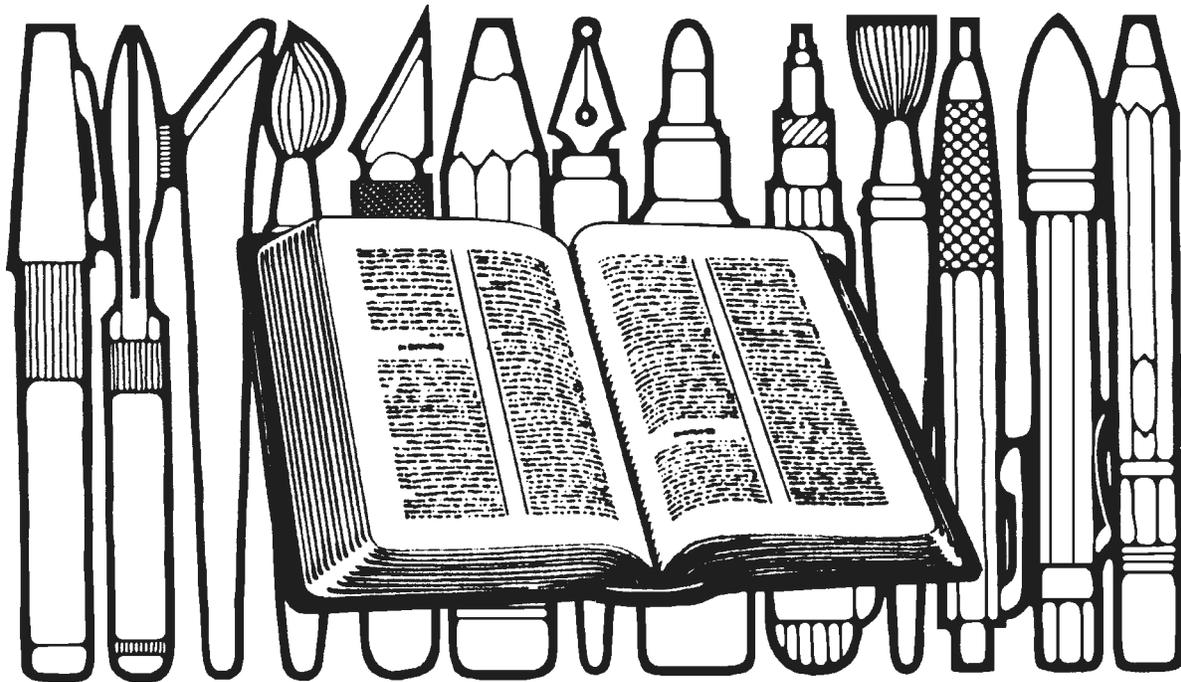


# Adorning The Word

*Volume 6*



## Sermon Outlines

by David Padfield

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# Introduction

Thank you for downloading this book of sermon outlines. These sermons were preached at the Lewis Avenue Church of Christ in Zion, Illinois. I do not claim originality for any of the material contained in these sermon outlines. Some of the sermons were put together over many years, and I simply cannot recall all of the commentaries I read while preparing those sermons. While you are free to preach any of these lessons, this booklet is copyrighted and may not be placed on any Web site or distributed in any form without the express written consent of the author. You can write to me at: <david@padfield.com>.

Yours In Christ,  
David Padfield

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# The Theme Of The Apostles

## Introduction

- I. When a man steps into a pulpit he must realize the awesome responsibility to preach the “whole counsel of God.”
  - A. Paul had charged young Timothy to “Preach the word....” (2 Tim. 4:2).
  - B. Paul not only gave the command, but an example to follow (1 Cor. 2:2).
- II. When I started preaching, I promised this would be my aim and guiding star.
  - A. Whether I have accomplished this or not, God will be the judge.
  - B. I want to talk with you this morning about the theme of the apostles, and our text will be 1 Corinthians 1:18–2:5.

## Discussion

- I. **The Apostolic Theme: Jesus Christ And Him Crucified**
  - A. Paul had recently come into Europe for the first time and had to confront an entirely new set of problems and circumstances—he had far different problems from those he encountered in Palestine.
    - 1. He had been imprisoned in Philippi and then been smuggled away by night from Thessalonica.
    - 2. He had been hounded from Berea and had made little impression on the philosophers in Athens.
    - 3. In his solitude, Paul came to the city of Corinth and lay quite, and took stock of his work.
    - 4. He came to his conclusion which he records in our text (1 Cor. 2:2).
    - 5. He felt that it was not His purpose to argue with the philosophers, or to attempt to vie with the sophists and professional orators, but that the only way to meet the Greek civilization, culture, philosophy, and eloquence was to “preach Christ crucified...” (1 Cor. 1:23).
  - B. Paul’s conception of his theme was to present the biography of a man with special emphasis on one act in history, i.e., His death.
    - 1. Paul’s relationship to his teaching and his Teacher was different from any other religion.
    - 2. For in many religions you can take the teaching without the teacher.
      - a) Mormons and Joseph Smith.
      - b) Ellen G. White and 7th Day Adventists.
      - c) Mary Baker Eddy and the First Church of Christ Scientist.
    - 3. Whatever men take Christianity to mean all lies in the personality and death of Jesus Christ.
  - C. Preaching the gospel (*the good news*) involves many things.
    - 1. History is a history; a biography is a biography; the story of the cross is a touching narrative, but it is no gospel.
    - 2. The gospel involves more: resurrection and ascension (1 Cor. 15:1–8).
  - D. We hear a great deal today about “recovering the Christ of the Gospels.”
    - 1. This is fine if we do not lose the Christ of the Epistles—for He is both.
    - 2. Past generations wrapped theological cobwebs around the gracious figure of Christ and they have met with disaster.

3. The mistake which this generation if falling into is just the opposite—they now have an undefined Christ.
  - a) They say it is like climbing a mountain and viewing a beautiful scene—there is no real way to describe it.
  - b) Men are no longer able to define what they believe about Christ.
  - c) We are to “hold fast our confession” (Heb. 4:14).
- E. Look at how the New Testament writers pictured Christ:
  1. A great mystery of godliness (1 Tim. 3:16).
  2. The Word became flesh (John 1:14).
  3. John saw and touched Him (1 John 1:1–2).
- F. Our concept of our theme will determine our method of proclamation.
  1. “We preach Christ crucified” (1 Cor. 1:23).
    - a) To “preach” is to “to proclaim as a herald does.”
    - b) The Jew sought a sign, the Greeks sought after wisdom.
    - c) “We do not come to philosophize or to argue. We come with a message of fact that has occurred, and of a Person that has lived.”
  2. My task is to proclaim a living Person and an historical fact.
    - a) I must do as the heralds of old when they would go into the marketplace and stand with trumpet in one hand and King’s message in the other.
    - b) Proclaim it loudly, confidently, not with whispering humbleness as if they were apologizing for the message.
    - c) I must not try to prop it up with my own reasoning.
    - d) I must simply say, “Thus saith the Lord!”

## II. Notice The Exclusiveness Which This Theme Demands

- A. Nothing but “Jesus Christ and Him crucified...”
  1. We have to hold up a picture, like a man in an art gallery who is displaying some great masterpiece we have to keep ourselves well behind the picture, not even let so much as one finger get in the way.
  2. Do you remember the woeful utterance of John the Baptist?
    - a) “...when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, ‘Who are you?’” (John 1:19).
    - b) John answered, “I am ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord,’ as the prophet Isaiah said.” (John 1:23).
  3. Consider Jeremiah, the weeping prophet of Anathoth (Jer. 1:4–10).
- B. The desires of the Jews and Gentiles represent two types of religions.
  1. “For Jews request a sign.”
    - a) They did not merely desire a miracle—Christ did that.
    - b) They wanted something to look at—a visible sacrifice, an ornate temple, a priesthood with proper vestments.
    - c) There are those today who want a priest, a Cardinal or a Pope, they want a preacher with his collar turned around backwards.
    - d) There is an trend among some of our brethren today towards more ritual and aesthetic services as a means of attracting people.
    - e) If we are to be strong spiritually, then we must have very little of these external aids to worship.
    - f) Few things weaken the power of the Gospel more than the lowering of our flag in conformity to the world (Acts 17:6).

2. "The Greeks seek after wisdom."
  - a) They wanted abstract principles, systematic theology, and the like.
  - b) We are called upon on all sides to preach the "social gospel."
  - c) In plain English, many people want us to preach morality and leave Christ out of it.
  - d) People want to pulpit to be turned into a Sunday supplement to the daily newspaper.
  - e) The way to clean up the slums is to start with the one's heart.

### III. Notice The All-Sufficiency Which This Theme Secures

- A. Paul said, "I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified."
  1. Jesus Christ and Him crucified covers all the ground of men's needs.
  2. Old fashion narrowness? No! (2 Pet. 1:3-4).
- B. Paul felt that if he was to give the Corinthians what they needed, he had to refuse to give them what they wanted.
  1. This is still true today—we must brush aside men's wishes, and go straight to their need (1 Cor. 9:16; Ezek. 3:17-20; Acts 20:22-27).
  2. What the Jew needs most is not a sign, what the Gentile needs most is not wisdom—what they both need is salvation (Rom. 6:23).
  3. All people—scholars or fools, rich or poor—have sin in common and we all need deliverance from this bondage (Rom. 3:10, 23).
  4. Therefore, if a man comes with a sign and does not deal with sin—or if a man comes with wisdom, and does not deal with sin—he does not bring a gospel that will meet the needs of the people.
- C. The message of Christ will satisfy the needs within our hearts.
  1. Let the Jew come to the cross of Christ, for there he will find God's mightiest sign.
  2. Let the Gentile come to the cross, and there he will find righteousness, sanctification, redemption and propitiation.

#### *Conclusion*

- I. Do not begin your building at the second story window.
- II. Put in your foundation first and be sure that it is solid.
- III. Then exhibit the applications of Christianity in your life.
  - A. "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God" (Col. 3:1).
  - B. "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).
  - C. "But God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." (Gal. 6:14).

# Soldiers Of Christ

## Introduction

- I. Near the end of his life, Paul was constantly surrounded by Roman soldiers.
  - A. He lived in the presence of the greatest military power ever known.
  - B. Night and day a soldier was with Paul to ensure he would not escape.
  - C. The Roman legion is considered to be the world's first professional army.
  - D. Their armor was distinctive, and with it they subdued the world.
  - E. Paul used figures of speech which reflected what he saw daily.
    1. He told Timothy to "wage the good warfare" (1 Tim. 1:18).
    2. Paul also told Timothy to "endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Tim. 2:3).
- II. Christians are to put on the "whole armor of God (Eph. 6:10–20).
  - A. "Panoply" was the whole armor of heavily armed Roman soldier.
  - B. We must position ourselves to stand for the truth (Eph. 6:11, 13, 14).
  - C. Unblemished character; zeal tempered with wisdom; knowledge of Word.
  - D. The welfare of the cause of Christ depends upon us making a stand.
  - E. Since we are not fighting a fleshly battle, our weaponry must not be carnal.

## Discussion

### I. **The Armor Of God**

- A. Girdle of Truth.
  1. This was not an ornament—it bound the other pieces together and gave the soldier freedom of movement.
  2. We move about this world more freely because we know the truth!
  3. The center of our armor is truth (John 17:17).
  4. The NEB renders this clause, "buckle on the belt with truth."
- B. Breastplate of Righteousness.
  1. On first century reliefs only the centurions had metal cuirasses (breastplates); the common foot soldier had a leather corselet with leather shoulder pieces.
  2. The breastplate of a Roman spearman was used to protect the heart and other vital organs.
  3. Our heart covered by righteousness (Psa. 119:11).
  4. Words are no defense against accusations, but a righteous life is.
- C. Feet Shod.
  1. "But most important of all were his heavy boots (*caligae*), or rather sandals, which were in many ways more serviceable than modern army boots. Their soles, made of several layers of leather and heavily studded with hollow-headed nails, varied considerably in thickness; perhaps three-quarters of an inch was about the average. Strips of cloth or fur were sometimes placed inside the sandals, and they were fastened to the foot by ankle thongs." (Michael Grant, *The Army of the Caesars*, p. xx).
  2. These boots would give the soldier a firm footing during battle.
  3. They were designed to make it difficult to walk backwards.
  4. Our footing must be supplied by the gospel of peace (Rom. 10:15).

D. Shield of Faith.

1. Roman shields were composed of leather or wicker.
2. The normal size was four feet high by two and a half feet wide.
3. "The word Paul uses is not that for the comparatively small round shield; it is that for the great oblong shield which the heavily armed warrior wore. One of the most dangerous weapons in ancient warfare was the fiery dart. It was a dart tipped with tow dipped in pitch. The pitch-soaked tow was set alight and the dart was thrown. The great oblong shield was made of two sections of wood, glued together. When the shield was presented to the dart, the dart sank into the wood and the flame was put out. Faith can deal with the darts of temptation. With Paul, faith is always complete trust in Christ. When we walk close with Christ, we are safe from temptation." (William Barclay, *The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians*, p. 183).
4. "Early legionary shields were oval in shape but in the 1st century they became rectangular, although curved to fit the body. A legionary shield (*scutum*) was made of thin sheets of wood glued together and bound round the edges with wrought iron or bronze. The center was hollowed out for the hand grip which was protected by a metal boss. The outer surface of the shield was covered with leather on which were fastened decorative bronze plates." (Leslie and Roy Adkins, *Introduction to the Romans*, p. 39).
5. The change from small round to large rectangular shields meant the soldiers no longer needed to wear greaves (shin-pieces), and thus their mobility greatly increased.
6. Our enemy does not always attack directly (Heb. 11:32f).

E. Helmet of Salvation.

1. This head-gear was generally of bronze, fitted inside with an iron skull-cap lined with leather or cloth.
2. We are to take this helmet from God—it is our salvation (Eph. 2:8–9).

F. Sword of the Spirit.

1. "The offensive armor, as described by Josephus, consisted of the *pilum* or throwing-spear, the *gladius* or Spanish sword, and the *pugio* or dagger slung on the left and right sides respectively." (H. M. D. Parker, *The Roman Legions*, p. 251).
2. "Weapons for attack included the *pilum* or javelin, two of which were carried by each man. The *pilum* was 7 ft. long, the top 3 ft. being of iron. The sword (*gladius*) was a double-edged weapon about 2 ft. long and 2 in. wide. Carried in a scabbard attached to a belt on the right-hand side of the body, it was a stabbing rather than a slashing weapon and designed for use in close fighting. The scabbard was usually made of wood and leather held together by bronze. On the left-hand side of the body there was a dagger (*pugio*) in a bronze or iron scabbard suspended from another belt. Daggers seem to have been withdrawn from the legionary armory by the end of the 1st century." (Leslie and Roy Adkins, *Introduction to the Romans*, p. 39).

3. “Weapon training was most important. The intelligent use of the sword is mentioned particularly in a surviving Roman training manual. The method taught was to thrust, rather than to slash at an opponent; for a slash-cut rarely kills, but a thrust makes a deep penetration of the vital organs. The Roman short sword was clearly designed for stabbing, with its sharp angled point, though it could be, and certainly was on occasion, used to effect cutting strokes. The skulls belonging to the hapless defenders of the great Durotrigian fortress of Maiden Castle in Dorset, England, show the appalling fatal wounds inflicted by the soldiers Of LEGIO II AUGUSTA against adversaries who were most probably unhelmeted.” (Michael Simkins, *Warriors Of Rome*, p. 28).
  4. Our only offensive weapon is the Word of God (Heb. 4:12).
  5. Christ fought Satan in the desert with this weapon (Matt. 4:1–11).
  6. We are never wasting our time when we are sharpening our swords—don’t let it get rusty.
- G. Put on properly.
1. The armor is to be donned with prayer (Eph. 6:18; Acts 4:29–31).
  2. Pray always—pray intensely—pray for others.
  3. We are foot soldiers—God is in control.

## II. A Lesson From Rome

- A. The Jewish priest and general Flavius Josephus lived during the zenith of Rome’s military glory.
1. He was made a citizen by Vespasian and traveled with the legions.
  2. Roman soldiers always carried their weapons with them—even in peace.
  3. “Every soldier is every day exercised, and that with great diligence, as if it were in time of war, which is the reason why they bear the fatigues of battle so easily.” (Josephus, *The Jewish War*, Book III, Ch. 5).
  4. “This vast empire of theirs has come to them as the prize of valor, and not as a gift of fortune. For their nation does not wait for the outbreak of war to give men their first lesson in arms. They do not sit with folded hands in peace-time only to put them in motion in the hour of need. On the contrary, as though they had been born with weapons in hand, they never have a truce from training, never wait for emergencies to arise. Moreover their peace maneuvers are no less strenuous than veritable warfare. Each soldier daily throws all his energy into his drill, as though he were in action. Hence that perfect ease with which they sustain the shock of battle. No confusion breaks their customary formation, no panic paralyses, no fatigue exhausts them. And as their opponents cannot match these qualities, victory is the invariable and certain consequence. Indeed, it would not be wrong to describe their maneuvers as bloodless combats and their combats as sanguinary maneuvers ... By their military exercises the Romans instill into their soldiers fortitude not only of body but also of soul. Fear, too, plays its part in their training. For they have laws which punish with death not merely desertion of the ranks, but even a slight neglect of duty. And their generals are held in even greater awe than the laws ... This perfect discipline makes the army an ornament of peace-time and in war welds the whole into a single body — so compact are their ranks, so alert their movements in

wheeling to right or left, so quick their ears for orders, their eyes for signals, their hands to act upon them." (Josephus, *The Jewish War*, Book III, Ch. 5).

5. If only we could become as familiar with our weapon (Acts 17:11).
- B. What caused their military downfall and finally the downfall of Rome?
  1. Nearly all historians agree Rome brought about its own downfall.
  2. "It is the just and important observation of Vegetius, that the infantry was invariably covered with defensive armor, from the foundation of the city to the reign of the emperor Gratian. The relaxation of discipline, and the disuse of exercise, rendered the soldiers less able, and less willing, to support the fatigues of the service; they complained of the weight of the armor, which they seldom wore: and they successively obtained the permission of laying aside both their cuirasses and their helmets. The heavy weapons of their ancestors, the short sword, and the formidable pilum, which had subdued the world, insensibly dropped from their feeble hands. As the use of the shield is incompatible with that of the bow, they reluctantly marched into the field; condemned to suffer either the pain of wounds, or the ignominy of flight, and always disposed to prefer the more shameful alternative. The cavalry of the Goths, the Huns, and the Alani, had felt the benefits, and adopted the use, of defensive armor; and, as they excelled in the management of missile weapons, they easily overwhelmed the naked and trembling legions, whose heads and breasts were exposed, without defense, to the arrows of the barbarians. The loss of armies, the destruction of cities, and the dishonor of the Roman name, ineffectually solicited the successors of Gratian to restore the helmets and cuirasses of the infantry. The enervated soldiers abandoned their own, and the public defense; and the pusillanimous indolence may be considered as the immediate cause of the downfall of the empire." (Edward Gibbon, *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. III, pp. 271–272).
- C. Is the gospel armor too heavy for you?
  1. Do you "earnestly contending for the faith," or do you find yourself apologizing for it (Jude 3)?
  2. Our weapons are for pulling down strongholds (2 Cor. 10:3–5).
  3. We must attack the citadels of error—not just hold our own.
  4. When General MacArthur was called home from Korea he reminded congress that "wars very object is victory, not prolonged indecision."
- D. Sometimes brethren need a course in enemy recognition.
  1. Gun shows have trading cards from WWII to identify enemy armor.
  2. Jesus declared the man who is not with Him is against Him (Matt. 12:30).
  3. The Devil does not attack under his own banner; sometimes he advances under a flag of truce (2 Cor. 11:14).

*Invitation*

- I. The welfare of the cause of Christ depends upon your willingness to stand.
- II. Confederate General Thomas J. Jackson was one of the commanders at the first battle of Bull Run.
  - A. When both right and left flanks of the confederate army fell back, Jackson's troops held firm.
  - B. General Barnard S. Bee rallied his disorganized men with: "There is Jackson standing like a stone wall."
  - C. This did not mean that Jackson stood there useless like a stone statue—it meant that he and his men stood firm.
- III. Christians are engaged in a great spiritual warfare.
  - A. Sometimes we think we are waging war when all we are doing is running around and making a lot of noise.
  - B. We have to take a firm stand against the advancing enemies of truth.

# Authority In Religion

## Introduction

- I. Christianity is a religion of faith.
  - A. “For we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7).
  - B. “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Heb. 11:6).
  - C. “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17).
- II. Opinion is what men speculate when God is silent.
  - A. For example, you could ask, “What kind of fruit did Eve eat?”
  - B. Any answer you give is an opinion—God was silent on this matter!

## Discussion

- I. **It Is Possible To Worship God In Vain (Matt. 15:1–9)**
  - A. In this text, there are two undeniable facts:
    - 1. The Scribes and Pharisees were worshiping God.
    - 2. Their worship was in vain because God had not authorized their worship (Mark 7:1–4).
  - B. Is it sinful to wash your hands?
    - 1. Yes, if you bind hand washing as a religious rite!
    - 2. According to Jesus, any act, no matter how pure in itself, is sinful when performed as a religious rite when God has been silent.
    - 3. Worshipers today are condemned when they do not “walk by faith.”
  - C. God desires to be worshiped “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24).
- II. **Application Of Principle From God’s Dealings With Man**
  - A. The Scriptures teach that God rejects every attempt men make to worship Him when they do it in a way He has not commanded.
  - B. Saul in his war with the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15).
    - 1. The command came from God (1 Sam. 15:3).
    - 2. He obeyed in part (1 Sam 15:8–9).
    - 3. The confrontation with Samuel (1 Sam. 15:13–14).
    - 4. God demands obedience, not mere sacrifice (1 Sam. 15:19–23; Hos. 6:6, “For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings”).
  - C. Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1–2; Num. 3:4).
    - 1. It is not exactly clear what they did, except that they performed something God had not commanded.
    - 2. They might have been honest and sincere—yet they were destroyed.
  - D. The disobedient prophet (1 Kings 13).
    - 1. The command came from God (1 Kings 13:7–10).
    - 2. He was lied to by the old prophet (1 Kings 13:14–19).
    - 3. He received a penalty for believing a lie (1 Kings 13:20–28).
  - E. There are only two ways to treat the commands of God: obey or disobey.
    - 1. Obedience consists of doing what God has said—nothing more or less.
    - 2. Disobedience consists of any departure from God’s order.

