obviously, he intends for them all to respond by saying "no." There is no spiritual gift that every believer has. Yet many of the Pentecostals tell people that everyone should speak in tongues. They say that this is the proof that they have received the Holy Spirit, and therefore everyone should try to get the Holy Spirit and then would be able to speak in tongues. All of these ideas are false and Paul is plain that everyone, even in the New Testament age, did not speak in tongues.

E. Spiritual Gifts Should be Used in the Local Church

In I Corinthians 12:27, Paul says "you (the local church) are the body of Christ, and members in particular." Just before this he explained that in order for the body to function effectively, it is necessary for all the members to be exercising their particular and necessary gifts. In Ephesians 4:11-13, Paul explains how God has given gifted leaders to the church so that the church as a body can be built up to spiritual maturity. Believers who spend much time using their spiritual gifts in some place other than the local church are missing the intention of spiritual gifts.

F. Some Spiritual Gifts Were Less Important Than Others

Those in Pentecostal circles stress the importance of the gifts of healings and speaking in tongues. These are the gifts which they emphasize. However, the New Testament shows that these gifts were less important than others. In two of the four lists of spiritual gifts found in the New Testament, the gifts of healings and tongues are not even mentioned. In the other two lists, the gift of tongues was put in last place. In I Corinthians 12:31 we are told to desire the "best gifts", which also suggests that some gifts were better and more important than others. Paul explains how much better it is to "prophesy" (preach) than it is to speak in tongues. (I Co-

inthians 14:1-19) Those who emphasize healing and speaking in tongues are not putting their emphasis where the New Testament puts it.

G. Some Spiritual Gifts Were Temporary

It seems that some of the spiritual gifts which were exercised in the New Testament age, were only given as temporary gifts, for that age only. This would particularly apply to the gifts of miraculous healings and speaking in tongues. Gifts of healings, prophesying revelations from God, and speaking in tongues were extraordinary gifts. One of the reasons that those gifts were given was to help to demonstrate to the skeptical crowds, that the ministry of Christ and His apostles was genuine. When he sent the apostles on their preaching mission He gave them power to do miraculous works. (Matthew 10:5-8) When John the Baptist sent his disciples to inquire if Jesus was indeed the Messiah, Christ called their attention to the miraculous deeds He was doing as proof. (Luke 7:20-22) In Acts 8:6-7 it says that the citizens of Samaria believed the preaching of Philip because they saw the miracles which he had done. Paul refers to “the signs of an apostle” which he had done in Corinth. Occasionally there were false prophets who could work a small miracle or two, such as the Egyptian magicians of Pharaoh, or Elymas the sorcerer. But only the true servants of God by the power of God could work such large numbers of all sorts of miraculous deeds to demonstrate the genuineness of their message. After the New Testament age these miraculous deeds passed from the scene. Since the preachers who followed the apostles were preaching the same message as the apostles, it no longer needed to be proven genuine. Once something has been demonstrated to be genuine, there is no more need for further proof.

The gifts of speaking in tongues and prophesying special revelations from God were also temporary in nature. During most of the first century, the believers had an incomplete revelation. Much of the New Testament had not yet been written. Often there were truths which they needed to understand but had no written revelation yet to provide this information. To make up for this lack, God supplied prophets and people who spoke in other languages, to provide missing truths to the believers. But, Paul said, “When that which is perfect is come, then

that which is in part shall be done away.” (I Corinthians 13:9-10) Some have suggested that this refers to the second coming of Christ, but that is not so. “That which is perfect” could not refer to Christ for it is neuter instead of masculine. Therefore, it must refer to the revelation of Scripture (neuter) which had fully come by the end of the first century. Therefore prophesying revelations and speaking messages in other languages were no longer needed and were “done away.”

Paul specifically states that some gifts were temporary and therefore would “fail”. “cease” and “vanish away”. (I Corinthians 13:8) Certainly God can still work miracles and often does. Many times He heals someone in answer to prayer. But the “gift of healing”, where a person has the spiritual ability to heal anyone who comes to him, is no longer present in this age.

CHAPTER NINE

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

I THE DEFINITION OF “CHURCH”

A. People Have Many False Ideas of What a Church Is

Often the word “church” is used to describe a building. Sometimes “church” is used to describe a denomination. (I belong to the Catholic Church) But the word “church” in the New Testament is never used to describe a building or a denomination. These are improper uses.