### **III. We Are Not At Liberty To Add To The Word Of God**

- A. We must “abide in the doctrine of Christ” (2 John 9).
- B. The “thunderous” silence of God (Heb. 7:14; 8:4).
- C. Sincerity alone is not enough (Matt. 7:21–23; Acts 23:1).
- D. Harmless things can be made sinful (Matt. 15:1–9).

#### *Conclusion*

- I. Our God is indeed a God of love, but He is also a God of justice.
- II. God will not allow His words to be tampered with.
- III. Have you obeyed the gospel of Christ?
- IV. “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven” (Matt. 7:21).

# “In His Time”

## *Introduction*

- I. The Old Testament is a collection of 39 books written over of period of more than 1,000 years and has something for everyone.
  - A. It goes from the impassioned preaching of the prophets to the calm reflective reasoning of the wise.
  - B. From the stern commandments of the Levitical law to the love scene in the Song of Solomon.
  - C. No other book in the Bible compares with the tone of Ecclesiastes.
- II. The book of Ecclesiastes starts with the oft repeated phrase “Vanity of vanities,” which means “utter futility.”
  - A. All of the wise men of the Bible tell us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge (Prov. 1:7).
  - B. In Ecclesiastes Solomon reminds us of this when we are desperate for an answer to the question, “Why am I here?”
  - C. Ecclesiastes 1:12—2:25 takes us on a tour with Solomon in his quest for happiness, but we come back empty handed (Eccl. 2:1–11).
- III. Ecclesiastes 3:1–15 contains some of the best known words in the Bible.

## *Discussion*

### **I. Explanation Of Our Text**

- A. Our reaction to Ecc. 3:1–15 depends on where we are in life.
  1. “A time for all things.”
    - a) Most of these items we have no control over.
    - b) “A time to plant” is useless without a “time to harvest” (vs. 2).
    - c) There must be time to make money, but also time to spend what we have earned (vs. 6).
    - d) One man’s time of weeping is another’s time to die (vss. 2, 4).
    - e) Your time of silence is another’s time to speak (vs. 7).
  2. Many people hate change.
    - a) They want time to be frozen and thus they live in the past.
    - b) This has never been God’s plan.
- B. The trouble is not that things change, but rather that we only see a fraction of the movement at any one time.
  1. We are desperately nearsighted when we view life.
    - a) We see only a little at a time.
    - b) We are like a nearsighted person viewing a great tapestry—they can’t get back far enough to take it all in.
    - c) We can not stand back far enough to view things as our Creator does, for God sees the end from the beginning (Isa. 46:10).
  2. Instead of frozen perfection, our world is a kaleidoscope, with each period of time has its own character (Ecc. 3:11).

- C. Our very life is a gift from God, therefore we must make the most of it.
  - 1. A preacher asked a man at a funeral, “What did your brother get out of life?” The man answered, “600 acres of prime farm land, a new house and over \$500,000 in the bank.” The preacher replied, “No, that’s what you got out of his life, what did he get out of it?” The man replied, “We’re getting him a solid oak casket in the morning.”
  - 2. In this lesson, we want to notice that there is a proper time for everything, and we must use our time wisely (Eph. 5:15–16).

## **II. Parents Need To See The Value Of Time**

- A. It is amazing how fast our children grow up!
  - 1. We need to enjoy our children while we can, before they leave home.
  - 2. Some parents are so busy making a living they forget to make a life.
  - 3. What good is your money if you can not enjoy it?
- B. You will never regret the time spent with your children (an investment).
  - 1. Where will your children learn values? (Eph. 6:1–4).
  - 2. Look at the parents as a Cub Scout meeting—no one is there because of the great food at a cake sale.

## **III. Husbands And Wives Need To Learn To Use Time Wisely**

- A. Sociologists claim that one reason for the increasing number of divorces among middle age couples is that they built their lives around the children, then the children moved away from home.
  - 1. Husbands and wives must learn to enjoy each others company.
  - 2. They must think about compatibility before marriage.
- B. In Proverbs 1–7, Solomon admonishes the young man with many warnings given to flee adultery.
  - 1. His son is told to “rejoice with the wife of your youth” (Prov. 5:15–21).
  - 2. “When a man has taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war or be charged with any business; he shall be free at home one year, and bring happiness to his wife whom he has taken.” (Deut. 24:5).
  - 3. Some one once asked me why she did not hear more lessons on adultery, I told her that many folks would probably get upset if they lessons got to plain (Prov. 7:15–27).
    - a) Lessons from a harlot (attire, bedroom, perfume, flattery).
    - b) You belong to another (1 Cor. 7:2–5).
- C. Children need good parents, but they also need to see husbands and wives who are still madly in love with each other.
  - 1. Where else will they find an example of a godly couple?
  - 2. “The best way to be a good father to your children is to be a good husband to their mother.”

#### **IV. Young People Must Value Their Youth**

- A. You are only young once (Ecc. 11:9–12:7).
- B. There are many choices that you will have to make:
  - 1. A choice of friends (Prov. 1:8–19).
  - 2. A choice of your reputation.
  - 3. A choice as to whether you will serve God.
  - 4. A choice for your occupation.
  - 5. A choice for your mate.

#### **V. Christians Must Value Their Time**

- A. Babes in Christ are to grow (1 Pet. 2:1–2).
- B. There must be a period of growth before teaching others (Jas. 3:1).
  - 1. We don't need any more half-converted preachers.
  - 2. Like marriage: I try to discourage a young couple from getting married, until I see their minds are firmly made up.
- C. Growth is needed before men become elders (1 Tim. 3:6, "not a novice").

#### **VI. The Church Needs To Value Time**

- A. Growth comes with peace and edification (Acts 9:31).
- B. In order to grow, you have to cut off the deadwood (2 Thes. 3:6).

#### *Conclusion*

- I. We must learn to number our days (Psa. 90:1–12).
- II. Number your days so you may "gain a heart of wisdom."

# “Come And See”

## *Introduction*

- I. “The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, ‘Follow Me.’ Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, ‘We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.’ And Nathanael said to him, ‘Can anything good come out of Nazareth?’ Philip said to him, ‘Come and see.’” (John 1:43–46).
- II. Our Lord was teaching in the area of Galilee where He found and called Philip to follow Him.
  - A. Philip, like Andrew, could not keep the good news to himself.
  - B. He went and found his friend Nathanael and told him that he had discovered the long promised Messiah in Jesus, the man from Nazareth.
    1. Nathanael was contemptuous.
    2. There was nothing in the Old Testament which foretold that God’s Chosen One should come from Nazareth.
    3. Nazareth was a quite undistinguished place.
  - C. Nathanael’s reaction was to declare that Nazareth was not the kind of place that anything good was likely to come out of.
    1. Philip was wise—he did not argue.
    2. He said simply: “Come and see!”
- III. Not very many people have ever been argued into Christianity.
  - A. Often our arguments do more harm than good.
  - B. The best way to convince a man of the supremacy of Christ is to confront him with Christ.
  - C. On the whole it is true to say that it is not argumentative and philosophical preaching and teaching which have won men for Christ; it is the presentation of the story of the Cross.
- IV. Go back with me over 2,000 years to see the birth of Christ, and then follow me as we quickly note His life, example, teaching, mission and sacrifice.

## *Discussion*

- I. Come And See His Birth**
  - A. Prophesied by Isaiah (Isa. 7:14; 9:6–7).
  - B. Promised to Joseph (Matt. 1:21).
  - C. Born in Bethlehem of Judea (Luke 2:3–7; cf. Micah 5:2).
  - D. Announced to the shepherds (Luke 2:8–16).
  - E. Honored by the wise men from the East (Matt. 2:7–12, 16).
  
- II. Come And See His Life**
  - A. Born to poor parents (Luke 2:22–24; Lev. 12:8).
  - B. His visit to Jerusalem at age 12 (Luke 2:42–52).
  - C. He worked as a carpenter (Mark 6:3).
  - D. His baptism by John (Matt. 3:13–17).
  - E. He had no place of His own (Matt. 8:20).

### **III. Come And See His Example**

- A. He went about doing His Father's business (Luke 2:49).
- B. Loyalty to the Father's will (Luke 22:41–42).
- C. Humility in life and death (John 13:13–15; Phil. 2:5–8).
- D. He learned obedience (Heb. 5:8–9).
- E. He left us an example to be followed (1 Pet. 2:21–22).

### **IV. Come And See His Teaching**

- A. He used simple language; spoke parables about sheep, farming, fishing; the common people understood Him.
- B. His teaching came from God (John 12:49).
- C. He spoke of our duty to others (Matt. 7:12).
- D. His teaching was superior to Law (Matt. 5:21–28).
- E. He taught us to love our enemies (Matt. 5:43–48).

### **V. Come And See His Mission**

- A. He came to do His Father's will (John 6:38).
- B. Preached that the kingdom was near (Matt. 4:17).
- C. He came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10).
- D. He fulfilled the law (Matt. 5:17–18; John 17:4).
- E. He "ever lives" to make intercession for us (Heb. 7:25).

### **VI. Come And See His Sacrifice**

- A. Redemption from the bondage of sin (Col. 1:12–14; 1 Pet. 1:18–19).
- B. Gave His life as a ransom for many (Matt. 20:28).
- C. He laid down His life (John 15:13).
- D. He died for all men (Heb. 2:9).
- E. He purchased the church with His blood (Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:25).

#### *Invitation*

- I. What do you see when you see Jesus?
- II. I see the Son of God who left the glories of heaven to come to this sin-cursed earth—the one who gave His life as a ransom for many!

# The Compassion Of The Pharisees

## Introduction

- I. Compassion is one of the greatest characteristics of the human spirit.
  - A. Compassion is defined as a “Deep awareness of the suffering of another coupled with the wish to relieve it” (*American Heritage Dictionary*).
  - B. Webster defines the compassion as “sorrow for the sufferings or trouble of another, accompanied by an urge to help; deep sympathy; pitying” (*Webster’s New World Dictionary*).
- II. Our Lord was moved by compassion on many occasions.
  - A. Prior to feeding the five thousand (Matt. 14:14).
  - B. Prior to feeding the four thousand (Matt. 15:32).
  - C. Compassion towards a leper (Mark 1:41).
  - D. His compassion was shown to the widow of Nain who had lost her son (Luke 7:13).
  - E. His compassion was shown to the two blind men (Matt. 20:34).
  - F. His compassion caused Him to teach (Mark 6:34).
  - G. He is now our compassionate High Priest (Heb. 2:17–18; 4:14–16).
- III. Christians are commanded to be compassionate individuals.
  - A. We are to have compassion for one another (1 Pet. 3:8).
  - B. We are to have compassion for the lost (Jude 1:22–23).
- IV. As you study the New Testament there is one group of people who appear to be totally lacking in this great moral quality—the Pharisees.

## Discussion

- I. **The Pharisee And The Tax Collector (Luke 18:9–14)**
  - A. The devout Jew observed three prayer times daily (9 AM, noon and 3 PM).
  - B. Prayer was held to be specially efficacious if it was offered in the Temple and so at these hours many went up to the Temple courts to pray.
  - C. Let us look first at the Pharisee.
    1. He did not really go to pray to God—he prayed to himself.
    2. The Jewish law prescribed only one absolutely obligatory fast—that on the annual day of Atonement.
      - a) But those who wished to gain special merit fasted also on Mondays and Thursdays.
      - b) It is noteworthy that these were the market days when Jerusalem was full of country people.
      - c) Those who fasted whitened their faces and appeared in disheveled clothes, and those days gave their piety the biggest possible audience.
    3. Levites were to receive a tithe of all a man’s produce (Num. 18:21).
      - a) But this Pharisee tithed everything, even things which there was no obligation to tithe.
      - b) This was a common event in the first century (Matt. 23:23).
    4. His whole attitude was typical of the worst in Pharisaism.
  - D. Let us look at the tax-collector (publican).
    1. He stood afar off, and would not even lift his eyes to God.
    2. The KJV and RSV do not do justice to his humility for he actually prayed, “O God, be merciful to me *the sinner*,” as if he was not merely *a sinner*, but *the sinner par excellence*.

- E. True prayer comes from setting our lives beside the life of Christ.
  1. No doubt all that the Pharisee said was true—he did fast twice a week; he did meticulously give tithes; he was not as other men are; still less was he like that tax-collector.
  2. But the question is not, “Am I as good as my fellow-men”?
  3. The question is, “Am I as good as Christ”?
  4. It all depends what we compare ourselves with.
  5. And when we set our lives beside the life of Jesus and beside the holiness of God, all that is left to say is, “God be merciful to me—the sinner.”

## II. The Woman Caught In Adultery (John 8:1–11)

- A. The Pharisees were out to get some charge on which they could discredit Jesus; here they thought they had impaled Him on the horns of a dilemma.
- B. When a difficult legal question arose, the natural and routine thing was to take it to a Rabbi for a decision—so the scribes and Pharisees approached Jesus as a Rabbi with a woman taken in adultery.
- C. In the eyes of the Jewish law adultery was a serious crime.
  1. Adultery was punished by death (Lev. 20:10).
  2. From the purely legal point of view the scribes and Pharisees were perfectly correct—this woman was liable to death by stoning.
- D. The dilemma into which they sought to put Jesus was this: if He said that the woman ought to be stoned to death, two things followed:
  1. *First*, He would lose the name He had gained for love and for mercy and never again would be called the friend of sinners (cf. Luke 15:2).
  2. *Second*, He would come into collision with the Roman law, for the Jews had no power to pass or carry out the death sentence on anyone.
- E. If He said that the woman should be pardoned, it could immediately be said that He was teaching men to break the law of Moses, and that He was condoning and even encouraging people to commit adultery.
  1. That was the trap in which the scribes and Pharisees sought to entrap Jesus—but He turned their attack in such a way that it backfired.
  2. At first Jesus stooped down and wrote with his finger on the ground.
  3. The scribes and Pharisees continued to insist on an answer.
- F. Jesus said in effect: “All right! Stone her! But let the man that is without sin be the first to cast a stone.”
  1. It may well be that the word for “without sin” (Gr. *anamartitos*) means not only without sin, but even without a sinful desire.
  2. Jesus was saying: “Yes, you may stone her—but only if you never wanted to do the same thing yourselves.”
  3. There was a silence—and then slowly the accusers drifted away.
  4. So Jesus and the woman were left alone.
- G. This passage shows us two things about the attitude of the Pharisees.
  1. It shows us their conception of authority.
    - a) The scribes and the Pharisees were the legal experts of the day—to them problems were taken for decision.
    - b) It is clear that to them authority was characteristically critical, censorious and condemnatory.
    - c) That authority should be based on sympathy, that its aim should be to reclaim the criminal and the sinner, never entered their heads.

- d) They conceived of their function as giving them the right to stand over others like grim slave-masters, to watch for every mistake and every deviation from the law, and to descend on them with savage and unforgiving punishment; they never dreamed that it might lay upon them the obligation to cure the wrongdoer.
- e) There are still those who think Christianity gives them the right to judge the heart and motives of others and condemn them.
- 2. This incident shows the attitude of the Pharisees to the people.
  - a) They were not looking on this woman as a person at all; they were looking on her only as a thing, an instrument whereby they could formulate a charge against Jesus.
  - b) It is possible that the Pharisees did not know this woman's name.
  - c) To them she was nothing but a case of shameless adultery that could now be used as an instrument to suit their purposes.
- H. This incident tells us about Jesus and His attitude to the sinner.
  - 1. We must be willing to apply the same standard of judgment to others as we apply to ourselves (Matt. 7:1-5).
  - 2. Our first emotion towards one who has made a mistake should be pity.
- I. Notice how Jesus treated this woman.
  - 1. It is easy to draw the wrong lesson altogether and to gain the impression that Jesus forgave lightly and easily, as if the sin did not matter.
  - 2. It is as if Jesus said to the woman: "I know you have made a mess of things; but life is not finished yet; I am giving you another chance, the chance to redeem yourself."
    - a) In Jesus there is the gospel of the second chance.
    - b) He was always intensely interested, not only in what a person had been, but also in what a person could be.
    - c) He did not say that what they had done did not matter; broken laws and broken hearts always matter; but He was sure that every man has a future as well as a past.
  - 3. Jesus exhibited genuine pity.
    - a) The basic difference between Jesus and the scribes and Pharisees was that they wished to condemn; He wished to forgive.
    - b) If we read between the lines of this story it is quite clear that they wished to stone this woman to death and were going to take pleasure in doing so.
    - c) They knew the thrill of exercising the power to condemn; Jesus knew the thrill of exercising the power to forgive.
  - 4. Jesus gave this woman a challenge.
    - a) Jesus confronted this woman with the challenge of the sinless life.
    - b) He did not say: "It's alright; don't worry; just go on as you are doing."
    - c) He said: "It's all wrong; go out and fight; change your life from top to bottom; go, and sin no more."
    - d) Here was no easy forgiveness; here was a challenge which pointed a sinner to heights of goodness of which she had never dreamed.

### III. The Sinful Woman (Luke 7:36–48)

- A. The scene is the courtyard of the house of Simon the Pharisee.
1. The houses of well-to-do people were built round an open courtyard in the form of a hollow square.
  2. Often in the courtyard there would be a garden and a fountain; and there in the warm weather meals were eaten.
  3. It was the custom that when a Rabbi was at a meal in such a house, all kinds of people came in—they were quite free to do so—to listen to the pearls of wisdom which fell from his lips.
  4. That explains the presence of the woman.
- B. When a guest entered such a house three things were always done.
1. *First*, the host placed his hand on the guest's shoulder and gave him the kiss of peace.
    - a) That was a mark of respect which was never omitted in the case of a distinguished Rabbi.
    - b) Judas betrayed Jesus with such a kiss (Matt. 26:48–49).
  2. *Second*, cool water was poured over the guest's feet to cleanse and comfort them.
  3. *Third*, either a pinch of sweet-smelling incense was burned or a drop of rose oil was placed on the guest's head.
  4. These things good manners demanded, and in this case not one of them was done.
- C. In the east the guests did not sit, but reclined, at a table.
1. They lay on low couches, resting on the left elbow, leaving the right arm free, with the feet stretched out behind; and during the meal the sandals were taken off.
  2. That explains how the woman was standing beside Jesus' feet.
- D. Simon was a Pharisee, one of the separated ones—why should such a man invite Jesus to his house at all? There are three possible reasons:
1. It is just possible that he was an admirer and a sympathizer, for not all the Pharisees were Jesus' enemies (cf. Luke 13:31).
    - a) But the whole atmosphere of discourtesy makes that unlikely.
  2. It could be that Simon had invited Jesus with the deliberate intention of enticing Him into some word or action which might have been made the basis of a charge against Him.
  3. Most likely, Simon was a collector of celebrities; and with a half-patronizing contempt he had invited this startling young Galilean to have a meal with him.
    - a) That would best explain the strange combination of a certain respect with the omission of the usual courtesies.
    - b) Simon was a man who tried to patronize Jesus.
- E. The woman was a bad woman—a notoriously bad woman—a prostitute.
1. No doubt she had listened to Jesus speak from the edge of the crowd and had glimpsed in Him the hand which could lift her from the mire of her ways.
  2. Around her neck she wore, like all Jewish women, a little vial of concentrated perfume; they were called alabasters (very costly).
  3. She wished to pour it on His feet, for it was all she had to offer—but as she saw Him the tears came and fell upon His feet.

- F. The story demonstrates a contrast between two attitudes of mind and heart.
  1. Simon was conscious of no need and therefore felt no love, and so received no forgiveness.
  2. Simon's impression of himself was that he was a good man in the sight of men and of God.
  3. The woman was conscious of nothing else than a pressing need, and therefore was overwhelmed with love for Him who could supply it, and so received forgiveness.
- G. The one thing which shuts a man off from God is self-sufficiency—Paul could speak of sinners “of whom I am chief” (1 Tim. 1:15).

#### **IV. Are You More Like Jesus Or The Pharisees?**

- A. Are you compassionate towards the lost?
  1. Do you see those lost in sin as individuals who have been blinded by Satan and his devices? (2 Cor. 4:3).
  2. Do you mourn over their sins and try teach them? (Rom. 10:1–3).
- B. Do you have compassion towards your brethren when they sin?
  1. Does your compassion move you to warn them? (Acts 20:31).
  2. Do you mourn when a brother leaves the Lord? (1 Cor. 5:1–13).
- C. How do you treat those who fall away and then come back to God?
  1. Do we allow them to be swallowed up with sorrow? (2 Cor. 2:1–7).
  2. Do we “reaffirm” our love towards them? (2 Cor. 2:8).
- D. Sometimes Christians allow the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh or the pride of life to drive them away from God (cf. 1 John 2:16).
  1. And like the prodigal son, they sink in the mire of sin—they are stained with the shame and guilt that sin brings (cf. Luke 15:11–24).
  2. And sometimes, like the prodigal son, they “come to themselves” and realize what a mess they have made of their lives and they determine to come back to their Heavenly Father.
  3. How you treat those who come back to God speaks volumes about your compassion—it reveals you to be a follower of Jesus Christ or a modern day Pharisee.
  4. I am convinced that there are Christians who rejoice when other people fall into sin—maybe it takes the heat off of their own family problems.
  5. Sometimes as people are trying to rebuild a life and reputation that has been wrecked and ravaged by sin, other Christians do their best to discourage and destroy them!
  6. Sometimes a person comes forward to make a public confession of sin and some busybody wants to know all of the details.
  7. Apparently, some people think that there is a cooler spot in hell reserved for the gossip than there is for the adulterer!

#### *Conclusion*

- I. Does the degree of compassion in your life make you more like your Master or the Pharisees? (Matt. 7:15–20).
- II. If you are not a Christian, please heed the words of Jesus (Matt. 11:28–30).

# The Conversion Of Cornelius

## Introduction

- I. I believe with all my heart that the gospel is universal in application, and intended for all races, classes and conditions of humanity (Rom. 1:16–17).
  - A. It is intended to reach down to lowest depths of degradation and despair.
  - B. Also intended for the very best man this nation affords, morally speaking.
- II. I want look at a prominent man, known throughout the country in which he lived and against whom very few things could be said—his name is Cornelius, and his story is found in Acts 10 and 11.

## Discussion

### I. Character (Acts 10:1, 2, 22)

- A. Many today would think it strange that he needed to do anything in order to be saved from his sins.
- B. People today might be honest, honorable, prayerful, generous, with hearts open to the poor—what do they have to fear at the hands of a just and merciful God?
- C. Cornelius was told four times that he needed to “hear words” in order to be saved (Acts 10:6, 22, 32, 11:14).

### II. Appearance of the Angel (Acts 10:3–6)

- A. How many preachers in this town would question his salvation?
- B. Though an angel had spoken and God heard prayers, he must yet hear words from another man’s lips before he will be saved.
- C. The angel to did not appear to convert him, to preach to him or change his heart in any way.
- D. The humility of Cornelius is shown (Acts 10:6).
- E. Did not inquire if he could be saved in some other way.

### III. The Messenger : The Apostle Peter (Acts 10:9–18)

- A. Our scene changes from Caesarea to Joppa, some thirty miles away.
- B. The Lord prepares Peter for a favorable reception of the servants of Cornelius (cf. Acts 10:17).
- C. While Cornelius was waiting he called for his friends (Acts 10:24, 33).

### IV. The Sermon Peter Preached, But Not In Order (Acts 10:34–35)

- A. In the introduction of the sermon we find a positive declaration that God respects not persons, but character—to fear Him and work righteousness is the ground of acceptability.
- B. Acts 11:15 “As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them...”
  - 1. Weymouth, “No sooner had I begun to speak...”
  - 2. NIV, “Just as I was starting to speak...”
  - 3. Moffatt, “Now just as I began to speak...”
  - 4. Living Bible, “But just as I was getting started...”

- C. The Holy Spirit came upon Cornelius and his household. Why?
  - 1. He did not preach the needed words.
  - 2. If Cornelius was saved when the Spirit came, he was saved before Peter's sermon, therefore he was saved before faith.
  - 3. "So then faith comes by hearing..." (Rom. 10:17).
- D. Speaking by the Spirit of God does not prove salvation.
  - 1. Saul, while seeking to kill David, had the Spirit of God upon him, and did what Cornelius did—spoke by the Spirit (1 Sam. 19:21–23).
  - 2. Balaam's donkey spoke by the Spirit (Num. 22:28).
  - 3. Caiaphas prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation.
    - a) God used this unregenerate man to speak (John 11:51; 2 Pet. 1:20–21).
    - b) Caiaphas was a persecutor of the church (Acts 4:6).
- E. The Spirit proved that the Gentiles could be saved (Acts 11:15–18).
- F. Ten years later, in Peter's final words in Acts, he told how the Gentiles would be saved in the same manner as the Jews (Acts 15:7–11)
- G. Remission of sins through His name (Acts 10:43; cf. Matt. 28:18–19).
  - 1. "And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days." (Acts 10:48).
  - 2. In harmony with Peter's first sermon (Acts 2:38–39; Luke 24:47).

#### *Conclusion*

- I. I repeat what I said at the start: no man will be saved by morality alone.
  - A. They have to heard words (Matt. 28:18).
  - B. I pray you would follow the steps of Cornelius, obey commands of God.
- II. If you are waiting for an angel to come, eternity will find you still unprepared.
  - A. Angels no long come, we have the word of God.
  - B. "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12).
- III. If you are waiting for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, you will die disappointed.
  - A. Only two cases in world history (Acts 2 and 10).
  - B. The purpose of Holy Spirit baptism has been fulfilled.
- IV. If Christ were visibly present today, would point you to His word (Heb. 5:8–9).
- V. We are saved, not by the appearance of an angel, the baptism of Holy Spirit, nor by miracles, but by humble, loving, trusting obedience to authority of God.

# The Deity Of Christ

## Introduction

- I. Consider the events of Matthew 16:13–20.
  - A. Public opinion was confused the identity of Jesus—yet Peter boldly declared Him to be “the Christ, the Son of the living God.”
  - B. How did the Father reveal to Peter the identity of Christ?
- II. We must all answer the question, “Who is Jesus of Nazareth?”
  - A. If you were present on this occasion listening to this Galilean carpenter, would you have boldly confessed Him as the Son of God?
  - B. Even His brothers doubted for a while (Matt. 13:53–58; John 7:1–5).
  - C. How would you form your opinion?
  - D. There are several ways you could have known His true identity.

## Discussion

### I. The Prophecies He Fulfilled

- A. “You search the scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of me” (John 5:39).
  1. Over 300 prophecies were made about him.
  2. The Septuagint was translated 285–246 B.C. —copies were in the library at Alexandria in Egypt.
- B. Look at a few of the prophecies:
  1. Isa. 7:14—fulfilled in Matt. 1:22 (born of a virgin).
  2. Micah 5:2—fulfilled in Matt. 2:5–6 (Bethlehem).
  3. Hosea 11:1—fulfilled in Matt. 2:15 (called out of Egypt).
  4. Jer. 31:15—fulfilled in Matt. 2:16–18 (slaughter of children).
  5. Isa. 40:3—fulfilled in Matt. 3:1–3 (preceded by a messenger).
  6. Isa. 9:1–2—fulfilled in Matt. 4:12–16 (Galilean ministry).
  7. Isa. 53:4—fulfilled in Matt. 8:16–17 (took our infirmities).
  8. Psa. 78:2—fulfilled in Matt. 13:34–35 (taught by parables).

### II. Testimony Of John The Baptist (John 1:19–34)

- A. John was not the Christ (John 1:20).
  1. John did not know Jesus as the Messiah (John 19:31).
- B. Was not Elijah— God promised to send Elijah back (Mal. 4:5).
  1. Jesus said “this is Elijah, that is to come” (Matt. 11:11–14).
  2. He came in the Spirit and power of Elijah (Luke 1:13–17).
- C. Was not “that Prophet” (cf. Deut. 18:18; John 6:14).
- D. He was the voice crying in the wilderness (Isa. 40:3).
- E. “You have sent to John, and he bore witness to the truth” (John 5:33).

### III. Miracles Christ Performed

- A. His fame went throughout all of Galilee (Matt. 4:23–25).
  1. Galilee was 63 miles long and 33 miles wide—it had 240 towns and about 3 million residents.
  2. Caravans passing through Galilee would carry the reports of Jesus.
- B. The miracles were a greater witness than John himself (John 5:31–36).

#### **IV. The Testimony Of The Father**

- A. At His baptism (Matt. 3:13–17).
- B. Later, on the mount of transfiguration (Matt. 17:1–5).

#### **V. The Resurrection From The Grave**

- A. “declared to be the Son of God with power” (Rom. 1:3–4).
- B. The very foundation of the gospel (1 Cor. 15:1–4).

#### *Conclusion*

- I. Jesus Christ: Liar, Lunatic or the Son of God?
  - A. You have to pick one!
  - B. He can not be just “a good man.”
- II. If He is God’s Son, the promised Messiah, we must listen to Him (Heb. 1:1–2).

# Opening The Door Of Faith

## Introduction

- I. The first missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas is recorded in Acts 13—14.
  - A. The Holy Spirit sent them out from Antioch of Syria (Acts 13:1–3).
  - B. Sailing from Selucia they journeyed to the isle of Cyprus, where they preached to the Jews in the Synagogue (Acts 13:4–12).
    1. They preached to a Roman Proconsul, Sergius Paulus.
    2. Elymas the sorcerer was struck blind.
  - C. At Antioch of Pisidia they preached first to the Jews in the synagogue and then to the Gentiles in the city, and “the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region” (Acts 13:49).
  - D. At Iconium they again had the opportunity to preach the both Jews and Gentiles (Acts 14:1–7).
  - E. At Lystra the apostles were mistaken for gods and the people of the city attempted to worship them (Acts 14:8–18).
    1. Jews from Antioch tried to kill Paul (Acts 14:19).
    2. Paul and Barnabas departed for Derbe (Acts 14:20).
    3. After preaching in Derbe, “they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, ‘We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.’” (Acts 14:21–22).
    4. Elders were appointed at various congregations (Acts 14:23).
  - F. “And after they had passed through Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia. Now when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had completed. And when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had *opened the door of faith* to the Gentiles.” (Acts 14:24–27).
- II. The phrase “opened the door of faith” is interesting.
  - A. “God had furnished an opportunity of preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles, and the preaching had met with success beyond any heretofore made in conversion of the Gentiles. ‘Open doors’—a characteristic expression of Paul—speaks of abundant opportunities and great progress.” (Gareth Reese, *A Commentary on the Book of Acts*, p. 524).
  - B. Paul uses similar phrases in other passages:
    1. “Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ’s gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord...” (2 Cor. 2:12).
    2. “For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries” (1 Cor. 16:9).
    3. “...praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ...” (Col. 4:3).
    4. In similar tones, Paul asked the brethren at Thessalonica to “pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified, just as it is with you...” (2 Thes. 3:1).
  - C. Paul looked for opportunities to preach the gospel wherever he went—what can we learn from his example?

## *Discussion*

### **I. Pray For Opportunities**

- A. Paul prayed for further opportunities (Col. 4:3; 2 Thes. 3:1).
- B. Paul used every opportunity he had (Phil. 1:12–14; 4:23).
- C. Brethren sometimes pray, “Lord, wear us out in Thy service.”
  - 1. If they would get ready, the Lord will do His part.
  - 2. The problem is, people often pray for things they don’t want.

### **II. Use The Opportunities You Receive**

- A. We will give account of opportunities squandered (Matt. 25:14–30).
- B. For decades in this country brethren prayed for the opportunity to preach the gospel behind the Iron Curtain.
  - 1. We got what we prayed for when the wall was torn down.
  - 2. However, many of those who prayed for the opportunity refused to support those who journeyed to the former Communist countries.
  - 3. The opportunity was short-lived in many respects—the door has begun to shut in many areas due to changing political situations.

### **III. Continue To Look For Further Opportunities**

- A. After his success in preaching to the Ethiopian nobleman, Phillip “was found at Azotus. And passing through, he preached in all the cities till he came to Caesarea” (Acts 8:40).
- B. After preaching to those in Thessalonica and the noble Bereans, Paul went to Athens and “his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols” (Acts 17:16).
- C. We can not rest upon our past accomplishments (Phil. 3:13–14).

### **IV. Our Present Opportunities**

- A. Our age has given us opportunities unheard of in prior generations.
- B. The printed word.
  - 1. Printing presses and moveable type have only been available for a little over 500 years, since the days of Guttenberg.
  - 2. For the past 50 years churches have had the opportunity to preach the gospel by means of bulletins and tracts.
  - 3. We also print most of our own tracts and class books.
  - 4. On our Web site people can read all of our bulletin articles, download and print the same class books we use here and view photographs from many of the cities of the Bible world I have placed on the Web.

## *Conclusion*

- I. Are you using every opportunity the Lord has given you?
- II. Have you used the opportunity you have to become one of God’s children?

# “For I Am God”

## *Introduction*

- I. Our text for today: “Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other” (Isa. 45:22).
- II. Have you ever considered that period of time when Jehovah dwelt alone, without any of the works of His creation?
  - A. There was a time before the sun ever gave its light and warmth.
  - B. There was a time before the stars and constellations floated in the sky.
  - C. There was a time when all that you and I can now see was yet unborn, slumbering in the mind of an eternal God.
  - D. Prior to the creation of the sun, the moon, the stars and the planets of the Milky Way, there was a God, and He was blessed forever.
  - E. Even though no angels yet hymned His praises, He sat as a King on His throne—the mighty God, the everlasting Father.
- III. For a time God dwelt by Himself in solemn silence (Psa. 90:2).
  - A. In the process of time it pleased the Father to create this world and all things therein (Col. 1:16–17).
  - B. Have you ever considered how infinitely inferior we are to Him?
  - C. “But now, O Lord, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You our potter; and all we are the work of Your hand” (Isa. 64:8).
  - D. It has been one of the chief objects of our God to teach mankind that He is God, and beside Him there is no other.
  - E. Hezekiah said: “O Lord God of Israel, the One who dwells between the cherubim, You are God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth.” (2 Kings 19:15; cf. Isa 37:16).
- IV. In this lesson we want to examine how God has been teaching this great lesson to the world throughout human history.

## *Discussion*

- I. **God Has Taught This Lesson To Idolaters**
  - A. Man has often set up a block of wood and stone to be his maker.
    1. He fashioned a tree into a image made like mortal man, or the fish of the sea, or creeping things of the earth (Rom. 1:22–23).
    2. He then prostrated his body before the creature of his hands—calling it god, while it had neither eyes to see, nor hands to feel, nor ears to hear.
  - B. Where are those gods before whom the multitudes of Nineveh once prostrated themselves?
    1. You would have to ask moles and snakes, because those gods are now buried beneath mounds of dirt and clay.
    2. Or, you could go to a museum and see them there, and smile to think that men should have ever bowed before such gods such as these.
    3. “The Lord has given a command concerning you: ‘Your name shall be perpetuated no longer. Out of the house of your gods I will cut off the carved image and the molded image. I will dig your grave, for you are vile.’” (Nahum 1:14).

- C. Where are the gods of Persia?
  1. Where are they?
  2. The fires of their altars are quenched, and the memory of them has nearly passed away from the face of the earth.
- D. Where are the gods of Greece?
  1. Those gods who were once adored with poetry and hymned in the most sublime odes.
  2. Who talks of them now? Only those in the halls of academia, as they study long forgotten relics of the past.
  3. Where is Zeus, the god of sky, weather, thunder and lightning?
  4. Where is Nike, the winged goddess of victory?
  5. Where is Athena, the warrior-goddess who was the embodiment of wisdom and the protectress of Athens?
  6. Who now stands before Jupiter or bows before Saturn?
- E. Where are the gods of Rome?
  1. Does Janus, the god who supposedly hovered over households, now command any temple?
  2. Can you now find the priests of Jove?
  3. Where is Bacchus, the god of grapes and wine?
  4. Are there any now that bow before these gods?
  5. No! They have lost their thrones.
- F. Ask the inhabitants of China and Polynesia where are the gods before whom they once bowed?
  1. They are cast down from their thrones and hurled from their once sacred pedestals.
  2. Their chariots are broken, their scepters are burnt in the fire, and their glories have departed.
- G. Jehovah has given Himself the victory over false gods, and taught their worshippers that He is God, and that beside Him there is no other.
  1. Are there other gods who are still worshipped today, or idols before which the nations fall?
  2. Yes! Wait just a little while and you shall see them fall.
  3. God will teach all men that He is God, and that there is none else.

## II. God Has Taught This Lesson To Empires

- A. Great empires have risen up, and have been the gods of their era.
  1. Kings and princes have taken upon themselves high titles, and have been worshipped by multitudes.
  2. But ask these empires now whether there is any beside Jehovah?
- B. God taught the Egyptians that he was God (Exo. 7:4–5; 12:12).
  1. “The Egyptians considered sacred the lion, the ox, the ram, the wolf, the dog, the cat, the ibis, the vulture, the falcon, the hippopotamus, the crocodile, the cobra, the dolphin, different varieties of fish, trees, and small animals including the frog, scarab, locust and other insects.” (John Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt*, p. 95).
  2. But where is Amon-Re, the supreme god of Egypt? His temple in Karnak now lies in ruins.
  3. Where is Isis, the mother goddess of fertility and nature?
  4. Where is Osiris (the husband of Isis), the god of the dead and of the underworld? Osiris represented the resurrection into eternal life and caused the Egyptians to embalm their dead.

5. Where is Horus, the god of light—the god represented as a falcon-headed man wearing a sun disk as a crown?
  6. Where is Ptah, the chief god of Memphis, the one whom they believed created the moon, the sun, and the earth?
- C. Consider the boastings of Babylon.
1. She who was great among the nations—where is she now?
  2. You could go to Iraq and stand upon the mounds that once housed some of the most feared armies of the world—but it is now covered in sand and forgotten by time.
- D. You could stand upon the mounds of ancient Nineveh.
1. Let those hidden ruins remind you that there is but one God and empires sink before Him.
  2. There is only one Potentate, and the princes and kings of the earth, with their dynasties and thrones, are shaken by His foot.
- E. Go find a seat in the ancient temples of Greece and recall the proud words of Alexander the Great; but where is he now, and where is his empire?
- F. Sit on the ruined arches of the bridge of Carthage, or walk through the empty theaters of Rome and you will hear a solemn voice amid those ruins, “I am God, and there is no other.”

### III. God Has Taught This Lesson To Monarchs

- A. Nebuchadnezzar had to learn this lesson the hard way.
1. Can you not picture him with the crown on his head and his purple robe over his shoulders as he walks through proud Babylon?
  2. Daniel had already told him the God “changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings” (Dan. 2:21).
  3. What a journey he had to make! (Dan. 4:1–37).
  4. Nebuchadnezzar had to learn that (Dan. 4:35).
- B. Herod Agrippa I was smitten by an angel of the Lord in the theater built by Herod the Great (Acts 12:20–23).
1. “Now, when Agrippa had reigned three years over all Judea, he came to the city Caesarea, which was formerly called Strato’s Tower; and there he exhibited shows in honor of Caesar, upon his being informed that there was a certain festival celebrated to make vows for his safety. At which festival, a great multitude was gotten together of the principal persons, and such as were of dignity through his province. On the second day of which shows he put on a garment made wholly of silver, and of a contexture truly wonderful, and came into the theater early in the morning; at which time the silver of his garment being illuminated by the fresh reflection of the sun’s rays upon it, shone out after a surprising manner, and was so resplendent as to spread a horror over those that looked intently upon him; and presently his flatterers cried out, one from one place, and another from another (though not for his good), that he was a god; and they added, ‘Be thou merciful to us; for although we have hitherto revered thee only as a man, yet shall we henceforth own thee as superior to mortal nature.’ Upon this the king did neither rebuke them, nor reject their impious flattery.” (Josephus, *Antiq.* 19.8.2).
  2. Josephus said Herod died after five days of suffering.
  3. God humbles the proud and abases the mighty.

- C. Think of the fall of the Soviet Union—we saw old dynasties tremble and gray-haired dictators driven from their palaces.
  - 1. We watched president Ronald Reagan stand in front of the Berlin Wall and say, “Mr. Gorbachev, tear this wall down.”
  - 2. Then in November of 1989 we sat by our televisions and watched the cranes dismantle that wall that had separated East from West for more than a generation, and they toppled the statues of Stalin and Lenin.
  - 3. It was as though we saw Jehovah put His foot upon land and sea, and with His hands uplifted cry—“Hear you people of the earth! I am God, and beside me there is no other.”

#### **IV. God Has Taught This Lesson To Wise Men Of The World**

- A. There have been those who sought to set themselves up in the place of God; one of the greatest enemies of Deity has been the wisdom of men.
- B. The wisdom of man does not see God (1 Cor. 1:18–25).
  - 1. But have you not noticed, in reading history, how God has abased the pride of wisdom?
  - 2. There have been many mighty and gifted men who thought that their system of wisdom would be taught forever.
- C. The mighty thoughts of Socrates are now all but utterly forgotten.
  - 1. Even a young child in grade school today would laugh at the “wisdom” of Socrates.
  - 2. And to the “wisdom” of Socrates, we could add Aristotle and Plato.
- D. One century passes and another century comes and a new set of philosophers rise up to refute their predecessors.
  - 1. At one time Sigmund Freud, a man who described himself as “a completely godless Jew,” was considered to possess one of the greatest minds on earth, is now repudiated by so many great centers of learning.
  - 2. And, in our day, we have great and wise men who believe they have obtained the truth—but within fifty years a man will be thought a fool that was ever connected with them.
  - 3. Systems of philosophy pass away like the morning dew before the sun, for Jehovah says, “I am God, and beside me there is no other.”
- E. The Bible is like a stone that breaks into pieces human philosophy—it is like a battering ram against the thin walls of humanism (cf. Dan. 2:44–45).

#### **V. Sometimes God’s Own People Have To Learn This Same Lesson**

- A. We who have been made the objects of God’s grace are perhaps the most likely to forget this great truth, that He is God, and that beside Him there is no other.
- B. The Jews in the promised land forgot this lesson and bowed before other gods, and therefore Jehovah brought against them kings and nations.
  - 1. During the period of the judges “they forgot the Lord their God, and served the Baals and Asherahs” (Judges 3:7).
  - 2. Israel forgot Jehovah and was carried away into Babylon.
  - 3. What Israel did, we often do as well, i.e., forget that He is God, and beside Him there is none else.

- C. Sometimes we are like the ones that James mentioned (James 4:13–15).
  - 1. God teaches His people every day, by sickness, by affliction, by trials, by the loss of the joys of His countenance, that He is God, and that beside Him there is none else.
  - 2. Ananias and Sapphira had to learn this lesson (Acts 5:1–11).