Many today, especially liberals, use the word “church” to refer to all individuals and groups who refer to themselves as Christian. To them, the “church” is all of Christendom: Lutherans, Catholics, Episcopalians, Christian magazines, religious organizations, and everything else that could be called “Christian”. All together this collection of everything that calls itself Christian, is called “the church in the world.” Liberals often stress the importance of the unity of all that is called “Christian” as one church, which they believe fulfills the desire of Christ expressed in John 17:21-23, “that they all may be one.” The “oneness” that Jesus was speaking of was not the unity of many groups in one big organization, or of the artificial grouping of many doctrinal positions under one category

(church) for those are exterior and material groupings. The unity that Christ spoke of was the spiritual unity which exists in this age between all who truly believe in Christ and are sanctified by His Word. (John 17:19-21)

B. Sometimes the Word “Church” Describes the Body of All True Believers.

Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, “I will build my church.” In Ephesians 5:23-24, 32, Paul refers to Christ loving the church. In Colossians 1:18 and 1:24 he refers to Christ’s body as the church. All of these verses seem to suggest that sometimes the Bible uses the word “church” to refer in the collective sense to all true believers who are part of the body of Christ.

C. The Primary Use of the Word “Church” is a Reference to a Local Congregation

References to churches were references to congregations in a certain place: the church at Corinth, the church at Thessalonica, the Church at Ephesus, etc. In Revelation chapters 2-3, Christ sends letters to seven local churches. Paul refers to the “churches of Galatia.” In Acts 15, the church at Antioch sent a delegation to the church at Jerusalem. The vast majority of uses of the word “church” clearly refer to local congregations of people who had been saved, baptized and added to that congregation. Together they worshipped and served the Lord in that particular place.

It must be concluded, then, that the primary use of the word “church” in the New Testament, refers to born again believers who have been baptized and united in a local group in order to worship the Lord, observe the ordinances and bring the gospel to others.

II THE ORDINANCES OF THE CHURCH

A. Definition of an Ordinance

An “ordinance” is a simple ceremony ordained by God to be observed by the local church for the purposes of strengthening the spiritual life of God’s people and being a testimony to the unsaved. The two ordinances that Christ ordained are Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. These ordinances should never be referred to as “sacraments.” “Sacrament” is a Roman Catholic term used to describe something which earns saving grace, or conveys saving grace to the individual receiving the sacrament. This helps them to earn more grace toward salva-

tion. Of course, this is nowhere taught in Scripture and “grace” can never be earned or obtained by some ceremony. The ordinances do not convey grace to, or help to save anyone. They are reminders and testimonies but are not sacraments.

B. Baptism

Baptism is the immersion of a believer as a testimony to the world that he has been saved because of Christ’s death, burial and resurrection. In being immersed, the believer is identifying himself with the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Paul says, “We are buried with Him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:4)

Baptism was clearly done by immersion in the New Testament. John was baptizing in Aenon near Salem, “because there was much water there.” (John 3:23) When Jesus was baptized He went “up straitway out of the water” (Matthew 3:16). When Philip baptized the Ethiopian Eunuch, it specifically says that they both went down into the water, Philip baptized him and they came up out of the water. (Acts 8:38-39) Since the word “baptize” means, “to dip or immerse,” there can be no doubt that immersion was the New Testament method of baptism. Since man has no right or authority to change the ordinance of God, sprinkling or pouring water on someone cannot be called baptism at all.

Since baptism is a testimony of salvation, it is absolutely essential that a person must be born again before he is baptized. True baptism is “the immersion of a believer.” A church should have confidence that a person is genuinely converted before they agree to baptize him. They should also be sure that the person being baptized understands the meaning and responsibilities of baptism and church membership.

Since salvation precedes baptism, it should be clear that baptism does not save or help save anyone. Nor is baptism necessary for salvation. The thief on the cross was never baptized, but went to heaven with Jesus the day he was crucified.

Though baptism does not save, this does not mean that it is not important. Christ was baptized to give us an example to follow. The Great Commission shows us that we should baptize those who accept the gospel. Certain-

ly this is an important ordinance that all believers should follow.