*Invitation*

- I. Go back to our text once again: “Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other” (Isa. 45:22).
  - A. God does not tell you to look to some priest or some preacher to be saved.
  - B. God does not tell you to look to yourself to be saved.
- II. We must look “unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2).
  - A. From the cross of Calvary, where the bleeding hands of Jesus drop mercy; from the garden of Gethsemane, where our Savior sweats great drops of blood, we hear Him say, “Look unto Me and be saved.”
  - B. Look no longer to Moses—look no longer to Sinai.
  - C. Come to Calvary, and to Calvary’s Lamb.

*(Based upon a sermon by Charles Spurgeon)*

# Forgiveness

## Introduction

- I. It would be hard to image a more important nor desirable characteristic of the human heart than forgiveness.
- II. Giving, thanksgiving and forgiving are usually found together.
- III. The disciples questioned our Lord about this matter (Luke 17:1–10).

## Discussion

### I. All Of Us Sin (Luke 17:1–2)

- A. Jesus addresses His disciples and warns them against of the danger that their example, words or attitude might do spiritual harm to others.
  1. Especially would this be true concerning weaker disciples.
  2. Think of how fragile the former publicans and prostitutes might be.
- B. So terrible is the punishment for the offender that it would be better for him, *before he offends anyone*, to die a violent death.
  1. Jesus is not advocating suicide.
  2. Jesus is teaching the criminality of causing anyone to fall into sin through our life or attitude.
- C. All Christians know that all Christians sin (1 John 1:5–2:2).
  1. There is no use in trying to convince anyone otherwise.
  2. The difference between the Christian and the non-Christian is the way we handle sin in our lives.
    - a) The non-Christian goes to a Freudian psychologist to get his conscience seared and his guilt removed.
    - b) The Christian repents, confesses and his guilt is removed by the knowledge his sins are forgiven.
- D. We must not be a partaker of other people’s sins (1 Tim. 5:22, “Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people’s sins...”).
  1. We must not bid “God speed” to false teachers (2 John 10–11).
  2. Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–11).

### II. Conditions Of Forgiveness (Luke 17:3–4)

- A. Just as it was necessary for His disciples not to put obstructions in the way of others, so it was necessary for them to be forgiving towards those who have sinned against them.
- B. Forgiveness is not a matter of weakness on our part—we must first rebuke the one who has sinned and call attention to his wrong.
  1. “Rebuke” (Gr. *epitimaō*) “to object to one as blamable; to blame, reprove, to find fault with” (*Liddell and Scott*, p. 263).
  2. “Rebuke” (Gr. *epitimaō*) “to tax with fault, rate, chide, rebuke, reprove, censure severely” (*Thayer*, p. 245).
- C. The condition for forgiveness is that a man must *repent*.
  1. Repentance carries with it evidences which the world cannot question.
  2. Repentance is vain unless we bring forth fruits worthy of it (Matt. 3:8).
  3. Confession of sins (1 John 1:9).
  4. Those at Ephesus repented by burning their books (Acts 19:18–20).
  5. Philippian jailer showed his repentance (Acts 16:33–34).

6. Under the Law, God demanded restitution (Num. 5:6–8; Lev. 6:1–7).
    - a) Zacchaeus is a good example (Luke 19:8–9).
    - b) The golden rule (Matt. 7:12, “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets”).
    - c) If a man steals from me, I want it back.
  7. Some brethren think they are more merciful than God by “forgiving” another whether they repent or not.
  8. “Forgiveness” without genuine repentance does far more harm than good—for the offender now thinks he is right with God.
- D. “You **shall** forgive him.”
1. It’s not *may*, but *shall*—it is not an optional matter.
  2. Forgiveness involves three things:
    - a) I won’t raise the matter to the offender again.
    - b) I won’t tell others about the sin.
    - c) I won’t dwell on them in my own mind.
- E. Forgiveness leads to forgetting.
1. Use an English dictionary to define “forget.”
    - a) To be unable to remember (something).
    - b) To treat with thoughtless inattention; neglect: forget one’s family.
    - c) To leave behind unintentionally.
    - d) To fail to mention.
  2. When I speak of “forgiving and forgetting,” it is the last three definitions I have in mind.
    - a) Technically, we may be able to recall the offense to our minds.
    - b) But for all practical purposes, we so disregard the offense that it is “out of mind.”
  3. “If I say, ‘Yes, I forgive, but I cannot forget,’ as though the God, who twice a day washes all the sands on all shores of all the world, could not wash such memories from my mind, then I know nothing of Calvary love.” (Amy Carmichael).
- F. Every time a brother repents, each new offense is to be regarded as his first—we are not to keep score!
- a) The Jewish Rabbis had a saying that if one forgave another three times he was a perfect man.
  - b) Jewish goes far beyond the Rabbinic tradition.
- G. We forgive because we have been forgiven (Matt. 18:21–35).
1. “That is an incredible debt. It was more than the total budget of the ordinary province. The total revenue of the province which contained Idumaea, Judaea and Samaria was only 600 talents; the total revenue of even a wealthy province like Galilee was only 300 talents. Here was a debt which was greater than a king’s ransom.” (William Barclay, *Matthew*, Vol. II, p. 194).
  2. “Suppose they were paid in sixpences. The 100 denarii debt could be carried in one pocket. The ten thousand talent debt would take to carry it an army of about 8,600 carriers, each carrying a sack of sixpences 60 lbs. in weight; and they would form, at a distance of a yard apart, a line five miles long! The contrast between the debts is staggering.” (A. R. S. Kennedy).

### III. **It Is Not A Matter Of Faith, But Of Duty (Luke 17:5–10)**

- A. This command impressed the disciples profoundly with the severe demands made upon them, and they requested greater faith to meet the challenge.
  - 1. This is the only example in the Gospels where the Apostles ever requested anything from the Lord.
  - 2. The Savior replied that it was not the amount of faith, but the right kind of faith—a vigorous, living faith.
- B. Forgiving another is not a matter of faith, but of duty (Luke 17:10).
- C. If our attitude is not right we will be lost (John 8:1–11).
  - 1. The scribes and Pharisees were cold hearted, religious individuals.
    - a) The meanest people I have ever met were religious people!
    - b) The scribes and Pharisees did not bring the man in.
  - 2. Some Christians go out looking for who they can find in sin.
  - 3. We preach on hell, but with tears in our eyes (Matt. 23:37”).

#### *Conclusion*

- I. When we truly contemplate the love, mercy, and forgiveness that God has shown us in Christ Jesus it is indeed possible to forgive and forget—at least in the sense of removing it from the attention of our minds.
- II. “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” (Matt. 6:14–15).
  - A. Have we allowed the mercy of God to melt our hearts?
  - B. Have we even accepted the mercy of God into our lives by obeying Christ?

# Paul's Joy In Christ

## *Introduction*

- I. The city of Philippi is located in modern day Greece, on a plain about 10 miles inland from the Aegean Sea.
  - A. The Egnatian Way, main overland route between Asia and the West, ran through this ancient city.
  - B. In 356 B.C. it was seized by Philip of Macedonia, the father of Alexander.
  - C. In 42 B.C. Mark Antony and Octavian (later Augustus Caesar) combined forces to defeat the armies of Brutus and Cassius, the assassins of Julius Caesar, at Philippi.
  - D. In celebration of the victory, Philippi was made into a Roman colony; this entitled its inhabitants to the rights and privileges usually granted to those who lived in the cities of Italy.
  - E. Eleven years later, Octavian defeated the forces of Antony and Cleopatra in a naval battle at Actium, on the west coast of Greece.
  - F. Octavian punished supporters of Antony by evicting them from Italy and resettling them in Philippi.
- II. The Lord's church at Philippi was established by Paul on his second evangelistic journey in about 52 A.D.
  - A. He had set out from Antioch of Syria and had traveled by land to revisit the churches which he had planted on his first journey.
  - B. Luke records that Timothy had joined him at Lystra (Acts 16:1–10).
  - C. They sailed from Troas, and evidently with a favorable wind, crossed the Aegean Sea in two days to Neapolis (usually took five days), and from there traveled inland to Philippi (Acts 16:11–12).
- III. Philippi did not have enough Jewish citizens to have a synagogue.
  - A. There was a meeting place for prayer just outside the city, where Paul found Lydia and a group of women on the Sabbath engaged in worship.
  - B. To them he preached the first gospel sermon in Europe (Acts 16:13–15).
  - C. Lydia and her household became the first converts; they were later joined by the jailer and household (cf. Acts 16:16–34).
  - D. Paul revisited the city on at least two occasions (2 Cor. 2:13; Acts 20:6).
- IV. Philippians was one of the prison epistles of Paul (around 62 A.D.).
  - A. The church at Philippi had sent Epaphroditus as their messenger to bring aid to Paul while he was in Rome—he fell ill while in Rome and was “sick almost unto death” (Phil. 2:27).
  - B. Upon his recovery, Epaphroditus longed to return home.
  - C. Paul knew of the concern of the Philippians—thus the letter was prompted.
  - D. One of the major characteristics of the Philippian letter is its vibrant undertone of spiritual joy and thanksgiving.
- V. This lesson is concerned with my life and how it relates to Christ.

**I. Christ Is The Purpose Of My Life (Phil. 1:21–24)**

- A. Paul's indifference towards death raises the question of what life and death is—the Stoics had preached indifference and apathy towards death.
- B. Paul announces his principle of life.
  - 1. Regardless of how others felt, this is what life meant to Paul.
  - 2. With many life is: money, power, sensual indulgence, flattery.
  - 3. Paul did not say, "Christ is life," but, "living is Christ and dying is gain."
- C. Christ occupies the whole of Paul's life—no doors locked to Him.
- D. Paul led a surrendered life and found peace and victory (1 Cor. 15:57).
- E. What about death? Simply more of Christ, i.e., "to die is gain."
  - 1. "Gain" is used for interest, gains and profits.
  - 2. Paul spoke about "gaining Christ" (cf. Phil. 3:8).
  - 3. Paul felt like an eagle in a cage—death would be liberation.
  - 4. Death held no terrors for Paul (Heb. 2:9–18).
  - 5. He looked upon death as a friend in disguise, but he was not dissatisfied with life here below.
- F. Is Christ really the *purpose* of your life?

**II. Christ Is The Pattern Of My Life (Phil. 2:5–8)**

- A. Paul uses the incarnation of Christ to teach a lesson on humility.
  - 1. John says the Word became flesh (John 1:14).
  - 2. As Christ possessed the real attributes of Deity, so He took upon Himself the real attributes of servanthip (Heb. 4:14–16).
  - 3. Jesus followed the Father's will obediently to death (Heb. 5:8–9).
  - 4. He cried aloud when His Father's presence left Him (Matt. 27:46).
  - 5. The body on the tree was accursed (Deut. 21:23).
  - 6. The Jews stumbled at the cross and Greek thought it foolish, but to us it is the power unto salvation (1 Cor. 1:20–25).
- B. Christ is the perfect pattern for my life, and I must surrender all that I have that the Father might be glorified (Rom. 12:1–2).

**III. Christ Is The Prize Of My Life (Phil. 3:13–14)**

- A. Many people do not understand "perfection" in this life.
  - 1. The word translated as "perfect" in the New Testament (Gr. *katartizo*) means "to complete thoroughly, i.e. repair (lit. or fig.) or adjust."
  - 2. "And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, *mending* their nets; and he called them." (Matt. 4:21).
  - 3. "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual *restore* such a one in a spirit of gentleness..." (Gal. 6:1).
  - 4. "night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and *perfect* what is lacking in your faith?" (1 Thes. 3:10).
  - 5. "Finally, brethren, farewell. Become *complete*. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace..." (2 Cor. 13:11).
- B. Paul pointedly says that he presses on.
  - 1. The verb literally means, "I pursue" or "I follow after."
  - 2. Paul was in the pursuit of Christ.
  - 3. Christ changed Paul from a persecutor to an apostle (Acts 22:3–5).

- C. Paul's goal is still ahead—he vividly pictures the tension of the chase.
  1. Paul was not forgetting his former career, but does not allow his immediate past to lull him into a false sense of security.
  2. He had no time to look back.
  3. The prize belongs to those who run (1 Cor. 9:24, “Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the *prize*? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.”).
  4. Paul is thinking of the crown of righteousness (2 Tim. 4:8).

#### IV. Christ Is The Power Of My Life (Phil. 4:12–13)

- A. Paul's strength resides in Christ—He empowers Paul.
- B. Paul uses this great word elsewhere of Christ's relationship to him.
  1. “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has *enabled* me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry...” (1 Tim. 1:12).
  2. “But the Lord stood with me and *strengthened* me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion” (2 Tim. 4:17).
  3. “be strong in the Lord and in the *power* of His might.” (Eph. 6:10).
  4. This power is accessible to all who yield themselves to Christ.
- C. Paul learned to do without his way and find joy in God's way.
  1. Men can kill him, but they cannot deprive him of the love and power of Christ in his life (Rom. 8:35–39).
  2. Paul leads the victorious life because he lets the word of Christ dwell within him and rule in his life.

#### Conclusion

- I. The time has come for Paul to say farewell to the Philippians (Phil. 4:18–23).
- II. The epistle was very brief, but rich in thought.
- III. He closes with the familiar phrase, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.”
- IV. Paul's emphasis is on grace from the Lord Jesus Christ—grace that ennobles and enriches the life.

# Will We Recognize Each Other In Heaven?

## Introduction

- I. Who among us has not pondered the great question, “Will we recognize each other in heaven?”
  - A. You have thought about it since you learned that there is a heaven for the pure and the merciful, those who long to “see God.”
  - B. While the Bible does not directly ask this question, the human heart does.
- II. In this life we have friends and they sometimes leave us.
  - A. Will we meet them again? Will we know them *as* our friends?
  - B. Will I be able to greet my mother and father on the shores of life?
    1. Will my eyes be able to look into theirs?
    2. Will I be able to say, “This is my mother!” or “This is my brother!”?
    3. The atheist tells me it is a dream.
    4. The agnostic hangs his doubt on it though he might not boldly pronounce it to be a delusion.
  - C. In death’s dark hour, can I comfort the relatives of those who “died in the Lord” with the hope of a future reunion in heaven?
  - D. Or, when the undertaker closes the casket and sod is placed upon the vault, is this truly the hour of final departure?
- III. The Scriptures assume we will know and recognize one another in heaven.
- IV. The thought of a future life implies a remembered connection with this one.

## Discussion

- I. **“Gathered To His People”**
  - A. Abraham died at the age of 175 (Genesis 25:7–10).
    1. Notice the sequence: he died, was gathered to his people, then his body was buried in the cave.
    2. Though the tomb was new, Abraham was now *with* his people.
    3. Abraham has been “gathered to his people” until that day when he shall live again at the sound of the last trumpet and all the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of Man.
  - B. This phrase, “gathered to his people,” is found recorded at the death of many Old Testament worthies, such as:
    1. Ishmael (Genesis 25:17).
    2. Isaac (Genesis 35:28–29).
      - a) When Isaac and Ishmael were “gathered to their people,” did they recognize their own father, Abraham?
      - b) It would be foolish to deny they did.
    3. Jacob (Genesis 49:33).
    4. Aaron (Numbers 20:23–26).
    5. Moses (Deuteronomy 32:48–50).
      - a) The destiny of Moses is further described in Deut. 31:16 when God said, “Behold, you will rest with your fathers.”
      - b) This could not refer to his physical body, for it was buried “in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth Peor” (Deut. 34:6).
      - c) Did he recognize his own brother there?

- C. After the death of Joshua we read, “When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord nor the work which He had done for Israel” (Judges 2:10).
- D. It was a source of comfort when the prophetess Huldah told Josiah he would be “gathered to his fathers” (2 Kings 22:14–20).
  - 1. What comfort would there be if he could not recognize his “fathers”?
  - 2. Was he to dwell in eternity, among his own family, as a total stranger?
- E. What does it mean to be “gathered” to your people?
  - 1. “Gathered” is defined as “to be collected, gathered together ... used of entering into Hades, where the Hebrews regarded their ancestors as being gathered together. This gathering to one’s fathers, or one’s people is distinguished both from death and burial” (*Gesenius’ Hebrew And Chaldee Lexicon*, p. 626).
  - 2. “To be gathered to his fathers, is a peculiar phrase deserving notice; it is distinguished from death which precedes, and from burial of the body which follows: Gen. xxv.8; xxxv.29; 2 Kings xxii.20. It seems to denote the being received by his own people, or among them. We read in the N.T. of being received into Abraham’s bosom, or of sitting down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven, as at a feast; so that to be gathered to his own people, is to be with them in joy or torment in Hades” (*Wilson’s Old Testament Word Studies*, p. 182).

## II. Other Bible Examples

- A. The Witch at En Dor (1 Sam. 28:3–19).
  - 1. The woman was a medium, one who conducts seances.
  - 2. It is not our purpose here to discuss how she obtained these powers, or even if they were real (cf. 1 Sam. 28:12).
  - 3. During her seance Samuel the prophet appeared and rebuked Saul.
  - 4. Samuel said, “Moreover the Lord will also deliver Israel with you into the hand of the Philistines. And tomorrow you and your sons will be *with me*” (1 Sam. 28:19).
  - 5. This passage teaches that Saul and his sons would be in Hades, the unseen abode of departed spirits. And, he would be there *with* Samuel.
- B. The Thief on the Cross (Luke 23:42–43).
- C. Our Lord’s promise to the Apostles (John 14:2–3).
  - 1. How could they recognize the place Jesus promised unless they bore in their memory that it had been promised?
  - 2. If they could not remember the promise then one place would be just as good as another.
- D. The Transfiguration (Luke 9:28–35).
  - 1. Moses and Elijah appeared as themselves.
  - 2. If they had no memory of their past how could they talk with our Lord about His own departure?
  - 3. If they remembered their work they could remember their audience!
- E. We will *see* Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Luke 13:28).
  - 1. If we will know Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, whom in this life we never met, how much more shall we know our own friends?
- F. The scene at the Judgment (Matt. 25:37–40).
- G. If there is no future recognition, what’s the force of a bunch of “strangers” who condemn other strangers (Matthew 12:41–42)?

- H. How would Paul know if Christ presented “us with you” if there is no future recognition (2 Corinthians 4:13–14)?
- I. The Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:27–28).
  - 1. The rich man remembered his five brothers and knew they were alive.
  - 2. The rich man recognized both Lazarus and Abraham.
  - 3. Abraham recognized the rich man and knew of his past.
  - 4. If Abraham could recognize the rich man across the “great gulf” that was fixed between them, how much more must he have recognized Lazarus who was reclining on his bosom!

### III. Objections Considered

- A. “We have no sympathy with that infernal delusion called *soul sleeping*. Neither have we respect enough for it to attempt its refutation. We speak for the comfort of good men, not the refutation of bad ones. Still in passing we may jot down a thought or two” (Moses Lard, *Lard’s Quarterly*, April 1865, p. 278).
- B. “Would you be happy in heaven knowing some of your friends and relatives were not there?”
  - 1. Instead of helping our problem, this question increases it.
  - 2. If I cannot recognize any of my loved ones in heaven, then I would be forever uncertain if any of them made it there!
  - 3. Furthermore, this question assumes I would want to overlook the manner of life these people led while alive.
    - a) If they are lost, it will be because they did not desire heaven enough to quit the practice of sin.
    - b) We serve a God who “knoweth and doeth all things well.”
  - 4. We will miss our absent kin in heaven.
    - a) At present, this is a very painful thought.
    - b) Let us labor more diligently for their salvation in this life.
    - c) Then we will not be pained by missing them in the next.
  - 5. Yes, we will be saddened by the loss of some, but I always thought this is why “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away” (Revelation 21:4).
  - 6. “No human being ever loved another as much as God once loved the devil and his angels; and yet he has not only expelled them from heaven, but bound them fast in chains of darkness, to the judgment of the great day, and has prepared for them an unquenchable fire, a punishment everlasting.” (Alexander Campbell, *Popular Lectures and Addresses*, p. 421).
- C. Another objection sometimes raised is based on Matthew 22:23–30.
  - 1. Jesus tells us that in the resurrection we will neither marry nor be given in marriage but will be like the angels of heaven.
  - 2. This passage proves our point.
  - 3. The angels of heaven surely know and recognize each other.
  - 4. We will not have a physical marriage there, for we will be married to the Lamb of God (Rev. 19:7).

*Conclusion*

- I. The first child from the union of David and Bathsheba died after a week of suffering (2 Samuel 12:15–23).
  - A. Grief stricken David, with his child yet unburied, said, “Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.”
  - B. What comfort could David have of being with his child again if he could not distinguish his child from mine?
- II. After the final judgment I fully expect to “see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God” (Luke 13:28).
  - A. I shall see them in the same way I shall see Jesus (1 John 3:2) and His Father (Revelation 22:4).
  - B. The same Greek word for “see” is used in all three verses.
- III. We often sing the beautiful song, “Shall We Gather At The River?”
  - A. In it, we bid our brothers and sisters in Christ to look for us on the margin of the river of life, when our earthly journey is completed.
  - B. We will “gather with the saints at the river, that flows by the throne of God” (cf. Revelation 22:1).
- IV. Earthly ties cannot last forever.
- V. Knowing we shall recognize one another in heaven, let us labor diligently to increase our acquaintances in that glorious abode of the soul.
- VI. And as another song suggests, “If we never meet again this side of heaven, As we struggle through this world and its strife, There’s another meeting place somewhere in heaven, By the side of the river of life.”

# The Genealogy Of Christ

## Introduction

- I. The Scriptures place great emphasis upon the ancestry and genealogy of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:3–4; Heb. 7:14, “For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood”).
- II. Matthew starts his gospel with Christ’s genealogy (Matt. 1:1–17).
  - A. The genealogy of Christ is often neglected, and yet it was and is of vital importance to those concerned about salvation.
  - B. “The reason for this interest in pedigrees was that the Jews set the greatest possible store on purity of lineage. If in any man there was the slightest admixture of foreign blood, he lost his right to be called a Jew, and a member of the people of God. A priest, for instance, was bound to produce an unbroken record of his pedigree stretching back to Aaron; and, if he married, the woman he married must produce her pedigree for at least five generations back. When Ezra was reorganizing the worship of God, after the people returned from exile, and was setting the priesthood to function again, the children of Habaiah, the children of Koz, and the children of Barzillai were debarred from office, and were labeled as polluted because ‘These sought their registration among those enrolled in the genealogies, but they were not found there’ (Ezra 2:62). These genealogical records were actually kept by the Sanhedrin. Herod the Great was always despised by the pure blooded Jews because he was half an Edomite; and we can see the importance that even Herod attached to these genealogies from the fact that he had the official registers destroyed, so that no one could prove a purer pedigree than his own. This may seem to us an uninteresting passage, but to the Jew it would be a most impressive matter that the pedigree of Jesus could be traced back to Abraham.” (Barclay, *The Gospel Of Matthew*, Vol. 1, p. 12).
  - C. When Flavius Josephus, the great Jewish historian, wrote his autobiography, he began by giving his pedigree, and says, “Thus have I set down the genealogy of my family as I have found in the public records.” (Flavius Josephus, *The Life Of Flavius Josephus*, p. 1).
- III. The first promise of a Savior was rather vague (Gen. 3:15).
  - A. Abraham was promised that through his seed “all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 12:1–3).
  - B. The Messiah was not just a descendant of Abraham, but also of:
    1. Isaac (Gen. 21:12).
    2. Jacob (Gen. 28:13–14).
    3. Judah (Gen. 49:10).
    4. Jesse (Isa. 11:1, 10).
    5. David (2 Sam. 7:12–16).
- IV. In this lesson we will notice what the genealogy of Christ proves.

### **I. Christ Fulfilled God's Promise To Abraham**

- A. God's promise to Abraham was repeated (Gen. 17:4–8; 22:16–18).
- B. Matthew starts the genealogy of Christ by declaring Him to be a descendant of Abraham (Matt. 1:1).
- C. "Concerning this genealogy of our Savior, observe the chief intention. It is not a needless genealogy. It is not a vain-glorious one, as those of great men often are. It proves that our Lord Jesus is of the nation and family out of which the Messiah was to arise. The promise of the blessing was made to Abraham and his seed; of the dominion, to David and his seed. It was promised to Abraham that Christ should descend from him (Gen. 12:3; 22:18) and to David that he should descend from him (2 Sam. 7:12; Psa. 89:3; 132:11) and, therefore, unless Jesus is a son of David, and a son of Abraham, he is not the Messiah." (Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary*, Vol. 5, p. 3).

### **II. Christ's Right To Be King On David's Throne**

- A. Matthew also reminds us that Jesus is a descendent of David (Matt. 1:1, 6).
- B. God promised to establish David's throne forever (2 Sam. 7:12–16).
- C. Statement by Gabriel to Mary (Luke 1:32–33).
- D. "Your King is coming to you" (Zech. 9:9 cf. Matt. 21:1–11).
- E. The scepter would not depart from Judah (Gen. 49:10).
  - 1. After the slaughter of the innocent children, Jesus, Joseph and Mary returned to Israel, for Herod was dead (Matt. 2:19–23).
  - 2. Then, they went into Galilee instead of Judea, for Herod's son Archelaus was reigning in Judea.
  - 3. Archelaus was just as cruel as his father, but far less competent, even to the point that Augustus denied him the title of "king."
  - 4. After ruling Judea for just nine years, Archelaus was banished to Gaul, where he died in A.D. 6.
  - 5. After his death, Judea never again had another native king—the land became a Roman province, and as Jacob promised, the "scepter" departed from Judah (Gen. 49:8–10).
- F. Pilate questioned Jesus as to His kingship (John 18:37).
- G. Christ is now on David's throne (Acts 2:29–36; cf. Rev. 3:21).

### **III. Proves Christ's Throne Is Not On This Earth**

- A. Christ is a descendant of Jeconiah (Matt. 1:12).
- B. Jeconiah would never have a descendant "sitting on the throne of David, and ruling anymore in Judah" (Jer. 22:24–30; 1 Chron. 3:16–17; Luke 3:27).
- C. Christ was to "be a priest on His throne" (Zech. 6:13).
  - 1. "For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest" (Heb. 8:4).
  - 2. "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne" (Rev. 3:21).

#### IV. Importance Of Gentiles And Women

- A. "By far the most amazing thing about this pedigree is the names of the women who appear in it. It is not normal to find the names of women in Jewish pedigrees at all. The woman had no legal rights; she was regarded, not as a person, but as a thing. She was merely the possession of her father or of her husband, and in his disposal to do with as he liked. In the regular form of morning prayer the Jew thanked God that he had not made him a Gentile, a slave, or a woman. The very existence of these names in any pedigree at all is a most surprising and extraordinary phenomenon." (Barclay, *The Gospel Of Matthew*, Vol. 1, pp. 16–17).
- B. Christ was a descendant of **Rahab**.
1. "Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab" (Matt. 1:5).
  2. Rahab had been a prostitute in Jericho (Joshua 2:1–7).
- C. Christ was a descendant of **Ruth**.
1. "Boaz begot Obed by Ruth" (Matt. 1:5).
  2. Ruth was a heathen woman from the land of Moab (Ruth 1:4), who became an ancestor of King David and Jesus.
  3. "An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the congregation of the Lord; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the congregation of the Lord forever..." (Deut. 23:3).
  4. Ruth belonged to an alien and hated people.
- D. Christ was a descendant of **Tamar**.
1. "Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar" (Matt. 1:3).
  2. Tamar was a deliberate seducer and an adulteress (Gen. 38:12–26).
- E. Christ was a descendant of **Bathsheba**.
1. "David ... begot Solomon by ... the wife of Uriah" (Matt. 1:6).
  2. Bathsheba was seduced from Uriah by David (2 Sam. 11–12).
- F. "If Matthew had ransacked the pages of the Old Testament for improbable candidates he could not have discovered four more incredible ancestors for Jesus Christ." (Barclay, *The Gospel Of Matthew*, Vol. 1, p. 17).
1. Why were these people mentioned?
  2. Probably to show that in Christ "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).
  3. Jesus is the Savior of both Jews and Gentiles!
  4. "Women, especially those born Gentiles, were rarely included in biblical genealogies. The first four were Gentile women whom God honored by including them among the recorded ancestors of Yeshua the Jewish Messiah — through whom Gentiles, women and slaves are saved equally with Jews, men and free." (David Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, p. 1).

## V. The End Of The Priesthood And No Future Messiah

- A. Priests had to come from the tribe of Levi (Num. 18:1–7; Heb. 7:14).
- B. “For our forefathers did not only appoint the best of these priests, and those that attended upon divine worship, for that design from the beginning, but made provision that the stock of the priests should continue unmixed and pure; for he who is partaker of the priesthood must propagate of a wife of the same nation, without having any regard to money, or any other dignities; but he is to make a scrutiny, and take his wife’s genealogy from the ancient tables, and procure many witnesses to it; and this is our practice not only in Judea, but wheresoever any body of men of our nation do live; and even there, an exact catalogue of our priests’ marriages is kept; ... but what is the strongest argument of our exact management in this matter is what I am now going to say, that we have the names of our high priests, from father to son, set down in our records, for the interval of two thousand years...” (Josephus, *Flavius Josephus Against Apion*, Book 1, Chap. 1, Sec. 7).
- C. Titus destroyed the birth records of the Jews in 70 A.D., and since that time no man has been able to prove his right to be a priest.
- D. After the Jews inside the city of Jerusalem refused an offer made by Titus, he declared “that he would henceforth spare nobody, but fight them with his whole army; and that they must save themselves as well as they could; for that he would from henceforth treat them according to the laws of war. So he gave orders to the soldiers both to burn and to plunder the city; who did nothing indeed that day; but on the next day they set fire to the repository of the archives, to Acra, to the council house, and to the place called Ophlas...” (Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, Book 6, Chap. 6, Sec. 3).

### Conclusion

- I. Statement of Zacharias at birth of John (Luke 1:67–79).
- II. Statement of Simeon at sight of Jesus (Luke 2:25–34).

# He Gave Them Their Request, But Sent Leanness Into Their Soul

## *Introduction*

- I. Psalm 106 begins and ends with “Hallelujah” (“praise the Lord”).
  - A. Eight other “Hallelujah Psalms” (111, 113, 135, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150).
  - B. These Psalms begin or end (or both) with “Hallelujah.”
  - C. This Psalm was probably written by David, for the first and last two verses are found in the sacred song David delivered to Asaph when he brought up the ark of the Lord (cf. 1 Chron. 16:34–36).
- II. Between the first and last verses of Psalm 106 we find the mournful details of the sins of Israel and read of the extraordinary patience of God.
  - A. Psalm 106 is a national confession of sin.
  - B. The first section deals with the history of the people from Egypt, and in the wilderness (Psa. 106:1–31).
    1. Sins committed in Egypt and at the Red Sea (Psa. 106:6–12).
    2. While lusting in the wilderness (Psa. 106:13–15).
    3. The envying of Moses and Aaron (Psa. 106:16–18).
    4. The worship of the golden calf (Psa. 106:19–23).
    5. The despising of the promised land (Psa. 106:24–27).
    6. The iniquity of Baal of Peor (Psa. 106:28–31).
  - C. Continuing the same sad story, the Psalmist then turned to the unfaithfulness of the people in the land (Psa. 106:32–48).
    1. At the waters of Meribah (Psa. 106:22–33).
    2. Failure when settling in Canaan (Psa. 106:34–44).
    3. Compassion from God when they were brought low (Psa. 106:44–46).
    4. Their plea to God for mercy (Psa. 106:47–48).
- III. This entire Psalm can be summarized by the description of what happened immediately after crossing the Red Sea (Psa. 106:12–15).
  - A. “He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul.”
  - B. Just because God gives you the desire of your soul is no proof the you are the object of Divine favor.
- IV. We often hear people try to warn us about some endeavor—they remind us to “Be careful what you ask for, you just might get it.”

## *Discussion*

### **I. Examples From The Bible**

- A. Jacob wanted the birthright that belonged to his brother (Gen. 27:18–29).
  1. He got what he wanted by way of deception (Gen. 27:35, “But he said, ‘Your brother came with deceit and has taken away your blessing’”).
  2. Jacob spent the rest of his life being deceived by others.
  3. His father-in-law “deceived” him about Rachael and Leah (Gen. 29:25, “So it came to pass in the morning, that behold, it was Leah. And he said to Laban, ‘What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served you? Why then have you deceived me?’”).
  4. Jacob said that Laban “has deceived me and changed my wages ten times” (Gen. 31:7).

5. His sons deceived him about the “death” of Joseph (Gen. 37:29–36).
  6. “And Jacob said to Pharaoh, ‘The days of the years of my pilgrimage are one hundred and thirty years; few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.’” (Gen. 47:9).
- B. The men of Israel said, “Give us a king to judge us” (1 Sam. 8:6).
1. They rejected Jehovah as their king (1 Sam. 8:7–9).
  2. Samuel explained the behavior of kings (1 Sam. 8:11–18).
  3. In spite of the warnings, the people persisted (1 Sam. 8:19–20).
  4. They lived to regret it, for Saul, their first king, turned out to be a like the ones in the nations around them!
  5. God summarized the whole matter: “I gave you a king in My anger, and took him away in My wrath” (Hos. 13:11).
- C. Lot wanted the best fields for his livestock (Gen. 13:5–13).
1. Lot first “pitched his tent even as far as Sodom,” but in the process of time he moved into the wicked city itself.
  2. Even though Lot was a righteous man, the environment had a corrupting influence on his family (2 Pet. 2:7–8).
  3. His daughters married men of the city of Sodom (Gen. 19:14).
  4. In the face of destruction he “lingered” (Gen. 19:16).
  5. He lost his wife as a result of the choice he made (Gen. 19:26).
  6. I heard a sermon one time titled, “Lot: the man who made money his god, lost his family, and let his town go to hell.”
- D. Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, wanted the silver and garments that belonged to Naaman the leper (2 Kings 5:20).
1. Gehazi pursued Naaman and got what he wanted (2 Kings 5:21–24).
  2. But, he got more than he bargained for (2 Kings 5:25–27).
- E. The Jewish leaders wanted the death of Christ (Matt. 27:17–26).
1. They said, “His blood be on us and on our children.”
  2. They got what they wanted, but Jerusalem was destroyed and over one million people died (Matt. 23:29—24:3; Luke 23:28–30).

## II. Be Careful What You Ask God For

- A. Do you really want “a good paying job”?
1. What are you willing to sacrifice in exchange for it?
    - a) It will require honorable and worthy things such as education, training and a commitment to continue your education.
    - b) However, what if it requires you to forsake the assembly of the saints on a regular basis? (Heb. 10:25).
    - c) What if you have to move to a place where no sound congregations exist?
  2. Godliness with contentment is great gain (1 Tim. 6:6–10).
  3. Where is your real treasure? (Matt. 6:19–21).
- B. Some people long for the approval of their fellow man.
1. What are you willing to sacrifice in the process? (John 12:42–43).
  2. One of the saddest things that could possibly be said at a man’s funeral is, “He didn’t have an enemy on this earth.”
  3. If you are going to take a stand for anything you will make enemies.
  4. In fact, I would consider having been “withdrawn from” by certain brethren to be a badge of honor.

- C. A lot of young people try to find the “perfect spouse.”
  - 1. The problem is their definition of “perfect”—too often it is determined by physical appearance or the car one drives.
  - 2. I’ve known young men to base their choice for a mate on physical appearance, and then spend the rest of their lives with an individual who cares more about appearance than character (Prov. 31:10).
  - 3. I’ve known young women who were so impressed by the fancy sports car some young man drove, and then spent the next forty years crying over the fact that “He cares more about that car than he does me.”

### III. Leanness To The Soul

- A. Experienced by the church at Laodicea (Rev. 3:14–18).
  - 1. Laodicea was located less than fifty miles southeast of Philadelphia and more than ninety miles east of Ephesus.
    - a) It was located in the Lycus valley—eleven miles west of Colosse and six miles south of Hierapolis (Col. 4:13).
    - b) Originally built as a strong garrison on the strategic eastern trade route, Laodicea became a center of Hellenic culture, reaching its peak of importance and wealth when Asia was made a Roman province in 190 B.C.
  - 2. Laodicea was a center of imperial worship, having received the coveted recognition of the temple-wardenship.
  - 3. It was also the home of a famous school of medicine, located thirteen miles from the city.
  - 4. The district surrounding the city was famous for a special breed of sheep that produced a soft, glossy-black wool, used to make highly prized and widely sought garments.
  - 5. The city became a noted banking center, which together with its trade brought great wealth to the community, making it one of the wealthiest cities in the world of its day.
  - 6. When the city was destroyed by an earthquake in A.D. 60, its independent and self-sufficient people refused help from Rome, rebuilding with their own resources.
  - 7. The problem was “leanness of the soul.”
- B. Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–11).
- C. At one time Demas was a faithful Christian, but he left the Lord.
  - 1. He was associated with Luke the “beloved physician (Col. 4:14).
  - 2. In Paul’s letter to Philemon, he included Demas among those men identified as his “fellow laborers” (Philemon 1:22–24).
  - 3. Paul told Timothy: “Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica” (2 Tim. 4:10).

#### *Invitation*

- I. Be careful what you ask for in life—you just might get it!
- II. We are going to “reap what we sow” (Gal. 6:7–10).
- III. Are you seeking first the kingdom of heaven? (Matt. 6:33).

# The Mind Of God

## Introduction

- I. Jesus prayed for the unity of His disciples (John 17:21).
- II. Religious division is condemned by God (1 Cor. 1:10).
- III. God's word will produce unity among the disciples of Christ (Eph. 4:4–6)
- IV. Imagine a man who was raised in the mountains—alone with his Bible.
  - A. He never heard of denominationalism—never saw division.
  - B. He would have read of the promise of the Messiah (Gen. 3:15; Isa. 53).

## Discussion

### I. The Four Gospels Reveal The Life Of Christ

- A. They tell of His birth (Matt. 1:21–23).
- B. Little is known of His childhood (Luke 2:41–52).
- C. After the age of thirty, He spent three years teaching (Matt. 4:23–25).
  1. He taught about a “narrow” way (Matt. 7:13–14).
  2. He taught the importance of obedience (Matt. 7:21–23).
  3. He taught the need for truth (John 4:24).
- D. The gospels tell of His death, burial and resurrection (cf. 1 Cor. 15:1–8).
- E. He gives the Great Commission to the Apostles (Matt. 28:18–20).
  1. Prior to His death, Jesus promised the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; 16:13).
  2. At His ascension, He again promised the Spirit (Acts 1:4–8).

### II. The Holy Spirit Was Given To The Apostles

- A. Our Lord's promise was fulfilled (Acts 2:1–4; cf. 1 Cor. 2:1–13).
  1. The apostles spoke the mind of God (1 Cor. 2:13).
  2. The apostles wrote the mind of God (Eph. 3:1–3).
- B. We have the “mind of God” in written form (Gal. 1:8–9; Jude 3).
- C. We must not go beyond “that which is written” (1 Cor. 4:6).

### III. The Mind Of God Answers Our Religious Questions

- A. Why do we sing? (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).
- B. Why do we partake of the Lord's Supper? (1 Cor. 11:23–26).
- C. Why do we assemble on the first day of the week? (Acts 20:7).
- D. Why do we pray? (1 Tim. 2:1–2, 5).
- E. Why do we have preaching? (2 Tim. 2:2).
- F. Why do we give of our means? (1 Cor. 16:1–2).
- G. How are men saved? Examples given (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16).

### IV. The Thunderous Silence Of God

- A. God's silence is thunderous (Heb. 7:12–14; 8:4).
- B. This silence answers many religious questions:
  1. Why don't we have a piano here?
  2. Why don't we burn incense?
  3. Why don't we have a choir?
  4. Why don't we play bingo to raise money?

## Conclusion

- I. Have you listened to the word of God?
- II. Have you obeyed what that word commands you to do?

# The Treasure In Earthen Vessels

## Introduction

- I. I believe with all my heart that the gospel is universal in application, including all races, classes and conditions of humanity (Rom. 1:16–17).
  - A. It is intended to reach down to lowest depths of degradation and despair.
  - B. Also intended for the very best man this nation affords, morally speaking.
- II. Our country is filled with many sincere religious people: want to do right.
  - A. Our text today will be 2 Corinthians 4:1–7.
  - B. The last verse expresses a great truth, which, if understood by many, could relieve much religious confusion in the world today.

## Discussion

### I. What Is The Treasure In Earthen Vessels?

- A. A treasure is something of great value, and Paul said it is in an earthen vessel.
  - 1. What is it? Gold? Silver? Oil? Context says it is the gospel (2 Cor. 4:3).
  - 2. The treasure is scheme of redemption, the plan of salvation, the way men and women are saved (Matt. 13:44–46).
  - 3. A “vessel” is a container; anything capable of carrying something else, like an oil tanker or a little brown jug.
  - 4. “Earthen” means it pertains to the earth; not from heaven.
- B. Paul was a “chosen vessel” (Acts 9:10–16).
  - 1. Why? To carry the gospel!
  - 2. The gospel has been delegated into the hands of men!
- C. There was a time when God spoke to men directly (Heb. 1:1–2).
  - 1. While on earth Jesus said, “I am the light of the world” (John 9:5).
  - 2. Prior to His ascension He gave the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18).
    - a) From that moment on the gospel was in human hands.
    - b) In every single New Testament case of conversion the word is preached by men to men.
    - c) Preachers can’t find one exception (Rom. 1:16; 10:17).
- D. Let me make a bold statement: If an angel, fresh from heaven, were present today, he could not tell you the plan of salvation.

### II. Conversion Of Cornelius

- A. His character (Acts 10:1, 2, 22).
  - 1. Many today would think it strange that he needed to do anything in order to be saved from his sins.
  - 2. People today might be honest, honorable, prayerful, generous, with hearts open to the poor—what do they have to fear at the hands of a just and merciful God?
  - 3. Cornelius was told four times that he needed to “hear words” in order to be saved (Acts 10:6, 22, 32; 11:14).

- B. The appearance of the Angel (Acts 10:3–6).
1. How many preachers in this town would question his salvation?
  2. Though an angel had spoken and God had heard prayers, he must yet hear words from another man’s lips before he will be saved.
  3. The angel to did not appear to convert him, to preach to him or change his heart in any way.
  4. The humility of Cornelius is shown (Acts 10:6).
  5. He did not inquire if he could be saved in some other way.
- C. The messenger: the apostle Peter (Acts 10:7–18).
1. Our scene changes from Caesarea to Joppa (the town where Jonah departed to flee from God), some thirty miles away.
  2. The Lord prepares Peter for a favorable reception of the servants of Cornelius (cf. Acts 10:17).
  3. While waiting, Cornelius called his friends together (Acts 10:24, 33).
- D. The sermon Peter preached, but not in order (Acts 10:34–35).
1. In the introduction of the sermon we find a positive declaration that God respects not persons, but character.
    - a) To fear Him and work righteousness is the ground of acceptability.
    - b) Read rest of the sermon (Acts 10:36–44).
  2. Acts 11:15 “As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them...”
    - a) Weymouth, “No sooner had I begun to speak...”
    - b) NIV, “Just as I was starting to speak...”
    - c) Moffatt, “Now just as I began to speak...”
    - d) Living Bible, “But just as I was getting started...”
  3. Why did the Holy Spirit fall upon Cornelius and his household?
    - a) He did not preach the needed words.
    - b) If Cornelius was saved when the Spirit came, he was saved before Peter’s sermon, and therefore he was saved before faith.
    - c) “So then faith comes by hearing...” (Rom. 10:17).
  4. Speaking by the Spirit of God does not prove one’s salvation.
    - a) Saul, while seeking to kill David, had the Spirit of God upon him and did what Cornelius did—spoke by the Spirit (1 Sam. 19:21–23).
    - b) Balaam’s donkey spoke by the Spirit while the Israelites camped across from Jericho (Num. 22:28).
    - c) Caiaphas prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation.
      - (1) God used this unregenerate man (John 11:51; 2 Pet. 1:20–21).
      - (2) Caiaphas was a persecutor of the church (Acts 4:6).
  5. The Spirit proved that the Gentiles could be saved (Acts 11:15–18).
  6. Ten years later, in Peter’s final words in Acts, he told how the Gentiles would be saved in the same manner as the Jews (Acts 15:7–11).
  7. Remission of sins is through His name (Acts 10:43; cf. Matt. 28:18–19).
    - a) “And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.” (Acts 10:48).
    - b) In harmony with Peter’s first sermon.
      - (1) Salvation was offered to all who would “call on the name of the Lord” (Joel 2:32; Rom. 10:13–15; Acts 2:21).
      - (2) Repentance and remission of sins (Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38–39).