C. The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is an ordinance that reminds us of Christ's sacrifice on the cross when He gave His body and shed His blood to provide for our salvation. It is also a reminder of His return, for we are told to observe it "till He come." (I Corinthians 11:26) Certainly it is important for believers to observe this ordinance for Christ twice said, "This do, in remembrance of me." (I Corinthians 11:24-25)

Sometimes questions are raised about who should participate in the Lord's Supper. Since it is a proclamation and remembrance of Christ's death, it should certainly only be observed by those who have been genuinely converted. The Scriptural pattern also indicates that it is proper for a person to be baptized before participating in the Lord's Supper. In the Great Commission, Jesus said that people should be saved, then baptized, and then "taught all things" which would include the Lord's Supper. (Matthew 28:19-20)

Paul also reminds believers that they should not participate in the Lord's Supper in an "unworthy" spiritual condition. (I Corinthians 11:27-32) Because some in the church in Corinth had done this, some of them were sick and some had even died. To avoid this Paul gave instructions that a person ought to "examine himself" before he participates in the Supper. Of course this examination does not demand that a person be perfect, but certainly there should be no open and persistent sin in his life nor should there be open and bitter disagreement between himself and some other member of the church.

Should only members of that particular local church participate in the observance of the Lord's Supper? Some churches restrict the observance to those who are members of that local congregation. Most Baptist churches would probably invite believers present who were members of a church of like faith and practice to join with them. This is a decision that each local church must make for itself since the Scriptures are silent on that subject.

When a church is about to observe the Lord's Supper the congregation should be reminded of the Scriptural qualifications for participating, be sure that

those present understand the meaning of the Lord's Supper, and make it clear who should or should not participate.

D. The Question of Foot Washing

Some groups include the washing of one another's feet as an ordinance of the local church. They base this on the example of Jesus when He washed the disciples' feet at the last supper. Then He said to them, "Ye ought also to wash one another's feet." (John 13:14) But they should also read the next verse where Jesus went on to say, "I have given you an example." (vs. 15-16) The example that He gave was an example of humility. He wanted them to humble themselves as servants, not to start an ordinance of foot washing. They often washed others feet in Bible times to refresh guests who had come to their home. Nowhere in the New Testament do we see any indication of foot washing observed as an ordinance or church ceremony of any kind. There is no mention of foot washing in connection with a church service. For these reasons Baptists have generally held that there is no ordinance of foot washing taught in the New Testament.

III THE ORGANIZATION OF A LOCAL CHURCH

A. The Independence of the Local Church

It is clear that in the New Testament, each local church operated independently. Even though they sometimes cooperated on projects, such as the collection for the saints in Jerusalem (Romans 15:26) each church was still responsible for making its own decisions. When Jesus discussed how to deal with an erring brother, the final authority to deal with the situation was "the church". (Matthew 18:15-18) When Paul exhorted the church in Corinth to deal with an immoral member, he called on the local body to "put away" the sinning brother from their membership. (I Corinthians 5:13) In Acts 15 we find an example of one local church (Antioch) calling on another local church (Jerusalem) to deal with their members who were causing trouble in Antioch by teaching false doctrine. Though Paul, as an apostle writing under inspiration, gave the churches directions and commands, this in no way interfered with the independence of each local church. Baptists have always insisted that no outside influence has any control over the actions of a local church.

B. The Pastor of the Church

1. The nature of the office of Pastor

Though it is common for many churches to be confused on this issue, it must be understood that the only scriptural office in the church besides that of deacon, is the office of pastor. Some confusion exists because there are three terms in the English New Testament used to describe the office of the pastor. In addition to the word “pastor,” we also find in the New Testament, the terms “elder” and “bishop.” These words do not suggest three different officers in the church but are three different terms or titles describing the one office of pastor. The word “bishop” means “overseer.” The word “elder” was simply a title of respect. The word “pastor” is a word that means “shepherd,” and is the word that best describes his overall position. We can see that these words all refer to the same position because they are used interchangeably in the New Testament. In Acts 20:17, it says that Paul called the “elders” of the church in Ephesus to come and have a meeting with him. As he talked to them, he said in verse 28 that God had made them “bishops” to “pastor” the church. He was referring to the same people, calling them “elders” and “bishops” and “pastors.” Obviously, all three titles referred to the same group of people. Because the church in Ephesus was very large, they had a number of pastors, but they did not have three different offices. We find the same pattern in I Peter 5, where Peter speaks to the “elders” in verse one, and in verse two tells them to “pastor” the church and be the “bishops” (overseers) of it. When Paul wrote to the church of the Philippians, he mentions saints (believers), elders and deacons. Why would he not mention the pastors? Because the “elders” were the pastors. When Paul outlines the qualifications for church officers in I Timothy 3, he only mentions “bishops” and “deacons.” Why does he not mention pastors? Because the bishops were the pastors. When Paul writes to Titus, he tells him to ordain “elders” in every city, and then lists the qualifications for “bishops.” (Titus 1:5,7) He does not mention pastors, because they all understood that pastors, elders, and bishops were all just different titles for the same position.