### III. Other New Testament Conversions

- A. The Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26–28).
  - 1. An Angel called a preacher 36 miles away.
  - 2. If you asked Ethiopian how he was saved, what would he tell you?
  - 3. The Holy Spirit was present, yet could not preach (Acts 8:29–39).
- B. Saul of Tarsus met the Lord on the Damascus Road (Acts 9:1–6)
  - 1. What finer time for the Lord to explain plan of salvation!
  - 2. Saul was led by hand to Damascus.
  - 3. He waited for Ananias (Acts 22:16).
- C. God will not perform a miracle to cause you to obey Him.
  - 1. You have the word of God (cf. Luke 16:27–31).
  - 2. I am here to affirm that Abraham told the truth!

#### *Conclusion*

- I. The word of reconciliation has been delegated to us—men of the earth.
  - A. Are we vessels of honor, useful for the master (2 Tim. 2:19–21).
  - B. Read the words to the song, “We Are The World’s Bible.”
  - C. If you are waiting for an angel to come, eternity will find you still unprepared—angels no long come.
  - D. We have the word of God (Heb. 4:12).
- II. If you are waiting for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit—you will die disappointed.
  - A. Only two cases in world history (Acts 2, 10).
  - B. The purpose of Holy Spirit baptism has been fulfilled.
- III. If Christ were visibly present tonight, would point you to His word (Heb. 5:8–9).
- IV. We are saved, not by the appearance of an angel, the baptism of Holy Spirit, nor by miracles, but by humble, loving, trusting obedience to the authority of God.

# Sin, Guilt And Depression

## Introduction

- I. There can be no question that *guilt* is one of the great destroyers of the soul.
  - A. Guilt, whether real or imagined, leads individuals on a downward spiral which renders them worthless in the kingdom of God.
  - B. An individual with a guilty conscience often becomes bitter, hostile and will lash out towards those who are trying to help them.
  - C. Sin is at the root of the problem—sin leads to guilt and depression—sinful handling of sin further complicates matters leading to greater guilt and deeper depression (Prov. 5:21–22)
  - D. Guilt can be a good thing when it brings one to a realization of *their* sins.
- II. We live in a age when most people blame the problems of the world on “sickness” by telling us, “We live in a sick society.”
  - A. When someone assassinates a national leader we hear, “Our nation is sick.”
  - B. When a couple of teenagers walk into a high school with guns blazing and murder over a dozen people we hear, “Society is to blame.”
  - C. The idea of “sickness” as the cause of personal problems removes all concept of personal human responsibility—this is the crux of the problem.
  - D. People no longer consider themselves responsible for what they do wrong!
  - E. The Bible never discusses the problems of the world as “sickness,” but rather, it points out that sin is the real culprit (Rom. 3:23; 6:23).
  - F. By blaming the problems of the world on “sickness” we cause people to lose all hope, for there is no vaccine to cure the “sickness” of the world.
  - G. However, when we point out that the problem of the world is “sin” we give people hope, for Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”
- III. In dealing with the guilt which results from sin, the world often offers psychological crutches, but no cures.
  - A. *Freudian psychoanalysis* turns out to be an archeological expedition back into the past in which a search is made for others on whom to pin the blame for our own behavior.
    1. Freud called himself “a completely godless Jew” and a “hopeless pagan.”
    2. His views have caused irresponsible people to persist in and expand their irresponsibility.
    3. He sanctioned irresponsible behavior and made it respectable.
    4. Freud did not make people irresponsible; but he has provided a philosophical and pseudoscientific rationale for irresponsible people to justify themselves.
  - B. *Rogesian psychology* (Carl Rogers) is perfectly consistent with liberal and humanistic thought, namely, that the solution to man’s problems lies within the man himself.
    1. Faithful Christians reject this viewpoint on the basis of its humanistic presuppositions alone—it begins with man and ends with man.
    2. Rogesian psychology asks us to accept the aberrant behavior of people without any sort of judgment.

3. However, the Scriptures specifically command believers to make righteous judgments (John 7:24).
  4. Rogerian psychology insists that it is wrong to advise people, yet the Bible requires that we give advice and direction to those in sin.
  5. The main goal of Rogerian psychology is to make people *feel good* about themselves, regardless of their sins.
- C. *Skinnerian psychology* believes in a view of behavior modification that says that man is simply an animal and that we must treat him as such.
1. Skinner believed man to be nothing more than an animal and thus fails to see man as a being who was created in the image of God.
  2. For Skinner, man is for all intents and purposes little more than a complex lab rat.
- D. A folk song by Anna Russell characterizes the day in which we live:
- I went to my psychiatrist to be psychoanalyzed  
 To find out why I killed the cat and blacked my husband's eyes.  
 He laid me on a downy couch to see what he could find,  
 And here is what he dredged up from my subconscious mind:  
 When I was one, my mommy hid my dolly in a trunk,  
 And so it follows naturally that I am always drunk.  
 When I was two, I saw my father kiss the maid one day,  
 And that is why I suffer now from kleptomania.  
 At three, I had the feeling of ambivalence toward my brothers,  
 And so it follows naturally I poison all my lovers.  
 But I am happy; now I've learned the lesson this has taught;  
 That everything I do that's wrong is someone else's fault.
- IV. This morning, I would like to talk with you about sin, guilt and depression and notice what the Bible says about the cure.

### Discussion

#### I. **Guilt Is The Result Of Sin**

- A. The story of Cain illustrates the progression of sin, guilt and depression.
1. Cain began badly by giving a sinful offering (Gen. 4:1–8).
    - a) Abel gave his best, whereas Cain merely brought an offering.
    - b) When God rejected the offering, Cain complicated the matter by responding wrongly to the rejection—he got angry and depressed: his face “fell.”
  2. The anger and depression were noted by God, who warned against the consequences of this wrong response.
    - a) God graciously said, “If you do well, will you not be accepted?” or, as some translations say, “If you do right, you will feel right.”
    - b) God also warned Cain that failure to repent and offer the right kind of sacrifice would cause him to fall deeper into sin.
    - c) The clutches of sin, like a wild animal, was crouching at the door and waiting to devour him.
    - d) God offered hope by saying that he could reverse the spiral of the rule over sin by breaking out of his sinful pattern through repentance and a subsequent change of behavior.

3. Cain failed to heed God's words and fell deeper into the depths of sin just as God said he would.
    - a) His downward spiral led him to murder Abel.
    - b) Nursing his grudge, self-pity, and anger were all elements of the depressed look on Cain's face about which God strongly warned him.
    - c) Sin leads to guilt and depression—sinful handling of sin further complicates matters leading to greater guilt and deeper depression.
- B. We can read of how Adam suffered from the depressing shame of a guilty conscience (Gen. 3:1–13).
1. The capacity for self-evaluation that God built into man activated painful inner sensations.
    - a) Adam came to know good and evil by personal experience and his conscience accused him of sin.
    - b) Adam decided to run; instead of running *to* God, he ran *from* Him.
  2. When God drew Adam out from among the trees he emerged covered with fig leaves.
    - a) Adam further complicated the matter by attempting to handle his guilt on his own rather than turning to God for the proper solution.
    - b) Adam had committed a crime, had attempted a getaway, and was now trying to cover up.
    - c) But God pointed the finger of accusation directly at him.
  3. God confronted him and forced him to deal with the problem.
    - a) Adam tried to shift the blame to Eve.
    - b) Those who suffer from a guilty conscience often do the same thing.
- C. Ahab, king of Israel, was an exceedingly evil man (1 Kings 16:29–33).
1. Ahab took Jezebel as his wife and set up an altar for Baal.
  2. Elijah was a faithful prophet of God and spoke out against Ahab.
  3. When Ahab met Elijah he accused Elijah of sin (1 Kings 18:17–18).
- D. Judas was a man with a terrible burden of guilt.
1. Judas was one of the twelve apostles (Matt. 10:4).
  2. Judas was also a thief, for carried the "money box" for the disciples and used to steal from it (John 12:4–6).
  3. Judas went to the chief priests and offered to betray Christ (Matt. 26:14).
  4. Imagine his conscience at the Last Supper (Matt. 26:21–25).
  5. Judas betrayed Christ with a kiss (Matt. 26:47–50).
  6. After Jesus was condemned Judas was remorseful, but his guilt caused him to take his own life (Matt. 27:1–5).
- E. Even the apostle Peter was not immune from the guilt of sin (Matt. 26:69–75).
1. In spite of the fact he promised to die with the Lord, he denied him.
  2. He cursed and swore that he never knew Jesus, his best friend.
  3. His guilt caused him to go out and weep bitterly.

- F. Herod and Herodias conspired to kill John the Baptist (Mark 6:17–28).
  - 1. John had said it was not lawful for Herod and Herodias to be married.
  - 2. Herod and Herodias both suffered from a guilty conscience.
  - 3. To soothe the conscience they decided to kill the messenger.
- G. King David sinned by committing adultery with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11:1–5).
  - 1. In covering up his sin, David had Urriah killed (2 Sam. 11:14–21).
  - 2. When David realized his sin, he humbly repented (2 Sam. 12:1–15).
  - 3. Prior to forgiveness, David suffered from guilty conscience (Psa. 32:1–4).

## II. What Guilt Does To An Individual

- A. Guilt can affect our physical bodies.
  - 1. David’s sin caused him to murder Urriah, and his guilt affected his physical body, i.e., his “vitality was turned into the drought of summer.”
  - 2. Like Peter, some people have uncontrollable tears because of guilt.
  - 3. Many individuals can not get to sleep at night because of their guilt.
  - 4. Many Christians lead miserable lives because guilt has a hold on them.
- B. Guilt often leads to other sins.
  - 1. Cain’s guilt led to depression and finally murder.
  - 2. Judas allowed his guilt to lead him to take his own life.
  - 3. Herod and Herodias allowed their guilt to end in the murder of John.
  - 4. Guilt can cause you to hate and lash out at those who are trying to help.
- C. Psychologists often spend a lot of time talking about “why”—but in the Bible the stress falls upon the “what.”
  - 1. The question “Why” is a waste of time and leads to blame-shifting.
  - 2. “What” leads to solutions to our problems.

## III. The Removal Of Guilt

- A. You can either have yours sins forgiven by the blood of Christ, or you can allow the guilt of your sins to destroy you.
- B. Suppose you were driving in a car and the water temperature gauge on your dashboard turned red and said your car was overheating?
  - 1. You could stop the car, go to the trunk and get a hammer, and then smash the gauge to pieces—and then go on your way.
  - 2. But you won’t get far—destroying the red light won’t remove the problem—it simply masks it for a little while.
- C. Your conscience is a lot like that red light on the dashboard—it tells you when you have a problem that needs attention.
  - 1. You can go to a Freudian psychologist and have your conscience smashed, seared and destroyed—but your problem remains.
  - 2. Your problem is sin and it will never get better on its own!
  - 3. It is possible to sear (cauterize) your conscience (1 Tim. 4:2).

- D. Young people, when your conscience bothers you because you know you've done wrong, what should you do?
  - 1. Your friends will tell that there are no moral absolutes.
  - 2. A Freudian psychologist will tell you its your mother's fault.
  - 3. A Skinnerian psychologist will treat you like an animal.
  - 4. However, there are moral absolutes, and your sins can not be blamed on your mother, and you are not an animal—you have been made in the image of God!
- E. What is the purpose of our preaching? (1 Tim. 1:5, NKJV)
  - 1. "But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart, and a good conscience, and a sincere faith" (1 Tim. 1:5, Adams).
  - 2. The goal of our preaching is to bring men into a loving conformity to the law of God, and this in turn brings a clean conscience.
  - 3. Instead of excuse-making or blame-shifting, the Bible advocates that you assume your responsibility and blame, confess your sin and seek the wonderful forgiveness which is in Christ Jesus.
  - 4. The word of God can cut you to your heart.
    - a) You can come back to God in repentance (Acts 2:37–38).
    - b) You can kill the messenger (Acts 7:54–58).
- F. A good conscience depends upon good behavior (1 Pet. 3:10–11).
- G. From his guilt, David cried out, "For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was turned into the drought of summer" (Psa. 32:4).
  - 1. It was as if God's hand was crushing him.
  - 2. He believed his depression was from God and he considered it the merciful punishment of God warning him and leading him to repentance.
  - 3. David acknowledged his sin and sought forgiveness (Psa. 32:5–7).
  - 4. David's forgiveness restored to him the joy of salvation (Psa. 51:1–13).
  - 5. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." (Isa. 55:7).

*Invitation*

- I. There are people here today suffering from the pains of sin and guilt.
  - A. I am not here to minimize your problems or your pain—the pain is real.
  - B. I am here to tell you there is hope, for "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15).
  - C. People in misery need hope—God gave hope to Adam (Gen. 3:15).
- II. The ABC's of dealing with guilt:
  - A. *Acknowledge* your sin.
    - 1. Sin is a violation of the will of God—not a sickness.
    - 2. Sin is first against God; then against others.
  - B. *Blame* no one but yourself.
    - 1. Not your parents.
    - 2. Not your spouse.
    - 3. Not the church.
    - 4. Not society.
    - 5. Not God.
  - C. *Confess* your sins (1 John 1:7–10).

# Will God Hold Me Accountable?

## *Introduction*

- I. If there is a command in the Bible about which you know nothing, even though you have read your Bible many times, and you live a long life filled with spiritual things, at the end of your life will God hold you accountable?
  - A. In your ignorance you could in no way comply with the command.
  - B. Most people say that in spiritual things God will accept sincerity alone.
  - C. I believe, and will attempt to prove in this lesson, that the Bible teaches that honesty and sincerity alone will not stand in the judgment if I have violated the commands of God.
- II. God held ignorant sinners accountable (Lev. 5:14–19).
  - A. Man was guilty even though he might not have known better.
  - B. God did have a remedy for the ignorant sinner—but the sinner was held guilty until he met God’s requirements.
  - C. Even “unintentional sins” were still sin (Lev. 4:1–35).
- III. How can we be held accountable for a law we didn’t even know existed?
  - A. The laws of man must be obeyed or suffer the consequences.
  - B. The laws of nature can not be violated with impunity.
    1. Try running your car into an embankment at 90 mph—the law of inertia—a body in motion coming in contact with a body at rest.
    2. The laws of nature must be obeyed or suffer the consequences.
  - C. The laws of God must be obeyed or suffer the consequences.
    1. “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple...” (Psa. 19:7).
    2. “He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day” (John 12:48).

## *Discussion*

- I. **Old Testament Examples (Rom. 15:4)**
  - A. The sin of Abimelech (Genesis 20:1–13).
    1. Abraham deep suspicions about Abimelech, king of Gerar.
    2. Evidently Abimelech, like the kings of Egypt, took significant numbers of unmarried women into his harem.
    3. One would think that after his humiliation in Egypt 25 years earlier, Abraham would have abandoned the use of deception.
    4. As had the king in Egypt, Abimelech discovered the deception quickly, not by his own genius but by special revelation.
    5. In spite of Abraham’s failures, God was still going to hold Abimelech accountable for his sin, even though he did it in the integrity of his heart (Gen. 20:6).
    6. Abimelech was a “dead man” because of his sin!

- B. The “young” prophet from Judah.
1. Jeroboam established himself as king over the 10 northern tribes and feared the people might return to Rehoboam (1 Kings 12:26–27).
  2. Jeroboam set up altars at Dan and Bethel (1 Kings 12:29–33).
    - a) Bethel was only 20 miles from Jerusalem.
    - b) Dan is in the United Nations buffer zone on the Lebanese border.
    - c) Assuming the office of priest, even though he was from the wrong tribe, he planned to burn incense at Bethel.
  3. God appeared to a young man and gave him orders (1 Kings 13:1–10).
    - a) The young man was tempted to accept the invitation of the King.
    - b) Would you have accepted the royal invitation?
    - c) Here is a man who was not afraid of the king’s wrath.
    - d) So mindful and respectful of God’s command that he was not moved by flattery—silver and gold had not attraction for him.
    - e) Could have thought, “I’ll go home with king and convert him.”
  4. Another side to this story is presented (1 Kings 13:11–19).
    - a) The old man was also a prophet of God, and while his heart was against idol worship he lacked the courage of convictions to stand against error.
    - b) He did not attend opening day ceremonies, but his sons did.
    - c) He was so anxious to carry out his will that he lied (not falsehood).
    - d) The young man had been able to withstand the invitation of the king— he resisted flattery—he was unselfish for silver or gold—but fell for a lie—he was not a bad man.
  5. The solemn announcement was well understood (1 Kings 13:20–26).
    - a) Young prophet met a lion on the way home.
    - b) Imagine the feeling of a lion getting hold of him—pulled off donkey—crushed the life out of him.
    - c) The average male lion in Palestine weighs 500 pounds; females average 300 pounds.
    - d) What was utmost on the prophets mind? Probably the thought of passing out of this life while in open disobedience to the will of God above.
    - e) The old man is told of the death.
    - f) The lion standing by the corpse is a monument to the fact that every transgression and disobedience will receive a just recompense of reward.

## II. **New Testament Teaching**

- A. We can not rely on religious leaders (Matt. 15:13–14).
- B. Standards of judgment—not degrees of punishment (Luke 12:42–48).
- C. Paul prayed that his brethren might be saved (Rom. 10:1–3).
- D. Paul maintained a good clean conscience, even while persecuting Christians unto death (Acts 23:1; 26:9–11).
- E. Cornelius was a good man, but lost (Acts 10:1–6, 22; 11:14).
- F. Some people prefer to remain in ignorance (2 Peter 3:5).

### III. **What About Those Who Never Hear The Gospel?**

- A. What about the man who lives in deepest, darkest Africa?
  - 1. He has never heard about Jesus or the Bible.
  - 2. Does God hold him accountable?
- B. Is this man dead or alive?
  - 1. If dead, I have no responsibility to him—he is in the hands of a God who knows and does all things well.
  - 2. If alive, I need to try and get the gospel to him—either myself or by assisting those who are willing to go (2 Tim. 2:2).
  - 3. The Bible has been translated into every major language of the world, and almost every minor dialect.
  - 4. “Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins” (John 8:24).
  - 5. “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Heb. 11:1).
- C. God no longer “winks” at sin (Acts 17:30–31).
- D. Sinners are “without excuse” (Romans 1:20).

#### *Conclusion*

- I. If ignorance of God’s law is an acceptable substitute for obedience, the best thing you could do would be to move to country that never heard of Jesus or His Word and raise your children in total ignorance.
- II. It would also make sense to burn every Bible and destroy every reference to it—society could remain in ignorance while continuing in their sins and still be pleasing to God.
- III. However, ignorance is no excuse.
  - A. In the past, God’s people have been destroyed for ignorance (Hos. 4:6).
  - B. What excuse will you offer God for not obeying His will?

# Immovable Pillars Of Christianity

## Introduction

- I. Hebrews 12 contains exhortations to faithfulness and steadfastness.
  - A. A contrast between Mt. Sinai and Mt. Zion and the revelation which came from each (Heb. 12:18–29).
  - B. One was earthly, repelling and unapproachable—the other was heavenly and gracious, full of attraction and charm.
  - C. The second was so glorious that its judgments will be more terrible in the end by those who despise or neglect it.
  - D. The revelation at Sinai brought fear and trembling (Exod. 19:16–18; 20:18).
- II. There are many temporal things in this world: governments, nations, wealth.
  - A. It is reassuring and of great comfort to know that some things remain.
  - B. There are pillars and stays which no power on earth can affect or remove.

## Discussion

### I. The Existence Of God

- A. “In the beginning God...” (Gen. 1:1).
  - 1. It is a bare statement, and no effort is made to prove it, yet all the powers on earth cannot shake this great fact.
  - 2. Even with all the proof available, we must accept this by faith.
  - 3. “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.” (Psa. 19:1).
- B. The *special theory* of evolution (not the *general theory*) denies three cornerstones of modern science:
  - 1. The first law of thermodynamics: the law of energy conservation.
    - a) No energy (which includes everything, even matter itself) is now being created or destroyed anywhere in the universe.
    - b) This means that creation is not taking place now at all.
  - 2. The second law of thermodynamics: the law of energy deterioration.
    - a) Everything tends to become less organized, to become disordered, to decay and die (the process of entropy).
    - b) Evolution cannot occur without contradicting this law also—the evolutionist sees all things progressing from the simple to the complex.
  - 3. The law of biogenesis (life begets life).
    - a) It takes more faith to believe that two lifeless rocks gave way to a single cell creature than to believe that Christ was formed in the warm womb of the virgin Mary.
- C. Men deny the Creation so they can deny the Judgment (2 Pet. 3:1–9).

### II. The Bible Is The Word Of God To Man

- A. The Bible has been attacked by skeptics from Celsus to Owen to O’Hair.
- B. It was a light to David and to us (Psa. 119:105).
- C. It will survive the earth and endure forever (1 Pet. 1:22–25).
- D. It was verbally inspired (2 Tim. 3:16).

### III. The Divinity Of Christ

- A. The resurrection of Christ proved His Divinity (Rom. 1:4).
  - 1. "He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs..." (Acts 1:3).
  - 2. This is the foundation of the gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-8).
- B. His life was not a *myth*—time has proven Him a vital strength.
  - 1. Testimony of Tacitus (64 A.D.) in his "Annals".
  - 2. Testimony of Seutonius (112 A.D.), a court official under Hardian.
  - 3. Testimony of Josephus (b. 37 A.D.), a Jewish priest, general and historian.
  - 4. The early church grew up in the shadow of the cross.
  - 5. Thousands became Christians just 50 days after the cross.
- C. He was not an *impostor*—not one such characteristic was manifested in His life from Nazareth onward.
  - 1. He made no personal gain, not even a home in which to live.
  - 2. "And Jesus said to him, Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head" (Matt. 8:20).
- D. He was not a *liar* or *fanatic*.
  - 1. Consider the sermon on the mount.
  - 2. His teaching can not be duplicated today—His standard of righteousness and right living.
- E. His *Divinity* is an immovable pillar upon which the church is built.
  - 1. Death could not stop Christ (Matt. 16:18).
  - 2. "having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone..." (Eph. 2:20; Isa. 28:16).
- F. The attitude of Paul (Gal. 2:20).

### IV. A Kingdom, Not Of Sinai, But Of Zion

- A. Sinai was shaken (Heb. 12:27), but Mt. Zion is unshakable (Heb. 12:28).
- B. This is the unshakeable kingdom of prophecy (Dan. 2:44; Isa. 2:2).
  - 1. John said it was "at hand" (Matt. 3:2).
  - 2. Jesus said it would come in their lifetime (Mark 9:1).
  - 3. Jesus said He would build it and give the apostles the keys (Matt. 18:18).
- C. Herein is safety and the only basis for unity.
- D. Our obligation is to preach the same gospel (Luke 8:11).
- E. The same word will produce the same thing: Christians (Acts 11:26).

#### Conclusion

- I. May our faith in God, His word, His Son and His Kingdom be deeply rooted.
- II. By taking the Bible as our only sure guide to heaven, it will lead us aright through this world of sin, confront us in death and sustain us at the judgment.

# The Loneliness Of Christ

## Introduction

- I. There are two kinds of solitude.
  - A. The first consisting of isolation in space.
  - B. The second, isolation of the spirit.
- II. When we are seen, touched and heard by no one, we are said to be alone.
  - A. The fisherman in the boat at night—alone.
  - B. The mountain climber sitting by himself at camp—alone.
  - C. The man in solitary confinement in prison—alone.
- III. There is also loneliness of the soul.
  - A. When hands touch ours, but they send an icy chill of indifference deep within our heart.
  - B. There are times when eyes gaze into ours, but with a look that cannot read into the bottom of our soul.
  - C. There are times when words pass from our lips, but come back like an echo in solitude, without reply.

## Discussion

- I. The Loneliness Of Jesus (John 16:25–33)**
  - A. Men often ask why the world accepted John and rejected Christ.
  - B. To the casual observer, Jesus' life was inconsistent.
  - C. The Pharisees could not comprehend how Jesus could condemn sin, and then eat with the publicans and sinners.
  - D. The so-called "respectable religious people" shunned Jesus.
  - E. For a while he was popular (John 6:15, 22–35, 41, 52–69).
- II. His Parents Did Not Understand His Mission (Luke 2:41–50)**
  - A. In the midst of others, but what did they have in common?
  - B. Ever learning, but never able to come to a knowledge of truth.
- III. Alone In The Garden (Matt. 26:36–46)**
  - A. Here we see the "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Isa. 53:3).
  - B. He prayed three times—each time He went to his disciples for human sympathy and encouragement and found them sleeping.
    1. He kindly rebuked Peter and said, "What, could you not watch with me one hour?"
    2. They were "sleeping from sorrow" (Luke 22:39–46).
  - C. The last time He came to his disciples and found them sleeping (Matt. 26:45), He told them to sleep on—it was no longer possible for his disciples to be of any help to him.
  - D. The hour of watching and praying had passed—the enemy was at hand.
- IV. Alone In Pilate's Judgment Hall (Matt. 27:11–26)**
  - A. Think of the actions of the apostle Peter (Luke 22:54–62).
  - B. Read the words of the song, "I'll Be A Friend To Jesus."

**V. Alone At The Cross (Matt. 27:38–46)**

- A. Forsaken by man, His Father was with Him till this hour (John 17:22).
- B. It is sad to die; but one who dies alone is truly pitied.

*Conclusion*

- I. Think of others who felt alone:
  - A. Elijah (Rom. 11:2–5).
  - B. David (Psa. 142:1–7).
  - C. Nehemiah [446 B.C. ] (Neh. 6:11).
- II. There is no need for any Christian to ever be alone (1 Pet. 5:6–7).

# The Work Of The Church

## Introduction

- I. Jesus promised to build His church (not churches) (Matthew 16:13–19).
- II. The church was purchased with the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28).
- III. In this lesson, we want to emphasize that the church is of Divine origin—it was not planned by human wisdom, brought into existence by human will, nor is it ruled by human authority.

## Discussion

### I. The Church Is The Result Of God's Eternal Purpose

- A. God's wisdom had remained a mystery from eternity, but is now made known by the preaching of the gospel of Christ (Eph. 3:1–10).
- B. The church was in God's plan and purpose from eternity (Eph. 3:11).
- C. God, then, is the supreme architect of the church.
  1. The pattern is Divine—the result of Divine wisdom and planning.
  2. The church itself manifests the wisdom of its designer.
- D. God has always had a pattern for man to follow:
  1. God gave Noah a pattern for the ark (Gen. 6:13–22), and he followed the pattern and was saved (Gen. 7:1–5; 1 Pet. 3:20; Heb. 11:7).
  2. God gave Moses a pattern for the tabernacle (Ex. 25:9–40; 26:30).
  3. God gave a pattern for bearing the ark of the covenant (Ex. 25:14; 37:5), but David and Uzzah did not follow the pattern (2 Sam. 6:3).
- E. The principle is applied to the church (Heb. 8:1–5).
  1. The church of Jesus Christ is the "true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man" (Heb. 8:2).
  2. It is ruled by Divine authority (Matt. 28:18–20; Eph. 1:18–23).
  3. Whatever the church is and does, Christ must have willed it.

### II. A Divine Pattern For The Church (Eph. 4:11–16)

- A. Four works to produce the unity of the faith:
  1. *Apostles*: the ambassadors of Christ (2 Cor. 5:20).
    - a) Eyewitnesses to the resurrection (Acts 1:21–22).
    - b) Personally guided by the Holy Spirit (John 16:13).
    - c) Left no successors (cf. Mormon "Council of Twelve").
  2. *Prophets*: those under the immediate influence of the Spirit.
    - a) Their work was to foretell and forthtell the truth, like Agabus (Acts 11:28).
    - b) There were prophets at Corinth (1 Cor. 14:29–30).
  3. *Evangelists*: the work of propagating the gospel (Acts 21:8; 2 Tim. 4:5).
    - a) "A bringer of good tidings, an evangelist; this name is given in the NT to those heralds of salvation through Christ who are not apostles" (Thayer).
    - b) The word "evangelist" (Gr. *euangelistes*) was only used in two other passages in the New Testament (Acts 21:8; 2 Tim. 4:5).

- c) "The conviction obtains that in far too many instances today, brethren are leaving the word of God to serve tables, thus reversing the order of the apostles (Acts 6:2). In such instances the study has become the office and the preacher a religious bell-boy. Should he be inclined to demur, knowing in his heart that such prostitutes his proper mission in life, he is informed that times have changed and that he must adjust himself 'or else.' The 'or else' too often becomes the deciding factor and another preacher graduates into an ever increasing number of men, no longer with the time nor the disposition to give themselves to the ministry of the word and prayer." (Guy N. Woods, *Gospel Advocate*, Dec. 6, 1979).
- 4. *Pastors and teachers*: "pastor" is the Latin word for "shepherd."
  - a) "The omission of the article from teachers seems to indicate that pastors and teachers are included under one class" (Marvin Vincent).
  - b) Their work was within the congregation (Acts 20:28).
- 5. Divine wisdom has given this arrangement through which the church is to carry out its Divine mission.
- B. The church has been given a Divine program of work (Eph. 4:12).
  - 1. "for the *equipping* of the saints" (Gr. *katartismos*).
    - a) "The word is used in surgery for setting a broken limb or for putting a joint back into place" (Barclay).
    - b) "the verb is used for mending nets (Matt. 4:21; Mark 1:19). Its basic meaning was put in order, restore—put in proper condition, complete, make complete." (Earle, *Word Meanings In The New Testament*, p. 312)
    - c) The word is translated as "restore" in Galatians 6:1.
    - d) The basic idea is that of putting a thing into the condition it ought to be.
    - e) This indicates the edifying of the body—the work of educating and training Christians in right living and acceptable service to God.
  - 2. "for the work of the *ministry*."
    - a) "Ministry" comes from Gr. *diakonia* (cf. 2 Cor. 9:1; 11:8).
    - b) Service is the idea—it includes any service rendered to anyone needing help, whether physical or spiritual.
  - 3. "for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Gr. *oikodomeo*).
    - a) Used in Matthew 7:24 concerning the wise man who "built" his house.
    - b) Used in the sense of a plant, establish it where it is not known, enlarge its borders by bringing others into it by the preaching of the word.
    - c) One of the works given to the church is evangelizing to world.

### III. What The Mission Of The Church Is Not:

- A. "The Social gospel"
  - 1. While the gospel will change and reform an individual's manner of living and thinking, the gospel was never meant to be a tool of social reform.
  - 2. Both slaves and masters can obey the gospel (1 Cor. 7:20–22).
  - 3. The home is the center of social activity, not the church (1 Cor. 11:20–22).
  - 4. The word "fellowship" is abused when used to refer to a common meal.
  - 5. There is good derived by associated with Christians (1 Cor. 15:33).
- B. The church is not a substitute for the YMCA.
  - 1. We are not losing young people because we have too few parties, but because we have failed to teach them the will of God!
  - 2. The church was never designed for entertainment and recreation.
  - 3. What passage would authorize the Lord's church to entertain people?
- C. Making money is not the function of the church.
  - 1. The church has no business in business (1 Cor. 16:1–2).
  - 2. No "Car Wash for Christ", "Judo for Jesus", auctions, rummage sales or begging money from non-Christians.
- D. The church is not a school of domestic relations, psychology or sociology.
  - 1. Secular education (math, English, history, and literature) does not come within the scope of the mission of the church—not a part of its work.
  - 2. Political issues do not belong to the church (Rom. 13:1–7; 1 Pet. 2:13–17).

#### *Conclusion*

- I. No one has the right to prostitute to energy, strength, zeal or resources of the church of our Lord to serve human aims and purposes.
- II. Let the church remain faithful in its Divine mission.

# A New Creation

## Introduction

- I. When is a thief not a thief?
  - A. Like the question, “When is a door not a door?” “When it’s ajar.”
  - B. A door is not a door when it becomes something else.
  - C. Some say a thief is not a thief when he stops stealing.
    - 1. This is not true—he might be in jail or just sleeping).
    - 2. Many homosexuals have ceased practice due to fear of AIDS.
  - D. The answer is, when he becomes something else—when he is reprogrammed.
- II. When is a sinner not a sinner?
  - A. Not when he quits sinning, but when he becomes something else.
  - B. In this case, when he becomes a Christian (Rom. 6:1–6).
  - C. He has been raised to “walk in newness of life.”
- III. Some new converts focus on the past—as long as they do, change is not possible.
  - A. Their “past” no longer exists—only their future.
  - B. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Cor. 5:17).

## Discussion

- I. **We Have Put On The “New Man”**
  - A. We have been “born again” (John 3:3–5).
  - B. We must now “seek those things which are above” (Col. 3:1).
  - C. Those in Corinth made many changes (1 Cor. 6:9–11).
  - D. Your former friends might not understand (1 Peter 4:3–4).
  - E. One of the hardest things for people to do is to repent of their sins.
    - 1. It is a direct challenge to a man’s will power—he must bow before his God and acknowledge his wrongs.
    - 2. Not discouraged today when men refuse, for I remember how our Lord pronounced woe upon the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida and even Capernaum where He lived because they refused to repent.
  - F. Repentance carries with it evidences which the world cannot question.
    - 1. We must bring forth fruits worthy of repentance (Matt. 3:8).
    - 2. Those at Ephesus repented by burning their books (Acts 19:18–20).
- II. **What Are The Characteristics Of The “New Man”?**
  - A. There is only one way to become a godly person, and that is to orient one’s life toward godliness.
    - 1. The old sinful ways, as they are discovered, must be replaced with new patterns from the word of God.
    - 2. I start living for Him who died for me!
  - B. Colossians 3:8–13 and Ephesians 4:22–32 give a list of the things that must be “put off” and the things that must be “put on.”
    - 1. God never tells a man to put off one habit without putting on another.
    - 2. *Put off*: Former conduct, lying, stealing, corrupt speech, wrath, bitterness, anger, clamor (loud quarreling), evil speaking, malice, blasphemy.

3. *Put on*: Speaking the truth, honest labor, pure speech, kindness, be tenderhearted, forgiving, full of mercy, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, forbearance and love.
4. There is a growing process in the new child of God.
5. The peace of God will rule his heart (Col. 3:15).
6. The new man will be thankful (cf. Psa. 107:1–2).

### III. The ‘New Man’ Must Continue To Grow

- A. Desire the sincere milk of the word (1 Peter 2:2).
  1. Like a newborn baby.
  2. The very young need constant nourishment.
- B. The word of God will dwell in him (Col. 3:16; Psa. 119:11).
- C. The Hebrew Christians had not profited from the word (Heb. 5:12–14).
  1. The reason was they had not used it—consequently, when they should have been teachers, they still needed to be taught.
  2. “Exercised” is the same Greek word which is translated as “*trained* in covetous practices” (2 Pet. 2:14).
  3. In the sixth chapter he admonished them to go “on unto perfection.”
  4. The life of a Christian is one of continual growth—it can’t remain the same yesterday, today and forever.
  5. We can never say “I finally made it” in this life.
  6. Jesus said, “Take up your cross daily and follow after me” (Luke 9:23).
- D. What the Scriptures will do for the believer (2 Tim. 3:16–17).
  1. Teach us what God requires (John 6:44–45).
  2. Convict us when we have sinned (John 16:8).
  3. They will correct us (i.e., set us up right again).
  4. Train or discipline us in righteousness (Acts 17:11).
- E. The new man will add to his faith (2 Peter 1:5–11).

#### *Conclusion*

- I. Have you become a new creation?
- II. You can “put off” the old man of sin today and start living for the One who died for you (Rom. 6:1–6).

# The New Testament Church

## Introduction

- I. Christianity is a religion of faith (2 Cor. 5:7; Heb. 11:6).
  - A. "Faith" is the result of God's written revelation to man (Rom. 10:17).
  - B. Opinion is what men speculate when God is silent.
- II. We also noticed that it was possible to worship God in vain (Matt. 15:1–9).
  - A. God desires us to worship Him "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).
  - B. The Scriptures teach that God rejects every attempt men make to worship Him when they do it in a way He has not commanded.
    1. Saul in his war with the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15).
    2. Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1–2; Num. 3:4).
    3. The disobedient prophet (1 Kings 13).
- III. There are only two ways to treat the commands of God: obey or disobey.
  - A. Obedience consists of doing what God has said—nothing more or less.
  - B. Disobedience consists of any departure from God's order, and is rejected.
- IV. We are not at liberty to add to the word of God.
  - A. We must "abide in the doctrine of Christ" (2 John 9).
  - B. The "thunderous" silence of God (Heb. 7:14; 8:4).
  - C. Sincerity alone is not enough (Matt. 7:21–23; Acts 23:1).
- V. Today, we want to apply these principles as we study the church Jesus built.

## Discussion

- I. **The Church Jesus Promised To Build (Matt. 16:13–19)**
  - A. The saved are added to the Lord's church (Acts 2:47).
    1. Christ is the head of "His body" (Eph. 1:22–23).
    2. He has but "one body" (Eph. 4:4).
    3. Christ is the "Savior of the body" (Eph. 5:23).
  - B. Church would not have "rulers" to "lord it over them" (Matt. 20:25–28).
  - C. The organization of the church:
    1. Elders {*shepherds, bishops, pastors, overseers*} (Titus 1:5–9; Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:1–7; 1 Pet. 5:1–3; Heb. 13:17).
    2. Deacons (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8–13).
    3. Preachers {*ministers, evangelists*} (2 Tim. 4:1–3; Eph. 4:11–14).
    4. Members (Eph. 4:16; 1 Cor. 12:12–22).
  - D. Various terms used to describe the church:
    1. "Church of God" (1 Cor. 1:2).
    2. "House of God" (1 Tim. 3:15).
    3. "Body" of Christ (Col. 1:18).
    4. "Churches of Christ" (Rom. 16:16).
    5. "Household of faith" (Gal. 6:10).
  - E. Various terms used to describe the members of the church:
    1. "Disciples" (Acts 11:26).
    2. "Saints" (Phil. 1:1).
    3. "Brethren" (Gal. 6:1).
    4. "The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch" (Acts 11:26).
  - F. Rule of faith: God's word (Heb. 4:12; Eph. 6:17; Rom. 1:16; 2 Tim. 3:16–4:5).

## **II. Worship In The New Testament Church (Acts 2:42)**

- A. Singing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Jas. 5:13; Matt. 26:30; Acts 16:25; 1 Cor. 14:15; Rom. 15:9; Heb. 2:12; Heb. 13:15).
- B. Praying (1 Thes. 5:17; 1 Tim. 2:1–4).
- C. Teaching (Acts 20:7, 20; 1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Tim. 4:6, 13, 16).
- D. Communion (Acts 20:7; Matt. 26:26–28; 1 Cor. 11:23–30).
- E. Giving of financial means (1 Cor. 16:1–2; 2 Cor. 9:6–7).

## **III. The Mission Of The New Testament Church**

- A. Since the church was purchased with Christ's blood (Acts 20:28), it must have a mission so holy and divine that no other organization could do its' work.
- B. Preaching the gospel to the lost (Mark 16:15–16; 1 Tim. 3:15).
- C. Preaching the gospel to the saved (Matt. 28:19–20; Eph. 4:11–14; 2 Tim. 4:2).
- D. Care of needy saints (Acts 11:27–30; 1 Tim. 5:3–10; Rom. 15:25–31).

### *Conclusion*

- I. The "seed of the Kingdom" is the word of God (Luke 8:11).
- II. Seed always brings forth after its kind (Gen. 1:11–12).
- III. If we plant the same "seed" (God's word) that was planted in the first century, it will produce the same thing now it did then, i.e., Christians (Acts 11:26).

# “No One Cared For My Soul”

## *Introduction*

- I. Psalms 142 is “A contemplation of David. A prayer when he was in the cave.”
  - A. Saul, moved by pride, sought to kill David (1 Sam. 18:7).
  - B. Caves make good closets for prayer; solitude is helpful to devotion.
  - C. If David would have prayed as much in his palace as he did in the cave he would have avoided the misery of his latter life.
  - D. David had known many friends, but now none would know him.
  - E. David felt forsaken by all—an outcast of society.
  - F. Later, he just wanted to get away from it all (Psa. 55:1–7).
- II. At one time or another, we have probably all felt like David.
- III. Could one of your friends, neighbors or relatives feel like David?
- IV. Within the past three years one of your friends or relatives died and went to hell, and what did you do to prevent it? Did they know that you cared?

## *Discussion*

- I. Do Your Children Know That You Care For Their Soul?**
  - A. They will know by your instruction (Deut. 6:6–9).
  - B. They will know by your discipline (Prov. 13:24).
  - C. They will know by your example (2 Tim. 1:5; Heb. 10:25).
- II. Do Your Friends Know You Care For Their Soul?**
  - A. Paul’s great desire for the salvation of Israel (Rom. 10:1–3; 1 Cor. 9:16).
  - B. Use the tools we have available (bulletins, tracts , etc.).
  - C. I am not trying to make you feel guilty—I want to create a desire within you that will cause you to share the blessed gospel with others!
  - D. When a question is asked, do you ever suggest a home Bible study?
- III. Do The Brethren Here Know You Care For Their Soul?**
  - A. “Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous...” (1 Peter 3:8).
  - B. “Agape” love is expressed by action and concern (John 3:16; Gal. 2:20).
  - C. Do you help or hinder the public worship? (Heb. 10:23–25).
    1. Are you an encouragement to others or are you a complainer?
    2. Are you a giver or a taker?
    3. Do you build up or tear down?
    4. “Therefore comfort each other and edify one another” (1 Thes. 5:11).

## *Conclusion*

- I. At the judgement, your concern or lack thereof will be made known.
- II. Will blood be upon your hands? (Ezek. 3:18–21).
- III. Paul was clean from the blood of all men (Acts 20:26–27).
- IV. The badge of discipleship (John 15:2, 8).

# On Unto Perfection

## Introduction

- I. Believers have the right to become the children of God (John 1:11–12).
  - A. Sometimes believers reject this right (John 12:42–43; Acts 26:27–28).
  - B. Sometimes believers exercise their right (Acts 6:7; Rom. 16:25–27).
- II. “For you are all the sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:26–27).