2. The responsibilities of the pastor

The responsibilities of the pastor are best summarized in the word “pastor” which is the word for “shepherd.” A shepherd’s duties are to lead, feed, and protect the flock. These are the very things mentioned in Acts 20:28 and I Peter 5:1-3. A pastor is to lead his congregation with God’s help, knowing where they should go and leading them in that direction. By his regular teaching and preaching, he should be feeding them with solid spiritual food so that they can be spiritually growing and healthy. He must guard them against false doctrine and bad conduct by warning and exhorting them from the Word of God. Peter also mentions that he must be an example to the flock. These are all very important responsibilities which every pastor should take very seriously and seek to fulfill with God’s help.

3. The qualifications of the pastor

The qualifications for the office of pastor are clearly given in I Timothy 3:1-6. He should be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, hospitable, able and ready to teach, not given to wine or fighting, not greedy or covetous, but managing his household well, and having obedient children. Basically, the same qualifications are mentioned in Titus 1:6-9). The qualifications for the office of pastor do not allow a woman to fill this position. Many women are very capable of doing many things, but they cannot meet the Scriptural qualifications for the office of pastor. They should not be “ruling their household” and cannot be “the husband of one wife.” Paul also makes it very clear that the woman is to learn in silence and not teach or usurp authority over the man. (I Timothy 2:11-14) A woman who preaches or serves as pastor of a church is exercising authority over the men in the congregation, which is unscriptural.

C. The Deacons of the Church

1. The responsibilities of deacons

The word “deacon” literally means, “servant.” A deacon is not someone who is supposed to run the church and tell the pastor what to do. He is supposed to be the servant of the church by helping the pastor. It is the business of the deacons to help the pastor in those areas where he needs help. They should normally handle the money of the church, look after the church building and the preparations for the church service, assist with the Lord’s Supper, help with the business affairs of the

church, and help in any other areas where the pastor needs their help. By no means should the deacons try to assume the leadership of the church by telling the pastor what to do, supervising his activities, or thinking that they are supposed to control the church.

2. The qualifications of deacons

The New Testament gives a list of the qualifications for the deacons. This list tells us that they should be serious, not dishonest, drunkards or greedy, hold good doctrine, and have faithful wives and obedient children. They should have demonstrated their ability and dependability. They should also have a good reputation and not be divorced and remarried individuals. (I Timothy 3:8-13)

D. The Members of the Local Church

1. The importance of church membership

The New Testament clearly indicates that the early churches each had a clearly defined church membership. In Acts 2:41 it states that 3,000 people were “added to” the 120 that had been meeting in the upper room. In I Corinthians 5 Paul speaks to the church of “them that are without” and “them that are within”. (vs.12) He also tells them to “put away” the sinning person from among themselves. In I Corinthians 12:27 he tells the church that they are a body of Christ and “members” in particular. No church can properly conduct business or exercise discipline if it does not have an established list of the members.

2. The requirements for church members

The first requirement for church membership is that a person must be genuinely converted (born again) and have a clear testimony of salvation. Since the New Testament often refers to the people in the churches as “saints”, it is obvious that they were born again people. Bible believing Baptists have always insisted on a regenerated church membership. A church that has unsaved members has seriously departed from the New Testament standard and should take definite steps to graciously but firmly remove any unsaved people from its membership.

The second requirement for membership in a Biblical Baptist church is baptism. Baptism is only valid if it is the immersion in water of a person who has previously been born again and can give a credible testimony of his salvation. The three thousand who were saved on the day of Pentecost were all baptized after they were converted.

The Scriptural pattern is Acts 2:41 is: first, receiving the Word (salvation), then baptism, then being added to the church membership. It is absolutely essential that this pattern should still be followed.