## Discussion

### I. Things That Are To Follow Baptism

- A. We have been raised to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4; 1 Pet. 4:1–4).
- B. We are to seek those things which are above (Col. 3:1).
- C. Desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow (1 Pet. 2:2).
  1. Like a newborn baby.
  2. The very young need constant nourishment.
- D. The Hebrew Christians had not profited from the word (Heb. 5:12–14).
  1. The reason was they had not used it.
  2. Consequently, at the time they should have been teachers of the word, they still needed to be taught.
  3. In the sixth chapter he admonished them to go “on unto perfection.”
- E. The life of a Christian is one of continual growth.
  1. We can not remain the same yesterday, today and forever.
  2. We can never say “I finally made it” in this life.
  3. Jesus said, “Take up your cross daily and follow after me” (Luke 9:23).
- F. What the Scriptures will do for the believer (1 Tim. 3:16–17):
  1. Teach us what God requires (John 6:44–45; Rom. 10:17).
  2. Convict us when we have sinned (John 16:8).
  3. They will correct us (i.e., set us up right again).
  4. Train or discipline us in righteousness (Acts 17:11).

### II. We Must Put On The New Man

- A. “When is a thief not a thief?”
  1. Like the question, “When is a door not a door?” — the answer is, “When it’s a jar.”
  2. What about the thief?
    - a) Some would say: “When he stops stealing.”
    - b) The answer is: “When he becomes something else.”
- B. “When is a sinner not a sinner?”
  1. Not when he quits sinning, but when he becomes something else—in this case, a Christian (Rom. 6:1–6).
  2. There is only one way to become a godly person, and that is to orient one’s life toward godliness.
  3. The old sinful ways, as they are discovered, must be replaced with new patterns from the word of God.
  4. Living for Him who died for me!

- C. We must “put off” our former conduct and “put on” the new man in Christ (Eph. 4:22–32; Col. 3:8–13).
1. *Put off*: former conduct, lying, stealing, corrupt speech, wrath, bitterness, anger, clamor (loud quarreling), evil speaking, malice, blasphemy.
  2. *Put on*: speaking the truth, honest labor, pure speech, kindness, be tenderhearted, forgiving, full of mercy, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, forbearance and love.

### III. New Responsibilities As A Christian

- A. Self denial (Matt. 16:24; Gal. 2:20).
- B. Love the brethren (John 13:34).
- C. Glorify God (1 Cor. 6:19–20).
- D. Teach others (2 Tim. 2:2).
- E. Assemble with the saints (Heb. 10:25).
- F. Practice pure religion (James 1:27; Gal. 6:10; Luke 10:25–37).
- G. Remain constant in prayer (1 Thes. 5:17; 1 John 1:5–10).
- H. Remain faithful unto death (Rev. 2:10, 14:13).

### IV. Being Of Value In The Lord’s Work

- A. Things not needed:
  1. Eloquence of speech (Ex. 4:10; 1 Cor. 2:1–4).
  2. Secular education (Acts 4:13; 2 Tim. 2:15).
  3. Riches and great wealth (Matt. 8:20; 1 Tim. 6:10; Mark 12:37).
  4. Fine health (3 John 2; 2 Cor. 12:10).
  5. Convenience (Acts 16:19–34).
  6. Years of experience (Acts 9:19–20).
- B. Things that are needed:
  1. A good example (Acts 4:13; Rom. 12:1–2).
  2. Good study habits (2 Tim. 2:15).
  3. Liberality (Mark 12:41–44; 2 Cor. 9:6–7).
  4. Love of lost souls (Rom. 10:1–3).

#### *Conclusion*

- I. Have you “put on” the new man?
- II. Have you started living for the one who died for you?

# “Let Us Pray”

## *Introduction*

- I. The greatest blessing in this world is to be a child of God (1 John 3:1).
- II. We also have a solemn duty: prayer to our Father (1 Thes. 5:17).
- III. Jesus, the one who “committed no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth” prayed often, and is our example in prayer (1 Peter 2:22).
- IV. Prayer is not a cold formal observance, but speaking to our Father.
  - A. It is an expression of our heart’s desire (Rom. 10:1; Phil 4:6–7).
  - B. It is coming to the throne of grace (Heb. 4:14–16; Neh. 2:1–2).

## *Discussion*

### **I. Does God Answer Prayer?**

- A. If God does not answer prayer, then we are not better off (Matt. 7:9–11).
- B. God has promised to hear our prayers (1 John 5:14–15).
- C. He answers prayer like He saves, i.e., conditionally.
  1. We must be righteous (John 9:31; 1 Peter 3:12).
  2. We must ask in faith (James 1:5–8).
  3. We must ask according to His will (Luke 22:42; James 4:1–3).
  4. We must ask “in the name” of Christ (Col. 3:17; John 15:16).
  5. We must endeavor to keep peace (Matt. 5:23–24).
  6. We must be willing to forgive (Mark 11:25–26).
  7. We must be sincere (Matt. 6:5–15).

### **II. Where Should We Pray?**

- A. Public prayer is enjoined (1 Tim. 2:8).
- B. Private prayer is important (Matt. 6:5–6).

### **III. For Whom Should We Pray?**

- A. For our brethren (2 Thes. 3:1).
- B. For non-Christians (Rom. 10:1).
- C. For our enemies (Matt. 5:43–46).
- D. For our government (1 Tim. 2:1–2).
- E. For the progress of the gospel (Eph. 6:17–20; Acts 4:23–31).
- F. For the sick (James 5:13–18).

### **IV. Humility In Prayer**

- A. Be like the publican (Luke 18:11–13).
- B. Show proper reverence (Heb. 12:28).

## *Conclusion*

- I. Our prayers must not cease.
- II. Saul is the only example of an alien sinner praying in the New Testament, and he was told to stop praying and start obeying (Acts 22:16).

# The Prodigal Parents

## *Introduction*

- I. The story of the prodigal son is one of the most popular and well known parables of our Lord (Luke 15:11–24).
  - A. It shows how some who are wayward can repent and return to the Lord, while others never will.
  - B. In spite of the fact that the prodigal son “came to himself,” the story is tragic as it demonstrates the wastefulness of sin.
  - C. It is from the parable that the word “prodigal” became a common word.
  - D. The word “prodigal” means, “a squanderer, a waster, a user of ones means, reckless extravagance...”
  - E. Very, very little is said in this parable about the parents and the conditions of their home.
- II. In the Bible we read of many great parents.
  - A. We could speak of Abraham’s love for Isaac.
  - B. David’s cry of a broken heart over Absalom.
  - C. The love of Hannah and Elkanah for Samuel.
- III. On the other hand, there are many bad parents recorded in the Bible.
  - A. Such parents are those who wasted their substance, and squandered their influence and opportunities.
  - B. They sacrificed their position as parents by neglect, and then sacrificed the souls of their children by careless, indifferent living.
- IV. The home is the backbone of the nation—when the home deteriorates nations soon crumble and fall.
  - A. This is one of the reasons given by Edward Gibbon for the decline and fall of the Roman Empire.
  - B. Happy homes are essential to happy hearts and lives.
  - C. Good homes are necessary for the building up of the church of our Lord.
  - D. Strong congregations can not be built up out of homes filled with discord, torn by strife and broken by divorce.
- V. The American family is in trouble in our day.
  - A. 40% of American children do not live with their biological father.
  - B. 30% of American children do not live with a father of any kind.
  - C. Although the divorce rate has been declining since the mid-1980’s, the United States still has the highest divorce rate in the industrialized world.
  - D. Between 40 and 50 percent of first marriages will end in divorce.
  - E. Of remarriages, around 60% will end in divorce.
  - F. Cohabitation (“living together” or “shacking up”) is continuing to grow in popularity, even though couples who live together before marriage have a far higher divorce rate than those who don’t.

## I. Bible Basics About The Family

- A. Marriage is not a casual relationship (Gen. 2:21–24).
  - 1. God officiated at the first wedding there in the Garden of Eden.
  - 2. God described the relationship as a covenant (Prov. 2:17).
  - 3. God argues that the wife is a companion by covenant (Mal. 2:14).
- B. Since God ordained marriage, it is good.
  - 1. The way we joke about it you would think it was ordained by Satan.
  - 2. “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge” (Heb. 13:4).
- C. Marriage is the normal state of men and women (Gen. 2:18, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him”).
- D. The woman was created to be “a helper comparable to him” (Gen. 2:18).
  - 1. Women often think of themselves in many roles, but seldom as a helper.
  - 2. “Suppose God had given Adam a say in what the woman would be like. Surely, Adam would have asked for someone strong enough to plow the fields and carry away the boulders to relieve him—not for a woman with delicate strength who needed him to open pickle jars and carry heavy boxes for her. Adam would have asked for someone with an analytical mind to help him design bridges and buildings—not for a woman who cried easily and who got emotionally involved in matters. And Adam certainly would have asked for someone tough enough to work out in the harsh elements on the evening swing-shift while he slept—not for a soft, tenderly formed woman who wanted to pat, hug, squeeze, and kiss him all the time” (Dawson, *Marriage: A Taste Of Heaven*, Vol. I, p. 168).
- E. The woman is the biological counterpart to man.
  - 1. Sex is not a dirty word (Prov. 5:15–20; 1 Cor. 7:3–4).
  - 2. There are many real differences between men and women.
    - a) “Men are different from women. They are equal only in their common membership of the same species, humankind. To maintain that they are the same in aptitude, skill or behavior is to build a society based on a biological and scientific lie. The sexes are different because their brains are different. The brain, the chief administrative and emotional organ of life, is differently constructed in men and in women; it processes information in a different way, which results in different perceptions, priorities and behavior” (Anne Moir and David Jessel, *Brain Sex: The Real Difference Between Men & Women*, p. 5).
    - b) Men are better at reading maps, math, have superior hand-eye coordination, have a more adventurous vocabulary, see better in bright light and like red better than blue.
    - c) Women are better on tests of verbal ability, equipped to receive a wider range of sensory information, master foreign languages easier, hear better, have a more conventional vocabulary, and like blue better than red.

## II. Parental Responsibility

- A. Parents, and fathers in particular, God has placed upon you the responsibility of teaching and instructing your children and bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:1–4).
- B. It amazes me the way some parents will insist and demand their children do well in school, but they couldn't care less about their Bible lessons!
  - 1. They say, "I don't want to cram religion down their throats."
  - 2. These same parents will cram softball, baseball, football, piano lessons, and a host of other trivial pursuits down the throats of their kids.
  - 3. When that child is sick they'll hold their mouth open and pour down the Robitussin!
- C. We need more parents like Lois and Eunice (2 Tim. 1:5).
  - 1. Have you noticed how frequently the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation of children whose parents are Christians fall away from the faith?
  - 2. It is remarkable to see how the spirit of godliness had lived in the lives of Timothy, his mother and grandmother—the flame of faith had not died.
  - 3. What is the difference?
  - 4. Why do some families seem to become less and less faithful and others increase in the faith? (2 Tim. 3:14–15).
  - 5. The difference between losing one's children and keeping them is the difference between teaching them God's word and a failure to do so.
  - 6. In the Old Testament parents were commanded to teach (Deut. 6:6–9).
  - 7. What marvelous changes would be brought in America today if more parents had this attitude!

## III. Parents Need To Entertain Their Own Kids

- A. A lot of parents think that the entertainment of their children is the obligation of the public schools or the Federal government.
  - 1. We live in an age when sacred duties are often pawned off to public schools and government programs.
  - 2. I have grown weary of parents who expect other people to entertain their kids—not just those in the world, but in the church.
  - 3. Too many parents "so busy" they don't have time to provide for the needs of their children.
- B. Some want the church to start a "youth group" to entertain their kids.
  - 1. I have to remind people that Jesus died on the cross so that you might have the remission of sins, not so your child can learn to play basketball!
  - 2. I realize that association with good friends is very important for kids, but when did the church inherit this responsibility?
  - 3. The goal of the other parents was to have their unruly kids associate with the good kids, thinking that would make everything turn out fine.
  - 4. Their intentions might have been good, but the reality of the matter is that "evil company corrupts good habits" (1 Cor. 15:33).

- C. If you are really concerned about the development of your children, then you must take the lead in providing for all aspects of your child's development.
- D. Parents, you are responsible for your own children—they are not going to be in your house forever, so enjoy the time you can spend with them now.

#### **IV. Why Children Should Obey Their Parents**

- A. God commands you to do so (Eph. 6:1–3).
  - 1. The God of heaven who made you and sustains you—the God who knows more about you than you will even know about yourself—He commands you to obey your parents.
  - 2. God is unselfish and wants only the best for you—He showed this when He gave His Son on Calvary.
  - 3. There is not one command in the Bible that is detrimental to your well being—He is always looking out for us.
- B. You owe your parents a debt of gratitude (Eph. 6:1).
  - 1. Your mother went down into the valley of the shadow of death to bring you into this world.
  - 2. Your mother and father have spent countless hours and many sleepless nights by your sickbed—or maybe they sat in a hospital room while you were in an oxygen tent.
  - 3. Their self-denial to supply you with the things you needed and their untiring efforts to shape your life into something worthwhile ought to solicit your eternal gratitude.
  - 4. Maybe you don't remember all the good things they did for you, but they are there none the less.
- C. It is good for you and society (Prov. 1:8–9).
  - 1. Obedience to parents teaches you respect for authority.
  - 2. Without respect for authority you will never be happy, and you will certainly never contribute anything worthwhile to society.
- D. It will enhance your chances for a long life (Prov. 1:10–19).
  - 1. Children who obey their parents are more likely to survive and enjoy a long and useful life—they will be saved from the vices and crimes which tend to cut life short.
  - 2. You will be turned away from self-destructive habits and you will become a useful part of society.

#### *Conclusion*

- I. Children do not need perfect parents—only loving and compassionate parents who love God and their family with the whole heart.
  - A. Mothers and fathers, it is far more important to your children for you to spend your time making a good life instead of a good living.
  - B. Parents, how can possibly fulfill the requirement to bring your children up “in the training and admonition of the Lord” unless you are a Christian?
- II. This morning we have been talking about the home and family relationship.
  - A. God is also concerned that you be a member of His family, the church.
  - B. A family where God is our Father and Christ is our elder brother.

# The Prophet Of Prophets

## Introduction

- I. Deuteronomy 18:9–22 is a passage on the origin of the prophetic institution.
  - A. It stands as a warning to the Israelites who were about to enter Canaan.
  - B. God was going to raise up a body of men and put His word in their mouth.
- II. The Levites were the appointed guardians of the law—they were to promote fellowship with God by the means of sacrifices at the altar.
  - A. However, in the promised land there would be new circumstances requiring further revelation from God.
  - B. Canaan was filled with superstition—they claimed detailed knowledge of the future, but their sources were declared abominations by God.
  - C. God promised to raise up prophets to make known the future.
- III. In this lesson we want to notice the superstitions of the Canaanites, and then see how Moses promised “the prophet” who would be like him.

## Discussion

- I. **Superstitions Employed By The Canaanites**
  - A. Febration was the practice of one making “his son or his daughter pass through the fire” (Deut. 18:10).
    1. The purpose of febration was to obtain an oracle, or to avert national disaster (cf. Deut. 12:29–31).
    2. This practice was common among the worshipers of Moloch, the national deity of Ammonites (Lev. 18:21).
    3. This abomination caused God to root out the Canaanites (Lev. 18:24–30).
  - B. The next three terms describe various methods of divination: “one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens.”
    1. “For there is no sorcery against Jacob, nor is there any divination against Israel. It now must be said of Jacob and of Israel, ‘Oh, what God has done!’” (Num. 23:23).
    2. No soothsayer has any power against Israel, for Israel receives her information from the Lord.
  - C. The next two: “a sorcerer, or one who conjures spell.”
  - D. The next two groups are those who seek after the dead: “a medium, or a spiritist” (often found side by side in the Scriptures).
    1. Manasseh reinstated many of these abominations as King in Judah (2 Kings 21:1–6).
    2. “Although these two words, ‘ghost’ and ‘familiar spirit’ are used side by side, there was nevertheless a distinction between them. The person who was possessed of an *ob* (ghost) was evidently a ventriloquist. Like the witch at Endor he might call up the *ob* and describe what he saw. Those about him would probably hear only a muttering or twittering which seemed to come from the ground. The ‘familiar spirit’ however, was evidently a spirit that was at the beck and call of a particular person.” (Edward J. Young, *My Servants The Prophets*, p. 23).
    3. Saul and the witch at Endor (1 Sam. 28:3–19).

- E. "One who calls up the dead" is a comprehensive term which covers all forms of spiritualism and superstition.
- F. "The context refers to sorcery, divination, spiritism, and other similar practices. Excavations at different sites have uncovered a great number of figurines, charms, amulets, and other objects connected with sorcery, fertility cults, demon exorcism, and pagan superstitions that at times propagated themselves in Israel to such an extent that legislators, prophets, and some rulers had frequently to warn the people against them." (Gonzalo Baez-Camargo, *Archaeological Commentary On The Bible*, p. 55).
- G. "The list is indeed impressive. These superstitious practices which were so much in vogue among the Canaanites of ancient time are the reason why the Lord will dispossess these people of their land. Moses then advances a step. Not only are these practices in themselves abominations, he says, but also every one that doeth them is an abomination in the sight of the Lord. It is for this reason that God will drive out the Canaanites from their land. It is well that we should grasp this fact, for it has sometimes been maintained that the God of the Old Testament was an arbitrary despot, who drove out the Canaanites and brought Israel into Palestine, and this, it has been said, was a cruel, arbitrary act. Such a judgment, however, is unjust, and out of accord with the facts. God, in dispossessing the Canaanites, was doing a gracious and merciful thing to the remainder of the world. The Canaanites, through their abominations, had themselves become abominations. If there was to be any salvation for the world, Canaan must go. The cup of their iniquity had filled, and they could no longer be permitted to exist as heretofore. Let no one, then, charge God with lack of justice in His treatment of Canaan." (*My Servants The Prophets*, p. 24).
- H. Israel would not have to resort to such means (Deut. 18:15).
1. The words, "from your midst, from your brethren," imply that there would be no necessity for Israel to turn to heathen soothsayers.
  2. God was going to do two things (a double reference):
    - a) Raise up a body of prophets, an institution, to declare God's words.
    - b) Raise up one great prophet, who alone could compare to Moses.

## II. Moses And The Prophets

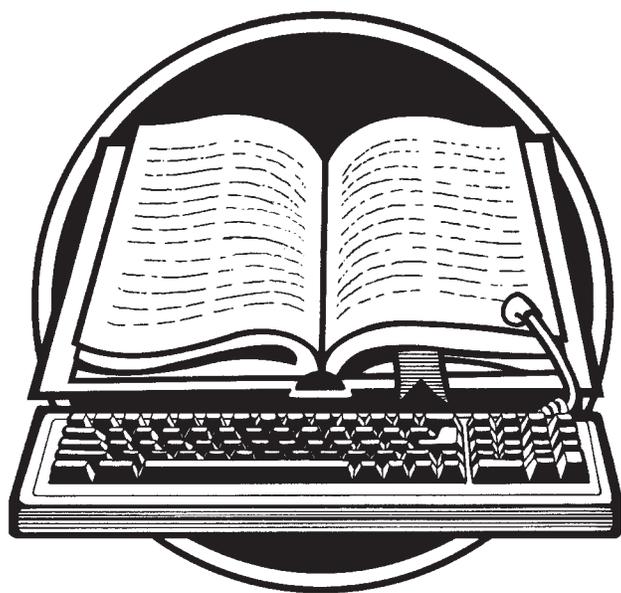
- A. We need to make a distinction between Moses and the rest of the Old Testament prophets (Num. 12:1–8).
1. “We may conclude then, that Moses in marrying a foreign woman had offended Miriam, whose narrow nationalism stands in marked contrast to Moses’ own act. The real reason for the complaint however, was something quite different. The real complaint which Miriam and Aaron discussed between themselves had to do with the relationship of their position in Israel with respect to that of Moses. They did not wish to be the recipients of revelation which was subordinate to that received by Moses but rather of that which was equal to that given to him. There is truth, of course, in their statement. God had indeed spoken to them. Aaron had the exalted privilege, which was not even vouchsafed to Moses, of using the Urim and Thumin in bringing the people’s rights before God (Exodus 28:30). Miriam was called a prophetess (Ex. 15:20), and occupied an honored position among the women of Israel.” (*My Servants The Prophets*, p. 41–42).
  2. “For I brought you up from the land of Egypt, I redeemed you from the house of bondage; and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.” (Micah 6:4)
  3. God would speak to other prophets in dreams and visions, but “Not so with my servant Moses” (Num. 12:6–7).
- B. Four phrases found in Numbers 12:8 which tell of the relationship between God and His servant Moses.
1. God will speak directly and immediately to Moses—“face to face.”
    - a) “So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend” (Ex. 33:11a).
    - b) It was a free, personal exchange, without any mediation.
    - c) “But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face...” (Deut. 34:10).
  2. God would speak “plainly” to Moses.
  3. “Not in dark sayings” or in riddles (cf. Ezek. 17:2ff).
  4. “He sees the form of the Lord,” not just a vision!
- C. Moses was not just one of the prophets, nor equal with them.
1. Rather, all of the prophets are under Moses (Deut. 34:9–12).
  2. Comparison between Christ and Moses (Heb. 3:1–6).

### III. Christ Is God's Final Prophet

- A. The New Testament often speaks of Christ as "The Prophet."
  - 1. The priests from Jerusalem wanted to know of John the Baptist was 'the prophet' (John 1:19–23).
  - 2. After the feeding of the 5,000, the people said, "This is truly the Prophet, who is come into the world" (John 6:14).
  - 3. Jesus claimed that Moses wrote about Him (John 5:39, 46–47).
  - 4. We are to hear God's Son, not Moses (Matt. 17:1–5).
  - 5. Peter used the words of Moses and applied them to Jesus (Acts 3:22–26).
  - 6. Stephen saw the fulfillment of the words of Moses in Christ (Acts 7:37).
- B. Christ is God's final spokesman (Heb. 1:1–4).
  - 1. "...prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21).
  - 2. Consequences of neglecting the message of Christ (Heb. 2:1–4).

#### *Conclusion*

- I. Have you listened to the words of Christ, God's final Spokesman?
- II. When you reject the words of Christ, you have rejected salvation!



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