The third requirement for membership in a biblical church is consistent Christian living. He commanded the Corinthian church, "if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one, no, not to eat (the Lord's Supper). Therefore, put away from among yourselves, that wicked person." (1 Corinthians 5: 11,13) People who have open and persistent outward sin in their lives should not be received into the membership of a church.

NOTE: For a more detailed discussion of the doctrine of the church, request a copy of the author's book, "The Organization and Administration of the Local Church".

CHAPTER TEN

THE DOCTRINE OF FUTURE EVENTS

I THE METHOD OF INTERPRETING BIBLE PROPHECY

How a person understands the prophetic passages of the Bible depends on his method of interpreting the Bible. The liberal thinks that most of the Bible is spiritual allegory and therefore interprets it in any way that suits him. The covenant theologian will interpret much of the Bible literally, but when he comes to prophetic passages he refuses to understand them literally and so interprets them allegorically. Fundamental Baptists believe that the whole Bible should be interpreted in a literal way, unless the context makes it obvious that it must be explained figuratively. In other words, when the Bible says Jonah was three days in the belly of the great fish, the literal interpretation says that he was three days in the belly of the fish. But when Jesus says "I am the door," it is obvious that this must be interpreted figuratively. We believe that everything in the Bible that can be taken literally, should be taken literally. Therefore, the fundamentalist also interprets prophecy, as well as the other parts of Scripture, literally. The covenant theologian interprets prophecy

spiritually and thinks that the promises that the Messiah will reign on earth for a thousand years some day, mean that Christ would reign in the hearts of God's people. The fundamentalist would interpret these things literally and believe that the Messiah will reign on earth for a thousand years just as the Bible says. Fundamentalists do not believe that it is right to interpret some of the Bible literally and the prophecies of the Bible spiritually. We believe that all of the Bible should be interpreted in a normal and literal manner.

It is also important that prophecy be interpreted from a dispensational point of view. Dispensationalism recognizes that God has dealt with different peoples in different ways down through the ages. Dispensationalists believe that people have always been saved by faith alone, but other things have been different. During most of the Old Testament, God was dealing with the Jewish nation. In this age God is working through the church. In the last days, the church will be removed and God will deal with the nation of Israel once more.

The following outline of future events is made from a literal and dispensational interpretation of prophetic Scriptures.

II BASIC FACTS ABOUT FUTURE THINGS

A. God Has a Program for the Future

Just before His death, the disciples asked Jesus about future things, His coming, and the end of the world. (Matthew 24:3-4) Jesus told them many things about the future to answer their questions. (Matthew 24-25) In Revelation 1:1 Christ showed His servants the things that "must shortly come to pass," and in Revelation 4:1 John was invited to come up to heaven so he could be show the things "that will be hereafter."

B. No One Knows the Date for Future Events

There are always foolish people who think they can figure out the date when the Lord will return and the end times will come. This idea is completely contrary to Scripture. Jesus said that not even the angels know the time of the Lord's return. (Matthew 24:36) When the disciples asked Him to tell them when He would restore the kingdom, He told them that it was not for them to know. (Acts 1:6-7) Anyone who sets dates for the Lord's return should be avoided as a false teacher.

C. Some of the Basic Passages on the Future

Isaiah 65-66, Ezekiel 37, Daniel 9, Zechariah 14, Matthew 24-25, I Corinthians 15, I Thessalonians 4:16-17, II Thessalonians 2, II Peter 3, Revelations 20-21. These passages should be read and studied in detail.

III A SUMMARY OF FUTURE EVENTS IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

A. The Rapture

The word “rapture” means “to snatch up.” At the end of this Church Age, Jesus will return in the clouds and suddenly snatch up all of the true believers of this age, both dead and living, to meet Him in the clouds and return with Him to heaven. (I Thessalonians 4:16-17) Paul says that this will happen in the twinkling of an eye. (I Corinthians 15:51-52) He calls this the “blessed hope” of believers. (Titus 2:13)

B. The Judgment of Believers

In Revelation 22:12, Christ tells us that He is coming quickly to reward each one according to his works. This suggests that the judgment of believers is right after the rapture, when all the church age believers will be present in heaven to receive their rewards. In II Corinthians 5:10 Paul refers to the “Judgment Seat of Christ.” It should be noted that he is talking to believers. It must be plain that this judgment is not about salvation, or deciding who will go to heaven. Instead, it is a judgment to present rewards to each believer based on his faithful service to Christ. In I Corinthians 3:10-15, the works of believers are classified as those with lasting value (gold, silver and precious stones) or works of no lasting value (wood, hay or stubble) which will be burned as worthless. It will be a great blessing for believers to receive eternal rewards based on their faithful service to God.

C. The Tribulation

Resting our beliefs on the basis of Daniel’s prophecy of the 70 weeks (Daniel (9:24-27) it is clear that these “weeks” are weeks of years, each week representing seven years. This period of time is related to the nation of Israel. Sixty nine of those weeks extend for 483 years (69x7) from the time the decree was issued to rebuild the city of Jerusalem, to the time of Christ. (Daniel 9:25) One week of seven years remains. When the Jews rejected Christ, God set aside the Jewish nation for a time and be-

gan the church age, working primarily with Gentiles. When Christ comes to take the church out of this world at the rapture, God will again begin working with the Jews for the final week of seven years. These will be seven years of tribulation directed primarily toward the nation of Israel, though it will involve the other nations as well. This will be a time of severe judgments on the world. There will be great plagues and troubles as outlined in the book of Revelation, chapters 6-19. These days are described in Revelation 7:14 and Matthew 24:21 as “great tribulation” and in I Thessalonians 1:10 as the “wrath to come”.

D. The Ministry of God’s Witnesses

During the tribulation years, God will send two witnesses who will preach the Word of God. (Revelation 11:3-12) There will also be 144,000 Jewish men who will preach the gospel. (Revelation 7:3-14) Even though at the beginning of the tribulation there will not be any believers in the world, through the preaching of these men there will be a great multitude saved from all nations of the world. (Revelation 7:9-14) Many of these believers will be martyred during those tribulation years.

E. The Career of Antichrist

During the tribulation years a false antichrist will rise to power, assisted by his false prophet. Midway through the tribulation he will set his throne in the temple and proclaim himself to be God, demanding that all of the world should worship him. (II Thessalonians 2:3-4, Revelation 13:5-8)

F. The Second Coming of Christ

At the end of the seven years of tribulation, Christ will visibly return to earth to defeat the Antichrist in the battle of Armageddon (Revelation 19:11-21, Matthew 24:29-30, Jude 14-15) and set up His kingdom. (This event is not to be confused with the rapture, which occurs 7 years earlier.)

G. The Judgment of the Nations

When Christ returns to set up His kingdom, He will gather all of the nations living on the earth, to judge, and send the followers of antichrist to Hell and the believers into the Kingdom. (Matthew 25:31-46)

H. The Millennial Kingdom

After Christ has defeated the antichrist, He will reign from a literal throne in Jerusalem over all the world, in a kingdom of justice and righteousness.

(Revelation 20:1-4, Isaiah 65:24-25)

I. The Great White Throne Judgment

At the end of time for this world, God will sit on a great white throne to judge and sentence the unsaved to a lost eternity. When they are judged “according to their works” it will be obvious that they are lost because they are sinners and because their names are not written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. (Revelation 20:11-15)

J. The Eternal State

When God has completed His program for this world, the world and all in it will be burned up. (II Peter 3:10-12) A new heaven and earth will be created. (II Peter 3:13, Isaiah 65:17) God’s redeemed will dwell forever in heaven with Him, while the lost will spend eternity in the lake of fire. (Revelation 21:1-8)

AMEN AND AMEN

GUIDELINES FOR TRANSLATIONS

If this book, by God’s grace, proves to be helpful to the churches, it may be that some would desire to have it translated into another language. I hereby grant permission for it to be translated and printed in other languages if the following conditions are carefully met:

- 1. When translating, more emphasis should be placed on carefully translating the ideas expressed rather than attempting to make a word by word translation. The translator should first be sure that he understands the idea presented, and then make the translation.**
- 2. When quoting verses from the Bible, the verse should be copied directly from the Bible translation used by the people who will be reading it, instead of translating the verse as it appears in this book. This is assuming that they have a reliable translation.**

- 3. When giving Scripture references, the reference should be checked to see if it is the same as the Bible the readers will use, because occasionally the numbering of verses is a little different in some translations.**
- 4. In no case will a translator leave out or add to any section of this book. Nor should a translator do anything that will change the doctrines or content of this book.**
- 5. The person translating this book is required to have another person trained in the language and theology carefully review his translation for accuracy and discuss any differences or suggested corrections.**
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